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"You live together, you train together, you play together, you drink together": An investigation of transition in British university sport

By

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Acknowledgments

Writing your PhD thesis is all about the process they say. Much like the participants in my study, I have crossed boundaries. It has certainly been a journey.

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Jo Angouri who continually encouraged me and believed in my abilities throughout my studies. Here it is especially necessary to acknowledge her patience with regards to my ability to consistently produce malformed figures and models, and then place them in my work. I also want to say "thank you" to my second supervisor, Dr Kieran File for his unwavering belief in me and continued guidance over the years.

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Declaration

I confirm that this thesis has been composed by myself alone and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree at another university.

Abstract

University sports teams represent unique social environments where new members must not only find their place among teammates but also grapple with the challenges associated with starting university. For students this period is fraught with uncertainty, opportunity and a need to belong. Membership of a university sports team can be seen as relevant to all three. Situated at the interface of applied linguistics, social psychology and sport this project seeks to investigate the experiences of students joining such teams as a means of illuminating a hitherto under-researched context: transition in university sport teams and specifically a male football team.

The interdisciplinary design of the project necessitated a broad, cross-disciplinary review of the available work which, in turn, provides a holistic understanding of the researched phenomenon. Drawing on data collected from members of a British university team over a period of three years this thesis aims to provide detailed insights into the complexities and nuances of transition as an ongoing process. Framing the team as a Community of Practice (Wenger 1998), 23 semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants representing different annual intakes of "freshers" (first-year players) and senior players. Participant stories were analysed using both thematic and narrative analysis tools.

The results illustrate the individual nature of transitions; drawing on the findings I argue that the exact nature of a player's transition to the team is determined by their degree of socialisation through participation in community practice. Hence, transition to the team is not viewed simply as either successful or not successful but specific to an individual's lived social reality. Indeed, the data show that the team constitutes a highly complex social structure that new players are required to navigate. Team practice is predicated on normative masculine behaviours enacted in a laddish guise, e.g. heavy drinking, risk taking, banter, etc. At the same time, member initiations to traditions, rituals and stories and their perpetuating or challenging them, leads to perpetuating or changing the team's dominant norms. In concluding the thesis, I

will present a model of transition that accounts for socialisation, participation and practice, and

constructs transitional experience as fluid and ongoing.

1 Introduction

This thesis presents the conceptual journey and results of a four-year research project seeking to understand the transitional experiences of students joining a university football club. A primary aim of this work is to outline the complexity of transition as a process and its intrinsic associations with notions of socialisation and participation within this particular context. These three core notions guide the structure of the work and the presentation of findings. I will argue and show that each individual player's transitional experience is shaped by the degree of socialisation they are exposed to in the club as a consequence of participatory learning. Multi-disciplinary in focus, design and implementation, this research seeks to make a contribution in sports literature and relevant fields, primarily sports sociolinguistics and sports psychology, and shed light on a hitherto under-explored phenomenon: transition and socialisation in university sports teams.

1.1 Background

According to Angouri et al. (2017, p.1) transitions "…form a normal part of everyday life" and can include movement across various borders, be they physical, spatiotemporal, life stage, intellectual or social. Encompassing all of these types of transition the experience of starting university has been characterised as an (increasingly) challenging moment for young people (Hviid & Zittoun, 2008; Krause & Coates, 2008; Wilcox et al., 2005). Equally, while receiving far less scholarly attention the process of joining a sports team is argued to pose unique challenges to incoming athletes at all levels of sport (professional, varsity, amateur, etc.). Indeed, Benson et al. remark: "the experience of entering a new sports team environment is fraught with potential ambiguities surrounding how athletes will fulfil their role as a newcomer" (2016, p.463).

University sports teams are critically important for the overall learning experience of their members and this is becoming increasingly relevant as universities in the UK compete for global talent through sports bursaries. Therefore, the focus on a university level men's football

team fundamentally necessitates a nuanced appreciation of the phenomenon and its constituent complexities. It is argued here that transition to the club cannot be separated from the overall experience of transitioning to university and vice versa, i.e. being a student at university cannot be separated from transition to the team once one is committed to it (e.g. with regards to identity construction, specific group practices, etc.). In this respect team transition is seen as situated in a specific university context underpinned by unique sociocultural, political and historic factors. As a means of understanding the team environment as embedded within this context Wenger's (1998) notion of Community of Practice (henceforth CoP) is drawn upon to construct the team as a particular community formed of specific socialising practices (i.e. associated with masculine constructs). The framing of the football club in this way provides the tools and a window into understanding transition as multi-faceted and occurring across domains, more precisely, in relation to: sporting, social and academic aspects of their experience.

As a starting point, the relationship between transition, socialisation and participation with regards to the socially lived reality of an individual's transitional experience is represented below in Figure 1.1. The model will be revised and elaborated on throughout the chapters and at the end of this thesis in order to illustrate the inherent complexity of the investigated process.
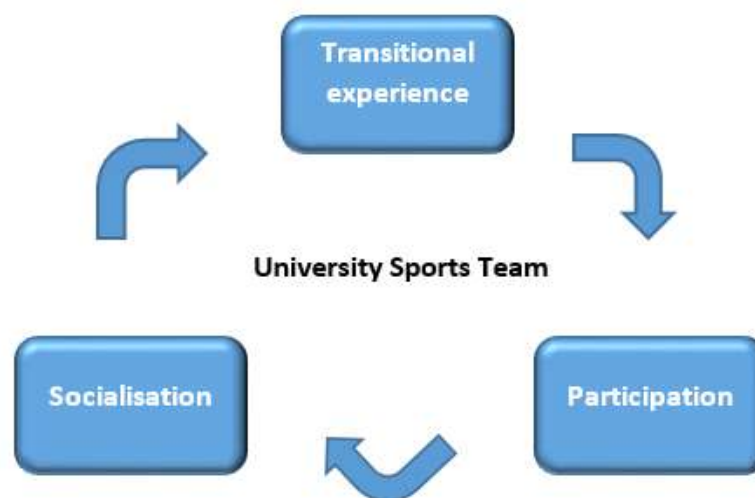
Figure 1.1 Initial figure of transition

In order to understand the investigated phenomenon I carried out a broad review of the literature due to considerable gaps relating to core concerns, e.g. transition in university sport, or transition to team sport more generally. The need to draw on varied literature reflects both the complexity of the project, and its positioning at the interface of several disciplines, namely: applied linguistics, social psychology and sport. I particularly see myself as deeply interdisciplinary, combining the social end of psychology and the discursive end of sociolinguistics. I will expand on my positioning as a researcher in the methodology (Chapter 3) and now turn to introducing both the academic context of the project, and the social and political context of university men's sports teams.

1.2 Context

The last decade has witnessed increasing attempts to investigate and understand the concept of transition in the domain of sport. Various approaches have focused on different facets of an athlete's career, be they professional or amateur. As a consequence of scholars taking note of the increase in athletes seeking to pursue their sports in different countries one primary focus has centred on transition in the form of migratory experience (Agergaard, 2008; Magee & Sugden, 1996; Maguire, 1996; Ryba et al., 2016; Schinke & McGannon, 2014; Schinke et al., 2013). Academics researching this area have sought to illuminate the travails of sports people as they cross national boundaries and enter new sporting environments and maintain performance levels as they adjust to the environment of their new team. This literature is particularly relevant to me as it provides a broad frame of relevance and equally indicates a significant gap my thesis addresses, the university sports context which has attracted much less attention.

The migratory and cultural hurdles that individuals are required to navigate are argued to be numerous and diverse relating to both on and off-field considerations. New players are required to adjust to the particular sporting context of the host country or club which involves adjusting to different approaches and understandings of what is ostensibly the same sport that was played in the home country (Richardson et al., 2012). This often involves building relationships with

new coaches (Hanton et al., 2005; Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009), and the inability to converse in the host country language has also been shown to impact not only an athlete's ability to collaborate with teammates through linguistic isolation (Agergaard, 2008), but also their experience of day to day living (Elliot, 2014; Schinke et al., 2011).

Alongside this body of research within the domain of sport is work that seeks to understand career transitions placing specific focus on retirement from sport (Carless & Douglas, 2009; Grove et al., 1997; Park et al., 2013), and junior to senior player transition (Bruner et al, 2008; Stambulova et al., 2012). Regarding the former transition from sport has been described as a traumatic experience for many athletes either voluntarily or involuntarily retiring (Kerr & Dacshyn, 2000; Sparkes, 1998).

In contrast to those leaving sport are the young athletes who experience developmental transition when making the step up from junior or rookie to senior player. Research on this topic follows increasing advancement with regards to both scale and sophistication of approaches to youth development across a variety of sports and football, in particular (Mitchell et al., 2014; Morley et al., 2014; Weedon, 2012). Investigations of this phenomenon point to factors beyond that of sport or team considerations that serve to underpin such experience, e.g. psychological development as a consequence of players moving from adolescence to adulthood (Franck & Tuovila, 2009; Stambulova et al., 2012) and the simultaneous physiological development as a consequence of the same process (Burgess et al., 2012; Mitchell et al., 2014).

Turning to my own context, the transitional experiences of elite athletes attending university has also been investigated by a considerably smaller number of studies. Much of this research has framed transition through the lens of career development (e.g. Brown et al., 2000; Smith & Hardin, 2018; Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004) but with a particular focus on the academic challenges faced by elite student athletes as they strive to maintain performance. In addition studies have not tended to focus on specific teams but rather on athletes performing in solo sports or by using a sample of a number of single athletes representing different sports (e.g. Aquilina, 2013; Brown et al., 2015; Giacobbi et al., 2004; McKenna & Dunstan-Lewis, 2004).

In their study investigating student-athlete transition Miller and Kerr (2002) conducted in-depth interviews with Canadian intercollegiate athletes from a number of different sports. One identified challenge was the constant need to balance the sporting expectations of elite sport with the intellectual demands of tertiary education and social aspects of university life. In this respect transition for the participants was argued to be multi-faceted involving three components: academic, sport and social. Overall, these studies show that sporting concerns were elevated above the other aspects of their experience on account of the athletes' drive to meet their goals. In a British context, Brown et al. (2015) similarly focused on elite athletes from a number of sports as they entered higher education with the framing of transition also incorporating psychological concerns. Here findings suggested organisational support played an important role in facilitating the athletes' ability to transition.

While the available literature with regards to transitional experience is rich and relates to both different types, levels and stages of sport there are clear limitations that need to be considered. More precisely, there is a paucity of research specifically seeking to understand the experiences of individuals when they join university sports teams. This is particularly true of the available empirical work where researchers have instead placed emphasis on exploring the types of transition noted in the preceding discussion. Hence, the notion of adjusting to a new team environment and the inherent associated complexities tends to form a secondary consideration behind explicit investigations relating to, for example; migration challenges, team cohesiveness and team performance. Similarly, existing theoretical contributions often frame team transition as one facet of many relating to transitional experience (e.g. Ryba et al., 2016; Wyllemann & Lavallee, 2004).

Although this research concurs with the notion that transition is indeed multi-faceted occurring across different domains and different contexts, this lack of specific focus on transition in university teams (and sports teams in general) presents the opportunity to make a significant empirical and theoretical contribution. An additional gap of the current student-athlete transition literature is that it focuses predominately on elite level university sport. To be precise,

the notion of being 'elite' is bestowed on those student-athletes who have attained success in Olympic level sport. In addition, these elite performers are eligible for particular scholarships and thus their participation in university sport has an attached monetary value (Aquilina, 2013). These concerns are relevant to note as the football team in this study would not be considered elite in the same respect and thus reinforces the argument concerning the considerable space in the literature for me to address.

Further to the conceptual underpinning of this work, I consider literature on socialisation within a broader sport team context equally important in order to build an understanding of a particular club's socialising practices. Benson et al.'s (2016) qualitative study of coach and athlete perceptions towards team socialisation strategies may be considered important in light of the dearth of available work. Transferring perspectives from the field of organisational science (e.g. Van Maanen & Schein, 1977), their approach is subsequently founded on the idea that "teams are active agents in the socialisation of new members" (Benson et al., 2016, p.463). Their findings present highly complex social structures where athletes are required to fulfil different roles. While their work is a valuable contribution to scholarly understandings of team environments I argue that it is limited by 1, the (understandable) specific focus on sporting roles, and 2, the subsequent emphasis on connecting role fulfilment and sporting cohesion at the expense of a more nuanced dissection of what the "social" in socialisation actually means. While official sporting roles are undeniably important in relation to the structure of sports teams, in this research I aim to illustrate that detailed understandings of the *social* environment of a team is critical to understanding both the transition, and socialisation, of new players.

Finally, similar to much of the student-athlete literature the participants used as part of Benson et al.'s (2016) sample were not drawn from the same team or even the same sport. Hence perspectives of transitional experience as a consequence of socialisation are coloured significantly by different contexts. To this extent I see focusing on one specific team over a period time as offering unique insights and something future research can further expand on. Accordingly, the football club in this research is framed as a specific community where existing

normative behaviours, values and practices are underpinned by socio-cultural factors and notions of gendered performativity. In line with the need to appreciate contextual factors influencing an individual's experience I will now provide discussion concerning the contemporary environment in which university men's football teams are formed. A core understanding here is that while literature related to transition in general sport is both useful and necessary, the research context is a varsity sports club and hence, any in-depth investigation must be grounded on an appreciation of relevant factors influencing experience in such teams.

1.3 Young men, masculinity & university

Every sports team, Benson et al. argue, is "…situated within a unique environmental context" (2016, p.463). The team that this research places focus on is a men's varsity football club based at a university in the English Midlands and it was argued that transitional experience related to the team must be seen as being embedded within the overall university experience. Hence, integral to understanding the local context of the team is an understanding of greater discourses surrounding young men at universities and associations with core facets of identity such as masculinity, as constructed and performed on campus. Although this is not a thesis on identity or masculinity per se, I will show how normative masculinities are integral to the core concepts of transition and socialisation as the socialising practices of the community that constitutes the focus of my work.

The place of young men at university has become an increasingly politically charged talking point straddling both popular media and academic interest. For example, British university campuses have been described as inhospitable for young female students on account of the pervasive "lad culture" dominating university life (Phipps & Young, 2013). "Laddish" behaviour as performed by young men on campus has been associated with misogyny (particularly in the form of sexist banter), objectification of women, homophobia and heavy drinking (Anderson, 2010; Dempster, 2009). Manifested as a form of hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) laddism on campus is regarded as not only problematic for

young female students but those others, irrespective of biological sex orientation, who do not align with such ideals (Phipps & Young, 2013). This is particularly important as I also do not equate normative masculinities with biological male gender and what is relevant to me is the way the community's practices are perceived and constructed in line with laddish ideals in my data (see Chapters 4 and 5).

Following recent (and public) incidents at both British and North American universities male student groups have come under scrutiny. For example, in 2018 Warwick University disciplined 11 male students after details of a private Facebook "lads' chat" surfaced revealing sexually violent messages about fellow female students (Giordano, 2019). The incident was followed by public outcry and further action was taken by Warwick University's senior management. Incidents such as these in higher education institutions show the need to look into students' lived experiences in the various communities they are members of or aspire to belong to during their university journey.

Equally there has been increasing awareness of the underlying practices of male groups with regards to initiation rituals that take place on campus. Common in British and North American universities these events serve as "gateways" and official entry into teams (Johnson, 2011). However, serious injury and even the deaths of young male students due to alcohol poisoning during these ceremonies (Rawlinson, 2018) has seen campuses come under even greater scrutiny with a number of British universities now banning initiations (Phipps & Young, 2013). Such behaviours, while associated with male groups, are argued to be particularly prevalent in university sports clubs as are the worst excesses of laddism. Indeed, the connection between sport, heavy drinking and laddish masculinity is one that is pervasive within the literature (e.g. Clayton, B., 2013; Dempster, 2009; Phipps & Young, 2013).

However, concerns related to the behaviour of young men on campus are complicated by concurrent political discussions that have begun to more vociferously highlight the widening educational gender gap. More precisely, it is now well documented that through educational stages boys perform worse than girls (Hillman & Robinson, 2016), are more likely to drop-out

of university education and are attending university in increasingly smaller numbers (Chan, 2014). Thus there is simultaneous pressure to both arrest falling male student numbers and tackle behaviours attributed to male groups and notions of masculinity in university settings (Phipps & Young, 2013). Regarding the latter point it should be noted that attitudes towards male students as carried through popular media and academic literature have been criticised. For example, Slater questions the idea that reported behaviour is a consequence of young men being "…consumed by the pack mentality" in the form of the other men they surround themselves with and are thus devoid of individual accountability (2016, p.38).

Furthermore, growing numbers of scholars have argued for more contemporary theorisations of masculinity that reach beyond Connell's notion of hegemonic practice and better reflect changing attitudes among men, particularly in sport (e.g. Anderson, 2010; Anderson & McCormack, 2018; Magrath & Scoats, 2019). Anderson (2010) maintains that more accurate descriptions of modern sports team environments should acknowledge the range of masculinities manifesting alongside normative behaviours. This is argued to be particularly true of men's teams in varsity sport where Anderson suggests team members can to some extent be considered bearers of shifting attitudes and more fluid constructions of gendered identity. This modern male athlete is contrasted with the bullying, sexist and homophobic "Jock" of the 1980s (Anderson, 2010).

Masculinity as manifested through laddism has also been critiqued by Nichols (2018) who argues there is greater critical awareness among men with regards to particular types of behaviour. Constructing degrees of laddishness as a continuum of actions determined according to situation and context, she prefers the term "mischievous masculinity". An exhaustive discussion of terminology goes beyond the scope of my thesis, but the concept of masculinity is relevant to my data and as such I will be returning to it in the following chapters particularly in the literature and data chapters (Chapters 2, 4 & 5).

To conclude this discussion, the landscape within which teams such as the one investigated in this research are formed can be regarded as both complex and increasingly visible as part of

modern public and political discourse. Initiatives designed to tackle traditionalised social excesses as predicated on laddish behaviour appear alongside a growing clamour to reappraise the social practices of young men and acknowledge the emergence of "softer" masculinities in male sports teams. The relevance then for university team transition relates to expectations of masculine performance within the team and the socialisation involved in becoming, and maintaining status, as a club member. At the core of such discussion is clearly the notion of identity and identity construction associated with masculinity within specific locales. To conclude the introduction section, I now move to the research questions and rationale for my thesis before getting deeper in the literature review.

1.4 Research questions

1, What transitional experiences do players report when joining a university football team?

2, What role does socialisation play in the process of transition?

3, What is the relationship between participation in the club and normative masculinities?

1.5 Rationale and contribution

The research is driven by a number of factors and seeks to make contributions that are cross-disciplinary and encompass empirical, theoretical and methodological concerns. Acknowledging the background outlined in the preceding section it was felt that both topic and context represented a unique research focus. Therefore, empirical work illuminating both transitional experience in team sport, and the social environment manifest in male groups as sites of transition, was deemed worthy of in-depth research. In this respect, at a theoretical level the project seeks to inform understandings of transition, particularly as a consequence of social learning following the Communities of Practice framework (Wenger, 1998). Equally, as the football club cannot be separated from the wider context of the university experience the research was seen to transcend mere sporting concerns and provide insights regarding the experiences of a small sample of young men in higher education. In the current context the embedding of team within university was seen as particularly relevant.

In line with the dearth of studies looking at transition in team sport there is limited variety in the methodological approaches adopted. Hence, an additional rationale developed reflected the inter-disciplinary nature of the project, openness to different approaches, and revelations emerging early during data collection. Specifically, this involved the utilisation of narrative and discursive methods as a means of understanding transition and associated socialisation practices underpinning player experiences. Regarding the former, this involved placing focus on storytelling as undertaken by participants reconstructing transitional experience while the latter point sought to investigate team stories shared within the football club that appeared to be re-propagated yearly as a socialisation tool. Again, emphasising contribution, to date there are no studies that have investigated the phenomenon using these approaches and thus the research sought to capitalise on an exciting opportunity.

Finally, conducting research with one specific team over a number of years allowed for an in-depth investigation of team practices as reported in a diversity of experiences. The influence of the social environment on an athlete's transitional experience has been considered in previous work but these studies did not draw on individuals playing for the same team. Moreover, the social experience has tended to be limited to support received (or not received) rather than a full consideration of how players are required to navigate particular social dynamics. This work contributes to sports scholarship by providing a glimpse into this navigation and discussing the implications for both new players and overall notions of team cohesion.

1.6 Structure of thesis

The thesis is divided into six chapters. Following *Chapter One* which has introduced the project and provided background and rationale for the investigation of the phenomenon, attention will then turn to *Chapter Two* to a discussion of previous and relevant literature. In this chapter the core theoretical concerns will be introduced, namely, *transition* and *socialisation.* Necessarily drawing on approaches from different disciplines, e.g. psychology, organisational science, sport and applied linguistics, existing theoretical approaches to these concepts will be considered and used as basis for how they are understood in this work. This is then followed by a review of the

empirical literature which discusses known barriers and facilitators of transition, particularly within the contexts of education and team sport. The chapter will conclude by focusing on the notion of identity which is argued to be a relevant factor in conceptualisations of transition and socialisation. Wenger's (1998) CoP framework will be discussed and its suitability for this project justified.

Following the review of the literature, *Chapter Three* will outline methodological considerations and the overall research design. This will first include a discussion of the social constructionist underpinning of the overall research approach before turning to outline the primary data collection method employed: semi-structured interviews. Attention will then be turned to the specific design of the project including participants, context, access and the interview process. Finally, the analytical approaches will be discussed and selection of employed approaches justified. Specifically, this research primarily utilises thematic analysis complimented by narrative and discursive frameworks.

Chapter Four presents the findings of the thematic analysis where transitional experience is broken down according to three separate but interrelated dimensions: social, sport and academic. Here the football club will be introduced as a CoP (Wenger, 1998) constituting a complex social structure that must be navigated by new players as they learn the practices of the community. It will be argued that group practice is underscored by behaviours associated with laddish masculinity, e.g. heavy drinking, risk-taking, etc., which as specific rituals are integral to understanding socialisation within the community. In addition to community learning and alignment with normative masculine values and the role of individual agency, transition is argued to also entail specific events that occur over the course of a new player's first season with the club. Together, these three considerations are represented in a process model of transition seeking to describe the participants' overall transitional experiences.

Chapter Five turns attention to the narrative and discursive approaches in the form of "flashpoint stories" as identified in the data, and the team narratives that are annually propagated by senior members of the club as a form of the community's shared repertoire. For

a more holistic approach to understanding the participants' socially experienced realities the first section involved a heuristic approach that combined discursive approaches (e.g. Bamberg, 1997; Depperman & Lucius-Hoene, 2000; Ochs & Capps, 2001) with classic structural approaches to narrative analysis (Labov, 1997). The purpose of the section is to show how participants constructed distinct stories that could be associated with core aspects of process as identified in the thematic analysis i.e. navigating hierarchy and membership, community participation, making decisions, etc. The second approach which involved discourse analysis will reveal how team (and the broader team community) ethos is disseminated through team "welcome emails" and "welcome talks" as a form of shared repertoire. This finding will be argued to have considerable implications for understandings of socialisation and the team's cohesiveness over time. More precisely, it will show how new players move towards the core of the community through participation. They learn club practices which are then propagated among the next cohort of new players.

Finally, Chapter Six will provide a discussion connecting the findings of the analysis with the core aims of the project and research questions before concluding the thesis and adopting a more critical lens of the limitations, implications and future avenues of investigation.

2 Literature Review

The primary aim of this project is to explore transition(s) as reported by male undergraduate students joining a university football club at a British university. Central to this investigation is the focus on building an understanding of how new players experience becoming members of teams. This chapter will provide a discussion of the theoretical underpinnings that have guided this study from research design to the interpretation of findings. I will first focus on the notion of *transition* as conceptualised across different fields before finally defining how the term is operationalised in this work and specifically in relation to the particular research context. Then I will turn attention to the concept of *socialisation* and introduce the Community of Practice (Lave, 1991; Wenger, 1998) framework. Concluding these two sections I will draw on what has been discussed in order to provide the conceptual frame for the research. Finally, a discussion covering the notion of *identity* will be provided with a particular focus on masculinity.

In addition to outlining theoretical considerations this chapter seeks to consider the existing empirical work that is available. However, due to the limited studies specifically focusing on this topic, and the inherently interdisciplinary foundations of this project, the literature review necessarily draws on different fields and approaches to ensure a rounded discussion.

2.1 Transition

Drawing on a dictionary definition, strictly speaking, *transition* refers to a *'period or process of change'*. According to discipline, however, such a definition has been remoulded to suit specific methodological perspectives and contrasting knowledge pursuits. Indeed, for the past several decades the notion of transition has drawn attention from scholars representing various academic fields, e.g. psychology (Adams et al., 1977; Erikson, 1963; Schlossberg, 1981), organisational studies (Nicholson, 1984; 1990; Van Maanen & Schein, 1977), sports science (Lavallee, 2005; Schinke et al., 2013; Taylor & Lavallee, 2010), and sociolinguistics (Angouri et al., 2017; Holmes, 2015). Although historically the literature may be considered skewed towards more psychological approaches and interests, there is an emerging body of work that

aligns with discursive perspectives (e.g. Marra et al., 2017). As this project is situated at the interface of applied linguistics, social psychology and sport the following overview will consider the different contributions to our overall understanding of the concept of transition and how they have affected my own perspective in this work.

The most readily drawn upon understandings of transition reflect the considerable emphasis that psychologists have placed upon the phenomenon. Following this school of thought, for example, Bridges maintains that transition involves "…the letting go of the old reality and the old identity you had before the change took place" (2009, p.7). Similarly for Blair transition is the *discontinuity* individuals face during life and the subsequent psychological upheaval that occurs as a response (2000, p.232). Transition per these understandings may be best characterised as a psychological response precipitated by a rupture of some sort in one's life circumstances, and the developmental change an individual undergoes as they adjust. Theorisation tends to revolve around the psychological processes manifest during transition, which in turn has seen the creation of a number of transitional process models aiming to map the specific developmental trajectory of individuals (Adams et al., 1977; Higgins et al., 1995; Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004). For example, Adams et al. (1977) presented a transition model suggesting seven separate stages: shock, denial, awareness, acceptance, testing, search for meaning, and integration. Each stage is argued to involve a corresponding level of confidence in the transitioning individual, for example, shock involves the surprise experienced when first encountering the trigger for change, and is duly characterised by a lack of confidence in one's ability.

Considering the substantial body of psychology-oriented transition literature, it is evident that emphasis is often placed on the salience of personal attributes as potential facilitators (or barriers) to adjustment. For example, individuals with greater self-esteem are suggested to undergo more (psychologically) uneventful adjustment experiences (Goodrich, 2014; Kling et al., 2003; Lee et al., 2014) while optimism is argued to lead to smoother transitions (Brissette et al., 2002). Equally, interest has also been directed towards transitional change as a catalyst for

personal development or growth (e.g. Brennan, 2001; Yeager et al., 2016). This body of work underscores the traditional view in psychological circles of transition as a potentially stressful event or period distinguished by the formation of new behavioural or cognitive coping mechanisms. For example, discussing the facilitative impact of optimism with regards to managing life transitions, Brissette et al. remark: "optimists cope more effectively with their stressors than do pessimists" (2002, p.102). Thus, for transitional psychologists, personality plays an integral role in understanding change.

Not far removed from traditional approaches in psychology, organisational studies scholars have directed much attention to investigating transition in workplace contexts (e.g. Chao et al., 1994; Kramer, 2010; Schein, 1993; Van Maanen & Schein, 1977). Focus here is placed on investigations of employee adjustment to new organisational settings and seeks to acknowledge both personal development; i.e. in the form of role adjustment, and socialising factors in the form of role expectations (Schein, 1993). Studies in this field tend to focus on employee transition as a means of developing strategies for increasing newcomer productivity, efficiency and satisfaction within companies and organisations (e.g. Ardts et al., 2001; Phillips et al., 2015). Hence while transition in the form of an individual's internal growth as a response to change is still a primary concern for organisational studies, as are the organisational practices that require adjustment. Concerning the latter point we are pointed to the credence that scholars in the field place on the forming of new relationships in new settings and the view of transition as a social process (Van Maanen & Schein, 1977).

More recently, however, there has also been growing interest in the field of sociolinguistics, where different methodological traditions have influenced how transition has been investigated. For sociolinguists it is the social interaction, and the primacy that they grant to language use in such interaction, that forms the basis for how the phenomenon is conceptualised (Angouri et al., 2017). Indeed, while there may be agreement in both psychology and sociolinguistics that the notions of transition and identity are intricately connected, there is clear contrast in understanding the "how" of that connection. For sociolinguists this involves looking beyond

internalised self-identities and instead placing emphasis on how individuals construct identities within (and through) language (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005). Following a discourse grounded approach can involve focusing on crossing linguistic boundaries and the ensuing change in an individual's language use ("linguistic" here need not necessarily refer to official language but also contextualised language practices) in new contexts. For example, sociolinguistic focus on workplace transition has revealed how the interactional norms and values of particular organisations are learned through workplace language use (e.g. Holmes, 2015). Hence, transition is not only conceptualised as a social process but equally, as a form of social learning. While the approach taken in this work does not focus specifically on social boundaries constructed through language practice, acknowledgement of this literature illuminates the complexity of the transition process.

2.2 Transition: A working definition

Having outlined some of the key approaches to the concept of transition I will now seek to define my own understanding. This definition acknowledges that while researchers from different disciplines might have contrasting epistemological and methodological starting points (e.g. positivistic influences in psychology), there is both similarity and dissimilarity in approaches. One classic approach in transitional psychology is given by Schlossberg (1981) who defines transition as any event experienced by an individual that changes, for example, relationships, routines and assumptions. The approach taken in this work concurs with the suggestion that transition involves some form of response to unfamiliar experience. However it rejects the suggestion of abrupt change and transition as a 'fixed turning point which takes place at a preordained time and in a certain place' (Quinn, 2010, p.122). Instead, this research prefers to align with the view of transitions as "periods of change" (Westerman, 2012, p.12) that may involve numerous "events". Moreover, the relational and thus, social aspects of transition are fully acknowledged. In this respect, Holmes notes that organisational transitions are a product of socialisation and learning (2015, p.78). Indeed, it will be argued that this understanding can be applied to transitional experience in university sports team environments

where an appreciation of the academic context is necessary to understand experience with the team.

Guided by an interpretative constructionist epistemology this research concurs with much of the sociolinguistic literature in defining transition (and identity) as fluid and dynamic constructs. Angouri et al. point to the omnipresence of transitions in everyday life and note that they encompass not only the spatiotemporal but also movement through intellectual and social boundaries (2017, p.1). Acknowledging the breadth of variety in the type of potential transitions an individual may experience this research views transition as the *crossing of boundaries* and the adjustment and learning involved in such crossings. In order to understand the nature of crossing it is necessary to unveil the social complexities in which boundaries are constructed. This concern will be returned to later in the literature review with the focus on the concept of socialisation.

2.2.1 Types of transition

With a definition thus posited the review will now turn to a discussion of the specific types of transition that have been the subject of academic research and are particularly relevant to this work. More precisely, this involves placing focus on transitions to higher education and migratory transition before turning attention to sport. In line with the approach taken thus far in this chapter, studies representing different disciplines are necessarily drawn upon to improve the breadth of understanding. Furthermore, the following sections will attempt to underscore transitional experience as multi-faceted and avoid privileging certain types of adjustment over others.

2.2.2 Transition to Higher Education

Moving between different levels of education has been shown to be a potentially turbulent time for students. This is particularly true of the transition to university where the first year of study, in particular, represents a "… complex and often difficult period of a young student's life" (Krause & Coates, 2008, p.495). Individuals arriving at university face pressures associated

with academic stress (Bewick et al., 2010; Fisher & Hood, 1987; Misra & Castillo, 2004; Saleh et al., 2017), the need to fit in or belong (Buote et al., 2007; Wilcox et al., 2005), and the need cope with spatial relocation and manage independent living (Christie et al., 2010; Holton, 2015). For many students this period is fraught with emotional instability, for example, loneliness and homesickness have been reported among populations of university students in a variety of national contexts (e.g. Ozdemir & Tuncay, 2008; Thurber & Walton, 2012; Yorke & Longden, 2008), while a recent systematic review of the prevalence of depression in university students found it to be substantially higher than the general population (Ibrahim et al., 2013). The difficulties associated with university transition are ultimately manifested in the high attrition rates of first year students (Willcoxson et al., 2011).

From the brief outline above, it is evident that the transition to university is complex and involves different forms of adjustment. Indeed, Friedlander et al. (2007) maintain that the most important domains involved in university transition are academic, social and emotional adjustment. These foci are clearly borne out in the literature. Academic adjustment is postulated to include the learning capabilities of students in relation to academic expectations, teaching environments, and study requirements, in addition to a sense of satisfaction within the institutional context (Gerdes & Mallinkrodt, 1994; Liran & Miller, 2019). Transitional difficulties may surface in the form of students struggling to produce the calibre of work required from them (Gibbs, 2006), a lack of self-motivation (Haggis & Pouget, 2002), and inefficient time management (Hafner et al., 2015; Macan et al., 1990).

Regarding the latter point, Krause and Coates argue that 'developing the capacity to manage one's time, study habits and strategies for success as a student is foundational to success in the first year [where study] demands more self-directed and independent approaches to academic work' (2008, p.500). This can essentially be reformulated to suggest that university requires new students to "learn to learn" (Wingate, 2007). Indeed, the notion of "independent learning" is pervasive in discourses surrounding higher education in the UK (Leathwood, 2006) and successful academic adjustment is argued to rest on a student's ability to become an

independent learner (e.g. Christie et al., 2013). However, precise terminology notwithstanding adjustment should not be viewed as independent of the social context within which it occurs. In Christie et al.'s (2008) study of the transitional experiences of non-traditional students in a UK university the authors drew on Lave's (1991) concept of situated learning. Aligning with the notion that "learning is participation in social practice" (2008, p.6), Christie et al argue (and provide evidence for) learning as a dual outcome of teaching and social context.

Social adjustment pertains to a student's ability to build friendship and support networks at university (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Maunder et al., 2013). Traditional psychological viewpoints have characterised social support as acting as a buffer to the particular stressors (see above) experienced by new students (e.g. Brissette et al., 2002; Mattanah et al., 2010). Although there is ample work linking satisfactory social support with university transition as a positive and successful experience, placing sole emphasis on the remedial qualities of friendship networks during stressful periods only tells part of the story. Equally pervasive in the student transition literature is the suggestion that students carry specific expectations regarding university life. More precisely, in the British higher education context forming new friendships and having an active social life are recurring features of *being* a student (Leathwood, 2006; Maunder et al., 2013), and student life (particularly first-year) as constituted by partying, drinking and sexual encounters has been noted in academic literature (Conroy & De Visser, 2016; Davoren et al., 2016; Piacentini & Banister, 2006).

The notion of belonging is also suggested to form a core aspect of a student's social adjustment. However, the concept as investigated, is multi-faceted and has been shown to relate to both belonging in the sense of "fitting in" and making the '*right kind*' of friends, and a feeling of belonging or attachment to the social environment of the institution. Concerning the former, in their seminal work, psychologists Baumeister and Leary argued that the "…need to belong is a fundamental human motivation" with human beings "…having a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive and significant interpersonal relationships" (1995, p.497). During the transition to higher education specifically, Wilcox et

al. argue: "students have an urgent need to belong, to identify with others…" (2005, p.713). This is empirically supported in studies focusing on British university students (e.g. Maunder et al., 2013; Wilcox et al., 2005). For example, considering the formation of friendship networks the undergraduate student participants in Maunder et al.'s (2013) study reported building relationships with those others they identified with while distancing themselves from those perceived as dissimilar. Intertwined with belonging as driven by the need to form suitable friendships is the idea of institutional belonging and a feeling of place within the university. Recent studies investigating the transitional experiences of British students reinforce the importance of this aspect of social adjustment (e.g. Maunder, 2018; Meehan & Howells, 2018).

Emotional adjustment has traditionally placed focus on students' mental stability and the proclivity for them to undergo some form of minor or major psychological disturbance during their studies (Fisher & Hood, 1987). However, synthesising the above outlined findings directs our attention to other emotional adjustment considerations as embedded within the overall university transition experience. First, it is important to state that university students are young people university transition may be regarded as a rite of passage to adulthood centred on the notion of becoming independent. With the move away from home and subsequent disruption of parental guidance and support in a familiar space, students learn how to live independently (Christie, 2009; Holdsworth, 2009; Holton, 2015).

This is where university transition is argued to represent not only a challenge but a developmental opportunity with regards to identity construction. Indeed, a central posit of Arnett's widely referenced notion of "emerging adulthood" is that the late teens and early twenties represents "a period of profound change and importance" (2000, p.469). Particularly pertinent to this work then is the underpinnings of independence as a Western masculine ideal (Leathwood, 2006 and hence transition to university representing male students unshackling the chains of dependency and aligning with discursively embedded gendered expectations. Speaking to this point theoretically identity and transition are viewed as intrinsically connected in this work and subsequently a full discussion will be offered at the end of this review. To

conclude the focus on university transition discussion will briefly turn to studies specifically focusing on the experiences of young men in universities before turning attention to migratory transition.

Indeed, there is increasing awareness both in scholarly and public circles of gender differences in higher education. For example, female students have been shown to outperform their male counterparts in academic settings (e.g. Sheard, 2009; Woodfield et al., 2006). Moreover, in British contexts male students are less likely to finish their degrees and drop out of education (Hillman & Robinson, 2016). However, when acknowledging the findings of studies that have looked at university transition with gender as a specific investigatory variable a more complicated picture is presented. More precisely, the available literature suggests that emotional adjustment to university is smoother for male students than females (Fernandez et al., 2017; Ramler et al.,2016), while the opposite can be said with regards to academic adjustment (Sheard, 2009).

Though again, such findings require further nuance. Reviewing the female respondents' lower scores of emotional adjustments in their study of Spanish students, Fernandez et al. (2017) linked their findings with previous research indicating female students require greater support to overcome psychological disturbance when coping with adjustment. In contrast, Ramler et al urged caution in overstating findings concerning male students being better able to emotionally adjust in their study. Questioning the accuracy of the responses given by male participants the authors suggested that they "…may have been more reluctant to respond honestly for fear of appearing vulnerable or undercutting the stoical male stereotype" (2016, p. 186). This, in turn, can be reconnected with gendered expectations of identity construction and performance and will be returned to in later discussion.

2.2.3 Migratory transition

Focus will now be turned to literature focusing on migratory transition with a specific focus on the challenges faced by students and athletes. This discussion is necessary as approximately half of the participants were international students hence an appreciation of factors relating to

e.g. attendance at a British university, joining a university sports team, etc. I will consider first the experiences of international students at British universities. Much of the available literature is situated within the field of intercultural communication and frames migratory transition according to intercultural experience of these students e.g. perceived national differences, languages barriers, the role of social support, etc. (e.g. Brown, L., 2009; Gu et al., 2010; Gu & Maley, 2008; Spencer-Oatey et al., 2017; Ward & Kennedy, 1993).

An individual's ability to communicate in the language of the host country has been shown to be an important factor in transition (Andrade, 2006; Brown, L., & Holloway, 2008; Mesidor & Sly, 2016). Poor proficiency in the host language has been linked with poor academic performance (Brown, L., & Holloway, 2008) impeding the ability to make new friends among host students (Taylor & Ali, 2017; Wu & Hammond, 2011) and feelings of isolation and loneliness (Brown, L., & Holloway, 2008). Differences in pedagogical approaches have also been stated to be a barrier to international students successfully transitioning to British higher education (Durkin, 2008).

Social support is argued to play an important role in transition (e.g. Adelman, 1988; Aycan, 1997; Brown, L., 2009; Bochner et al., 1977; Kraimer et al., 2010; Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2002; Wang & Kanungo, 2004). Social support is suggested to act as a buffer against stress during adjustment (Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992; Poyrazli et al., 2004). Importantly, social support has been shown to be multi-faceted with students forming different types of support networks e.g. host national, co-national, family, etc. For example, the role of co-national support is more complex and has been investigated in the international student literature (e.g. Brown, L., 2009; Major, 2005; Ward & Kennedy, 1993).

While Bochner et al.'s (1977) seminal work on student friendship networks suggested that co-nationals were a vital source of emotional support a number of more recent studies have argued that co-national friendship networks actually impair social transition on account of reduced interaction with host nationals as an international student's friendship networks may be primarily composed of co-nationals (e.g. Geeraert et al., 2014: Hendrickson et al., 2011). This

has become relevant in modern British universities where the international student experience is seen as an increasingly isolated one (Spencer-Oatey et al., 2017; Yu & Moskal, 2019).

An important consideration is the context of British university life and the normative behaviours that have been associated with campuses in the UK. Most salient in this respect is the pervasiveness of excessive alcohol consumption especially amongst first year students (Gill, 2002; Heather et al., 2011; Piacentini & Banister, 2006). Studies have shown that for students conforming to such normalised drinking practices may serve as a "social facilitator" and help individuals to form bonds with others (Banister & Piacentini, 2006; Piacentini & Banister, 2006). However, students that do not wish to participate in the consumption of alcohol consequently face challenges related to social integration. Drawing on interview data from a small sample of British undergraduate students, Piacentini and Banister (2009) reported the challenges faced by participants attempting to both resist existing campus drinking cultures while simultaneously forming peer relationships. Other work has highlighted the strategies that non-drinkers employ to avoid negative judgements from peers e.g. holding alcoholic drinks without drinking, pretending to be ill, etc. (Conroy & de Visser, 2013a). The potential barrier then for international students unused to socialisation founded on excessive alcohol consumption appears clear. The drinking practices of male students in relation to the construction of masculine identity will be returned to in the following section.

Montgomery (2010, p.89) maintains that drinking among British students can be a significant challenge to international students' social participation and integration. Recently, Thurnell-Read et al., (2018) drew on focus group and interview data from a sample of international students at a British university to investigate attitudes towards British student drinking. The authors reported a general tendency for their participants to unfavourably compare alcohol consumption undertaken by their British peers with the drinking practices of their home countries. Acknowledging this work, the drinking practices of British students could potentially serve as a barrier for international students wishing to socialise in student groups. Indeed,

excessive alcohol consumption will be shown to be strongly associated with male British students (Section 2.6.6.).

In summary, while the transition to university can be viewed as representing a significant challenge to young learners, for international students this experience may be exacerbated by the migratory factors outlined above. More precisely, while adjustment to the academic norms of the host institution can be argued to affect all first-year students, there is the necessity for international students to navigate potentially alien social practices.

2.3 Transition in sport

A core aim of this research is to understand how new players become members of university sports teams; in essence, this involves considering how they cross the boundary from non-member to member and how they adjust to both the on-pitch and off-pitch dimensions of transition. To date this specific focus remains under-researched, thus representing a challenge with regards to the limited available knowledge to draw on, but also the opportunity to make a significant contribution. The work that is available is predominantly focused towards sports migration with team transitions only forming a secondary consideration. Moreover, the bulk of this work has not focused specifically on football and there are no studies looking at transition in varsity football with its additional complex contextual features. In light of the dearth of literature, work focusing on migratory transition in sport is useful as it provides a broad frame of relevance.

2.3.1 Migratory transition in sport

A recurrent theme within the literature concerns athlete perceptions of cultural difference. For example, Campbell and Sonn's (2009) study of aboriginal Australian Rules football players revealed that newly transferred individuals suffered great difficulty in adjusting to what they saw as mainstream Australian culture. Similarly, this was a key theme in a study by Blodgett et al (2014), who examined the acculturative experiences of aboriginal Canadian ice hockey players moving from reserves to play in Euro-Canadian contexts. Participants in the study reported being overwhelmed by changes they faced even when billeting with host families who

were there to support them. Specifically, some individuals felt that they had to change their behaviour according to what they viewed as the norms of the host context and had to come to terms with their new position as "outsiders" (Blodgett et al., 2014).

For the young footballers in Richardson et al.'s (2012) study, the need to get used to how things were done on the pitch emerged as an important issue. The authors reported that all players interviewed clearly expressed the shock and difficulty of adjusting to English football in terms of style of play (e.g. higher physicality, higher tempo) and perceived underlying values and beliefs (i.e. macho, ruthless, hyper masculine). Overall, these findings are notable as they reveal how perceived differences regarding host country and home country can impact an athlete's adjustment. Importantly, for the athletes in the above studies this involved both non-sporting and sporting contexts.

Social support received by migrating athletes has been shown to be an important factor (Agergaard, 2008; Campbell & Sonn, 2009; Evans & Stead, 2014; Popp et al., 2011) and that the nature of "support" can be complicated. For example, while the participants in Campbell and Sonn's (2009) study overcame challenges such as perceived difference and racism by heavily drawing on existing social networks in their home countries, other athletes may form sub-groups according to linguistic or cultural factors. For example, the professional handball players in Agergaard's (2008) study stated that Scandinavian, Russian and other Eastern European players segregated themselves according to language at clubs in Denmark. The Russian players reported that their compatriot network served a dual purpose as both a reinforcement of their home country (e.g. language, food), and a safe platform to learn about the host country and team.

Evans and Stead's (2014) investigation of Australasian rugby players in the UK also describes intricate social support networks involving compatriots, teammates and family members. Indeed, the authors note that *all* participants in the study described relationships before and during their stay as "vital" (2014, p.720). For many players this support initially involved contacting fellow professionals in the UK prior to travelling. However, there were

discrepancies between different nationalities regarding the nature of these relationships. Specifically, for the New Zealanders, Papuans and Pacific Islanders these initial contacts would continue to be a strong base of support and friendship during their time in the UK. The authors note that this "…physical, embodied network was of central importance to such players, who described that they felt part of a community with similar values away from home" (2014, p.720).

Although the networks built by the players in Britain served as an important source of support, the authors go on to suggest that the new friendships "…could not replace relationships lost or limited by the great distances to players' origins" (2014, p.721). Players tried to maintain relationships with home country family, friends and significant others albeit with some difficulty. Social support was again shown to be an important transitional factor. Feelings of isolation and displacement is consistently reported in studies focusing on athlete transition (Schinke et al., 2013).

The findings of these studies are particularly important for understanding the challenges faced by athletes as they provide a more nuanced appreciation of social support in a sports environment. In both Agergaard's (2008) and Evans and Stead's (2014) studies, incoming players appeared to gravitate towards the sanctuary of familiarity provided by co-national support. This ranged from cooking together to players having the opportunity to use their mother tongues. However, despite being positively connected with new player transition, the manifestation of sub-groups has implications for overall team cohesion. This will be returned to later in the next section.

2.4 Sports team environments as sites of transition

The discussion now turns to sports teams as complex social environments. To an outsider team sport may appear quite simple. That is to say, two sets of rival players competing with one another, attempting to accumulate the most points. While points may manifest in different forms, for example, tries (rugby), goals (football, handball, etc.), or runs (baseball, cricket, etc.), ultimately, the process appears the same. Individual team members must coordinate

actions either offensively or defensively to achieve the desired outcome for the team, i.e. to win the game (Carron, 1982). However, such a basic premise belies the complexity of sports team and the often complicated social structures and networks of formal and informal relationships that exist within the team environment. Finally, attention will be turned to varsity sport and the notion of a university football club as a CoP will be introduced.

2.4.1 Structure and composition of teams

Benson et al. that "the experience of entering a new sports team environment is fraught with potential ambiguities surrounding how athletes will fulfil their role as a newcomer" (2016, p.463). Indeed, sports teams are highly structured groups and membership requires an appreciation of numerous different roles and hierarchical positioning. For example, positions within the team may be technical or task related (e.g. playing as striker, point guard, defender, etc.) or refer to formal leadership roles such as a coach or captain (Benson et al., 2016). Furthermore, roles demarked as social are also considered to be integral aspects of teams. In this respect, Cope et al. remark "informal roles can serve to supplement the formal group structure in situations where individuals are needed to fulfil a particular function not provided by existing prescribed roles (2010, p.420). Further work by Cope and colleagues (2011), suggest numerous informal roles exist in teams, for example, *comedians* or *mentors,* in addition to roles relating to seniority that signal social rank and position (e.g. rookie versus journeyman).

Leadership roles within the structure of sports teams serve to indicate power differentiation among group members. For example, in professional and elite sport a clear divide is often drawn between non-playing staff (head coach, coaches, physio, etc.) and playing staff. Head coaches are by virtue of being selected (and contracted) to run the team by the greater sports organisation, able to wield significant, if not absolute power (Loughead et al., 2006). Indeed, coaches are responsible for strategy, tactics and the selection of playing personnel (Morrow & Howieson, 2014; Potrac et al., 2007).

The structure of the playing staff, however, warrants closer consideration as it is this specific group that incoming athletes must interact with at both a professional and personal level. Regarding formal leadership, the role of the "captain" is a ubiquitous feature of team sport albeit with responsibilities differing from sport to sport (Cotterill & Fransen, 2016). Leaders are recognised to perform a crucial role in sports teams, for example, effective leadership strengthens team identification (Steffens et al., 2015), confidence and motivation (Fransen et al., 2015), and performance and cohesion (Vincer & Loughead, 2010). Captains are assumed to "take the lead both on and off the field" (Fransen et al., 2017, p.6) and consequently considered to be highly influential members of the team. For example, in this research access to the club was negotiated through two club captains over the three-year duration of the study.

Regarding new player transition research suggests that informal leadership can be beneficial for incoming athletes. For example, coach and athlete participants in a study by Benson et al. (2016) maintained that veteran team members played a prominent role in helping players to integrate. Importantly, Cope et al. (2011), note that such informal roles evolve as a result of group interaction over time and not through formal prescription. Therefore, a newcomer would need to learn the degree to which certain players are tacitly given greater (or lesser) respect by teammates.

2.4.2 Sub-groups and cliques

While developing an awareness of a particular team's leadership hierarchy is an important process for a new player, they must also come to understand the intra-team divisions that may be present at a social level. Benson et al. remark that "…newcomers are expected to forge social bonds with teammates while vying for playing time with them" (2016, p.468). It is not hard to see how social acceptance might not easily be achieved in an environment oozing competition and expectation. However, by zooming the lens out and away from individuals it is necessary to appreciate potential intragroup conflict with the team. Martin et al. broadly define cliques as "…tightly knit subgroups of individuals that contain reciprocating relationships"

(2014, p.83), and these groups can form along linguistic or national lines (see Ryba et al., 2016; Teichmann, 2007).

The manifestation of such factions, however, is often negatively associated with team cohesion and performance (e.g. Fletcher & Hanton, 2003), and coaches in numerous studies report that they actively attempt to prevent their formation (e.g. Ryska et al., 1999). Despite coaches being wary of their existence, the consequences for individual players are unclear. More specifically, while exclusion from groups and subsequent sources of knowledge has been suggested in some contexts (Martin et al., 2016; Wagstaff et al., 2017), Martin et al. (2014), argue that cliques can provide sources of social support and belonging that are not immediately apparent in the overall team. This latter revelation is congruent with the finding that co-national sub-groups serve as spaces for learning and support.

Wagstaff et al. (2017) make the distinction between *facilitative subgroups* and *debilitative cliques* and stress the need to focus attention on their existence. Their longitudinal investigation of subgroups in a UK based university level rugby union team provides some useful insights. For example, the authors report that a key theme in the data was the variabili*y* of membership and behaviour over the course of the season. Specifically, Wagstaff et al remark that "…early subgroups typically developed around position or cohort (e.g., "newbies")" but in later interviews with players membership changed based on a number of factors e.g. common interests, socialising behaviours, ability, etc. (2017, p.168). This is important as it suggests the possibility for sub-group formation beyond linguistic or national lines. More precisely, new players may gravitate towards some other perceived shared characteristic.

2.4.3 The fluidity of sports teams

Although the above discussion has sought to detail the complex structure of an average sports team, it is easy to take for granted the fact that players and coaches come and go, and the personnel make-up of any given team is almost constantly in flux. This is clearly apparent in high profile professional sports. For example, in 2017 a report by the CIES Football Observatory research group revealed that over 20 teams from the top five European leagues had

used 80 or more players in a five-year period. One Italian team, F.C. Genoa used a total of 137 players. Given that football teams in Europe can field a maximum of 11 starting players and 3 substitutes per game this figure is quite remarkable (CIES, 2017). Research on other sports has shown similarly high levels of squad turnover, e.g. basketball (Morse et al., 2008), and American football (Davis et al., 2014).

Here it is crucial to question the presumed stability of team environments. If we assume a particular social structure is founded on hierarchical networks dominated by coaches, captains and other influential team-members (both official and unofficial), then it must also be assumed that such structures are relatively short lived per the above discussion. One consequence of this revelation would be to question the influence of individual roles. For example, while veteran athletes are regarded to perform mentoring roles for incoming players (Benson et al., 2016), these same senior players may have played under several different coaches and captains, and consequently, have experienced different team environments. The mentoring athlete's role therefore might not only involve helping a new player find their place but also prepare them for further transition (i.e. departure of coach or captain).

A point of interest here would be to attempt to reconcile the emergent and dynamic properties of the team with the residual influences left by previous players in positions of power. To this extent, university level sport represents a particularly unique and appealing context for research on account of the continual change of player and coaching personal (Johnson & Donnelly, 2004). For example, university football teams in the UK have extremely high player turnover due simply to the very nature of university education. More precisely, every new academic year sees the departure and intake of new student players and notably a new team captain. How teams ensure stability in the face of significant change is a point that will be returned to throughout this work. However, in order to lay the groundwork for understanding the continuation of practices in teams it is necessary to introduce the next core concept: socialisation.

2.5 Socialisation

With this section I will now discuss the concept of socialisation and explicitly outline how it informs my understanding of transition in team contexts. This will involve a brief consideration of historical developments and forwarded approaches before attention is turned to Wenger's (1998) CoP framework. Finally, I will conclude the section by first outlining the conceptual relationship between transition and socialisation, and the framing of the university sports teams as specific CoPs.

Academic conceptualisations of the term socialisation can be dated back to the late 19th century in the burgeoning field of sociology and particularly within the seminal works of Durkheim (1912/1995) and Simmel (1903/2013). Their work emerged in a period of high industrialisation, and the associated explosion in populations of European cities and manifestation of complex societies. For Simmel, the notion of socialisation, in its most primordial guise, essentially referred to the constraining of human nature in the presence of immense social influences (i.e. in the form of a network of societal rules) and as a product of social interaction. The role of the "social" and society is equally underscored in Durkheim's understanding, however, an individual's awareness of the social rules is argued to be a consequence of systematic education in society (1912/1995, pp.18-19). Hence, at a broad, societal level socialisation is argued to refer to how individuals are socialised to the codes, values and norms of a particular society as required for successful social interaction.

However, the degree to which individuals are confined to, and shaped by societal rules in the form of structures, has formed a central problem in sociological thinking (Baber, 1991). Giddens (1979; 1984) exerted much energy critiquing earlier sociological thinking by Durkheim and Simmel (among others). Fundamental to this work is a greater appreciation of the relationship between agents (individuals in society) and the permeating structures present within societies. In this respect, Giddens argued that individual agents are not completely helpless entities in social life: "structural constraints do not operate independently of the motives and reasons that agents have for what they do" (1984, p.181).

Socialisation still forms a core focus of investigation for academics particularly within the fields of sociology and social psychology (Brown, R., & Pehrson, 2019). However, moving away from grand theories of social life at a macro level, specific group contexts have equally attracted much attention with, for example, scholars seeking to understand the means by which newcomers are socialised to the practices of the organisations they join. To this extent Van Maanen and Schein (1977) have contributed much to the current body of literature particularly with the concept of 'organisational socialisation'. For Van Maanen and Schein:

> In its most general sense, organizational socialization is then the process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role. Across the roles, the process may appear in many forms ranging from a relatively quick, self-guided, trial-and error process to a far more elaborate one requiring a lengthy preparation period of education and training followed by an equally drawn out period of official apprenticeship. (1977, p.3).

Socialisation tactics are employed to help a newcomer's transitional navigation through the socially constructed boundaries within groups or organisations (Van Maanen & Schein, 1977). These boundaries are argued to refer to: *functional, hierarchical* and *inclusionary*. The first of these refers to functional role of a newcomer, and specifically what official tasks they are to be responsible for in relation to co-workers. Hierarchical boundaries involve distinctions of status and authority within a group environment (Van Maanen & Schein, 1977, pp.14-15). For example, in the context of a sports team this would involve the prescription of formal roles e.g. players, coaches, sports scientists, etc. Finally, inclusionary boundaries refer to the social environment existing within the organisation which are traversed by newcomers through tests of their abilities and values. Van Maanen and Schein state "movement across the inclusionary dimension is analogous to the entrance of a stranger to any group" (1977, p.23). Where if things "go well" for the newcomer and they display the appropriate competence expected with the group they are granted greater opportunity to demonstrate their worth and subsequently move from the boundary to centre as they become a trusted colleague.

While the above framework has proven to be popular among organisational scientists both theoretical and empirical work has largely been limited to professional workplaces and an understanding of how white-collar workers fulfil their roles within these organisations (e.g. Jones, 1986; Schein, 1993). Accordingly, discussion will now turn to the notion of socialisation in sports teams.

2.5.1 Socialisation in team sport

The socialisation of new players is a recognised aspect of team sport (Benson et al., 2016). Insofar as transitioning individuals are concerned the available literature indicates an awareness among coaches regarding newcomer anxieties related to entering the team environment e.g. role performance, teammate expectations and perceptions, etc. (Benson et al., 2016). Although these coaches emphasised the important role that senior teammates played in helping to integrate new players, they were wary of directly instructing veteran athletes to act as mentors. Rather, they sought to create a natural mentoring atmosphere among the senior players but also expected a degree of accountability from the incoming athletes. In this respect, new players would not only be expected to fight for their playing position but to some extent their position within the social group (Benson et al., 2016).

In North American varsity settings both the social structure of typical collegiate fraternities and how newcomers enter into them has been the focus of interest for scholars. Drawing on experience of membership in one such fraternity, Kiesling (2005) outlines the specific status of members. Men that have not yet undergone initiation are classed as "pledges" while those that successfully initiate are deemed "neophytes". These ranks carry with them particular structural penalties. For example, with pledges "…being treated as badly as possible" (2005, p.706), and neophytes, although considered actual members, seen as being incapable of performing anything but the most mundane tasks due to their lacking of fraternity knowledge. Only after time spent as part of the fraternity do these individuals become full members.

Much more salient regarding university sports team socialisation, in both the academic literature, and in the mainstream media, is the phenomenon of *hazing* (or *initiation* in the United Kingdom). Allan and Madden define hazing as "…any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers them regardless of a person's willingness to participate", (2012, p.2). Diamond et al. note "…hazing is remarkably common in sport" (2016, p.2). Not all ceremonies are considered the same with different types of initiation activities better placed on a continuum ranging from severe to less severe forms. For example, severe hazing activities are argued to involve beatings, sexual abuse, kidnap, sleep deprivation, etc. (Allan & Madden, 2012; Johnson, 2011). While American varsity level sport has been the traditional focus of research and media attention, there is increasing awareness of initiation events in U.K. universities (Groves et al., 2012).

Groves et al. (2012) offer one way of explaining hazing and initiations by placing emphasis on notions of power and hierarchy within the team. Specifically, "team building" that occurs during initiations can actually be seen as the strengthening of team hierarchy. Indeed, Groves et al. remark that some researchers argue for "…hazing as a means of reinforcing team hierarchy, while others outline hazing as a method for athletic teams to reinforce the power and dominance of the veteran members and the lack of power possessed by rookies" (2012, p.119). This suggestion clearly puts into perspective the mentoring role that previous work has suggested to be played by senior members. Rather, transition might involve incoming players quickly understanding their place within the team, the pre-existing social order, and the lesser or greater degree of subservience and deference expected of them.

Johnson and colleagues have extensively researched the constitution and purpose of hazing ceremonies in university contexts, although admittedly his focus has been on North American collegiate sport (e.g. Johnson, 2000; Johnson, 2011; Johnson & Chin, 2016; Johnson & Holman, 2004). Johnson compares sport team initiations with cultural rites of passage ceremonies as manifest in human history arguing that they both constitute community entry rituals. Moreover, although notions of group belonging and identity construction are posited

reasons for such events, he maintains that it is the "…articulated desire for membership that is the paramount tenet for both teams and traditional cultures" (2011, p.201). Drawing on and adapting Van Gennep's (1909/1960) earlier work that cast such rituals as transitional experiences symbolising the death of one identity and the rebirth of another for initiates, Johnson suggests initiation in sports teams consists of three phases: pre-initiation anxiety; initiation and membership (2011, pp.204-205).

The *pre-initiation* phase involves the time between joining the team and the initiation ceremony. A worthy point here is that official membership is granted *before* the overall event. More precisely, on the successful completion of try-outs of trials new players are selected to join the team. Hence, their identity already sees a shift from that of triallist to fresher or from try-out to rookie. In this way new players go from being non-members to members situated at the bottom of the hierarchy. Johnson (2011, p. 204) notes that in this period new members are subject to exaggerated stories regarding the event from senior team members designed to engender feelings of anxiety in initiates. The *initiation* phase involves the ritual which is "…marked by the symbolic death" (2011, p.205) of the initiate, and as liminal ground between old and new identities. Importantly, the experience is shared amongst initiates which at once both constrains individuality and ensures bonding and group investment as they undergo the event. This phase is often characterised by "tests of fortitude" involving painful or degrading punishments (Johnson, 2011; Johnson & Holman, 2004). The shared experience of pain during these events is understood to foster feelings of belonging amongst those who experience it together (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Finally, with the *membership* phase initiates who have successfully endured initiation, are welcomed as new members with their "physical, social and spiritual existence" having been redefined.

In considering the above descriptions we have to be careful not to remove all sense of agency from individuals undergoing initiation. A tendency in the literature is for athletes to both defend initiations and state their *necessity* as a team bonding exercise (Chin & Johnson, 2011).

Moreover, theoretically congruent with the understanding in this work that transition is not a product of single, isolated events, Johnson notes:

> Of course, a sense of belonging is not guaranteed to accompany an initiation ritual; there must also be an invested interest on behalf of the athletes to pursue membership and to have that identity validated. (2011, p.208).

Thus, not only is an individual's "want" to be initiated an important concern but also their continued adherence to community values, practices and hierarchy, as espoused as a group member beyond the initiation ceremony. Ultimately, belonging for new players can be viewed as involving two aspects: a continually developing bond with new teammates and the team as a whole; and a sense of togetherness with those teammates who were initiated alongside them. The latter point is crucial if we consider that it is precisely these players who will go on to become veterans, wield power and hence ensure the continuation of the community. In the words of Johnson: "new affiliates are more likely than non-initiated members to maintain the organization much like the senior members left it" (2011, p.220).

Finally, it is important to consider the connection the between team cohesiveness and hazing rituals. Drawing on questionnaire data taken from American intercollegiate athletes, Van Raalte et al. (2007) found that while participants reported the more team building activities that they were involved in the more cohesive they perceived the group to be, participation in hazing activities was associated with lessened cohesion. More recently, a study of British varsity athletes by Lafferty et al. (2017) provided further support that undermined any positive connection between hazing and group cohesion. Indeed, Johnson argues that "initiations utilising humiliation, degradation and abuse create resentment, division and mistrust" (2011, p.222), and recent focus on team building strategies in place of traditional hazing has illuminated the potential for inclusive activities to foster team unity (Chin & Johnson, 2011; Waldron, 2012, 2015).

Having introduced the notion of socialisation and discussed the complex socialising practice manifest in sports teams (particularly university sport), attention will now turn to a detailed

consideration of Wenger's (1998) CoP framework and its utility for understanding transition through notions of socialisation and participatory learning.

2.5.2 Communities of practice

First devised by Lave (1991) but subject to various reformulations (Wenger, 1998, 2010; Wenger et al., 2002) CoP is a social learning framework that has seen much utilisation across diverse fields e.g. organisational science, education, sociolinguistics and sport (Cox, 2005). When originally posited the theory bore resemblance to earlier approaches such as organisational socialisation above in that it provided a lens with which to understand how newcomers are socialised into a particular group or community (Cox, 2005; Lave, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Specifically, this involved focusing on how apprentices gradually learn to become part of an established work community through situated learning with the relationship between established group members as givers of knowledge underscoring the social situatedness of the framework. Through participation over time newcomers gain more expertise and eventually take up a more central role within the group. Lave termed this process "legitimate peripheral participation" (1991, p.27-28).

However, the framework was later revised by Wenger (1998) who dropped the notion of legitimate peripheral participation and defined certain requisites that he argues are needed in order for a particular CoP to exist. More precisely, according to Wenger CoPs are defined by three key components: mutual engagement, joint enterprise and a shared repertoire. With *mutual engagement* members meet consistently to engage in a particular activity, build relationships and create a shared meaning; *joint enterprise* involves the shared goal or task that connects the community and *shared repertoire*: the behaviours, routines, stories, etc. that are practiced by the group and developed over time (1998, p.72). Ultimately, the revised concept still fundamentally provided a window into newcomer socialisation albeit with a greater emphasis on social identity. For Crafter and Maunder the core workings of Wenger's (1998) updated approach are outlined as such: "Through interacting with members of an existing

knowledge community and learning their shared practices, the learner develops an identity as a competent member which fosters their sense of belonging." (2012, p.14).

The notions of identity and belonging are both now visible within the framework. The importance of this with regards to an individual joining a community is noted by Wenger who states that participating in practice "shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do" (1998, p.4). Hence, for Wenger, identity and participation are intrinsically linked within the CoP configuration.

An important concept here is that of "trajectories of participation" (Wenger, 1998; 2010). It is useful to unpack how Wenger constructed the core terms constituting the construct before considering its utility with regards to understanding socialisation and transition. First, "participation" refers to people ''being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities'' (Wenger, 1998, p. 4). Practices, as noted above, involve the community's mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and particularly, the shared repertoire. For Wenger, participation is not something that can be switched on and off and goes beyond "specific activities with specific people" (1998, p.57). For example, in the context of this research a team member may engage with the practices of the football as a CoP but does not cease to be a club member when attending lectures or general academic pursuits within the context of university.

With Wenger's use of the term "trajectory" he was very careful to differentiate between common usage: "I do not want to imply a fixed course or a fixed destination. To me the term trajectory suggests not a path that can be foreseen or charted but a continuous motion…" (1998, p.154). In this respect a clear connection can be drawn with notions of transition as fluid and on-going (discussed Section 2.1) and trajectories of participation. More specifically, a team member's trajectory may take them from the periphery of the community to core (i.e. seasoned professional, veteran member, etc.) and, in time, away from the core (i.e. former member). Fundamental to this understanding is that identity is temporal, ongoing and constructed in social contexts (Wenger,1998, p.154). This is particularly relevant within the context of both

university education and university sport as, in addition to other factors, participation in a community is constrained by a team member's period of education (3-4 years).

Wenger outlined the specific trajectories of individuals joining CoPs, more precisely these are: *peripheral, inbound, insider, boundary* and *outbound*. Peripheral trajectories never lead to full membership but may hold importance with regards to a newcomer's identity. Inbound trajectories involve newcomers joining communities with the potential for eventual full participation even if their current level of participation is peripheral (1998, p.154). Insider trajectories denote a member's renegotiation of place and identity beyond full participation. Mindful of the assertion that trajectories do not have an end-point negotiation here represents the continual evolution of practice as undertaken by the community. Following on from the "insider's position", outbound trajectories refer to paths leading out of the community. Being on the way out of a community may involve the development of new relationships and "seeing the world and oneself in new ways" (Wenger, 1998, p.154). Finally, boundary trajectories refer to the sustainment of identity as a result of engaging in practice across different communities of practice.

Trajectories of participation then may be seen as offering a nuanced framing of newcomer socialisation (through learning and practice) by highlighting how differing degrees of participation determine experiences of transition. More specifically, it cannot be assumed that all individuals joining university sports teams share the exact same experience. Indeed, the very notion of becoming a member of a team may mean one thing to one player, and something different to another. For example, compare two 'rookie' team members, one on a peripheral trajectory, the other, inbound and heading towards full participation. Overall, following the presented discussion the CoP framework was viewed as the appropriate tool with which to view the university football club and entry into that specific community. Examples of the use of CoP in sport research will be presented later in the chapter, however, first discussion will turn to understandings of socialisation in sport.

2.5.3 Conceptual frame: transition and socialisation

The chapter has so far provided discussion of the concepts that are integral to this work. This section will now briefly outline the relationship between transition and socialisation, and how this understanding informs the entire research project. Transition was defined as involving the crossing of boundaries and the learning involved in such crossings. Here transition was argued to constitute more than a response to change in the form of a neatly bracketed event but rather be characterised as a dynamic and fluid process. Socialisation was initially defined as the means by which newcomers are socialised to the normative practices of groups. However, this position was elaborated on with the introduction of Wenger's (1998) social learning theory: Community of Practice. This framework offers a lens through which to understand how individuals come together to form communities and continually create and engage in shared practices.

Crafter and Maunder argue: "transition in a community of practice framework refers to members joining and becoming new members" (2012, p.4). However, at the core of the CoP framework is the notion of participation. Individual participation in the form of specific trajectories influences what form transition will take and how identity is constructed in relation to place within the community. More specifically, the greater the degree of participation then the greater exposure to practice in the form of, e.g. rituals, traditions, stories, etc. (Wenger, 1998). For example, a fully participating new member would be characterised as on an inbound trajectory towards the core of the community. Hence the transition specific to a new member joining the community can be said to be determined by the degree of participation in practice. However, the exact constitution of practice must also be established. In this regard practice as manifested in the community's shared repertoire and mutual engagement can equally be viewed as having a socialising effect. For example, the shared repertoire of a varsity sports club might involve mathematical drinking games where newcomers can only learn the rules of the games through participation. In this respect practice can be defined as something that is both learnt by new members and taught by the community. Participation then is seen as

forming the fulcrum between transition and socialisation. Figure 2.1 below visualises this relationship:
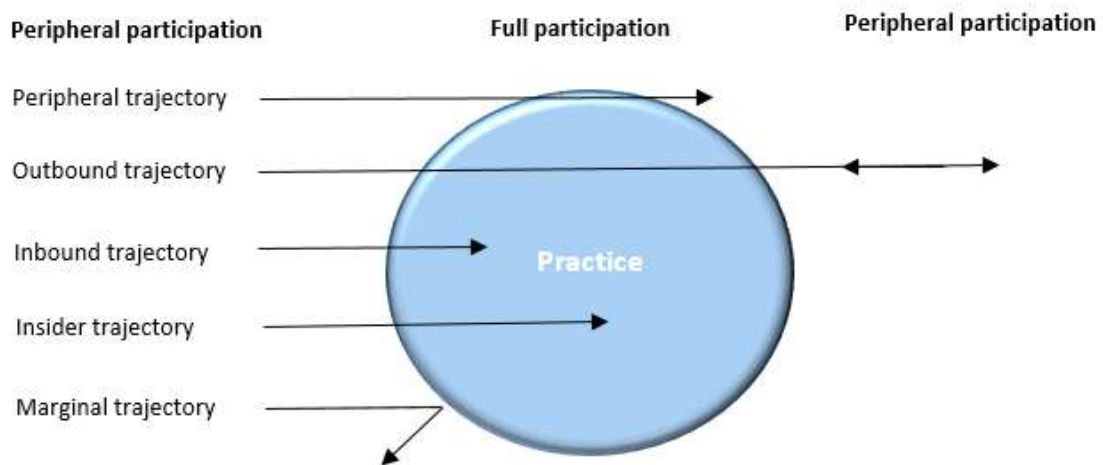
Figure 2.1 Transition as degree of socialisation through participatory learning

2.5.4 Sports clubs as Communities of Practice

The above section outlined socialisation in sports teams and the navigation potentially required from incoming players before introducing the conceptual framing that informs the research approach. This section will now specifically outline university sports teams as CoPs. There have been numerous attempts to define teams in sport with much work emerging from within sports psychology and by Carron and colleagues in particular (e.g. Carron, 1982; Carron et al., 2005). Carron et al. define a sports team as:

> A collection of two or more individuals who possess a common identity, have common goals and objectives, share a common fate, exhibit structured patterns of interaction and modes of communication, hold common perceptions about group structure, are personally and instrumentally interdependent, reciprocate interpersonal attraction, and consider themselves to be a group (2005, p.13).

Paramount in such definitions is the focus on task i.e. team members must collaborate efficiently in order to win matches. This can be seen as a reflection of the focus that has been placed on understanding the connection between team cohesiveness and performance in

professional sport (Evans & Dion, 1991; Grieve et al., 2000). However, I argue that alternative theoretical framing may provide a deeper understanding of transition and socialisation in the context of a varsity sports club. Specifically, this involves drawing on the concept of the Community of Practice as described above (Section 2.5.3).

The potential applicability of the framework to sports teams has been noted, for example, in his sociolinguistic study of a New Zealand rugby team, Wilson posited that the team represented a CoP based on the following rationale: mutual engagement occurs when players regularly meet for training sessions and matches; the jointly negotiated enterprise is the fact that members of the team are there to play rugby (and win); and finally, the shared repertoire manifests in the specific rugby terminology that is used (2010, p.3).

Importantly, utilisation of the framework has the potential to unveil individual transition as a consequence of participatory learning. Galipeau and Trudel note the connection between transitional trajectory and community participation observing that as newcomers "…gain more knowledge, experience and acceptance from other community members, [they] move toward 'full participation'" becoming veterans or more central figures in the community (2005, p.29). An added concern here is that learning from new teammates need not necessarily be confined to the boundaries of sporting endeavour. For example, the student athlete participants in Galipeau and Trudel's (2005) study reported the academic support they received from more senior players which the author's categorised as a form of mutual engagement within the CoP and as a group practice. A distinction can be drawn between professional sports teams and student athlete teams as CoPs. Indeed, drawing on the above discussions and the various types of transition and associated challenges it would be fair to argue that university sports clubs, similarities in hierarchical structure notwithstanding, represent more than just sports teams, particularly in a social sense. In this regard, the CoP framework provides an ideal lens through which to view the team as community, and transition determined by access to, and participation within, that community. Attention will now turn to the concept of identity and specifically how such a community might be underpinned by idealised identity notions.

2.6 Identity

The concept of identity is argued to be relevant to the core concepts (transition and socialisation) and the conceptual frame (CoP). For example, as evidenced in much of the preceding discussion the concept of identity is often given centrality in theorisations of transition with the determining rationale being that transitional experiences are accompanied by changes in a sense of self or shifts in how identity is done. Furthermore, Wenger's (1998) CoP framework places emphasis on social identity construction through participation in practice. Therefore, the final section of the literature review will now turn attention to identity and its relevance for understanding the context of university team sport in British universities in particular. Discussion will first turn to introducing the concept.

2.6.1 Understandings of identity

Identity has proven to be a core focus for scholars in the social sciences for the past century with notable contributions coming from psychology (Erikson, 1963), social psychology (Weinreich & Saunderson, 2005; Cote & Levine, 2014; Taijfel & Turner, 1979), variational sociolinguistics (Labov, 1966), philosophy (Ricouer, 1991) and more recent approaches in sociolinguistics and discourse studies (Angouri & Marra, 2011; Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Bucholtz and Hall, 2004, 2005; Harre, 1991). The multitude of differing approaches to understanding identity represents an intellectual division of labour which according to Cote and Levine has "…created a fragmented field that lacks a unifying, multi-dimensional taxonomy and a consensus about underlying assumptions…" (2014, p.xii). A natural consequence of such epistemological and ontological incoherency across approaches is a lack of a single definition.

In line with the interpretative constructionist approach adopted in this work (discussed in Chapter 3) and in harmony with the adopted understanding of transition discussed in the preceding sections, identity as understood in this work rests on three primary assumptions: first, following Bucholtz and Hall (2005, p.586), identities are formed from an understanding of self in relation to others and is inherently a "relational and sociocultural phenomenon". Comparisons to 'others' are particularly essential because identities are constructed through

difference (Hall, 1996). Second, identities are viewed as fluid and "constantly evolving in relation to context" (Angouri & Marra, 2011, p.3). This proposition builds on post-modern conceptualisations with individuals being suggested to have a multiplicity of potential identities (Hall, 1996) and stands in direct opposition to essentialist understandings which view identity as involving one clear set of characteristics that are argued to be shared by *all* members of a particular nationality or ethnicity and which remain static over time (Woodward, 1997).

Finally, building on the preceding assumptions identity is argued to be relationally emergent and thus neither the sole product of the mind or as a consequence of fixed social categories (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Regarding the latter point, for example, Labov's (1966) early sociolinguistic work was founded on the assumption that rigid speech styles directly indicated an individual's fixed identity with a clear separation drawn between language and identity. More modern approaches do see identity as constituted through language but the relationship between the concepts is considered much more complex (De Fina, 2011). Indeed, identity as constructed through social action involves an appreciation of relationships and roles in addition to the local, social and historical contexts of any given interaction (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005).

Identity as both socially constructed and constituted, directs attention to another necessary consideration: social identity. One prominent approach coming from the field of social psychology is Taijfel and Turner's (1979) Social Identity Theory (SIT). Following SIT, identity is primarily influenced by the groups to which individuals do (and do not) belong. Hogg notes that in SIT, social identity is defined as "…the individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership" (2001, p.186). This emotional significance manifests in the form of pride and self-esteem and by promoting the group, an individual also promotes oneself. Moreover, groups to which the individual does not belong are discriminated against in order to further boost the positive aspects of the in-group. In this way individual identity is intertwined with the identity of the group (Tajfel and Turner, 1979).

A defining feature of SIT is the notion of "us" and "them", i.e. in-group and out-group. From the perspective of identity construction, of interest here is how members enact "belonging" within social groups. In this respect, Angouri and Marra note that membership may be seen as conformity and specifically how individuals adopt certain behaviours as a means of "…conforming to the systems of belief that sustain "in-group", 'collective' definitions of self, as opposed to out-groups which are presented in a negative light (2011, p.3). Equally, drawing on Wenger's (1998) notion of CoP a researcher might seek to unpack how community practices are both constructed and aligned with, in descriptions of team and team social environment.

Given the intense and sometimes violent rivalry that can exist between clubs in team sport it is not unsurprising that the analytical potential of applying the theory to team sport contexts has been considered by sports scholars (e.g. Fink et al., 2009; Fransen et al., 2015). Recently, Rees and colleagues argued that adopting a Social Identity viewpoint grants a researcher new insight into group behaviour, group formation and development, and group leadership (Rees et al., 2015). Indeed, they maintain that it is social identity that "…underpins people's sense that they are part of a particular team, squad, club or organisation…" (Rees et al., 2015). This position draws attention to the notion of collective identities in sports teams, i.e. players are not unique individuals but members of the same team. Following this approach, the investigation of players joining a team would might seek to consider "team" identity present as manifested through particular practices.

2.6.2 Identity in team sport

The above sections presented the theoretical understanding of identity and how it is employed in this work. Drawing broadly on the social constructionist paradigm this research takes the position that identity is emergent, dynamic and cannot be adequately understood without an appreciation of the social contexts within which individuals are situated (e.g. Angouri, 2016; Burr, 2015). This viewpoint is in line with contemporary approaches in sports, for example, Blodgett et al. lament the post-positivist emphasis in sports studies noting that researchers "…have glossed over the multiplicity of people's identities, failing to account for the ways in

which their sense of self and lived experiences are multiple and thus subject to change in relation to the sociocultural contexts around them" (2015, p.29). However, any understanding of identity and sport cannot forego a discussion of masculinity, particularly where young men are a focus of investigation. As such this section will first introduce the concept of masculinity and the various developments of the past 30 years as associated with team sport and then, finally, the available literature concerning male students and varsity sport.

2.6.3 Masculinity

The connection between sport and masculinity has been the source of rich scholarly input for over the past four decades. Dunning's (1986) sociological treatment of the subject elucidated the greater societal influences on the reproduction of masculinities within historical sporting environments. Indeed, for Dunning sport itself would be considered "…only of secondary importance with respect to the production and reproduction of masculine identity" (1986, p.89). He points to the origins of organised sport in the 19th century as involving both the "civilised" development of preceding violent folk sports and the reaction to greater equality between the sexes. For example, regarding the latter point Dunning argues that rugby clubs formed as specifically male domains where men could "…mock, objectify and vilify women, who now, more than ever before, represented a threat to their status and self-image". (1986, p.89).

Acknowledging the patriarchal grounding of organised sport Connell's (1995, 2015) seminal work on hegemonic masculinity underpins much of our understanding of men and masculinities. Anderson (2010, p.731) writes that hegemonic masculinity is the creation and legitimisation of a masculine hierarchy where the men who most readily espouse the appropriate masculine values are afforded greater social capital. Traits associated with this dominant form of masculinity are argued to include courage, strength, aggression, autonomy, athleticism, risk-taking, adventure, stoicism and success (Connell, 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Donaldson, 1993). However, dominance is not argued to be as a consequence of prevalence as the majority of men are presumed *not* to embody such a

definition (Connell, 1995), rather, hegemony comes with the fact that it is the most readily aspired to masculine form and subordinates all other kinds (Wetherall & Edley, 1999).

While the theory is predominant in much of the literature (Demetriou, 2001) it has also sustained significant criticism (e.g. Anderson, 2008a, 2010; Carniel, 2009; Demetriou, 2001; Donaldson, 1993; Wetherall & Edley, 1999) and been subject to reappraisal (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Particularly noteworthy critiques have emerged in the work of Anderson and colleagues (e.g. Anderson, 2010, 2011; Anderson & McCormack, 2012) which will be introduced below, and Wetherall and Edley's (1999) discursively grounded social-psychological approach. With the latter work, the authors argue Connell's initial conceptualisation, while useful for understanding gender relations in society, offered only a very limited illustration of how men conform to (or resist) hegemonic practice. Specifically, this involved questions of how men align with values and identity claims in actual interaction i.e. how men do or talk masculinity (Wetherall & Edley, 1999). Building from the assumption that "discursive practices are also a pervasive and constitutive element in all social practices…" and thus social action (1999, p.7) Wetherall and Edley's study illustrated a complexity of positions claimed by their participants who demonstrated at times both resistance and complicity to ideals of hegemonic masculinity.

2.6.4 Masculinities in team sport

Anderson argues that "organised, competitive team sports are almost universally described as locations where heterosexual men battle for masculine dominance in Western culture" (2011, p.730). Indeed, the manifestation of masculine values in a number of team sports has been the focus of much scholarly interest, e.g. in football (Adams, 2011; Clayton, B., & Humberstone, 2006; Parker, 2006), rugby (Anderson & McGuire, 2010; Chandler & Nauright, 2013; Van Campenhout & Van Hoven, 2014), American football (Steinfeldt & Steinfeldt, 2012), and baseball (MacArthur and Shields, 2015).

Research focusing on gender in sport has typically drawn on Connell's (1995) notion of hegemonic masculinity and consequently many supposed masculine values in team sport are

reflected in the list given above. However, some ideals, while not necessarily exclusive to the domain of sport are heavily associated with it, e.g. competitiveness, aggression (Messner, 1990; Young et al., 1994), pain suppression (Adams et al., 2015, Laurendeau, 2014) homophobia (Anderson, 2002; 2011), sexism (Anderson, 2008b; Clayton, B., & Humberstone, 2006). Locker room banter is also viewed as a conduit of masculine values. For example, team talk focusing on drinking and the subordinating of women and gay men has been argued to be a manifestation of masculinity (Clayton, B., & Humberstone, 2006). One particular trait associated with masculinity in male sport teams is excessive alcohol consumption (e.g. Capraro, 2000; Clayton, B., & Humberstone, 2006; Clayton, B., & Harris, 2008; Green et al., 2014). This behaviour is associated with university, where sport and alcohol consumption are seen as "…key demonstrations of a hegemonic form of masculinity" (Green et al., 2014, p.420). This will be returned to in the next section focusing specifically on male students.

Despite the substantial body of work detailing hegemonic practices within sport, Anderson has argued for alternate readings (2010) and suggests the potential for numerous masculinities to be present in any given team environment. Forwarding the notion of *inclusive masculinity,* he argues that there is a decreasing trend in homophobic attitudes (among other types of behaviour) in men's sport, suggesting that more inclusive and dynamic forms of masculinity can exist alongside more traditional forms of masculinity (2010). In these contexts, "…multiple masculinities will proliferate without hierarchy and hegemony, and men are permitted an expansion of acceptable hetero-masculine behaviours" (2010, p.97).

The grounding for his theorisation comes largely from his own (extensive) work which has looked at men's sport in university, in particular, and what he argues are changing attitudes in society in general (Anderson, 2010). An environment permeated by inclusive masculinity in team sport is argued to be epitomised by decreased homophobia, decreased sexism, anti-bullying, anti-violence and a general "softening" of orthodox masculine practice, e.g. emotional expression in place of stoicism (Anderson, 2010; Anderson & McGuire, 2010). Ultimately, a deeper understanding of masculine identities in sport must appreciate changing attitudes in

society. Multiple masculinities exuding traditional, inclusive and metrosexual (Carniel, 2009;

Coad, 2008) values may be espoused by members of the same team with equal cultural value

(Cashmore & Cleland, 2012).

Overall, the purpose of this discussion has not been to contrast hegemonic masculinities with

inclusive masculinities but to show that traditional understandings of masculinity in sport (e.g.

Connell, 1995; Messner, 1990) are, as with all academic approaches, suspect to change and

reconsideration in the face of greater social developments. Furthermore, it has detailed the

numerous masculinities that may be present in a team environment. For example, there may be

multiple hegemonic masculinities constructed in all-male groups with certain masculinities

enjoying a privileged position (Kiesling, 2005). Later sections will demonstrate how in this

research "laddish" masculinity occupied this position.

2.6.5 Athletic identity

Moving away from masculinity I will briefly discuss the notion of *athletic identity*. Devised and

developed Brewer et al. (1993) the athletic identity construct (henceforth AI) is prominent in

sports literature. In essence; AI refers to the degree to which individuals identify with the

athlete role. A heightened sense of AI is argued to have both positive and negative

consequences for athletes. Strong AI has been shown to have a positive influence on

performance (Brewer et al., 1993). For example, higher AI per the AIMS was correlated with

faster personal best times in a study of marathon runners by Horton and Mack (2000).

However, the number of studies that highlight the beneficial effects of having an elevated AI is

rather limited when compared with the work done exploring how it can adversely affect an

athlete. More specifically, those sports performers who identify heavily with the athletic role

are argued to suffer greater psychological disturbance when injured or deselected (Brown, G.,

& Potrac, 2009; Horton & Mack, 2000; Sparkes, 1998), or when retiring (Grove et al., 1997;

Lally, 2007).

Such commitment, or over-commitment, to the athletic role (or any role for that matter) can

clearly be considered problematic in the event of the athlete no longer being able to function in

that role. This can be linked to Adler and Adler's (1989) notion of the "glorified self". The recognition and fame an athlete receives for his or her sporting endeavours can solidify the inflated position of their athletic identity when compared to other roles. Indeed, Adler and Adler argue:

> The gloried self is a greedy self, seeking to ascend in importance and to cast aside other self-dimensions as it grows. It is an intoxicating and riveting self, which overpowers other aspects of the individual and seeks increasing reinforcement to fuel its growth." (1989, p.300)

While much of the work employing it as an analytical tool is quantitative by design G. Brown and Potrac's (2009) research provides a usefully complimentary example as their approach utilised qualitative methods in the form of semi-structured interviews designed to facilitate interpretive biography data analysis. Four players were interviewed with the primary focus being placed on the development of an athletic identity in the players and their experiences of be de-selected. The authors suggest the development of athletic identity in the players was formed through both their early success (i.e. being scouted by a professional team) and the ensuing positive responses from significant others (family, friends and coaches). Regarding the latter point, the informants note that they enjoyed being known at their schools for their footballing achievements. This response to the acclaim received can be viewed as the development of their "glorified" selves and the subsequent reinforcement of their identity as a footballer and athlete.

Following de-selection from their respective teams the informants expressed how difficult it was to come to terms with no longer being a footballer. The authors identified feelings of loss, uncertainty and failure in the data. In essence; a strong athletic identity was associated with desolation following release from a professional club (Brown, G., & Potrac, 2009). In part such strong negative feelings were due to the players simply not knowing what to do next having invested so much energy into being a footballer.

Acknowledging the fact that the participants in this study are not professional athletes the athletic identity construct is still important with regards to how sport (or football) is made

relevant in interviews and discussions of transition. For example, the prestige associated with varsity club membership is underscored by aspects of hegemonic masculinity such as athleticism, competitiveness and success (Connell, 1995). Prestige can then be equated with both social and symbolic capital per Bourdieusian understandings (e.g. Clopton, 2012) with regards to the overall experience at university. Indeed, in high performance varsity teams sporting prowess is manifested and represented visually in the social environment on campus through blazers, sporting jackets, club ties and various garments associated with training and practice (Dempster, 2009; Wetherall & Edley, 1997). For the male student participants in Dempster's (2009) study, such artefacts served as a method to brand and make oneself distinct in respect to other "ordinary" students. Moreover, research suggests that students apply greater prestige to specific sports (Sparkes et al., 2007) and male team sports such as rugby and football, in particular (Jeffries, 2019; Sparkes et al., 2007).

2.6.6 Lads, university and varsity sport

The final section of the literature review will now turn specific attention to theorisations and empirical work regarding young men at university and particularly within varsity sport. This section is particularly relevant as it backgrounds what practices might be pervasive within university male sports teams. As noted in the introduction chapter there is a tendency to view the behaviour of young men at university through the lens of laddism and reported excesses on campus are seen as indicative of a pervasive "lad culture" dominating British higher education (Jackson & Sundaram, 2018; Phipps & Young, 2013; Stead, 2017). Indeed, as Phipps observes "…since 2010 the figure of the "lad" has especially come to dominate discussions around masculinities in UK higher education" (2017, p.1).

Early theorisations of laddism associated the concept with white, working class men and anti-intellectual and anti-establishment attitudes (Willis, 1977). However, more contemporary understandings have typically associated lad identity performance and practice with young white middle class men, particularly in the form of university students (Phipps & Young, 2013; Stead, 2017). Indeed, Dempster (2009) has argued that laddism forms a template of sorts of

hegemonic masculinity for young British males and associated practices and behaviours bear this out. Overlapping with traditional or orthodox (Anderson, 2010) notions of masculinity, characteristics associated with the performance of a laddish identity include, for example: strength, aggression, wit, daring, etc. (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). A more specific definition specifically describing groups of lads is offered by Francis:

> A young, exclusively male, group, and the hedonistic practices popularly associated with such groups (for example, 'having a laugh', alcohol consumption, disruptive behaviours, objectifying women, and an interest in pastimes and subjects constructed as masculine). (1999, p. 357)

From this definition one practice stands out in particular: alcohol consumption. Indeed, heavy drinking as an espoused part of lad identity claims or as generally associated with masculine practice is clearly borne out in the empirical studies that are available (Anderson et al., 2012; Clayton, B., & Humberstone, 2006; Conroy and de Visser, 2013b; Dempster, 2009, 2011; Nichols, 2018; Sparkes et al., 2007, Warin & Dempster, 2007). While drinking has been associated with student-hood in the UK (Gill, 2002; Mobach & Macaskill, 2011) it is argued to be particularly characteristic of male varsity sports clubs (e.g. Anderson, 2011; Clayton, B., & Harris, 2008; Dempster, 2011). Indeed, heavy drinking has been noted to form one component of a laddish trinity, which, in the perspicuous words of Edwards, includes: "drinking, football and fucking" (1997, p.82).

Health psychologists Conroy and de Visser (2013a, 2013b & 2016), and colleagues (e.g. De Visser & McDonnell, 2012, 2013; De Visser et al., 2013) have exerted much energy seeking to understand drinking practices among young British people, and particularly the connections between alcohol consumption, young men and performances of masculinity. One recognised rationale for the drinking practices of young people, in general, is its supposed utility as a social bond facilitator (e.g. Piacentini & Banister, 2009). The participants in de Visser et al.'s (2013) qualitative study of student beliefs towards drinking provide a more nuanced picture of such bonding. They reported numerous different forms of bonding related to excess alcohol

consumption, e.g. helping heavily inebriated friends, being cared for when drunk, suffering a hangover, etc. The latter reported aspect was given significance by participants as it related to shared memories of drinking or drunkenness (De Visser et al., 2013). Indeed, recent work by Griffin et al. (2018) has further explored this phenomenon with the authors arguing that for the student participants in their study, hangovers constituted collective periods of shared suffering and strengthened group identity.

While drinking is an activity undertaken by both young men and women it is especially associated with masculine identity performances. Reframing Bourdieu's (1984) notion of symbolic capital, de Visser and McDonnell (2012; 2013) use the term masculine capital to refer to the masculine "credit" accrued by men performing typical masculine behaviours (e.g. Connell, 1995). Alcohol consumption represents one such way young men can build or accumulate masculine capital (De Visser & McDonnell, 2012). Accordingly, young men who do not drink are penalised on account of performing supposedly feminine behaviours (Conroy & de Vissser, 2013b). Equally, the same socially constructed expectations are argued to lead to the stigmatisation of young women who drink heavily and thus are viewed as enacting typically masculine behaviours (Ross-Houle et al., 2015).

Heightened expectations of what is permissible and non-permissible behaviour concerning gender performance in relation to drinking and other masculine activities are argued to be central to lad groups and laddishness as manifest within varsity sports teams (e.g. Dempster, 2011). Hence drawing again on the notion of masculine capital, young men joining such teams who do not adhere to normative behaviours and practices (as predicated on laddism) face a depletion of said capital. Indeed, Conroy and de Visser (2013b) consider how young men might create in-group and out-group distinctions based on drinking and none drinking per Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory. While in the context of a varsity sports team this could involve team members constructing a barrier between members and non-members, such distinctions would naturally emerge within the team with the group stratified according to drinkers and non-drinkers.

The literature shows alcohol consumption in male groups in university contexts often centres on drinking games (Zamboanga et al., 2015; Zamboanga et al., 2017). Zamboanga et al. define such games as:

> a risky social drinking activity that involves heavy alcohol consumption, consists of rules that specify when participants should drink and how much alcohol to consume, and requires its players to perform some kind of cognitive and/or motor task. (2017, p.1).

These games are argued to be high risk as participation can lead to individuals becoming severely intoxicated with the prescribed rules being specifically designed to facilitate heavy drinking (Zamboanga & Tomaso, 2014). Research on male teams in British varsity sport has illuminated the competitive edge that can accompany such drinking as part of the performance of a masculine identity (e.g. Dempster, 2011). In this respect competitiveness as a highly valued masculine trait in male sport is transferred from the football pitch to the club bar. Indeed, being able to "hold one's drink" is noted as a particular test of masculinity (De Visser & Smith, 2007) and clearly encompasses a number of masculine ideals, e.g. competitiveness, strength, and risk-taking. Hence, the "biggest" drinkers in the group may be afforded greater masculine capital (De Visser & McDonnell, 2013) on account of their prowess with regards to alcohol consumption (Edwards, 1997).

The advantages of such capital within varsity male sports teams has been noted in previous studies. For example, drawing on qualitative data collected from male student athlete participants, Dempster (2011) suggests that playing time for individual players was predicated on one's ability to drink and participate in laddish behaviour as opposed to their actual sporting ability. Indeed, the author remarks that overall acceptance in these teams was dependent on a new player's ability to adopt specifically laddish behaviours and thus align with normative expectations of masculinity as manifest within the context of university and the team (Dempster, 2011, p.645).

The relationship between the gender performance of male students and transition to university has been investigated by Warin and Dempster (2007). Drawing on interview data collected from a sample of British male undergraduate students they suggest that identity performances aligning with typically laddish behaviour was a temporary strategy adopted as a means of accessing friendship groups within the alien environment of university. In this respect, laddishness was seen as an "easy, comfortable form of social currency" but largely relevant only to a participant's negotiation of identity during their initial period at university (Warin & Dempster, 2007, p.901). The authors go on to conclude that in time such performances were no longer felt to be necessary as participants reported distancing themselves from laddish excesses.

Overall, the available literature draws a strong association between alcohol consumption and drinking games as a means of constructing, claiming and reinforcing a masculine identity within male varsity team sport. Moreover, considering the British studies specifically, university football teams are consistently associated with laddish behaviours (Dempster, 2009; 2011; Warin & Dempster, 2007). However, also apparent from the studies conducted are the potential challenges faced by new team members not possessing appropriate levels of "masculine capital" as a consequence of non-alignment with normative expectations of alcohol consumption.

One behaviour not directly stated by Francis (1999) but nevertheless associated with lads and all male groups is "banter" (Nichols, 2018; Thompson et al., 2015; Wolfers et al., 2017). The notion of banter refers to a specific type of jocular communicative practice involving e.g. sarcasm, mock politeness, impoliteness, insults, etc. (Haugh & Bousfield, 2012). It has been suggested to serve as a regulatory tool in male groups (Nichols, 2018) and has been historically associated with, although not exclusively, homophobic and sexist language (Anderson, 2010; Clayton, B., & Humberstone, 2006). Anderson and McCormack (2010) maintain that homophobic banter is predicated on the need for young men to show conformity with hegemonic masculinity through overt heterosexuality, i.e. by positioning themselves as not homosexual through targeted derogatory humour.

Some caution, however, is required with these readings. While heavy alcohol consumption is associated with laddishness numerous studies have shown how male students also seek to distance themselves from alcohol induced excesses expressing both complicity with, and resistance to, hegemonic ideals (Dempster, 2009; Warin & Dempster, 2007). These findings echo earlier research by Wetherall and Edley (1999) who offered a critique of how hegemonic masculinity was aligned to in practice. Furthermore, such self-awareness of laddish behaviour has recently been noted with regards to banter. For example, Jeffries (2019) conducted interviews with participants who self-described as "lads" and argues that banter formed a "social glue" of sorts for the group.

However, while banter could be characterised by harsh or insulting humour, participants made it clear that this only extended to "good friends" (2019, p.10) who were willing (and *able*) to return in kind. In this respect, banter directed at someone outside of the group was explicitly seen as bullying behaviour. Nichols' (2018) study of men in an English amateur rugby team provides further evidence of self-awareness in "lad groups". For example, banter within the team she studied was underpinned by both construction and de-construction of sexist attitudes. To this extent, Nichols' has argued for a reframing of the notion of laddishness, preferring to use the term "mischievous masculinities" as a means of describing the reflexive understandings of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

Some attempts to explain (or defend) laddishness have rested on notions such as "boys will be boys" which implicitly connects laddish behaviour with youthfulness. Indeed, laddism has been characterised as immature behaviour (Jackson et al., 2015) and thus something that adolescents and young men will outgrow. Other explanations point to the benefits of alignment within groups specifically within universities. For example, forming friendships within the alien environment of university is noted as a key transitional challenge (Boute et al., 2007) and classic "lad" interests such as sport and drinking provide the space for such male bonding (Dempster, 2009). Furthermore, lad groups as support networks, or even safe spaces within the context of campus has been suggested (Jeffries, 2019). For the participants in Jeffries' (2019)

study the external performance of laddism can be contrasted with intimate friendship practice. Indeed, the author notes that at the core of interviews and embedded discussions of lads and laddism were notions of friendship and belonging. Indeed, this included overt statements of affection within the interview context, which according to Anderson (2010) would entail behaviour associated with inclusive masculinity.

2.6.7 Laddishness as a continuum of behaviour

Beyond problematizing and providing explanations what the above research shows, however, is a variety of behaviours that might all constitute different forms of laddishness. Indeed, the prevailing view of lad behaviour is that it is best represented along a continuum and significantly influenced by context (Dempster, 2009; 2011; Ingram & Waller, 2014; Nichols, 2018; Phipps & Young, 2013; Stead, 2017). Regarding space, for example, while university bars are typically noted as core sites of laddish behaviour among students (Dempster, 2009; Jeffries, 2019) other spaces on or associated with campus are not associated with the enactment of laddishness as traditionally understood. Regarding the practices along the continuum it is fair to say that not all groups considered "laddish" are founded on hyper-masculinity communicated through sexist or homophobic banter and violent bullying. Speaking to this point, B. Clayton has attempted to reframe understandings of laddish practice claiming to be driven by the desire to "…offer a different sociological position on the behaviour of jocks and move away from the essentialism of theories of 'football masculinities', and the 'arseholes' they produce" (2010, p.382). Wary of these remarks, with this project the onus is on providing a considered understanding of the group environment and pervasive community practices underpinning behaviours. This is particularly important as with the understanding of transition as boundary crossing, the boundary in the groups represents the line between participation and non-participation with idealised practice.

2.6.8 Summary

This chapter provided a discussion of the two core theoretical concepts: transition and socialisation. The introduction of the latter is significant with regards to how the investigated

phenomenon is framed. Where transition was conceptualised as boundary crossing the role of socialisation was emphasised as a means of drawing attention to the situated socialising practices that influence, if not determine, transition as process. To this extent it was argued that Wenger's CoP framework and notion of participation provides the conceptual bridge between transition and socialisation. More precisely, it is argued that a detailed appreciation of transition can only be attained through a full accounting of social structure and social practices that are continually renegotiated in a particular community. With this understanding what constitutes either successful or unsuccessful transition is opened to critique.

Rather than viewing the experience in such binary terms, I argue that understanding how players become members of teams is dependent on how we understand the term "member" and what membership means to individuals. Figure 2.1 illustrated some of the possible trajectories that new players might follow when joining the team and how membership can be, e.g. core, peripheral, marginal, etc., depending on active participation in practice. The fluidity of transition is also underscored with this understanding as the trajectory of a community member can take them from the periphery of a CoP to core and then out to the periphery over time. Indeed, examples of this kind of trajectory identified in the data will be provided in the analysis.

Embedded in this theoretical discussion was a review of empirical findings relating to specific types of transitional experience. Evident from the literature relating to the transition to tertiary education was the emphasis placed on the academic and social aspects of a young student's journey. Recurrent in the literature was the notion of separation as experienced by new students and the need to reconstruct support networks and identify with the new groups to which they belong. In essence, this involved what Baumeister and Leary (1995) argue is a fundamental aspect of people, i.e. the need to belong. This understanding is important for this work as it provides part of the background for why the young men in this study joined the football club and participated in community practices. Following this, different factors that are suggested to form barriers, or facilitate transition with regards to migratory and sporting contexts were

outlined. Prominent in the research were factors relating to language ability, e.g. as an impediment to forming new social relations, and perceived differences related to playing styles.

Finally, an in-depth consideration of the notion of identity, and particularly of masculinity within university sports teams was offered. Where earlier discussion on socialisation in teams helped to provide description of the structures (official, unofficial, etc.) of sports teams, this discussion illuminated what practices might manifest in such environments and thus, need to be navigated by new players transitioning into the team. This practice was argued to be predicated on an enactment of masculinity identity specifically associated with young British male students (i.e. laddishness). However, while behaviours traditionally associated with such identity performances were noted recurrently in the data, e.g. excessive alcohol consumption, so was the call for a reappraisal of both the notions of masculinity in sport and laddishness on British campuses on account of suggested changing attitudes (Anderson, 2010).

In sum, this chapter has argued for an appreciation of the complexity of transitional experience both from a conceptual standpoint and an empirical one. The next chapter will now turn to outlining the methodological tools that were utilised in order to investigate this complexity.

3 Methodology

In the previous chapter theoretical considerations were discussed and core concepts such as transition, socialisation and identity were defined. How these notions are operationalised was argued to align with an interpretive constructionist philosophical stance. In this chapter, focus will first turn to a brief discussion of the interpretive and social constructionist traditions underpinning the research approach before attention is placed on specificities relating to overall research design, access, employed methods and analytical tools.

3.1 Interpretivism to Social Constructionism

Emerging from critiques of the application of positivist traditions to social phenomena, interpretivism is grounded on the assumption that humans cannot be researched in the same way as other worldly phenomena (Weber, 1920/2009). Paramount to this assumption is the argument that knowledge is subjective and its construction determined by contextual (human) factors e.g. cultural, social, historical, etc. (e.g. Geertz, 1973; Weber, 1920/2009). For Schwandt, an interpretivist approach is guided by the goal of "…understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it" (1994, p.221). Interpretively guided work tends to utilise qualitative research methods as these are deemed to provide in-depth understandings of social experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017; Prasad & Prasad, 2002). The primary goal of this research is to understand transitional experience, and how such experience is socially constituted. Hence interpretative thought influenced the philosophical foundations of the approach taken.

However, the specific positioning of this research manifests in the form of the social constructionist paradigm, which is both indebted to, and shares many grounding propositions with, intepretivism (Schwandt, 2000). Similar to other epistemological traditions constructionism does not offer any single doctrine and is often used in a general sense to emphasise the social creation of daily life.

Yet the past several decades has witnessed the growing adoption of social constructionist approaches within the social sciences and such prevalence reflects the influence on scholarly thinking that the paradigm has exerted (Burr, 2015). Seeking to challenge the "taken for granted" assumptions about everyday life a central tenet of constructionist thought is that objective reality does not exist (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 1985), rather, reality is seen as "situated and dynamic" (Angouri, 2016, p.50).

Following this particular view of a non-objective reality, constructionists often use the term "subjective" to explain how meaning is derived by individuals in the social world. However, Crotty criticises the careless use of such terminology noting: "some researchers describing themselves as constructionist talk as if meanings are created out of a whole of cloth and simply imposed upon reality (1998, p.43). To this extent the notion of subjectivity is better viewed as the social negotiation of meaning as agreed upon and created during interaction with others in the social world (Gergen, 1985). More specifically, this refers to the idea that knowledge is relationally constituted and specific to the socio-cultural context that it is produced (Burr, 2015). Following such thought then is the notion that there is an innumerable number of ways of understanding the world and no single interpretation should be privileged over another. Indeed, meaning may shift according to both societal context and temporal considerations, i.e. our understandings of particular concepts may evolve over time. As an example of the instability of meaning in this regard, Gergen (1977) has noted how self-definitions change as social circumstances for individuals are altered.

With the world argued to be socially constituted the primary conduit for relational meaning making for social constructionists has been language (Angouri, 2016; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Burr, 2015; Gergen, 1985; Hall & Bucholtz, 2012). In essence, people, things and concepts are talked into "being" as they cannot pre-exist language (Burr, 2015) and dominant discourses (more or less pervasive than others) carry such constructions both in a social and historic sense (Wodak, 2001). Hence, per Gergen's (1977) example above alternative constructions of self are made real through language.

3.2 Research tradition

Following from the interpretive constructionist stance this research lies firmly within qualitative approaches as design is underpinned by the description and inference of the studied phenomenon (reported transitional experience) as part of a specific focus on process as opposed to outcome (Richards et al., 2012). The primary data collection tool is the semi-structured interview and overall the research can be considered a case study with regards to specific methodological tradition. In-depth interviews were selected as a means of exploring transition with reporting in the interview data treated as a reconstruction of experience. This approach proved especially useful with regards to eliciting narrative accounts of transition (Chapter 5). Research interviews as a data collection tool will be fully discussed in Section 3.4.1. First, this chapter will begin with a consideration of the utility of the case study approach and how it has informed the research project.

While not *all* case study approaches are necessarily driven by qualitative precepts they are often associated with qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017) and subsequently bracketed alongside other typically qualitative approaches such as ethnography, phenomenology and grounded theory (Bryman, 2015). Although case study research can be traced back through anthropological and sociological roots its use is prevalent across disciplines within the social sciences such as psychology, medicine, law, business, etc. (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Moreover, the worthiness of the approach with regards to sport, and sports teams as specific cases is demonstrated in the literature. For example, Theberge (1995) investigated how community was constructed within the bounds of a women's ice hockey team while Hodge et al. (2014) focused on the New Zealand All Blacks rugby team over a seven-year period exploring motivational climate within the team. Creswell and Poth (2017) note that there is some disagreement between scholars as to whether case studies constitute an actual method or simply a choice of what is studied. Following Creswell and Poth (2017), in this research I see the approach constituting a method underpinned by different approaches to e.g. data collection, data analysis and a reflexive approach to design.

Acknowledging the above noted debate (see Stake, 2005 for further discussion) it is necessary to offer a definition of the term. Like many approaches and traditions within the social sciences there are conflicting understandings of the concept. Focusing specifically on what is constituted by the term "case", Gillham remarks:

> a unit of human activity embedded in the real world; which can only be studied or understood in context; which exists in the here and now; and that merges in with its context so precise boundaries are difficult to draw. (2000, p.2).

Cases, for example, can involve single individuals, groups, institutions and communities. In order to study such contexts, the case study approach is characterised by a number of fundamentals albeit how much exactly one is required to adhere to such principles is again the subject of debate (Stake, 2005, Yin, 2006). Nevertheless, case study research is argued to shun carrying pre-determined theoretical approaches into the actual case studied as it is assumed that without data and context a researcher cannot know what theories are best suited (Gillham, 2000). Equally, the case study method is seen as requiring multiple forms of data to be collected as means of building evidence and thus reinforcing claims.

Speaking to these points, the design of this research can be said to be both iterative and reflexive as a result of a combination of the above considerations. First, regarding employed method, as a consequence of revelations within the data it was deemed appropriate to incorporate both narrative and discursive approaches to framing and understanding elements of the data. Concerning the latter point this involved accessing and drawing on data in the form of documentary evidence. This was used to both reinforce the findings of the thematic analysis and contribute to the evolving theoretical developments in the thesis. Second, further theoretical and analytical reconfigurations involved the decision to employ Wenger's (1998) CoP framework after preliminary analysis of the data encouraged the use of the tool. Furthermore, while a broad definition of the notion of transition was conceptualised in the previous chapter, more importantly, a model of transitional process as specific to the participants in this context is presented during the analysis. A final consideration reinforcing the iterative approach taken

concerns the timeframe of the study. The decision to conduct two further blocks of interviews with new players in 2018 and 2019 can be seen as aligning with the longitudinal spirit seen in many case-study approaches where emphasis is placed on understanding the phenomenon in specific context (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

3.3 Research design

3.3.1 Research questions

Reflecting the iterative underpinning of case study approaches the design of the project has been one of continual evolution. This is particularly true of the research aims and questions which have been formulated and reformulated over time since the project began in 2015. The research questions for this project are as follows:

1. What transitional experiences do players report when joining a university football team?

This question forms the primary avenue of investigation. In alignment with qualitative approaches seeking in-depth understandings of social phenomenon it is considered broad enough to leave open numerous potential directions (e.g. relating to academic, social or sporting experiences) but specific enough to ensure adequate focus (Bryman, 2015). The two initial guiding questions specifically related to moving to university and joining the team. For example, experience here could involve positive aspects of transition or challenging moments. As the primary focus these questions form the core of the thematic analysis (Chapter 4) but also serves to inform Chapter 5 and the narrative and discursive focus.

2. What role does socialisation play in the process of transition?

Although in part driven by literature derived assumptions of sports teams (e.g. Benson et al., 2016) the pertinence of this question emerged particularly following the pilot study and first round of data collection. Here preliminary analysis of the data pointed to numerous and varied socialisation practices within the team worthy of specific investigation and subsequently informing analytical interpretations. This necessitated a reconsideration of the concept of the transition process experienced by players which was outlined in the preceding chapter (Section

2.5.3.). While this is covered throughout the overall analysis chapter it is specifically discussed in the final section which focuses on team stories as part of the club's shared repertoire (Chapter 5). Here such stories are framed as a discursively shared socialisation strategy.

3. What is the relationship between participation in the club and normative masculinities?

Intrinsically connected to the preceding questions the final research question is relevant to both analysis chapters as far as descriptions are concerned but specifically as part of the focus on flashpoint stories (Chapter 5) with regards to gendered identity claims relating to team experience. As will be demonstrated in Chapter 4 normative masculine ideals as manifested through the enactment of laddish identities are central to community practice.

3.3.2 Research process

While the research design was guided by the aims of the project in the form of the research questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017) there was also flexibility with regards to new opportunities. More precisely, the original focus of the study privileged migratory transition (e.g. Schinke et al., 2013) as the core phenomenon under investigation while a very early research question sought to gain insights regarding how players thought adjustment impacted on their performance. The latter was dropped as a specific research aim as it was felt to be redundant and disharmonious with the overall focus of the project and other research questions. Regarding transitional focus following the pilot interview and first round of interviews a more holistic approach to transition was adopted with migratory concerns forming just one consideration. As will be outlined in the coming sections such changes did not necessitate significant overhauling of the interview design as these were already suitably open ended to allow participant voices to come through the data (Richards et al., 2012).

Although flexibility during the process was an important characteristic of the research approach, the research also sought to produce a rigorous design. As such the different research stages are broken down in Figure 3.1. below:

Stage 1: Identifying potential team and establishing contacts. Summer 2016

Stage 2: Pilot study involving 2 interviews and observations of football trials. January 2017

Stage 3: Main study. Interviews with 23 players between 2017 and 2019.

Figure 3.1 Data collection process

The first phase involved identifying suitable participants and an appropriate team context. The specific drive to access a particular team was twofold: first, studies in the available literature have looked at the transitional experiences of athletes representing different sports and different teams. Second, socialisation practices are argued to greatly impact a new player's transition. Hence, in order to build a detailed picture of transitional experience in a specific team context, imbued with particular practices, I recognised that it was clearly necessary to gain access to a sports club and not individual athletes. As I have experience of playing football and thus a full understanding of the rules of this particular sport, I opted to secure access to a football team.

Following difficulty building links with professional football clubs (see Parker, 2016 for a discussion of the significant challenges associated with gaining access to professional football in England), I was put into contact with a member of a university football club. Following email correspondence, I met this contact along with several other senior players. In discussions I explained the general aims of the research which was received positively by the football club and I was subsequently invited to attend trainings and the annual football trials which were due to take place at the beginning of the next academic year. During the considerable gap between access being granted and informal observations of the trials I prepared and submitted my ethical

approval forms. Copies of the consent form and participant information sheet are included in the appendices.

Following this period of building a relationship with key members of the club I then undertook the pilot study. Pilot studies have been noted to form a "trial run" of sorts of the main study and methods employed (Richards et al., 2012; Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). However, while this stage afforded the researcher the opportunity to test the interview schedule and hone skills related to conducting interviews (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012) it also allowed me to build an initial understanding of the football club context. This latter point is important as due to my limited experience of *university* level football I was ignorant of the processes involved in the running of such teams, i.e. leadership, structure and selection, where official coaches are not present. Having the opportunity to observe training sessions and trials proved extremely enlightening in this respect.

Competing as part of British Universities and College Sport (BUCS), the football club has approximately 60 members and is subdivided into a first team and three reserve sides. Trials are conducted in October every year to recruit new players. Due to the relatively short duration of university education (four years maximum), turnover in varsity sports teams is extremely high when compared with professional sport (Johnson & Holman, 2004). This factor added to the appeal of the research context, particularly with regards to understanding the socialisation strategies that emerged in preliminary analysis.

With the pilot study interview schedule formulated I conducted two interviews: one with a player from the club, and one with a sports coach working with high performance teams at the same university. The rationale for such selection was that I would be able to gather valuable insights from two distinct perspectives, essentially, from within and from without the team. The interview schedule for the sports coach was adjusted to elicit responses concerning their perceptions of transition and adjustment of new members in these teams. Thematic analysis of the pilot data proved illuminating with regards to my initial aims as both interviewees placed more emphasis on the challenges of being a fresher (i.e. first year player) than being an

international student at a British university sports club. Indeed, emerging strongly from the data was the idea of transition as multi-faceted and encompassing many different aspects of a new member's experiences as part of the club, and part of the university as a whole. A further finding related to the research instrument with the design of the interview schedule proving to be very satisfactory. More precisely, the open-ended questions relating to experience at university and at the club proved to elicit particularly rich data. This perception was reinforced following preliminary analysis of the main interviews.

Following analysis of the pilot study and reappraisal of the research instrument the main study began in spring 2017. Building on the pilot data and following informal discussions with senior players it was reasoned that interviewing players after they had chance to experience the first half of the season (term 1) would prove more fruitful with regards to the aims of the study. The primary tool for data collection was the semi-structured interview. An interview schedule was designed focusing on participant experiences, for example, themes centred on arriving at university, joining the football team and taking part in the social side of the club, etc. However, this generally did not require significant reconfiguration of the schedules per se as the original semi-structured outline already included many questions inviting the interviewee to recount particular events free of strict direction (as noted above). For example, the standard opening question is: "Could you describe your experience first moving to the university?" and then "Can you tell me about the social side of the club?". With probing questions interspersed within this broad guideline (see Appendix 6 for the list of guiding questions).

Reinforcing the findings of the pilot study preliminary analysis of early interviews indicated less emphasis on migratory transition related to transnational boundary crossing i.e. adjustment challenges, with an initial finding being that team (and university) status was an integral transitional theme for participants rather than national background. Specifically, players appeared to downplay perceived cultural differences and instead construct their experiences through the perspective of being a "fresher" (a first-year student). Responding reflexively to this development the interview schedule underwent minor adjustments to place more emphasis

on the "fresher experience". A further development involved the decision to take the

opportunity to collect more data with the final iteration of the study becoming more

longitudinal in nature. This decision was taken as a consequence of particular findings in the

preliminary analysis and investment in understanding the specific context (Cresswell & Poth,

2017). In total, between 2017 and 2019, 23 interviews were conducted with British and

International students who are members of the team. The overall interview timetable is

represented in Table 3.1 below:

Date	Number
Spring 2017 (a)	1 Senior player 5 First Year players
May 2017 (b)	4 Senior players 2 First Year players
January 2018	5 First Year Players
January 2019	6 First Year Players

Table 3.1 Interview process

Access to participants was gained through key gatekeepers in the team and rested on the

goodwill and rapport built with the original senior players that were contacted. Again, it is

important to note that varsity sport is relatively short-lived, and a specificity of the studied

football team is that club-captains must be third year students. Hence, it is more than likely that

they will be no longer at the university at the beginning of the next season. Thus, I asked each

departing captain to introduce me (via email) to the new captain before they left the university.

In this sense access was renegotiated several times during the study. To secure player

anonymity the club captain provided me with the email address of players (specifically freshers

in 2018 and 2019) to give me the opportunity to ask whether they would be interested in the

taking part in the study. Through this procedure the captain was not aware of which players had

agreed to take part in the research. All interviews took place in the researcher's departmental meeting room which was deemed a secure location (interview context will be discussed in the next section). All participant contributions are anonymised with pseudonyms used throughout in place of actual participant names. In addition, potentially revealing information relating to, e.g. town or city of birth, names of opposing teams, former players, etc. has been omitted to ensure confidentially.

In addition to the interviews, evidence was also collected through documentary data and less significantly, in the form of observations. Before turning attention to the data collection process, I will briefly discuss these additional elements of data. During preliminary analysis a revelation emerged in that the participants appeared to be drawing significantly on what senior players had said to them during their club welcome talks which take place after a new player has successfully passed the club trials. Discussions with senior players revealed that the club also circulates a "welcome email" to new players. As will be demonstrated in the analysis there was an explicit connection between the contents of the welcome email and what the players were reporting. The contents of the email will be unpacked in the upcoming analysis section (Chapter 5). Three welcome emails taken from 2016, 2017 and 2018 are included in the appendices. Finally, as noted with the pilot study I took the opportunity to observe the football team training and the trials process. Positioning myself as part of the research context (Gillham, 2000) the rationale for this approach was to build a more tangible picture of player experience particularly with regards to the trials event which emerged in the data as a particularly important event for participants.

3.4 Data collection

3.4.1 Semi-structured interviews and eliciting narratives

Taylor et al. (2015, p.4) note that interviews and other qualitative methods are as old as recorded history. The semi-structured interview has emerged as the instrument of choice for many qualitative researchers. However, while the research interview has proven to be a popular method, its validity and scientific merit has been questioned as part of heated paradigmatic

debate. Gillham argues that the "…overwhelmingly positive feature of the interview is the richness and vividness of the material it turns up" (2000, p.10), while Rubin and Rubin (2012, p.2) note that the focus of the qualitative researcher is on depth rather than breadth. Therefore, it is unsurprising that over the past few decades the interview has emerged as the instrument of choice in a qualitative researcher's arsenal. However, what is meant by "interview" requires some clarification. Three major forms of interview are utilised in social science research: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Although these interview types are frequently treated as distinct approaches, Gillham (2000) prefers to place them on a continuum ranging from structured to unstructured. Immediately relevant to this paper, however, is the semi-structured interview. Consequently, the following sections will focus specifically on this type of interview.

Occupying the middle ground between structured and unstructured interviews, the semi-structured type may be seen as getting the best of both worlds. Specifically, semi-structured interviews combine a formal structure that ensures the interviewer can maintain an appropriate direction for the interview, while still being afforded the freedom to probe the responses of interviewees (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Another stated benefit of the method is that the structured nature of the questioning allows for comparison (Bryman, 2015). Here the standardisation of the primary questions ensures a degree of data reliability (Flick, 2009). The set up for such an interview will involve the researcher preparing a set of open-ended questions with the ultimate goal of giving the participant the chance to answer in as much detail as he or she pleases. Because the interviewer is not constrained by a rigid question structure the line of inquiry may follow an unexpected (but potentially fruitful) trajectory. For example, one core question included as part of the interview design is "How did you come to play for the football team?". This question presents the interviewee with the opportunity to offer a rich contribution which is reinforced by the findings of the analysis. In the case of this specific question some participant responses ranged from describing the official process of joining the football club (signing up

for the trials, attending, getting through, etc.) whereas others interpreted the question as direct inquiry to their overall sporting (football) experience.

Indeed, it can be argued that the openness of the instrument facilitated the adoption of a narrative based approach to data analysis as a part of the ongoing development of the research design. More precisely, on being granted flexibility in how they responded one emergent quality of the interviews was the storytelling done by participants. For example, one probing question building on participant responses of joining the club was: "could you tell me about the trials?". This was not necessarily a fixed question and often followed after a participant had made the trials event relevant to his reported experience. Nevertheless, some respondents chose to directly answer this question with a specific story reconstructing the experience. In an example concerning this specific topic one participant related how the club had written his name incorrectly on the list of players who had successfully passed the trials and thus he had assumed he had not made the team. In the story he finally learned that he had made the team after advice received from his father.

The interspersing of stories across interviews proved revelatory. As Creswell and Poth (2017) note small considerations in research design or delivery can present significant research opportunities with the boundaries between methodological traditions (particularly qualitative) being loose. Narrative interviewing (particularly from the perspective of biographical traditions see pp.86-87 in this report) is argued to be underscored by minimised contribution by the interviewer except in the form of probing questions related to the story told and supportive interactional work (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). In my approach an increased awareness and adaptability during interviews proved important where I as an interviewer learned to follow the interview schedule less rigidly and indirectly elicit storytelling and in-depth response. In this respect with the design erring more towards openness the interview structure could be seen as representing a middle ground of sorts between semi-structured and unstructured (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006), without attempting to extract myself from the interview as an interactional context.

Building from the above point semi-structured interviews are argued to be ideal research instruments when the aim is to explore the views and experiences of an individual (Gillham, 2000). Moreover, they are suggested to be particularly useful when investigating sensitive issues. For example, the ability to probe respondents for more detailed responses allows the researcher to construct events that they themselves have not experienced. However, the willingness of a participant to reveal sensitive information is also dependent on the level of trust that has been built between the interviewer and interviewee. A recurrent theme in the qualitative research literature is the notion that face-to-face, semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to build rapport with the interviewee (Gillham, 2000).

Tempering the above assertion in light of the research participants in this study, however, Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2003) maintain that the interview site represents both "threat" and "opportunity" for male interviewees. This claims rests on the assumption that in *doing gender* during interviews male participants may align with elements of Connell's (1995) notion of hegemonic masculinity (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2003, p.55). Such dramaturgical performance is suggested to present an interviewer with potential problems as male interviewees seek to portray a masculine self in relation to context and interlocutor. Masculine portrayals may be communicated through signifying, for example, autonomy, rational thought, risk and excitement, etc. (Connell, 1995). Following these claims the interview process for the young men in this study may represent, in the words of Schwalbe and Wolkomir:

An opportunity to signify masculinity insofar as men are allowed to portray themselves as in control, autonomous, rational, and so on. It is a threat inasmuch as the interviewer controls the interaction, asks questions that put these elements of manly self-portrayal into doubt and simply does not affirm a man's masculinity displays. (2003, pp.57-58).

Threat is also suggested to be enhanced by the gender of the interlocutor with a male interviewer presenting the greatest danger on account of being best placed to "recognise flaws in performance" (2003, p.58). While "male" as a category is acknowledged as "internally diverse" potential problems with male interviewees within the interview context are argued to

include e.g. barriers to communication and nondisclosure of emotions. Both "issues" are suggested to be predicated on an interviewee's unwillingness to disclose particular information (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2003). This assertion has support in health research where stoicism and lack of emotional expression has been repeatedly associated with male participants (e.g. Affleck et al., 2012).

Acknowledging the above comments, it should be noted in practice some participants were simply more willing to reveal information than others. While the open-ended line of questioning generated rich responses for many of the players, in some instances the interviewees did not appear to be comfortable and only gave brief contributions. For example, the longest interview conducted was approximately 50 minutes whereas the shortest only lasted 19 minutes. Although the brief duration of the latter interview was not typical of the overall dataset it does give an indication of the variation in responses given by participants. As will be discussed in more detail in the coming sections interviews are seen as co-constructed events underpinned by identity construction. Hence gendered performances in both descriptions of experience, and within the interview setting are acknowledged in the analysis.

3.4.2 Criticisms of the method

Although the preceding sections have detailed clear advantages of utilising interviews, no research method is without its limitations. At a more practical level, Gillham (2000) notes that semi-structured interviews are extremely time consuming. Indeed, the time spent conducting interviews, transcribing, and analysing interview data requires considerable commitment. As a consequence, individual studies tend not involve many participants. It was reasoned that a sample of 23 interviews would both yield a satisfactory amount of data and be manageable with regards to transcription and analysis. Beyond these practical concerns there have also been a number of significant questions leveed against the method regarding subjectivity, researcher bias, participant selection, participant reliability and data interpretation.

Writing over two decades ago, Kvale (1994) published a response to what he perceived were the predictably negative responses to qualitative research utilising interviews as the primary data collection method. Although Kvale's paper was, in essence, a rebuttal of the criticisms of the research interview, a number of the issues raised are significant. First, the notion of bias in interviews is an important concern. Kvale (1994, p.154) notes that data may be spoiled by the *unintentional* bias of both the interviewer and the interviewee. Regarding the former, interviewer bias may manifest in the form of leading questions with the researcher unintentionally directing a participant to certain responses. Here the researcher's own investment in the subject and subsequent expectations from the research may unconsciously determine the avenue of investigation and how experience is reconstructed by participants.

Unintentional interviewee bias may stem from the relationship that exists between the researcher and research participants. Diefenbach (2009, p.880) observes that the interview situation is a form of social interaction where participants will be aware that there are certain expectations that they are required to meet (i.e. answering questions). Asymmetrical differences in status and power may influence the responses given by participants without the interviewer saying a word. Here it is necessary to reconsider the notion of rapport in the context of a semi-structured interview. Although face to face, open ended questioning may allow a relationship to be built between interviewer and interviewee, it is clear that rapport may be undermined by the factors discussed in this section. Again, researcher positionality is argued to form part of the interview as co-constructed thus such "bias" is both expected and seen as analysable. Indeed, the interpretation in any research is *always* influenced by the researcher's previous experiences and professional identity (Bell, 2014).

More troublesome, however, is the potential for interviewees to give deliberately misleading answers. Diefenbach (2009, p.881) notes that when discussing difficult and sensitive topics, interviewees may be either unable or unwilling to give truthful answers. Research participants representing organisations may be unwilling to compromise their own positions by revealing information that they may perceive as negatively impacting the organisation. Specific to this

research, interviewees may be unwilling to reveal information concerning experiences with senior members of the team (captains, senior players) or fellow teammates in general (Campbell & Sonn, 2009).

Second, indirectly connected to bias is what Diefenbach (2009) refers to as the unsystematic selection of participants. Access is noted as a particularly problematic part of the interview process (Gillham, 2000; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). When investigating organisations researchers must rely on the goodwill of powerful and influential people in order to secure access. Diefenbach notes that "…research primarily based on interview data the selection of interviewees decides who's worldviews, opinions, and interests will be taken into account—and who's will be ignored and excluded!" (2009, p.880). Although access to data source may be considered a troublesome part of research projects *in general*, the patience and goodwill required from participants to sit through 30-60 minutes of an interview must be acknowledged.

3.4.3 Interviews as co-constructed

Consistent with the constructionist approach to the creation of knowledge this work sees interviews as dialogical sites where interlocutors conjointly produce meaning through their utterances (De Fina & Perrino, 2011; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). In this respect the researcher as both speaker and recipient cannot be removed from the interview process (Gillham, 2000). For example, with this research the participant represents someone who is aware that he is being interviewed about his experience at university and more specifically, as part of the football club. Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann (2000) remark that prior to interviews taking place research participants have already begun to gather details about the interviewer and formulate subsequent assumptions. Hence expectations are carried into the research contexts which are either met or not. Viewing interviews as co-constructed has implications with regards to the narrative and discursive approaches taken in this work which subsequently seeks to focus on both the "hows" in addition to the "whats" of storytelling. This will be explored in the next section.

3.5 Data analysis methods

The overall analytical framework involved adopting multiple approaches as guided by the research design and as a response to developments in the data. Specifically, this involved drawing on thematic, narrative and discourse analysis traditions. The combination of these approaches is seen as a "best fit" approach to the data (Gillman, 2000) in addition to reflecting the multi-disciplinary background of both research and researcher. The approaches are treated as intrinsically connected and together offer a stronger perspective of the investigated phenomenon. This is visualised below in Figure 3.2:

Figure 3.2 Analytical approaches

3.5.1 Thematic analysis

The primary aim of this study is to explore the transitional experiences of the participants as relating to membership of the university football club. The interview design involved lines of inquiry covering general experiences with probing questions seeking to understand aspects that were either challenging or helpful. This included experience both in a sporting context (on the pitch) and in a social context (off the pitch). Thematic analysis (TA) was selected as the

primary data analysis tool due to its usefulness in identifying key experiential themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis is one of the most widely employed analytical frameworks in social science research (Boyatzis, 1998) and is noted for the transferability of the method across paradigms (e.g. essentialist/constructionist) and approaches e.g. discourse analysis, narrative analysis, etc. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012). It focuses on identifying, emphasising, examining and categorising of patterns or themes across a specific data set with the ultimate end point involving the encoding of qualitative information (Boyatzis, 1998). Reflecting the flexibility of the approach there are many different ways of understanding how and when to employ TA. To ensure methodological and analytical rigour TA often entails adopting a stage by stage approach such as Braun and Clarke's (2006) method. The rest of this section will now outline the steps followed during the analysis as guided by existing approaches and recommendations.

The first step involved transcribing and familiarising myself with the data. The process of transcription is argued to transcend more than the mere copying and formatting of the interview recording rather it already represents the beginning of the interpretive process before the researcher has had a chance to look at transcribed interview in its entirety (Gibbs, 2018). Indeed, transcription affords the researcher an excellent opportunity to familiarise oneself with the data in unprocessed form (Riessman, 2003). Familiarisation at this stage, and once the transcription work has been completed, involves reading and re-reading the transcripts while making notes and reflecting on the data (Denscombe, 2010). It is during this phase patterns within the data begin to be identified and the researcher starts to consider initial codes in the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Accordingly, the next stage involves the generation of codes. Codes form the most basic element of the data (Boyatzis, 1998), are descriptive, and involve small sections of text or data (Denson, 2010). This is an important stage of the analysis as it involves the processing and organising of relevant aspects of the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To this extent codes can be loosely defined according to frequency or on account pointing to something significant or worthy within the data. Here identification does not

necessarily rest completely on frequency, as noted by Braun and Clarke: "what is common, however, is not necessarily in and of itself meaningful or important." (2012, p.57). Getting to grips with the data during this period I coded what I felt to be of some importance and noted any patterns that I had interpreted across individual and multiple interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Regarding the coding process there are different ways that researchers can approach their data such as opting to use software (e.g. MAXQDA) or manually coding the data set. Automatic coding is suggested to offer a smoother process for the researcher, particularly when handling large quantities of data (Saldana, 2015). Acknowledging the suggested benefits, I opted to manually code my data as I saw the number of interviews (23) as being manageable and felt more comfortable with the employed method, added workload notwithstanding. To facilitate a thorough and robust process coding was iterative and I returned to review them diligently over the course of the analysis process. During the overall thematic process analytical reflexivity was assisted by the fact that interviews took place in four separate blocks over a three year period. Thus, with each round of data collection and analysis I was able to return to the overall data set and be open to reconsidering my initial interpretations.

Returning to the coding process, specifically, part of the manual approach involved compiling all identified codes across the data set and visualising them on pieces of A5 paper. The aim of this method was simply to organise codes into relevant categories which forms the next stage of analysis (Denscombe, 2010). Initial attempts to do this proved difficult as there was overlap between codes and categories which, in turn, precipitated theorising of relevant literature and nascent themes. Following refinement, a map of codes and categories was produced which served to underpin the following stage which Braun and Clarke (2006, p.89) term the "search for themes". This is where true interpretation of the data set begins where the researcher seeks to make sense of the map at a broader level and relate them to the core aims of the research (Denscombe, 2010). Once this has been completed Braun and Clarke (2006) recommend the researcher produce an initial thematic map including "candidate" themes.

Next, the map is reviewed with a focus placed on ensuring both coherency across codes, categories and themes, and a distinction between primary themes. Similar to the initial coding process, this stage is characterised by the tightening of the method and continual refinement of identified themes which often leads to a reduction in themes, or alternatively, a reconsideration of what constitutes a theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Finally, with the map and themes in place the last stage involves further refinement and naming. Part of this process involved confirmation of theme as a consequence of the overall analysis. In this regard Braun and Clarke (2006) remark that is it up to the researcher to justify what constitutes a theme or not.

As Denscombe (2010) notes that explanation of the coding process is vital for coherency between methods and analysis. In addition to the outlined stages that I followed I have included a sample of coding below taken from the interview with "Tom" where the player is discussing managing life away at university:

Sample of data	Code	Category
I found that quite easy because laughing I didn't really get much help at home really to be honest I was cooking ironing doing cleaning all my on my own to be honest so I found that quite easy living on a room by myself I don't really mind to it was quite easy I didn't found any of that stuff particularly challenging or daunting	Resourcefulness Discipline Managing	Maturity

Table 3.2 Sample of coding process

3.5.2 Narrative approach

Following the discussion of the thematic approach the second part of the methodology chapter will present the narrative and discursive approaches. As noted in the methodology the utilisation of narrative tools primarily occurred as a reflexive response to participant use of storytelling across early interviews. It is argued that story selection was not arbitrary but relevant to situated identity claims, and transitional experience as identified in the thematic approach. Following Gillham's (2000) advice of being open to the utilisation of new (and appropriate) tools once a complete picture of the data has been developed the research drew on narrative approaches to create a heuristic tool. The following sections will briefly consider narrative traditions before outlining the devised method of analysis.

3.5.3 Narrative analysis across disciplines

Narrative as a method forms a cornerstone of qualitative approaches to data analysis (Denscombe, 2010: Frank, 2010; Gibbs, 2018). Jerome Bruner (1990) argued that people have an inborn tendency to tell and understand stories and thus humans as a species may be regarded as *homo-narrans*. This understanding is clearly reflected in the emphasis scholars have placed on trying to understand social phenomena through narrative and its application by researchers representing numerous fields across the social sciences. Key contributions come from classic sociolinguistics (Labov & Waletsky, 1967), psychology (Bamberg, 1997; Bruner, J., 1990), philosophy (Ricoeur, 1991), discourse studies (De Fina, 2009; Depperman & Lucius-Hoene, 2000; Georgakopoulou, 2006, 2007) and more recently sport (Douglas & Carless, 2009; Carless & Douglas, 2013; Smith & Sparkes, 2009, Smith & Sparkes, 2012).

Smith and Sparkes (2009) noted the "narrative turn in sport" as underway a decade ago. During this timeframe there have been contributions to the literature that may be seen as useful for this work. However, as noted during literature review (Chapter 2) the availability of relevant work is limited. Nevertheless, narrative in sport represents both life story and discursive approaches (full discussion to follow below). Through the lens of the latter, Douglass and Carless (2009)

investigated the narratives produced by the professional golfer participants in their studies and coined the term "performance narrative" as a means of describing how sporting endeavour consumes all other aspects of identity.

Literature relating to the notion of shared narratives in sports teams is sparse, but Kilger's (2017) contemporaneous study of youth athletes in Sweden provides some useful insights. For Kilger, societally shared narratives are stories that are shared within societies that function "…as a means to understand the moral and normative framework that surround us" (2017, p.48). In the domain of sport, for example, Kilger points us to the "success stories" of elite athletes that are discursively disseminated in society (i.e. through media) and drawn upon by youth athletes when describing their own success. It should be noted that in these examples the participants included professional or elite youth athletes competing at national levels. Hence the findings can serve to guide theorisation but caution is taken with regards to direct comparisons.

3.5.4 Biographical and interactional traditions

There is a diversity of paradigmatic perspectives underpinning conceptualisations of narrative. While a common starting point among scholars that is generally agreed upon is that "narratives are used to express and negotiate both individual and collective identities" (De Fina, 2015, p.351) a dividing line can be drawn between two primary approaches: biographical (or conventional) and interactional (De Fina, 2015; De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2011). The primary distinction is argued to rest on what it is the respective narrative scholar, be it biographically, or interactionally oriented, is setting out to achieve. Biographical approaches are driven by the view that narrative coherence is vital to identity construction and a sense of self (McAdams, 1988, Bruner, 1990). The narrative told and the coherence of this story in relation to the "life-story" of the narrator is of primary concern here (De Fina, 2015). In contrast, interactional approaches are epitomised by a focus on story telling as a relational process (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2011).

Biographical approaches are argued to be heavily influenced by Labov and Waletsky's (1967) seminal work and later research by Labov (1972, 1997, 2001) on narrative. Labov's (1972)

work focused specifically on the structural qualities of stories that he argued were integral to narrative production. He deliberately elicited interviewee storytelling by asking participants to relate a time when they had nearly died. He argued that six key elements typically occurred in the storytelling. For example, narrators might begin with an *abstract* summarising the story about to be told, followed by an *orientation,* where the context (characters, location, time), are outlined. However, crucial to narrative following this approach were the *complicating action* (the main body of the narrative), and the *evaluation,* essentially Labov's "So what?" question relating to the immediate relevance of the story being told (Labov, 1972, 1997). Key to this approach is an understanding of narrative as a manifestation of storied structure with clearly demarked elements.

This framework has proven popular among narrative analysts across various fields as it afforded them a means of identifying coherent storylines by connecting structural segments per the model. For biographical analysts the privileging of temporality and structure affords the opportunity to map identity construction and meaning making with regards to "life story" or master narratives (Georgakopoolou & Bamberg, 2006). In essence such approaches have been referred to as "big story" research (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2011). However, Labov's approach has since been the focus of sustained criticism, particularly among narrative scholars placed towards the interactional side of the analysis spectrum (e.g. De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2011). Central to this criticism is the argument that Labov forwarded a monolithic and completely decontextualized conceptualisation of narrative where the interactional processes of the storytelling event are disregarded (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2011, p.35). As De Fina notes, such an approach is problematic as "...eliminating the recipient from the picture takes away an important element of the storytelling context (2009, p.252). Moreover, Frank (2010, p26) has argued that stories built are seldom fully formed and stages may be out of order or missing altogether.

Despite this criticism Labov's forwarding of structural components has had a profound influence in the field particularly as it affords the researcher a general framework to work from

(De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2011, p.34), with the evaluation element proving to be a salient element in the model. Indeed, De Fina & Georgakopoulou argue that "…a story without evaluation is simply a sequence of events with no point, a good narrative is one where a narrator is able to convey certain interpretations…" (2011, p.32). For analytical purposes in this research this is especially useful as evaluative responses can help reveal how meaning is attributed to specific (and overall) transitional experiences. Noteworthy here is that although according to Labov (1972) evaluative elements tend naturally to manifest towards the end of particular stories they can also be interspersed throughout a particular telling. Thus, in this regard meaning and interpretation (both coherent and contradictory) may be constantly provided throughout by the narrator.

In contrast to biographical approaches interactionally focused narrative analysts are less interested in structure in the traditional sense and rather seek to understand narrative as done in a specific context and with a specific recipient or audience (Chase, 2007). In this approach the interviewer is not merely positioned as a repository of storied information but actively contributes to the co-construction of the narrative (De Fina, 2015). Bamberg and Georgakopoulou's (2008) notion of "small stories" has been prominent in this respect which can be contrasted with standard canonical understandings in the form of "big story" research. Small stories research focuses on non-canonical aspects of narrative identity work as done in interaction e.g. narrative activities, tellings of ongoing events, events that are hypothetical or set in the future, shared events, etc. (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008).

Following this approach, narratives are conceptualised as "…aspects of situated language use, employed by speakers/narrators to position a display of situated, contextualized identities." (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008, p.2). The notion of small stories is heavily influenced by Bamberg's (1997; 2004) notion of narrative positioning and subsequent attempts at expanding his original approach (see Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann, 2000). Bamberg himself is indebted to Harre and Langenhoven's (1990) concept of *subject positions*. Grounded within discursive traditions, Harre and Langenhoven (1990) suggest that two concepts of identity represent

selfhood: *personal identity* and *social identity*. Personal identity is said to represent the temporal continuity of an individual whereas social identity referred to how the individual is represented across different interactions mindful of their role within a particular relationship.

Building from this, Bamberg sought to place focus on the performative properties of interactional narrative production. With this approach, the *telling* and the audience are assigned greater, if not central, analytical importance thus underscoring narrative positioning as a product of interaction and co-creation (1997, p.355). Bamberg's model is predicated on the assumption that narrative production involves different levels or worlds: the *told* world (level 1) and the *telling* world (level 2) i.e. "the here and now of storytelling" (Georgakopoulou, 2013, p.3). This is realised analytically with the first level referring to how characters are positioned in relation to each other in the storyworld by the narrator. Second level positioning involves how narrators position themselves with regards to their interlocutors or audience.

Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann (2000) built on Bamberg's approach to offer a more detailed understanding of the work done by narrators and what this means with regards to identity construction. Their four sub-categories related to e.g. evaluative stances towards described events, agency attributed to characters, story design, etc. Concerning the design of a particular story, an important consideration involves asking what stories and experiences do players choose to draw on in response to specific lines of interview inquiry? Such decisions are not seen as arbitrary but are specifically made as a discursive means of making sense of transition and vividly connecting "real" experience with overarching narratives.

Having introduced different approaches to narrative covering e.g. Labovian traditions (Labov & Waletzky, 1967) and positioning (Bamberg, 1997), the chapter will now turn to outlining how narrative is understood in this project.

3.5.5 Narrative analysis in this work

With the above traditions discussed I will now outline and justify the heuristic tool developed for the identification and analysis of stories within this work. In practice this involved placing specific focus on the "whats" and the "hows" of storytelling. The data was first approached by broadly drawing on the Labovian methods in order to identify and categorise specific stories. This involved identifying the structural elements of the contribution as a means of separating the story from surrounding text.

Elaborating on this point draws attention to more practical considerations of story selection. More specifically, as described in the methodology section (see p.75), interview duration varied across the dataset and as a consequence some interview transcripts could be considered more productive than others with regards to storytelling. Variation in participant contribution is provided in the appendices (Appendix 7: Sample of Original Transcripts). Hence, narrative selection was heavily dependent on the availability of stories appropriate for analysis i.e. well-formed, sufficient in length and relevant. For clarity, "well-formed" essentially referred to stories that could be bracketed from surrounding text with Labovian understandings of structure proving useful i.e. when identifying the beginning (abstract/orientation) and end of a particular story (evaluation/coda), and when attempting to illuminate meaning (identifying one or more evaluative points). Acknowledging the potential pitfalls of cherry-picking data (Denscombe, 2010), "relevance" here refers specifically to stories that represented retellings of transitional experience and thus held data relevant to the formulated research questions. In total, 20 stories were identified that met the above outlined criteria.

With their stories participants provided vivid instantiations of transitional experience associated with e.g. arriving at university, attending trials, attending initiations, finding mates, socialising and on-pitch challenges. Selection of the final six stories to be drawn on for the analysis proved challenging as I attempted to balance accurate representation with manageability and coherency with regards to the overall analysis. Early iterations of analysis involved three additional analyses involving retellings of injury, receiving the news one had made the team and a

recounting of a memorable football match. However, as I sought to produce a succinct and coherent analysis these stories were deemed superfluous and removed from the final iteration which I argue represents a robust selection of story focus.

Following these structural considerations acknowledges interviews as dialogical this work was broadly guided by Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann's (2000) reimagining of Bamberg's (1997) positioning framework (2nd level positioning, in particular). However, in the spirit of the heuristic nature of the analytical approach, analysis related to specific positioning was related to appropriate theories. For example, aspects of story design the approach drew on Ochs and Capp's (2001, p.33), notion of "tellability" as a means of identifying design in the storytelling. More precisely, tellability involves the extent to which stories convey a sequence of reportable events in a rhetorically effective manner" (Ochs & Capps, 2001, p.33).

Highly tellable stories often involve something unusual or unexpected that is designed to draw the attention of the recipient and is suggested to be a skill learned during early childhood (Ochs & Capps, 2001). As a learned experience Ochs and Capps remark: "the narration of unexpected events assumes some degree of what is normative and expected in everyday life" (2001, pp.77-78). With regards to this research this can be related back to question of why this story and why now? Positioning analysis was further assisted by drawing on Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) principle of indexicality. Here identity construction in interaction is argued to occur through a number of indexical processes. For example, Bucholtz and Hall (2005, p.594) note that indexing can involve *overt* mentioning of identity categories or labels or *implicature* and *presupposition* regarding one's own or other's identity position. An example of overt positioning from my data includes explicit identity claims, for example: "I am a footballer" or "they are not footballers".

In conjunction with this approach, the identified stories were also mined from a content perspective in order to illuminate identity construction in relation to transition and associations with community (socialising) practice as informed by the thematic analysis. Equally, focusing on both content and discursive factors *across* the interviews allowed for the identification of

team narratives (discussed in Chapter 5). Overall, I argue that this focus on narrative provides the tools to explore deeper the complexity of the experience and understanding of participation in the CoP.

3.6 Justification for approach

Combining content (the "whats") and discursive (the "hows") approaches to understanding participant storytelling may be seem as methodologically unusual and thus this final section seeks to justify the creation of the heuristic tool. First, it is important to remind ourselves of the motivation to adopt a narrative approach. Specifically, the aim of this focus was to take advantage of the narrative work organically undertaken by participants as a means of pursuing revelations emergent on the data and relevant to the findings of the thematic analysis. Stories emerged both as a response to direct inquiry, e.g. the researcher asking specifically about what the participant may have found difficult or challenging, or more spontaneously in general unguided discussion. Such stories were deemed "flashpoint" because they were seen as relating to a key event or aspect of transition, e.g. an incident that occurred during a player's first match, a pivotal moment of university adjustment, etc.

Mindful of the above it is important to state that this work concurs with social constructionist conceptualisations of identity as fluid, dynamic and situated (e.g. Angouri & Marra, 2011; Benwell & Stokoe, 2006), and brought into being through relational and social action that is often predicated on language (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004, 2005). Miglbauer (2017) notes that interviews are important sites of identity work while most identity work is often achieved through storytelling according to Baynham (2011). An additional question to be considered relates to scholars not recommending combining looking at both the "hows" and the "whats" of storytelling. Smith and Sparkes (2012, p.90) maintain that such an approach is "too demanding" and potentially "unproductive". I argue that by focusing on a limited number of specifically demarcated stories (6 out of 20 stories identified) such analysis can contribute to scholarly work, and particularly this research.

3.7 Chapter summary

The purpose of this chapter was to outline the methodological approach of the project. Paradigmatic considerations were discussed first with a focus on social constructionism as the grounding point while alignment with case study approaches was also noted. Attention was then turned to thematic and narrative analysis traditions before a heuristic approach designed as a "best fit" to the emergent narrative properties of the data was outlined. It is argued that this approach provides a robust base from which to explore transition. Thematic analysis affords the researcher the tool to identify a breadth of experience as reported by participants and to categorise analysed data according to recurrence and significance, in relation to e.g. specific events, aspects of social life at the club, challenges of living alone, etc. The narrative and discursive approaches gave me the opportunity to explore in more detail transitional experience with regards to the community through the storied reconstruction of key moments. Moreover, it enabled me to identify specific discursive socialising practice in the form of shared narratives. Chapter 5 will focus on these stories that are argued to form part of the community's shared repertoire. Hence the discursive approach serves as both a window into experience, and a means of identifying recycled team discourses.

4 Thematic analysis

Chapters 4 and 5 will now present the findings of the project which draws on 23 semi structured interviews with participants who are members of a university football team. The interviews were conducted between 2016 and 2019 and represent three separate intakes of new players in addition to senior players at the club (as outlined in Chapter 3). Analysis of the data followed an iterative process centring on both the identification of significant patterns across interviews, and the significance that participant's placed on particular experiences with regards to transition. Specifically, Chapter 4 will detail the findings of the *thematic analysis* of the data where the key themes drawn are introduced and discussed. Chapter 5 involves the *narrative analysis* which places focus on flashpoint stories specifically seeking to illustrate identity construction as done by participants and relevant to transitional experience as identified in the thematic approach, in addition to presenting a discourse analysis relating to the emergent narrative qualities of the data in the form of team narratives that were identified as a socialisation tool.

Following the discussion in the literature review the thematic analysis of the data revealed three primary themes that could be associated with different aspects of the players' transitional experiences. The first of these is termed *finding feet* and specifically refers to how participants reported their experiences of arriving at university. Here I discuss how contrasting notions of agency and dependency emerged across the interviews in relation to moving to higher education. I will then introduce the second theme which I term *boundary crossing* and refers to participant descriptions of joining the university football team. This section explores the process by which players join the football team centring on the key sporting events that underpin this experience. A core focus of this theme involves outlining the football team as a specific CoP serving as both an environment of situated learning and one requiring player navigation.

Finally, building on the preceding discussion the third theme *being a fresher* places the spotlight on social practices specifically in relation to the community away from the football

pitch. Here the ritualised off-pitch practice of the club is argued to serve as a means of socialising new players and facilitating player binding to the team. Guided by participant reporting this aspect of the community's normalised practice is shown to be predicated on masculinity as manifested in a specific laddish guise. Together these three themes are represented in Figure 4.1 below illustrating the core components of the participants' lived experiences. However, this understanding will be revisited at the end of the thematic analysis following full discussion and a new model specifically outlining the *process* of transition will be introduced.
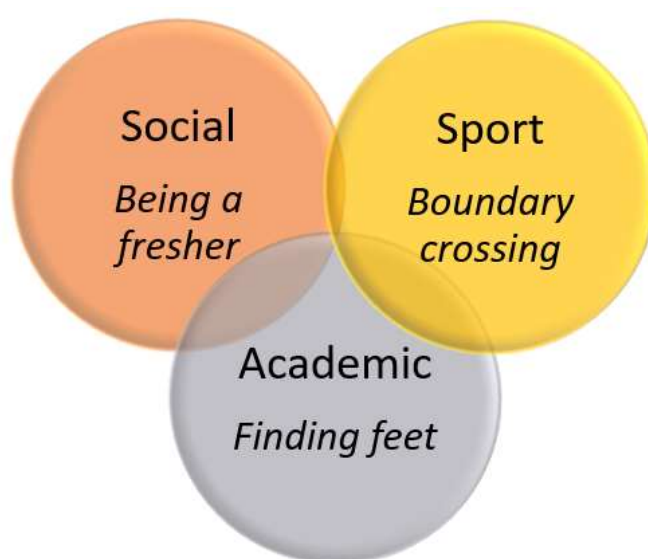
Figure 4.1 Primary themes: dimensions of transition

Before proceeding with the analysis it is first useful to briefly explain the generation of codes as a means of outlining the analytical procedure that was followed. As a guide I will elucidate, for example, coding related to the category of "freedom" which would subsequently form part of the overall theme "finding feet". Following the TA method outlined earlier (see pp.78-81) the initial stage involved familiarisation with the data as part of a pre-coding exercise (Denscombe, 2010). During this stage I reread transcripts taking notes and sketching rough patterns as a means of identifying potential codes. I labelled words, phrases and chunks of text that either occurred recurrently within and across the data or seemed significant for participants (Boyatzis, 1998; Denscombe, 2010). This generated a considerable but unwieldy chunk of initial analysis

necessitating refinement of the data as part of the next stage. More precisely, the code "living away from home" emerged following the consolidation of a number of potential codes referring to e.g. participants reporting opportunities presented by living alone, life away from parental watch and guardianship, and the daily structure of home life. In addition, code generation also involved focus on specific relevant lexis or phrasal use, for example, where participants used the following: "independent", "independence", "freedom", "doing what I want", etc.

Similarly, participation in night-life and partying was identified in player discussions of their initial university experience. Pre-coding here initially involved noting reference to both player descriptions of going out to night clubs in general, and more frequently to "fresher's week" partying which specifically involved a participant's first week living on campus and the accompanying (student) nightlife experience. Regarding the latter reporting specific lexis was also relevant with participants referring to the name of the university nightclub or the term "fresher's week" itself. These foci were amalgamated to form one coherent code: "going out".

The next stage involved presenting and organising the data with the aim to map connections and relationships between codes. Data coded under "living away from home" and "going out" were grouped under the category "freedom" as this term appeared to suitably represent the interconnection of the codes. Table 4.1., below provides a sample of this coding which demonstrates how my attention was drawn to how free choice appeared to underpin the participant's early period at university and the explanation and rationalisation of that free-choice.

Sample of data	Code	Category
at university it's unbelievable it's like I don't want to go to lecture it's not the end of the world you have very few like it's much much freedom so you wanna wake up at 12 no one's gonna mess if you wanna go out 3 days in a row no one's gonna say anything	Living away from home Going out	Freedom

Table 4.1. Sample of coding

It should be noted that coding was not as straightforward as described in this section. The
boundaries of codes and categories were loose and underwent revision and refinement several
times. This underscores TA as a method that is both iterative and reflexive (Denscombe, 2010).
Finally, the themes, or highest level of categorisation (Boyatzis, 1998), were formed through the
organisation and consideration of the identified categories. Table 4.2., represents the final
thematic map charting themes, categories and codes. The number in brackets indicates code
occurrence, and for reader guidance, gives an indication of data patterns across the entire dataset,
e.g. "living away from home" (14) indicates that the code was identified in 14 separate
interviews. It should be noted here that coding did not rest solely on frequency but also where
data pointed to something significant or worthy of discussion. For example, the code "non-
commitment" was not as frequently identified, however, as it concerned reporting involving
those participants who felt unable or unwilling to participate in the club's social practices it was
deemed significant. Specifically, it provided a counter to positive constructions of the team
environment that predominated the data.

Themes	Categories	Codes
Finding feet	Freedom & disorientation	Living away from home (14) Time management (8) Going out (10) Fending for self (13) Overwhelming (7) Different level of education (8)
	Here & There	Perceived cultural differences (4) Making friends (14) Comparisons with home (12) Not interacting with local community (3)
	Maturity	Mental strength (3) Discipline (2) Resourcefulness (9) Managing (14)
	Club support	Coursework support (8) Sport (as stress buffer) (2)
Boundary crossing: Entering the team	Passing the trials	Pressure to get in (6) Magnitude of trials (16) Competition (10) Pride (7) Celebrating (7) Friendship (11) Elation (4)
	Playing the first game	Coach Journey (8)

		Match outcome (9) Performance (6) Fresher rents (5)
	Here & There (On-pitch)	Pedigree (14) Perceived differences (9) Communication (4)
	Accepting the formal hierarchy	Doing chores tasks (7) Going by the rules (12) Banter (10) Rationalisation (7) Deference (9)
Being a fresher: socialisation and participation	The "Social"	(Losing) drinking games (9) Mates (11) Positive event (13) Chanting (4) Drunk (12) Getting humour (8) Bonding (11)
	Initiating	Punishment (12) Risk-taking (10) Surreal (3) Defending (9) Great night (9)
	Club practice: informal hierarchy	Participating (9) Commitment (12) Non-commitment (3) Laddishness (6)
	Co-national support	Providing advice (4) Source of knowledge (3) Back up (3) Familiarity (6) Shared language (6) Shared customs (2)

Table 4.2 Thematic map

4.1 Finding feet

This section focuses on reporting of experience as related to arriving at university. Coding afforded the creation of two interconnected binary categories that were coded as *freedom and disorientation*, and *here and there.* In addition it was also possible to identify two single contrasting categories: *maturity* and *club support.* As will be outlined in the following section there is much overlap between the categories and subsequently together, they feed the conceptualisation of the first primary theme.

Recalling their early experiences arriving on campus players noted the autonomy that moving to university brought, however this feeling of freedom emerged as somewhat of a double-edged sword. On one hand, players reported the ability to live their own life away from the constraints of the family home with "freedom" manifesting in a number of ways.

For example, as the newfound independence that players discovered on arriving on campus:

"In the terms of independence you're quite coming to living at home with parents and suddenly here your own, you can do whatever you want" (Paulo, 2017a).

"I really loved it because it was the first time living away from home so I dunno just freedom…here no one's messing it's a really fun experience" (Henry, 2017b).

Through participant reporting the notion of "doing whatever one wanted" is associated with interviewees emphasising their social experiences during the first weeks at university. Accordingly, the notion of "going out" formed part of the category of freedom. Participant emphasis on the social context of university is not regarded as surprising. An active social life has been noted as integral to the "student experience", in studies focusing on reporting both undergraduate experience (e.g. Holdsworth, 2009; Lewis, 2018; Maunder et al., 2013), and student expectations (Longden, 2006; Money et al., 2017;). Freedom further related to how participants organised their daily routines with regards to managing induction to university life and how they chose to participate as a student in higher education (e.g. attending modules, seminars, meeting tutors, etc.). For example, the apparent free choice of trajectory presented to players in the first several weeks is exemplified in the comments of one student who remarked: "…what do I do if I wake up if I go sleep more like just don't wanna wake up don't go lectures..." (Guy, 2018).

The notion of free choice in such descriptions also places emphasis on the role of individual agency in player perceptions of experience. Choice and agency is an omnipresent finding and will be returned to later in this section and in the focus on flashpoint stories (Chapter 5). On the other hand, however, was the disorientation that came with a player's newfound freedom and autonomy. More precisely, participants emphasised the need to get to grips with life away from home during the early stages of their time at the university. Quotes such as those below illustrate player perceptions of needing to manage on their own:

"There are a lot of jobs parents do you for you or whoever you live with they do for that you do not realise happens I'm gonna sound very spoiled here like washing up at home I have a dishwasher" (Steve, 2019).

"Living on my own I came here and I didn't know I just I wasn't really aware small things like how much you pay for laundry how in the week for food was hard to get a balance of everything" (Timo, 2018).

The need to manage the more mundane challenges presented by the new (and alien) reality of life on campus is equally borne out in existing literature charting the adjustment experiences of both British undergraduates and international students (e.g. Brown, L., & Holloway, 2008; Maunder et al., 2013; Spencer-Oatey et al, 2017; Wu & Hammond, 2011). In addition to these noted challenges participants particularly place emphasis on the transition from preceding learning institutions (e.g. college, high school, etc.), to university education. Indeed, participants reported the need to cope with the increased intellectual and mental demands required in a more advanced learning environment:

"but I didn't realise how difficult and it was sort of I've done maths all my life and I remember I've done maths all my life and the maths we had in the first term was completely different to anything we've seen adapting to this new style of learning was really difficult" (Brett, 2018).

One specific aspect of disorientation is time management. For example, having been asked what he felt was the most challenging aspect during his initial experience at university, "Jonny" from the 2018 intake responded by describing the need to cope with the increased workload:

"time management with (my course), even though like today I've only got 1 hour I've got 1 hour it's a lot of work you get 2 or 3 assignments a week and then exams I had an exam Wednesday and I had an exam week 10 of term 1…"

This quote may be regarded as exemplifying time management as a key aspect of participant recollections of disorientation. Overall, while the participants appeared to be free to choose how they approached their education the need to efficiently manage their academic schedules was reported as a significant challenge. Christie et al. (2008) note that differences in learning and teaching styles at university precipitates the undoing of earlier learning approaches in first year undergraduate students. Moreover, previous research has suggested that the enhanced intellectual and organisational demands presented by university education are a serious source of stress for new students (see Bewick et al., 2010; Christie, 2009). In this regard participants in

this research emphasised academic adjustment as an early impediment and overall such comments can be summarised as a need to learn to learn (Wingate, 2007).

4.1.1 Here & there: seeking belonging

The second category identified in the data was again considered a binary construct and was associated with spatio-temporality involving interviewees contrasting "there", e.g. an interviewee's home environment, with "here", the university and the local area. This was directly related to the category of freedom and disorientation in that there was an association between the unfamiliar and unstructured nature of here and the familiar and structured nature of there. As noted above one example of this manifested in interviewees comparing their previous experiences of education with the academic environment of university. However, also prominent in the data were perceptions and descriptions of geographical and social differences as reported by both British and international members of the team:

> "Well erm I grew up in [city] obviously a huge city it was weird for me to come to *the university* and *local city* it's a campus uni I believed it was not difficult but different at the beginning to have this closed bubble" (Frank, 2017a).

> "So growing up in [city] it's a very very big town a lot of stuff to do a lot of friends and I commuted every day long distance…" (Gabriel, 2018).

In these two examples the criterion for comparison is size with both interviewees explicitly stating the fact that they come from large cities. Other players, however, chose to draw comparison with their previous university (if studying for a Master's degree), with size again occurring as a relevant factor. Despite different focus it can be argued that underpinning these comments is the need to adjust to a new "space", with home or a previous university or school serving as a comparative reference point. Higher education students have been categorised as being in a state of liminality on account of their transition between youth and full adulthood and past experience has to be shown to heavily influence how new students make sense of university campuses and their immediate environs (Holton, 2015). In turn, a sense of place has been connected with a sense of self, or more succinctly, understanding of place contributes to student identity construction (Chow & Healey, 2008). For interviewees the campus is framed as

a specific space representing a blank canvas of sorts that presents both challenges and opportunities. As will be illustrated in the coming sections descriptions of overcoming challenges allowed for identity construction centred on the portrayal of a mature (and masculine) self.

Compounding the disorientation presented by *here* was the fracture of home social networks and the onus on the interviewees to form new friendship groups. Indeed, "friendship" consistently emerged across interviews as a prerequisite of early university life and could subsequently be associated with disorientation. Friendship involves emphasis being placed on making new friends and the role of existing friends. This is neatly illustrated in the following quote:

> "I remember talking to all my friends at the time who had obviously gone to loads of different universities around the country and I thought this is my group of friends I've got here and I don't really wanna leave that so when I came here I was quite nervous especially at the start when you make friends but you always compare it to your old friends at home" (Tom, 2019).

Transition has been postulated as occurring as a consequence of some form of discontinuity or change in an individual's life circumstances (Crafter & Maunder, 2012). In this context, spatial change as a form of social dislocation may be regarded as a significant rupture in participants circumstances. While the positive impact of retaining parental support has been noted (Wintre & Yaffre, 2000), the forming of quality relationships with university peers is regarded as highly beneficial for first year students (e.g. Bochner et al., 1977; Buote et al., 2007; Maunder et al., 2013). For example, Friedlander et al. (2007) found that for the Canadian students in their study new friends were a more important source of support than parents, while Buote et al. (2007), also looking at Canadian higher education, argue that their data suggests making new friends can lead to the enlargement of a student's support network. Indeed, consensus in the literature suggests that social integration and the reestablishment of support networks can positively influence both a student's experience, and the likelihood of that student completing their degree (e.g. Christie, 2009; Thomas, 2002; Wilcox et al., 2005).

Such findings, although intuitively reasonable, do not offer particular nuance regarding the exact nature of social support for first year undergraduates at university. Analysis of the interview data in this work revealed "social support" to be a complex phenomenon conflictingly associated at times with both short term necessity and function, and a desire to belong (to the right group) longer term. In keeping with the arrival at university as a daunting experience, the process of meeting new people was reported as both pressurised and precarious. Consider the following examples discussing the role of flatmates as potential sources of support:

"My flatmates see a lot of people have said to me that they had a very negative experience with their flatmates noise mess mess is the biggest one people have been griping with over just general politeness but my flatmates I've been so lucky cos all of em are very normal individuals" (Steve, 2019).

"I would say my hall mates themselves were probably not as similar to me as I would have hoped or maybe expected and so coming in as a fresher thinking I got into the football in my first week within two or three weeks all my mates at uni were either from the football club or associated friends with people I was with in the football club…" (Arron, 2017b).

First year undergraduates live on campus and thus must share kitchens with other students. A natural consequence of this organisation of accommodation is that individuals cannot pick and choose who they wish to be placed with. As illustrated by Arron, being placed with dissimilar flatmates can pose an issue with regards to finding one's place. Indeed, the emphasis placed on finding the *right* social network is also evidenced by those players who attributed themselves as being lucky on account of being at university with friends from home, and thus afforded the privilege of managing the early period of university with a previously established relationship. Wilcox et al. observe that during transition to university "…students have an urgent need to belong, to identify, with others…" (2005, p.713). Recent work suggests a multi-faceted notion of belonging with emphasis placed on belonging in an academic sense (Meehan & Howells, 2018), and belonging with regards to student community (Maunder, 2018). Empirically, this is supported by Maunder et al. (2013) who found that the students in their study reported associating with groups they identified with while distancing themselves from others very early into their university journeys.

4.1.2 Receiving support and being mature

Building on the suggested need to belong the above excerpt from "Arron" reveals another aspect of player recollection that could be associated with early social support, specifically, the role of the football club as an early (and important) friendship network. The greater role of the football team for interviewees is complicated in addition to being omnipresent in the data and will be returned to throughout the analysis. However, in terms managing academic expectations fellow players are reported as helping with coursework and assignment management. The following excerpt provides an example of how players described this support:

> "…you obviously get a lot of contact with 2nd and 3rd years so in terms of school actually university work I had one guy who actually helped so much I actually achieved really good grades in the first term without studying a lot…" (Frank, 2017a)

Other players made similar remarks and specifically told of the support they had received from older players who were undertaking the same degree and thus had knowledge of the assignments the new players were expected to produce. For a small number of players this support was suggested to be integral to their university experience as their ability to continue higher education was directly attributed to the support received from the club. For example, consider "Jonny's" description of his initial experiences:

> "100% first few weeks I was actually hating it I was like getting a lot of assignments I just couldn't do it erm and if it wasn't for football then I potentially wouldn't have stayed I would have just left and maybe come back and be a different course something". (Jonny, 2018)

Previous research in varsity sport in a North American context has provided similar findings of academic support from senior to rookie players (Gravelle et al., 2014). Moreover, characterising varsity sports teams as CoPs (Wenger, 1998), Galipaeu & Trudel (2006) illustrated the potentially multi-faceted nature of the group's practice relating to mutual engagement both on and off the field with senior players supporting new players academically as part of community practice. While relevant the constitution and function of the football club as a CoP will be returned to for a full discussion in the next section.

Overall, where dislocation and the fracture of home social networks could be connected with the category of disorientation, the football club and football appear to fill the player's social void in addition to serving as an antidote to the unstructured nature of "here". Regarding the latter point, beyond course assistance players also credit membership of the football team with providing weekly structure and a discipline to their early management of university life. This aspect of club support is well illustrated in the following example:

> "…but I did have a slightly down period but yeah also football kept me going because though sometimes you just don't wanna wake up and train you just rather stay in bed and sleep but having this far football kinda being compulsory for me it gave me a discipline and kept me going because I just couldn't slouch in bed well I could but then I wouldn't make it in the team and I would feel like I've failed my goal so yeah football helped me to stick to it and also the social events they help a lot because sometimes you don't really have plans…" (Gabriel, 2018).

Learning to study independently is noted as a challenging process for new students (Christie et al., 2013), and findings from studies focusing on students' psychological well-being during transition to university pinpoint the first term as the most stressful period they will experience (Bewick et al, 2010). Thus, the emphasis placed on the role of the football club by participants with regards to academic and institutional adjustment during the first crucial weeks after arrival should not be seen as insignificant. To some degree the football club in both direct (teammate support) and indirect (providing structure) forms can be seen as substituting for lost parental guidance in player reporting and thus has further relevance with regards to the club's role in a player's overall transitional experience at university.

In contrast to the above outlined supportive role of the football club in facilitating a participant's initial transition, the final category in the data related to notions of *maturity*. In essence this centred on participants reporting how they had risen to the challenge of independent university life and demonstrated their ability to function as an independent adult (e.g. through mental strength, self-discipline, stoicism, etc.). Consider the following examples:

> "er the first two weeks a lot of drinking and not much work but then work sorta picks up especially on my course and er sorta got into a routine only going out on football nights out and then going to football training and then time aside of that was predominately spent on my course cancelled my

Netflix subscription because I had no time to watch it…yeah sort of had many assignments 2 3 4 assignments a week and got into routine of looking after myself cooking washing yeah. (Brett, 2018).

"well it's definitely self-motivation because no one else is gonna motivate you erm so I was used to wake early and go to school but high school so you have to go like your teachers know your name like know if you work or not here I'm doing management at the business school so we are like 500 so we have lectures of like 300 400 people the tutor doesn't know you if you don't show up they're not gonna say something it's just at the end of the exams it will be bad for you" (Guy, 2018).

As illustrated in the above excerpts maturity involves managing both the academic demands of university by prioritising work ahead of leisure, and overcoming the challenges associated with independent living (e.g. doing washing, cooking, handling bills, etc.). With such reporting, participants portray themselves as resourceful in the face of spatial, emotional and intellectual uncertainty. This can be related to notions of student independence and the "student experience" (Holdsworth, 2009; Lewis, 2018; Sabri, 2011). More precisely, university attendance as a rites of passage associated with adulthood has typically been associated with middle class students in the United Kingdom (Christie, 2009; Holdsworth, 2009; Leathwood, 2006), with the relationship between going away to university and obtaining independence ubiquitous for students (Holdsworth, 2009, p.1858). However, more pertinent with regards to the young male participants in this study are discourses related to masculine ideals of independence and self-sufficiency (e.g. Anderson & McCormack, 2018; Leathwood, 2006). Leathwood argues that ideals of independent living and learning are rooted in Western notions of masculinity (2006, p.613). This point also speaks directly to the framing of initial university experience as a challenge that was successfully overcome (p.6). Hence, self-portrayals of maturity as pervasive in participant responses can be seen as gendered in character.

For a small number of players maturity manifested in reporting previous experience as a facilitator of adjustment. This ranges from responses covering previous migratory experience to prior university attendance or claims involving particular life circumstances. Regarding the latter point consider the following comment given as a response to a question directly inquiring about the participant's move to campus:

"I found it quite easy because I didn't really get much help at home really to be honest I was cooking ironing doing cleaning all on my own to be honest so I found that quite easy living in a room by myself I don't really mind it was quite easy I didn't find any of that stuff particularly challenging or daunting". (Tom, 2019).

For these participants maturity and independence is not carried through claims of successfully managing early university life but rather it is self-attributed through particular experience or personal characteristics. In the above comment Tom's parents are indirectly framed as not performing the expected role as caregivers and the participant's resourcefulness is constructed as pre-existing his arrival at university. In this sense it would hard to apply the term "rites of passage" that is often equated with university attendance to this particular player's early university experience as independent living is clearly downplayed in his response. Nevertheless, such framing can clearly be related to an independent and thus a masculine self (Leathwood, 2006).

Maturity as a category of related codes, and in relation to the other described categories, may be seen as best representing the notion of agency with respect to academic transition. More precisely, players frame their experiences as involving overcoming specific hurdles and not being dependent on others. Where dependency is described i.e. the football club providing structure, transitional experience is still underscored by the player's choices and specific navigation of the described period. Overall, this section has illuminated participant reporting related to their experiences of arriving at university and thus provides the context for the player membership in the football team.

4.2 Boundary crossing: entering the team

This section will focus on player experience joining and becoming members of the football club. Following the line of inquiry directed towards their first experiences at university the focus of the interviews was then directed towards player experiences joining the team. Coding from the responses allowed the identification of four categories that subsequently underpin the overall theme: *passing the trials* which involves coding associated with the football club's trials which are held at the start of every year. Participants frequently referred to and described (often

in detail) this moment focusing on the magnitude of the trials (in terms of numbers and competitiveness), descriptions of emotion (e.g. elation, joy, etc.), related to discovering that they had successfully passed the trials and references to footballing pedigree. This section is important for transition as it involves descriptions of a key gateway event through which participants are able to offer particular evaluations and claim identities relevant to the experience.

The next category related to *formal hierarchy* and it is with this focus that the club as a CoP is introduced in full. The final part of the section will focus specifically on coding related to the players' *first games* and general *on-pitch* experiences. Regarding the former this category related to more than just the first game played by the participant but also the associated aspects of being a club member, for example, being introduced to specific match-day rituals that form part of the CoP's shared repertoire blurring the boundary between sport and social. In essence, these sections illuminate player reporting of the navigation of existing social structures and their introduction to specific community practices.

Before commencing with the analysis it is useful to consider an important finding that emerged in the data. This was the tendency for players to focus on landmark events or critical incidents relating to, for example, sport or social based events, when reconstructing particular experiences. Placing emphasis on key events (as reported) afforded the researcher the opportunity to map player trajectory within the community. The rationale for such categorisation was driven by one of the primary aims of the project, which is specifically: to build an understanding of new player transition in teams. These incidents (and overall trajectory) are visualised in the below diagram:
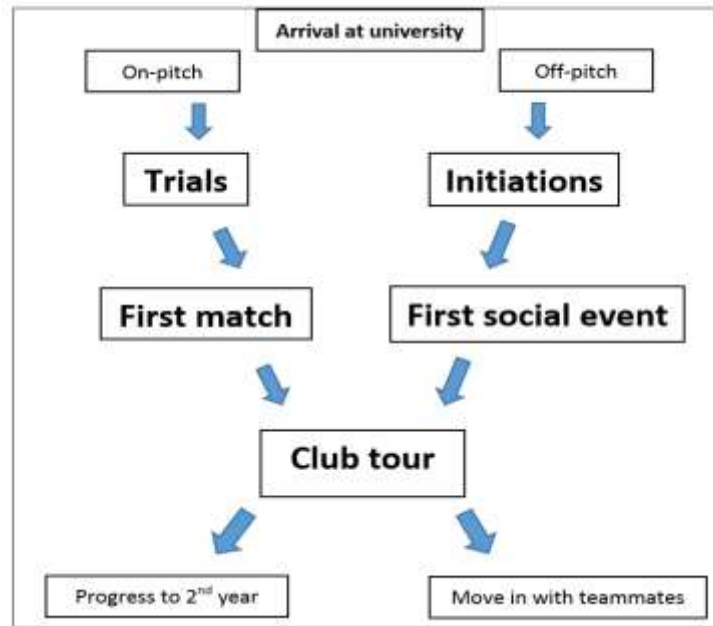
Figure 4.2 Stages: player journeys

4.2.1 Passing the trials

Players reported the magnitude of the trials both in terms of number of triallists (or competitors) involved and as a personal achievement. Specifically, participants described a trial process involving "hundreds" of other young men hopeful of making the team. Across interviews descriptions involve emphasis being placed on getting through the first to the second day where 11 aside matches are played and ultimately, team selection occurs. The following example is representative of the scale that is attributed to the trials by participants:

"I think in total there was like more than 300 or 400 it think and then to turn up there and then to think I was I was intimidated I was surprised am I really gonna make this I mean four hundred people and then you turn up and there you do some small drills like passing" (Timo, 2018).

Part of the coding is associated with participant perceptions regarding the ability of other footballers and the (naturally) competitive nature of the trial event. Regarding the latter point, self-belief emerged in the data with participants pointing to their own ability and emphasising how they had played during their particular trial. Across interviews there is a tendency for these descriptions to be constructed as matter of fact and hence without excessive self-aggrandisement. This appeared to be at odds with reporting alluding to a player's pedigree, i.e.

player claims of past experience which will be discussed later in this section. The following quote is representative of participant reporting of a successful triallist:

"I just played well and worked really hard and I sensed by towards the end of the game that I was gonna get into the club a couple of boys had talked to me on the side and said you have played really well you don't need to work so hard just relax so it was very comfortable really if that answers your question" (Jordan, 2017b).

However, alongside such self-appraisals of performance and ability is the distinction that participants appeared to draw between themselves and those considered "non-footballers", particularly when describing the first day of trials. Descriptions of the ability of these players tend to be derisive and founded on the assumption that these players do not belong. Moreover, such differentiation did not solely involve negative perceptions of ability but also noting the inappropriate clothing worn by these players. Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) approach to analysing identity construction in interaction proves useful here in illustrating the identity claims of the participants and specifically, their indexicality principle which in essence is predicated on the assumption that in interactional contexts "…speakers positions themselves and others as particular kinds of people" (2005, p.595). Such positioning can, for example, manifest overtly through direct claims or implicitly through presupposition. The below excerpt may be seen as representative of descriptions of "non-footballers" with the participant using overt indexing to position self in relation to other:

"Yeah the trials are funny because everyone turns up people who turn up in trainers who aren't footballers who saw the event on facebook who just thought they'd pop along then you have erm people who know what they are doing and then that's funny I remember maybe it's quite intimidating at the start because you have all those because you don't know whose whose you just have a bunch of guys in their football kit looking at you at every move…" (Gabriel, 2018).

Notable in the quote, however, is identity positioning in relation to the actual members of the football team. Here, the participant does not merely position "non-footballers" in relation to himself but also with respect to those official members who are controlling the trials. As "real" footballers these others are implicitly positioned as powerful and experts on account of their ability to make selections (or deselections). Through such indexing players created contrastive identity positions as a means of illustrating who they were not (non-footballers), and who they

wished to be (team members). In this regard the achievement of navigating the first transitional hurdle is emphasised by participants.

As there is a scarcity of literature looking specifically at how individuals report sporting success at varsity level findings from professional sport can provide a necessary reference point. For example, self-projections of humility and balance have been noted as preferred stances by athletes in post-match media interviews (File, 2015), while Kilger (2017, p.5) notes the balance between self-confidence and humbleness that athletes must strike in "sporting hero" narratives. Moreover, "hard work" is also suggested to be a core tenet in sporting narratives (Baker et al., 2015). While the participants in this study are neither professional athletes and nor were they conducting media interviews, it is argued that self-confidence manifests through comparisons with non-footballers, and hard work and humility through what appeared to be restrained reporting of a player's successful trial event. Thus there does appear to be parallels with the available literature in how they describe their experiences. Additionally, the construction of success on the pitch can be viewed as the portrayal of an athletic identity with participants emphasising their sporting prowess and the importance of the achievement (Brewer et al., 1993). In this respect similarities can be drawn with the mature-self portrayed as overcoming the challenges of university, and the footballing-self beating hundreds of other competitors to secure a place on the team. These sentiments, recurrent across the data, provide a window into understanding how players reconstructed their initial experiences with the team.

4.2.2 Indexing shared identities

Associated with the trial experience are player recollections of how they felt on being informed that they had made the team. Players reported a range of positive emotions ranging from happiness to relief. While this finding should not be considered surprising it does serve to illuminate both the emphasis that participants placed on needing to make the team, and further identity construction related to *being a footballer*. More precisely, players emphasised the need to play football at university as illustrated in the following excerpt:

"It's hard to describe I just had to if I didn't get in the uni team I would have literally looked elsewhere I don't know would I would do in a week if I couldn't train couldn't play that's literally I enjoy really doing and I enjoy the work and I enjoy coming out but it's nothing compared to the football it's my favourite time of the week definitely" (Tom, 2019).

Indeed, playing football at university is not reported as merely taking advantage of an opportunity but rather a specific goal that participants had before arriving on campus. This can be linked with both the notion of belonging (through teammate support) that was introduced in the previous section and also again to identity construction with particular relevance to athletic identity (Brewer et al., 1993). While Wilcox et al. (2005, p.713) suggest that the first term is characterised by a need to negotiate a new identity as a university student these findings suggest (along with other aspects of the players' reporting) a tendency for participants to reconstruct a footballing or athletic component of their identity in the context of university. One remarkably consistent aspect of interviewee responses in this respect was the explicit identity claims made by players that serve to frame their contributions related to this topic. Consider the following examples (my emphasis added):

Dan: "moving on to the team itself erm how did you come to play for the team"

Jonny: "well erm *well I've literally played football all my life* I grew up in a football based family sort of thing"

Dan: "ok so how is that you came to play for the mens team how did that happen?"

Guy: "well I used to play football since I'm young so *I've always played football* whenever I was and in actual clubs or in my high school it depends so by coming here at [the university] I knew that they had a team and I there was no way I wasn't gonna play football…"

Dan: "Ok moving forward just onto the men's team itself so how did you come to play for the men's team?"

Andrew: "So *I've played football all my life* erm so I was really eager to play football at uni so I went to trials and made it through to the next one and the extended trial and then got in so it was quite a rigorous process but erm so that's how"

Following Bucholtz and Hall's (2004) indexicality principle such explicit claims clearly constitute overt indexing by the players. For these players their "being" footballers is attributed

with a constant and stable quality and thus is an unquestioned facet of their identity.

Furthermore, players attached considerable prestige to playing for the football club, in some

cases making negative comparisons with, in the words of one player, the "pleb sports". This

finding again underscores the interrelatedness of the university experience, team membership,

identity construction and transition to the team. More specifically, varsity sport is argued to be

stratified according to the levels of prestige associated with particular sports. For example, in

British universities, sports such as football and rugby are noted as being particularly highly

regarded (Sparkes et al., 2007). Overall participant reporting related to this point is succinctly

illustrated in the following example:

> "I've got the feeling so we've got the best stash all our stash is all Nike and stuff I'd say we were up
> there one of the best sports I'd say that when people you say you're are with the football club they are
> like oh that's pretty cool" (Paulo, 2017a)

Status (and the associated implications for identity) in this regard can be seen as being two

pronged: first, it is possible to attribute membership of the football club with Bourdieusian

notions of symbolic and social capital (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986). Regarding the former, one

component of material and symbolic capital lies with the clothing and garments that official

members are able to wear. These range from football shirts and training tops to casual sweaters

emblazoned with the name of the club. Following De Visser and McDonnell (2012; 2013), this

can be reframed according to the notion of masculine capital with the wearing of club artefacts

demonstrating the accruement of such capital as earned through alignment with approved

masculine behaviours. Second, intrinsically linked to the preceding point is the social capital

accumulated from aligning with hegemonic masculinity through participation in competitive

sport and the broadening of a player's friendship network (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005;

Steinfeldt & Steinfeldt, 2012). This latter point is reinforced by participants reporting

membership of the football club as being positively received by other students and the

expansion of networks through membership. This is neatly illustrated in the following

examples:

"…what I've found with [the university] its very well perceived to be in a sports team to do sports on top of your lectures whereas in France no one really cares if you are in the French national team or when you are local football club and the school won't rush you to go further" (Gabriel, 2018)

"I didn't know about so all that stuff just helps socially and academically helps and in terms of socially in terms of getting popularity or something it's just that when you say you're in the football team people are like 'he's cool we have to hang out with him'" (Frank, 2017a)

Players reported membership of the football team as opening doors to socialising opportunities that might ordinarily be beyond the reach of a typical fresher. More precisely, while new players may be regarded as already at an advantage concerning social networking because of the possibilities to bond with new teammates, the ability to attend house parties hosted by senior players was also noted. One specific manifestation of social capital in this respect was the historical ties that participants reported between football club and the university women's netball team. Hence, membership can be viewed as affording members a streamlined opportunity to experience hedonistic "student life" in the form of partying, drinking and sexual encounters. Nevertheless, in harmony with the view that identities are multiplicitous and fluid later analysis will reveal how such positioning was also relevant *within* the team environment. Hence, identity construction transcends more than mere representation of player and non-player but also as determined by perceived alignment (or non-alignment) with community practices.

Finally, as a counter to the prevailing sentiments associated with "getting in", it is useful to consider the perspective of a participant who initially failed the trials. The following excerpt was taken from the interview with "Damon" (2019):

Damon: "…I didn't have the best game so they I didn't get in so I played for the development squad for a couple of games and I got asked to come to training at Tuesday morning at 7 and I just kept working hard and I trained with the 4th team and eventually I just consolidated my place

Dan: And how did it feel when you found out you hadn't made the team

Damon: Again I was kinda expecting it but at the same time I was pretty gutted like especially because I was told I was one of the two best goalkeepers to not get in 1 of the 2 best fresher goalkeepers it was disappointing but obviously I could pick myself up with the development squad

The participant's description of disconsolation both reinforces the importance players attached to being part of the club in addition to providing a further example of alignment with sporting narratives, i.e. overcoming adversity through hard work (Baker et al, 2015).

4.2.3 Formal hierarchy

Recurrent in the data is the suggestion that social structures exist within the club and that their existence is rationalised and accepted by participants. This is an important consideration as club structure is where a sports team CoP can be separated from other CoPs emerging in different domains (Culver & Trudel, 2008; Wenger, 1998). Indeed, it is with the identification of particular structures that we are able to categorise membership (e.g. apprentice, expert, etc.), and theorise trajectory through participation within the community (e.g. periphery to core). The existence of a particular CoP is argued to be dependent on three core components: mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). I argue that not only can these integral elements be identified from player reporting but also that they are multi-faceted and manifest according to specific transitional experience (e.g. sport, academic, social). Mutual engagement across transitional dimensions is illustrated in Figure 4.3 below:
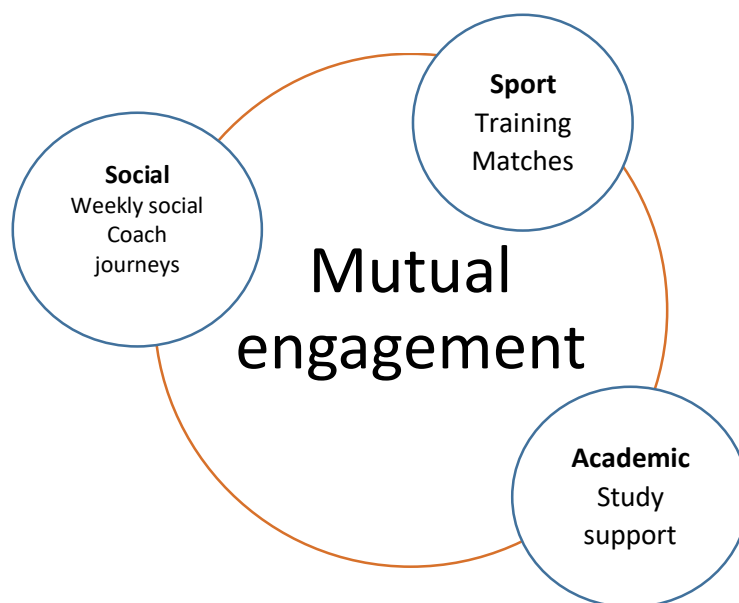

Figure 4.3 Mutual engagement across contexts of transition

Analysis revealed the social environment (hence community) to be complex and comprised of two interrelated hierarchies with practice associated with specific dimensions of transition. More formally the team can be compared with the traditional power structures that are found within sports teams (Benson et al., 2016) with the club captain and team captains at the top followed by regular players below and finally the new freshers at the bottom of the hierarchy (see Fig. 4.4). However, enmeshed with this described structure is a more informal hierarchy that I argue is predicated on (social) commitment to the club. This structure involves players that are, according to different levels of participation, termed committed, semi-committed members and finally, non-committed players (see Fig. 4.9.).

Having introduced the concept of CoP as operationalised in this research attention will now turn to providing evidence for and illuminating the formal hierarchy within the team. This focus is integral to understanding transition as a process underpinned by socialising factors as it illustrates the first aspects of community structure that new players encounter, and subsequently are required to navigate. Indeed, players openly reported the existence of a team hierarchy either following direct inquiry, or as a consequence of discussing different topics where power was a salient factor (e.g. initiations, socials, etc.). For example, the following comment is representative of direct discussions relating to hierarchy:

> "erm there definitely is from the club captain and ******* used to be club captain and you can tell where he was club captain in his 3rd year and he's gone to do a masters he's definitely a big name in the club and obviously ******* (*current club captain*) and then you've got the 4 team captains…" (Jonny, 2018)

The existence of a formal hierarchy is not surprising as power structures in team sport have been the focus of studies looking specifically at sports team environments and also those papers seeking to theorise the function of such hierarchies (e.g. Benson et al., 2016; Loughead et al., 2006). Regarding formal leadership, the role of the "captain" is a ubiquitous feature of team sport albeit with responsibilities differing from sport to sport (Cotterill & Fransen, 2016). Leaders are recognised to perform a crucial role in sports teams, for example, effective leadership strengthens team identification (Steffens et al., 2015), confidence and motivation

(Fransen et al., 2015), and performance and cohesion (Vincer & Loughead, 2010). Captains are assumed to "take the lead both on and off the field" (Fransen et al., 2015, p.6), and consequently, are considered to be highly influential members of the team.

The formal hierarchical structure argued to exist in this research context includes various captains: club captain, first team, second team, third team, and fourth team. From the perspective of CoP, leadership must have intrinsic legitimacy in a particular community (Wenger, 1998). In this context such legitimacy is realised through a shared understanding of leadership positions in football, and the fact that the respective captains are voted into their positions by members of the club. However, a notable point is that it is the sole responsibility of these captains to pick their respective teams. This is a significant departure from professional and other forms of elite amateur football where team selection is undertaken by members of the coaching staff. Although captains and vice captains may represent a considerable social and symbolic presence in any particular team (Cotterill & Fransen, 2016), it is uncommon for them to make official team selections. In this context the team captains may be seen as being able to exert an unusual amount of power when compared with other forms of football.

Furthermore, a clear distinction can be drawn between CoPs formed in this way, and CoPs in other sports team environments where coaching staff are present. For example, Galipeau & Trudel (2006) suggest that where coaches are present (i.e. in professional sport), a team may involve both a coach CoP and an athlete CoP involving constant negotiation between communities underpinned by power relations and team goals (i.e. joint enterprise). The co-existence of multiple CoPs in sports teams has been framed along the lines of Wenger's (1998) notion of *Constellations of Practice* (see Wilson, 2010). The revelation of the team as essentially "coachless" is a useful finding as hierarchical structure and leadership in varsity sports teams has received scant attention. More specifically, where coaches in teams are argued to be socially separated from athletes (Galipeau & Trudel, 2005), the captains and senior leaders in the football club are not only immersed in the social side of the club, but actively lead traditionalised practices (e.g. singing the "ranger", leading drinking games, overseeing

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initiations, etc.). As will be illustrated in the coming sections this is especially important with regards to core group composition and privilege.

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              ┌──────────┐
              │   Club   │
              │ Captain  │
              └──────────┘
              ┌──────────┐
              │   Team   │
              │ Captains │
              └──────────┘
    ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
    │        Regular players          │
    └─────────────────────────────────┘
              ┌──────────┐
              │ Freshers │
              └──────────┘
```
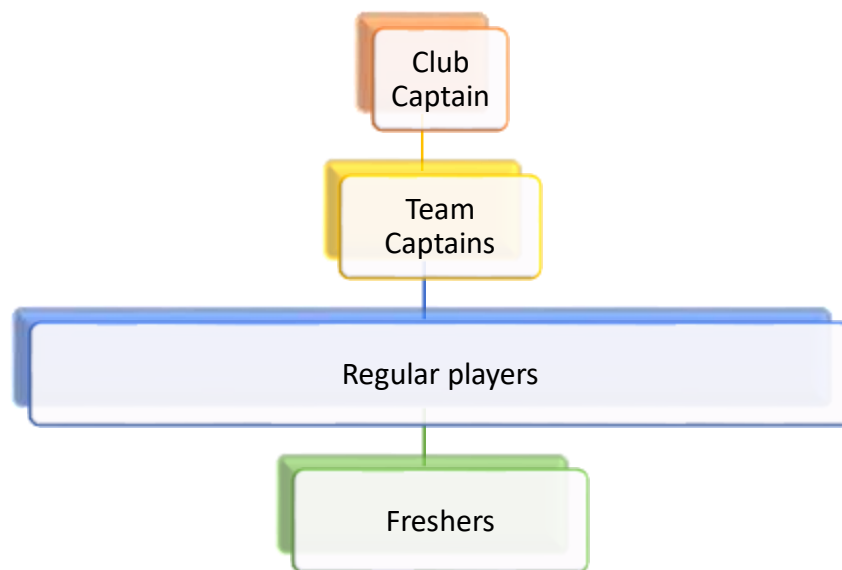
Figure 4.4 Formal club hierarchy

The leadership group itself can also be further structured hierarchically with the first team and club captain representing the most influential members of the club. For example, as captain of the primary team in the club, the first team captain can request players from any of the teams below should he feel they are good enough to play in his team. The other captains cannot request first team players in the same fashion. Finally, it is worth noting all of the captains are in their third year at university, and only a third year can become club captain. Thus age and experience are key factors in power distribution. Through attributed status, privilege and power these players are argued to constitute the core of the community with regards to the sporting side of the club. Attention will now turn to the fresher (or apprentice) experience within the community and the hierarchical hurdles that are navigated by these players and the practices that are learned.

4.2.4 Navigating entry: "Dirty jobs"

Shared repertoire refers to the behaviours, routines, stories, etc., that are practiced by communities and developed over time (Wenger, 1998). Within the club as community shared repertoires emerged in the form of social rituals and club traditions. One such tradition learned

through participation within the community is the need for freshers to take care of chores such as cleaning kits and carrying sporting equipment to both training sessions and match days. Examples of such tasks are reported below:

> "So when you are a fresher you have the dirty chores you have to wash the kit make it ready for game day you always have to you are in charge of the ball bags and the bibs for every training session…" (Gabriel, 2018).

> "…at training if we are doing a seven a side match and the goals aren't in position they are like who's a fresher can you go and move the goals please it's no big deal" (Brett, 2018).

Parker and Manley note: "football traineeship in England has been historically replete with images of physicality, discipline and subservience" (2017, p.9). For example, youth players cleaning the dirty boots of senior players as a means of instilling in them a sense of responsibility and humility is a common trope in British football media. Parker and Manley's (2017) study of academy players revealed not only particular expectations of youth players to carry out tasks but greater expectations of subservience placed on first year academy players than second year. In a similar vein, the requirement of freshers to perform mundane jobs can be seen as both a demonstration of power through reinforcing status, and a means for new players to display commitment and deference to the existing power structure. From the perspective of CoP this expectation of freshers can be categorised as an *on-pitch* tradition and a specific community practice in that domain.

4.2.5 Navigating entry: Banter

In addition to the "dirty jobs" given to new players and following the experiences of previous participants, freshers bearing the brunt of team banter was reported in the data:

> "a lot of the a lot not really abuse but like a lot of the stick is targeted towards you as a fresher I think you just get it that wherever team you are in…" (Jonny, 2018).

As illustrated in the above comment team banter was rationalised a part of club life and equally, as not unique to the football team. Banter was reported to occur in multiple club contexts such as the changing rooms, in training or on the coach journey to games and thus a shared repertoire across dimensions of engagement. One manifestation of banter within the team was in the

WhatsApp group where players reported discussions generally involving football, girls and banter. While some of the players (especially more senior), noted that anybody within the club was free to post comments on the chat, responses from other players suggested that contributing to the group was more complicated for freshers. For example, being apprehensive of older player's "banter" some participants reported being quieter on the group as a fresher. One perspective of banter can gleaned from the below comments:

"…they did make us understand when you're a fresher make sure you know you're a fresher you can't just drop in a joke can't make fun of third years" (Paulo, 2017a).

"…if you are a fresher people make fun of you and no matter what you post people make fun of you I find it really funny […] so right now my job is to make fun of freshers and especially I'm one of the most involved so I'm allowed I've got I'm allowed to be mean to freshers" (Henry, 2017b).

However, the severity of this banter was downplayed and WhatsApp banter was portrayed as good natured. Reporting of banter ranged from being described as "equal" between teammates to just "general jokes" and fun. One player appeared to relish the opportunity to reciprocate the teasing directed towards him:

"…and you kinda incite banter towards someone else then they kinda enjoy it it's a bit like David and Goliath you go for it and they like it and it stimulates everyone it doesn't make you feel let's say people don't get easily offended in the football club" (Gabriel, 2018).

The available literature spanning both gender research and sports studies suggests that banter is a practice associated with (laddish) masculinity and pervasive in all male groups, particularly in sport (e.g. Adams, 2019; Nichols, 2018; Thompson et al., 2015:Wolfers et al., 2017). Banter is typified as a form of jocular interaction which is predicated on impolite or insulting language (Haugh & Bousfield, 2012). It has been conceptualised as both a "regulatory tool" (Nichols, 2018), and mechanism for team cohesion (Wolfers et al., 2017). Regarding the latter point, Easthope (in Wagg, 2004, p.88), sees banter as the dual display of idealised masculine aggression in concert with a demonstration of intimate knowledge of the target. Thus, banter has the potential to strengthen bonds within the group and can be categorised as a socialising strategy accordingly. From a CoP perspective it can be viewed as part of the community's shared repertoire and for the players in this study there was both an acceptance of place, and an

understanding that, in time, they would have the power to direct banter to new players, for example:

"so there is definitely hierarchy and there has to be though when I'm third year I'll give shit to freshers its crucial though it's like respect deference I like it though it makes sense initiations and everything [social] and there is a hierarchy absolutely the freshers can talk but they get shit for it" (Paulo, 2017a).

Interview data provides evidence for banter being a core feature of the linguistic repertoire of the group, and as such a specific practice needed to be learned as part of team transition. Moreover, findings from this data further support the shift in meaning relating to off-pitch and on-pitch contexts. Specifically, while players reported being able to engage in banter with senior players as illustrated in the example on the preceding page, in certain contexts it appeared to be off-limits, e.g. when senior players were adopting leadership positions in training or in matches.

While it is not argued that these contexts represent two separate communities of practice or even a constellation of practice (see Wilson, 2010 for an example from rugby), what can be stated is that the community's jointly negotiated enterprise (Wenger, 1998), as understood by the group, varies according to the boundaries of the club bar, the football pitch and the academic experience as a whole (represented in Figure 4.5). Which, in turn, influences the shared repertoire that is developed over time. Simply put, while the goal on match day is win to football matches the goal during socials is, for lack of a better description, to have fun and to get drunk. This again highlights the multi-faceted nature of transition and the interconnectedness of the participants' experiences attending university and joining the team.

Indeed, referring back to the support received by senior players as reported by participants and viewing the football club in this research as a CoP the practice of providing new players with academic support constitutes part of the club's shared repertoire and is notable for several reasons: 1, it serves as a demonstration of hierarchy and power and thus as one part of the introduction to the community; 2, following from the first point as a socialising measure it serves to bind new players to the group as a consequence of dependency and gratitude; and 3,

as evidenced by participant reporting from all fresher cohorts it is a perpetuating practice learned by freshers in their first year who subsequently take the place of the *provider* of support in their 2nd and 3rd years. Equally this point can be compared with player understandings of power as described above. They learn the practice of doing dirty jobs and being on the receiving end of banter as part of community expectations and enforcement of hierarchy. Carried with this understanding is that in time they will take the role of expert and "teacher" within the community. Indeed, the connection between socialising practice and community (identity) continuation will be returned to throughout the analysis.

Figure 4.5 Jointly negotiated enterprise

4.2.6 First game and playing for the club

Reporting related to the trial experience was then followed by inquiry into a participant's experiences with the team. Responses often involved a player recalling his first match playing for the club. For some players this took the form of participating in a match that was described (and subsequently confirmed by senior players), as a club tradition. More precisely, following trials (taking place on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of the first week of term), the club head to a university in the English Midlands where each team (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th), plays against the host university football club's respective teams. This was constructed as a club tradition

Although the "first match" was consistently discussed across interviews, how the match was talked about and what details were provided depended very much on the player. Some participants focused on their own personal performance during the match, others stressed the outcome for their team (won, drew, lost), while others chose to describe aspects of the coach journey to the game's location, i.e. being introduced to club traditions in the form of chanting, expectations of freshers, etc. These points are important from a socialisation perspective because in addition to the introduction to hierarchy discussed in the previous section it gives an indication of the immediate socialising processes that begin once new players join the team. This is contrary to the heavy emphasis that is often placed on entry rituals such as initiations serving as sole gateways into sports teams that is suggested in the literature (Johnson & Holman, 2004). Rather, outside of the match freshers are introduced to aspects of the community's shared repertoire that manifest in the form of pre-match routines and traditions. The community's mutual engagement in this context can be seen as entailing both social and sporting dimensions with a new player's trajectory beginning in earnest.

Moreover, the relative importance of this reported experience with regards to player transition is carried through the fact that players appeared to place more emphasis on the coach journey to the game and changing room chanting as opposed to the actual football match itself. Indeed, a one practice described here involved the ritualised chanting that takes place in the changing rooms at the ends of successful matches. Specifically, this club tradition involves the singing of a team song named "the ranger", where the club captain (or respective team captain), leads the rest of the team in the chant. Recollections of this event as part of the first game involved emotions ranging from bewilderment to enjoyment as illustrated in the quote below:

> "then we just got on 60 man coach and then played our games I think all 4 teams won so we did you know like the song you do at the end of the games it' s called ["the ranger"] or something like that and we all went into the changing room and did this weird song which has like I've never heard it before so id dint have a clue what was going it was yeah it was well good and got on the coach back" (Jonny, 2018).

Durkheim (1912/1995) argued that rituals foster a sense of belonging and help to create a sense of unity in groups. In amateur and professional team sport pre-game and post-game rituals involving speeches and chanting have been documented as forms of team bonding strategies designed to reinforce cohesiveness in the group (e.g. Light, 2000; Wilson; 2018). Viewed through the lens of CoP, these practices are argued to serve the dual purpose of both facilitating bonding and introducing new players to hierarchy. Recently, Wilson (2018) used the term "portable locker-room" to describe how team identity is created in unfamiliar spaces (e.g. playing away from home) through ritualised communicative practices. Arguably the success of "the ranger" as both bonding and socialisation is evidenced through its occurrence in the interviews. Similar to Wilson's findings the club as a community are able to recreate team identity while "on the road" through various aspects of shared repertoire and accompanying practices.

While new players reported first hearing the club chant in the team changing rooms, the team coach also provided a space where freshers are introduced to club traditions. Specifically, new players are expected to perform a ritual termed "fresher rents" and was mentioned in the interviews. As reported by participants (and confirmed by senior players), with this tradition new players (freshers) are required to stand up on the team coach and recite a fact and sing a song for the rest of the team. On completion of this task, the performance of the new player is then evaluated by senior club members and awarded a score:

> "…away games we have to do singing say a joke and say a fact and once again its tradition and I just notice on the last away game there was quite a lot of fresher's there was normally me and just one other fresher in the 2s there was loads there was about 6 of us and I thought I did a perfectly good performance but they quite enjoyed putting me last" (Tom)

The notion of new players being required to perform for the rest of the team is argued to form part of socialisation specifically relating to club hierarchy and can be seen as an extension of players proving themselves in the eyes of senior club members.

4.2.7 "Here & there" – On-pitch experiences

The final category identified from coding associated with this particular line of inquiry involved participants contrasting the previous levels and types of football they had played before competing in varsity football. Contextualising this stage of the interviews, participant responses were embedded in discussions revolving around comparisons of football experience either emerged naturally following questions broadly related to sporting experience, or as a response to more direct inquiry explicitly asking about perceived differences. Nevertheless, across the interviews participants readily described football "there" and football "here" while also describing their own footballing pedigree. The following examples are representative of the way in which the latter point manifested in interviews through players claiming experience at a (comparatively) more significant level of the sport, or reporting experience from previous educational levels (e.g. school, college, etc.):

> "so coming in I think I improved a lot in my first season I was quite fortunate in the sense that I'd got I'd played quite a good level before I came to university I got straight into the 2nd team and within 6 or 7 games I was put into the first team and I thought the whole from coming id played non-league but semi-pro non-league" (Arron, 2017b).

> "…we used to play in high leagues high regional leagues the highest league I was playing in the same as [team] Youth Academy and so one of the best teams from [city]" (Leandro, 2017a).

While the above descriptions do provide evidence of identity construction as footballers as was discussed in the previous section it is useful to consider at this stage of the analysis the reported challenges that new players described and were coded as part of the overall category of "Here & There". International players, in particular, reported challenges relating to the style of football played by the team (and other university teams) and weather conditions. For example, the short passing technical style of football often associated with Spain (Quiroga, 2013), was contrasted with the perceived direct, long ball style played in England and noted by some international players:

> "no not getting used to your teammates because basically that's something that can happen that's something that will come anyway and it's just like the style of play people in Spain they basically prefer the short pass first try to like I dunno maybe play short passes there's a problem in trying to go

up if you can turn around and recycling the other way round here everyone is just too…is most of the time generally too focused on 'it has to go forward it has to go forward'" (Leandro, 2017a)

"…but especially when we play on other pitches when they are really muddy and the bounce of the ball isn't right and you slip especially when I wear really small studs" (Leandro, 2017a).

"…I remember thinking it's not gonna be that cold in England then it was like it's gonna be freezing then suddenly I found myself one December morning training and there was snow on the ground" (Paulo, 2017a).

Also visible in the data, however, was the perceived excessively physical nature of football in England. This often referred to both the greater physical size of the opposition, and to more aggressive style of play adopted by these same players:

"…well when I first came I spent the majority of games on the floor being tackled rather than standing I was I was a lot skinnier not that I'm bulky now but a lot skinnier…" (Cristian, 2017a).

"…yeah the style of play from France and England is different England people are bigger are stronger" . (Henry, 2017b).

As there is no available literature providing insights regarding how international student athletes adjust to British varsity football such findings can be seen as offering valuable insight with regards to perceptions of playing style or other described hurdles. Nevertheless it is necessary to draw on the (limited) studies that do exist from other contexts. For example, Richardson et al. (2012) found that incoming academy footballers contracted to English Premier League football clubs reported adapting to the physical nature of English football to be particularly challenging. Moreover, with regards to sporting transition in general previous work has shown that migrating athletes (among other sojourners), will seek to make sense of their immediate environment by contrasting with what they know, i.e. home country sporting experience (Blodgett et al., 2014; Schinke et al., 2013).

However, an important finding in the data was that although physicality was consistently coded in the data, it was not *only* equated with English football. Participant experiences appeared to be exacerbated by the fact they were competing against young men who are several years older and thus more physiologically developed. This provides an additional dimension to understanding potential transitional challenges the participants' faced on the pitch, specifically,

as 18 or 19 year olds facing older opponents. The following response is indicative of such reporting:

"It's probably getting used to playing against big physical players because in [country] they will be bigger than me but they wouldn't be as physical here because you play against 22 year olds they are big and huge like size wise and trying to adapt to this physical approach was quite tough" (Timo, 2018).

Although it is necessary to again draw on work focusing on footballing contexts beyond varsity level, the bridge between adolescence and adulthood has been identified as a difficult hurdle for young players (e.g. Cushion, 2009; Mills et al., 2012; Nesti et al., 2012). With regards to sport, in general, this has been reported by researchers looking at both professional athletes (e.g. Finn & Mckenna, 2010), and scholarship level student athletes at universities in the United Kingdom (Brown et al., 2015).

The final reported challenge strongly associated with "Here & There" could be associated with communication and similar to the above described focus on physicality, emerged as another complex and contradictory feature of the data. More precisely, while one player reported experiencing no difficulties in communicating with team mates on account of "…international and British players speaking English fairly well" (Cristian, 2017a), other players described the challenges they faced understanding (and being understood) on the pitch. For one player this involved struggling to communicate instructions to other players:

"…I always understand what they are saying sometimes I do get some trouble trying to tell them things I want them to do or I feel like that because I'm used to saying it in Spanish and when I translate it obviously it's not like how they told me in school so I just directly translate it and obviously sometimes it has no sense at all" (Leandro, 2017a).

For other players the problem appeared not to lie with knowledge of English but with knowledge of the English football slang used by their British teammates:

"…although I spoke English I've never spoken English on the football pitch before or very rarely so I'd not know here you'd say "there's a man to your right" while I know what it means I've never thought it before now I have the reflex to automatically drop back whereas before I didn't have that reflex at all so the first few games…it was really quite challenging" (Henry, 2017b)

In summary, while some players spoke of being frustrated at their inability to make themselves heard on the pitch and pass coherent messages on to teammates, quickly. Others who had a more solid grasp of the language noted the need to get accustomed to British football slang. For example, one player reported being completely unfamiliar with the term "man on". This shout, which essentially means "an opposition player is approaching from behind", is an extremely common call in English football, and failure to comprehend the warning can lead to a player being swiftly dispossessed. For their part, where language ability (on the pitch) was made relevant by British players they did not consider it to be an issue. The language associated with English football contains hundreds of different words and phrases and some of these are crucial to on-field communication. For members of the team, such terms form part of a specifically localised linguistic repertoire that is constrained to matches and training sessions. Nevertheless, in the contexts new players must manage such language use and those unfamiliar with English football terms (i.e. international students), are at disadvantage.

4.3 Being a fresher: socialisation and commitment

A prominent feature of the interviews was the tendency for players to use specific events as narrative building blocks when reconstructing experience. This was particularly useful when mapping participant trajectories and attempting to build an understanding of what a typical season looks like for a player. While the preceding sections focused on those events relating primarily to on-pitch experience within the community the following sections will turn attention to the off-pitch experience, or more precisely, the social side of the club. However, analysis of the interview data revealed the team environment, and indeed, transitional experience in this context, to be complex. Player descriptions pointed to the existence of hierarchies constituting a complicated social structure underpinned by different levels of participation. This section will now turn to revealing the community's social environment as manifested through specific practice.

These findings form the core of the research as it is a nuanced understanding of (precisely) the transition that occurs when players navigate the social environment of sports teams that is of

primary interest to this work. Three categories were coded that could be related to socialisation: *the "Social", initiating* and *informal hierarchy*. In essence together these categories could be related to player experience of being a fresher or first year player and the traditional socialising events they take part in as part of the community's mutual engagement and shared repertoires. Coding related to the first of these categories specifically involved descriptions of club's weekly social that emerged as a form of ritualised practice. The second introduces the traditionalised initiation ceremony as an important milestone in the trajectories of new players. Importantly, discussion of these categories will demonstrate how the community's social practice aligns with hegemonic masculine practice, specifically in the guise of laddish masculinity. Building on these points an informal hierarchy is introduced specifically related to participation within the community and individual alignment with club practices. This is seen as being particularly important for the notion of transition as participation (or non-participation) will be argued to determine the specific transitional trajectories of new players, or rather, in the words of Wenger (1998) "trajectories of participation". A final category coded *co-national support* specifically involved the experiences of international players and co-national groups within the team. Drawing on participant reporting such groups are argued to form a "safe" location for learning aspects of the community's normalised practice and thus represent communities within the overall community. Together these categories contribute to the creation of the overall theme.

4.3.1 The "social"

Per the interview schedule (Appendix 6) participants were invited to report their experiences related to the social side of the football club. For participants, across the data the notion of the club's social side was ubiquitous with the experience associated with attending the weekly team social event. As described by the players, this event essentially involves the team getting together at a university bar and taking part in a number of drinking games, directing banter towards one another and chanting, or as one player put it "lots of drinking and laughing". This

aspect of club life was consistently reported in a positive way. The below comment is representative of how the weekly night out was portrayed by players.

> "The social side is great I really enjoy it it's kinda like work hard play hard we play 6 hours a week play a match then every Wednesday [social] together we drink together go out it's just really because everyone just has fun it's completely optional everyone who is there loves it it's just a really good experience especially" (Damon, 2019)

As with other team traditions the "social" was portrayed as a consistent event and one that required quick adjustment by players. It is during the first social event that new players are immersed in both core club practices and their relative status (as freshers) within the club is further reinforced. Central to the social are the mathematical drinking games that members participate in over the course of the night. The following excerpt provides a description of participation in such games:

> "we'll play a drinking game standing in our group and each person has to say something to do with the game for example 21 you say 1234 each person 56 but that's easy that's the first game we play and then the first and sorry the person who says 21 stands up and drinks they've lost the game and we play much more complicated games" (Brett, 2018).

Scholars have long associated excessive drinking with student-hood in British universities (e.g. Gill, 2002; Mobach & Macaskill, 2011), and with male varsity sport clubs, in particular (e.g. Anderson, 2011; Clayton, B. & Harris, 2008; Dempster, 2011). Moreover, the social environments constructed in such teams are argued to be spaces where traits associated with hegemonic masculinity, in a specifically laddish iteration, are pervasive (Clayton, B,. & Humberstone, 2006; Dempster, 2011). The reporting of the social event being centred on drinking games is in line with the available literature (e.g. Zamboanga et al, 2014). With regards to the team in this research, through the lens of the CoP framework, it is possible to identify particular rituals and behaviours and make relevant connections with discourses surrounding masculine ideals and laddish practices. Here mutual engagement associated with the social dimension of the CoP can be stated to involve weekly socialising.

Returning to Durkheim's (1912/1995) proposition that rituals facilitate togetherness in groups, the weekly social event as described is clearly highly ritualised. Here community members

bond with "mates" through the practice of drinking and shared banter. Indeed, a sense of belonging was found to clearly permeate descriptions of the "social". One notable aspect of this ritualised drinking event is that new players are *not* allowed to be told the rules of the game. Hence, newcomers only learn the rules of the game through observation and/or failure. However, failure in this context means that an unsuccessful player must drink a pint of beer. Thus, it can be reasonably argued that the drinking games are essentially "rigged" against new team members who consume large quantities of alcohol as a consequence of their repeated failures. Scholars investigating the practice of drinking games among male students have suggested that they are high-risk activities for those who are new to the practice as the games are specifically designed to facilitate inebriation (Zamboanga & Tomaso, 2014). Moreover, one function of such games is that by following the prescribed rules certain players may find themselves forced to drink more than others (Zamboanga et al, 2015). How such experience is lived by participants in this study is illustrated somewhat graphically in the following response:

> "…we have [the social] every Wednesday evening so that's great fun and I really enjoy ok you have to drink a lot and ok you have to escape to the toilet because you have drank too much and don't know the rules of the game but yeah that's yeah yeah I remember first 2 [socials] I was very impressed because of a lot of chanting and loud so loud and erm a lot of games a lot of fun games etcetera you always lose when you're a fresher because you don't know the rules" (Gabriel, 2018).

Pertinent with regards to transition is that as a consequence of this activity newcomers are socialised into taking up the core social practice of heavy drinking. More succinctly, in the spirit of Lave (1991), the club bar represents a site for situated learning in which freshers learn to drink according to team (and masculine) ideals. Part of a player's transition, therefore, relates to their ability to adjust to the amount of drinking that is normalised within the confines of the club. Indeed, the need to meet this challenge was evident in player reporting of the event. However, this in turn raises important questions relating to non-participation, e.g. those players that do not drink alcohol and what this means with regards to group accessibility and individual trajectory.

4.3.2 Initiations

After successfully completing the trials first year players participate in both their first match and attend for the first time the traditional club social event within days of becoming a member. Approximately four weeks after the new cohort of players has joined are the club initiation ceremonies. Initiations could be compared to the trials in a number of ways. First, to some extent they could be seen as important, if not, gateway events, and second, both required freshers to prove their worthiness to belong to the club. Whereas for the trials this involved a demonstration of sporting prowess, initiations involved a demonstration of social commitment in the form of community participation for the players.

Initiation ceremonies are becoming increasingly common among varsity sports clubs and societies in British universities and may be considered as a player's "official" acceptance into a team (Allan & Madden, 2012; Griggs et al, 2012). In addition Johnson (2011) argues that given such events occur early in an individual's first year at university, in part, initiation can also be seen as symbolizing the move to university encompassing both sport and academic transition. In this research the initiation ceremony emerged across the interviews as a result of direct inquiry, or being freely revealed by participants. However, it should be noted that some players were unwilling to reveal any information about the initiation ceremony.

Nevertheless, as reconstructed from participant reporting initiations involved new players performing tasks in-front of an audience of new teammates at a location on campus. More specifically, freshers are given three minutes to entertain the rest of the team. Examples from the data set included one player performing a rap, another attempting to make a fool out of himself through dancing, and two players firing paint-guns at each other's exposed torsos. Following the completion of the task the initiates are then assigned a punishment based on how well they were judged to perform according to teammates. The punishments described involved some kind of embarrassing task, as exemplified by the following player stories:

> "And it's just funny thing whatever impresses judge but it was fine I enjoyed it I did like downed some
> disgusting drink and whoever lost got shot with a bb gun in the stomach so it was all fine I lost actually

so I had actually about ten shots all over my stomach it didn't last long yeah the punishment wasn't too bad just funny things really nothing was too it was all finished in a couple of hours and after it was fun one of the best nights I think" (Tom, 2019)

"whatever it's just such a weird but funny like thing and then some of the punishments where like two boys got hand cuffed together and they had to drink a pint but then the pint had laxatives in its like little things like that" (Jonny, 2018)

Like the ritualised social events discussed earlier the initiation ceremony as described across interviews is replete with actions and behaviours indexing masculine practice associated with young men in particular, e.g. heavy drinking, risk taking, etc. (Clayton, B., & Humberstone, 2006; Dempster, 2009; Hinojosa, 2010; Johnson & Holman, 2004). The expectation of new players to complete such tasks is in line with the findings of the current body of research concerned with hazing and initiations in British and American university sports teams (Clayton, B., 2013; Diamond et al., 2016). Analysis of the data has already revealed the ways in which new members are socialised immediately on joining the club and hence the lack of any single event supposedly enshrining a new player with all the relevant knowledge and behaviours of a veteran team member. However, with regards to transition players did attach importance to the event. Johnson (2011) frames initiation ceremonies as a *rites of passage* that symbolise status change for initiating individuals. In the context of the football club this pertains to the confirmation of new players as official club members. Although to an outside observer tasks such as those reported above may be seen as degrading or humiliating participants tended not to describe their initiation experiences negatively. Conversely, the initiation ceremony was unanimously reported as a positive experience by participants. In his semi-fictional recounting of initiation in a British university men's football team, B. Clayton (2013) speaks of initiation as a transformation from negative to positive feelings.

Again, a degree of alignment between this finding and the available literature can be found. For example, in a 2008 national study of American collegiate athletes, Allan and Madden found initiates were more likely to report positive benefits as opposed to negative. Later research by the same authors concluded that 91% of the North American student-athletes they surveyed did not even consider what they had experienced as hazing or initiation (Allan & Madden, 2012).

In these contexts Diamond et al. maintain that hazing and initiation ceremonies are tolerated by student-athletes in order to "…gain acceptance, identify with the group and enjoy the benefits of group membership…" (2016, p.150), with an underlying desire to be accepted being empirically demonstrated in existing work (Waldron & Kowalski, 2009). Despite the North American context of these studies, such reasoning can be used to explain participants appearing to downplay the more negative aspects of their experience in this study.

However, players (particularly senior), appeared to be aware of the negative connotations associated with initiations. Specifically, constructions of initiation as a degrading and potentially dangerous experience has been reinforced by national media coverage of British young male students being seriously injured or even dying during such ceremonies (Rawlinson, 2018). The following comments taken from an interview with a club captain reveal both awareness and criticality regarding traditional initiation ceremonies:

> "I had one of the lads mums ring me and say he really doesn't want to do it he had a guy form home one who was quite close cousins and he drank too much at initiations who actually passed away so he was obviously shit scared so his mum rang me and said "he really doesn't want to do it" but that's not a problem at all it doesn't make a difference […] I think for us the main thing is if you are a massive nob then they are not gonna want to come back so why would you do that?" (Stu, 2017b).

This focus also reveals another important aspect of such ceremonies: the initiate's *willingness* to take part in the event. In this research context, players do not have to participate in trials if they do not wish to and in the general literature, as opposed to being constructed as totally devoid of agency, incoming players *choosing* to take part are argued to see initiations as a necessary team bonding experience that "…marks the group as team and its members as teammates" (Johnson, 2011, p.207). Thus initiation can be argued to be a two way process driven by both community socialisation and individual motivations. More precisely, it suggests for players a need to balance punishment and reward with regards to level of participation and accumulation of masculine (symbolic) capital within the community. In this project, for example, "Jonny", summarised briefly his experience with the following words: "just straight away you can appreciate the humour yeah it's a good way to get in".

Building from the above considerations an equally fair interpretation then would be to state that players' positive evaluations simply stem from wanting to demonstrate belonging and friendship within this particular community, albeit carried through laddish behaviour in the form of risk taking and competitiveness. An important factor is that initiation as reported by participants in this study can be deemed *comparatively* tame when contrasted with the excesses consistently described in North American contexts, e.g. physical abuse, sexual degradation, etc. (see Allan & Madden, 2012; Diamond et al., 2016; Holman & Johnson, 2004). In addition, players also directly contrasted their experiences with negative perceptions of how the university rugby team treated its freshers.

Notably, initiation rituals in sport have not been considered through the notion of CoP. Hence reframing the initiates as apprentices (Wenger, 1998), and thus the ritual as an aspect of the community's shared repertoire affords a unique conceptualisation of what is an otherwise well-studied phenomenon. In the words of Wenger: "the very notion of CoP implies the existence of boundary" (2010, p.125). While initiations occur alongside other ongoing socialising practices the event itself represents a significant learning experience for new players offering clear trajectories from the boundary towards the core of the community. Figure 4.6 represents a model of initiation that incorporates the key elements of the event for the experiencer:
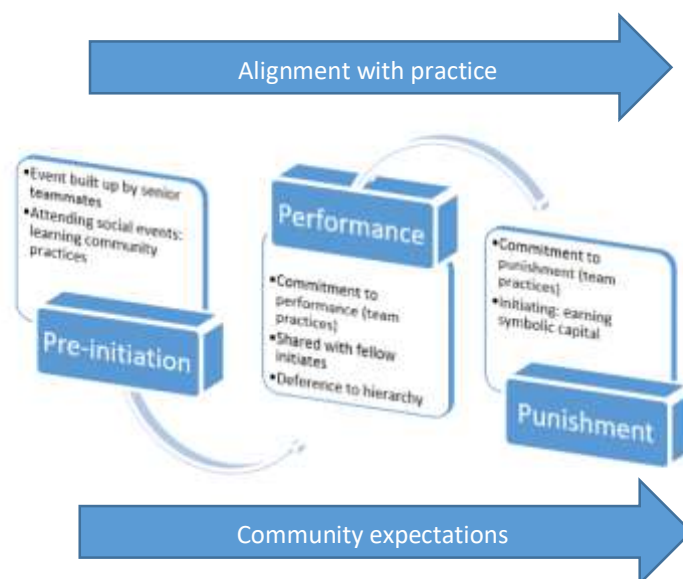

Figure 4.6 Initiation as part of the team's shared repertoire

Moreover, it is not merely constituted by such learning but it also serves as a demonstration of what has been *already* learned through the player's participation within the community to that point. More precisely, with the ritual freshers (as apprentices) conjointly demonstrate and learn a deference to hierarchy, and an alignment with community values as underpinned by masculine ideals. Both aspects are essentially manifested through commitment: a commitment to experiencing some form of humiliation as required by veteran members, and a commitment to the sufficient performance of a masculine self (e.g. in the form of tests of fortitude, drinking, etc.) during the event. Commitment to participation (and hence learning) will be returned to and discussed in more detail later in this section.

Also relevant with regards to both transitional experience and the continuation of the community is the fact that initiation is experienced by new players *together*. Shared experiences of pain or humiliation have been argued to foster a sense of belonging among those who jointly experience it (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). For the "apprentices" in this study this learning experience, as reported, is shared not only with veteran players but with co-initiates. The following excerpt provides an example of the shared nature of the initiation experience for players in the club:

> "my initiation with my friend […] who I met in the football him and I ordered a paintball gun online which you'd be surprised about you can do online legally which I was shocked by it was his idea and we drew three targets on our back and er depending on each target if you hit the middle target sorry each of us had a glass and if id hit the middle target he'd put an egg in his drink ….it was like with alcohol in it with vinegar vodka and topped it up with purple which we drink at [social]" (Brett, 2018)

Holman and Johnson (2004) argue that initiations serve to introduce initiates to existing power and hierarchical structures. Although with the ceremony new players are accepted into the team, their acceptance equally pertains to their status as freshers. The requirement of players to both perform a task and face a punishment is clear evidence of both power, and deference to that particular hierarchical structure. Much in the same way that new players learned the community practice of core members providing academic support through receiving support

themselves an initiated cohort will, in turn, take the role of "initiator" in the next season's ceremony.

Overall, reporting of the initiation ceremony in light of the available literature presents a complicated and at points contradictory picture where a balance appears to be struck between reward and punishment as a consequence of participation. Players seek and demonstrate belonging by exhibiting and describing behaviours that align with laddish masculinity, and as consequence, the associated practices of the club as a CoP. Descriptions of initiation experience present a somewhat toned down version of both the hazing ceremonies performed in North American contexts and B. Clayton's (2013) semi-fictional account of initiation in a men's university football team in the UK. For example, while drinking was omnipresent in participant descriptions, no form of sexual degradation (e.g. being forced to stand naked in front of female onlookers), was reported by any interviewee. Moreover, the revelation that new members do not need to attend if they do not wish to appeared at odds with other descriptions of the enforcement of hierarchy (e.g. freshers doing dirty tasks on match days).

Anderson (2010, 2011) has presented the case for alternative, up to date, readings of masculine practices within both varsity sport and society in general. He argues that such practices as manifested within modern teams represent a softening of traditional masculine attitudes, e.g. decreased sexism, anti-homophobia, opposition to bullying, etc. In the context of initiations the latter point is worthy of consideration. Johnson (2011, p.222) maintains that hazing and initiation ceremonies can sometimes be witness to excessive brutality perpetrated by senior team members "expressing grudges" from their own initiation experience. In this data while practices that could be classified as aligning with masculine expectations were reported, abusive treatment in the form of beatings or physical violence by senior teammates was not described by any player interviewed. To reiterate the voice of the club captain such excesses were seen as counter-productive to the community. More closely aligning with the literature, however, it should be noted that players reported that the event was built up by veteran teammates, for example consider the following:

"yeah there is some sort of initiation but like it's one of those things where you are really nervous and you are terrified and all the older people are bigging it up and saying all this stuff but on the day after it you are like "this was the best day of my life" like that sort of thing" (Matt, 2017b)

An important final consideration relates to those players that choose to not take part in initiations. While it has been argued that integral community practices involve more than just the initiation ceremony, the ritual itself can be seen as a player's demonstration of participation and the opportunity to move towards the core of the group. Members choosing not to participate face potential penalties relating to integration and a sense of belonging in relation to both senior teammates and the initiating cohort. Johnson remarks that opting out of initiation can lead to perceptions of non-commitment and subsequent marginalisation (2011, p.215).

From a Bourdieusian (1984, 1986) perspective, initiated players, although still freshers, are afforded symbolic capital by other teammates on account of passing the test of initiation and proving themselves. Ultimately, such accrual of capital cannot be separated from the masculine underpinning of the initiation ceremony. Hence, it can be argued that successful initiates are specifically granted masculine capital for their alignment with normative expectations of e.g. risk-taking, drinking and other aspects of the ritual. Participants failing to attend initiation are unable to draw on such credentials. Thus while participation is not mandatory non-initiation comes with structural penalties. With regards to transition the problem is clearly posed for new players who wish to be part of the group but do not wish to align with community practices.
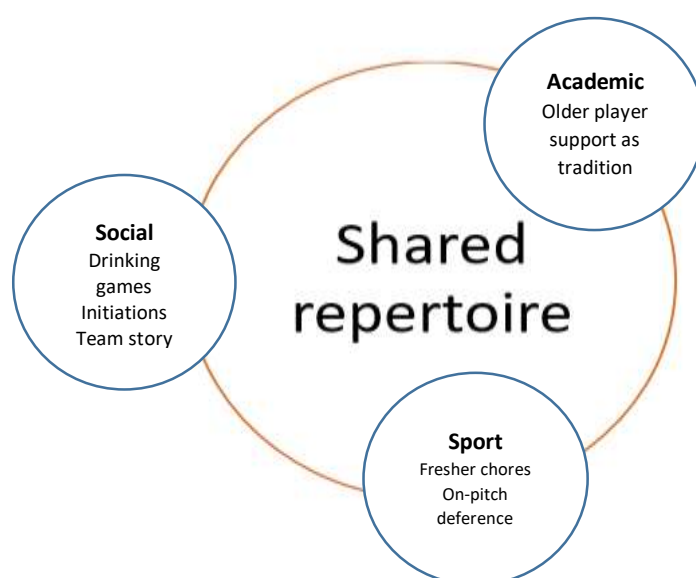
Figure 4.7 Shared repertoire across contexts of transition

One final social event worthy of discussion is the "club tour". During the interviews (and following informal discussions with senior players) it was revealed that for first year players the social side of the club culminates in a so called "European tour". This is viewed as part of the community's shared repertoire in relation to the social dimension (a full model of the community's shared repertoire is represented in Fig. 4.7). Specifically, this is when members of the team fly abroad as part of a club holiday at the end of the season. Crucially, it is only during this vacation that freshers are finally allowed to be told the rules of the drinking games. Therefore, although not as prominent across the data with regards to frequency as the first social and initiations it is nonetheless a noteworthy aspect of player experiences as it may be conceptualised as another landmark event. An observation at this point would be to note the apparent redundancy of revealing the rules of the drinking games at this late stage with regards to practical use for the freshers. More precisely, any fresher attending the social events consistently for the previous six months would be expected to have learned the rules of the games through participatory learning. Hence, this practice may be seen as serving a more symbolic purpose, i.e. fresher rules no longer apply on account of those players no longer being freshers. This can thus be seen as representing part of a participating player journey from the boundary to core group member (Wenger, 2010).

4.3.3 Trajectories of participation: informal hierarchy

An important consideration with regards to community participation is that barring traditions associated with match day chanting, new players do not need to take part in the club's social activities if they do not wish to. As noted in the preceding sections this even extends to initiations which in US and UK universities would ordinarily be considered a mandatory part of entering sports teams (Holman & Johnson, 2004). Ultimately, as described by both senior players and freshers it is up to new players to decide how much they participate in the club. Although all players are encouraged to be involved in the social side of the club it is clear that they do not all follow the same trajectory and represent different levels of participation. From

an analytical perspective these differing levels of commitment are seen as forming an informal

hierarchy (Fig. 4.8) within the club that exists alongside, and intertwined with, the formal

hierarchy that was outlined earlier (Fig. 4.4).
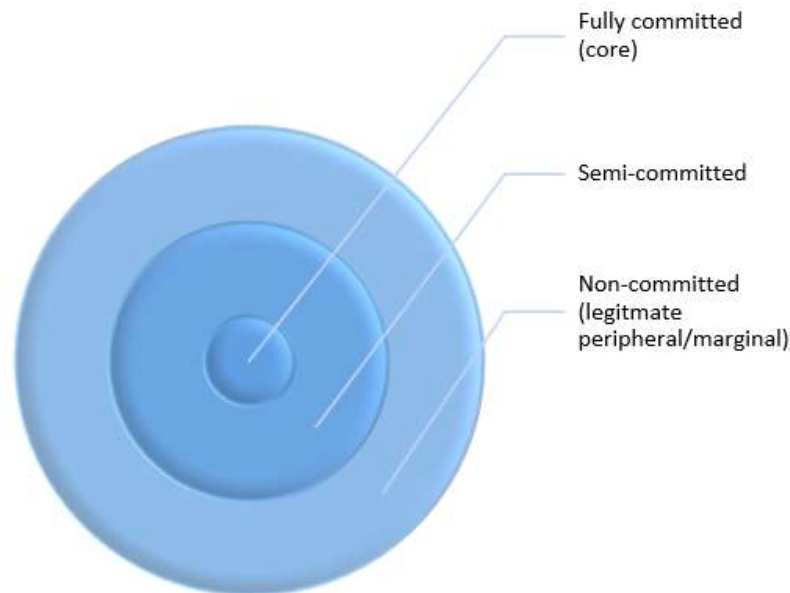
Fig. 4.8 Informal hierarchy

I argue that the informal hierarchy as discussed in the data is predicated on *social* commitment

to the club in the form of participation with players categorised as fully committed; semi-

committed and non-committed. Specifically, within the club there is a core group of players

primarily (but not exclusively) British and third year in composition that are fully committed to

both sporting and social aspects. Outside of this core I argue there is a group of players who I

term semi-committed. However, I see the boundaries between the groups as porous with

members situated loosely on a continuum representing various levels of commitment. Semi-

commitment here refers to those players attempting to find a balance between being part of the

social side of the club, and other aspects of their university life. Finally, at the periphery are

those players who are primarily committed to the sporting side of the football club but not the

social aspects. Considering the interview data these non-committed players were harder to

identify and description of this group is largely founded on perceptions of players regarding

their teammates, in addition to a very small number of interviewees who offered counter-

narratives. In the terms of CoP, commitment can essentially be equated with participation in the community's practices and thus different levels of commitment representing different possible trajectories (Wenger, 1998).

<div align="center">Core members</div>

The notion of a core group was either specifically discussed or could be identified indirectly through discussion surrounding commitment in the interview data. As a researcher's note commitment forms the core focus on team discourses that will be discussed in the final analysis section. Despite showing a discrepancy in the perceived number of core members the below excerpts are representative of new player perceptions and senior player descriptions regarding the core group:

> "…you quickly identify there's 15-20 people who always go to the socials who are always the ones with the inside jokes of girlfriends of players that we don't understand…" (Gabriel, 2018)

> "…you've got the 4 team captains and then there is a group of 4 or 5 other players you can tell they are all 1s (first team) I think they live in the same house…so they are like the main boys…" (Jonny, 2018)

In essence, being a core member requires a commitment to attending club social nights out, a commitment to living with other footballers, and a commitment to attending training sessions. Fully committed players are argued to represent the "core" of the CoP and the drivers and carriers of central club practices. Participation for these players can be seen as approximating insider or inbound trajectories. Particularly with regards to new players in the case of the latter. These players are most committed to club social events and underlying club practices which are, as outlined in earlier sections, underscored by aspects of laddish masculinity, particularly as manifested in the form of heavy drinking activities. The below excerpts provide perspectives from that of an outsider, and a core group member:

> "…but what I've realised it's mainly the more laddish you are and the more laddish you are the more you are inside that core group" (Gabriel, 2018).

> "…I don't think he should have got that his English is much worse and he's not such a lad I hate to say it like that…" (Jordan, 2017b).

The notion of commitment is an important consideration when attempting to understand player transition. Players forge a path depending on their own participation within the club. New players and senior club members are separated physically in that the latter live on campus, and the former, in private apartments in the nearby town. Referring to the "player journey" diagram (Fig. 4.2.), one of the final landmark events and symbols of belonging was for players to move in with fellow teammates. However, not all players chose this particular path with some preferring to live with other friends or course-mates. Nevertheless, the core group was described as living together in the same dwelling where many parties and social gatherings were held.

<div align="center">Semi-committed</div>

Outside of this core I argue there is a group of players who I term semi-committed. However, I see the boundaries between the groups as porous with player trajectories leading to more (or less) exposure to socialising practices. Semi-commitment here refers to those players attempting to find a balance between being part of the social side of the club, and other aspects of their university life. This is manifested in descriptions of players' social networks and the amount of time spent with the club. Indeed, commitment goes beyond emotional investment and can involve up to 12 hours a week of a player's (spare) time. This desire to find balance is clearly evident in the following comment:

> "…actually there is two personalities of myself when I go to school…and when I go to football because first of all it's not the same outfit I go to football with football clothes and also for [socials] we need to dress well so like it's a real different world you are with different people you not hanging out with another time…so it's really two different world…" (Guy, 2018).

Here the struggle to balance the football and non-football worlds (and emergent identities therein), form part of the player's experience. Again, space emerged as an important factor with semi-committed players reporting living with non-football club friends and drawing a distinction between football and non-football friendship networks. With the CoP framework semi-commitment can be associated with partial participation with player trajectories potentially representing a range from peripheral to inbound to outbound (Wenger, 1998).

Indeed, one senior player who reported heavy involvement with the club during his first year observed how he had needed to take a step back "every now and then" (Matt, 2017b). This alludes to a fluidity of movement with regards to trajectory in the form of participatory engagement. More precisely, the player's trajectory may have involved inbound, insider and outbound trajectories depending on level of participation.

Notably, a disproportionate number of the international players interviewed appeared to be semi-committed. Moreover, these players tended to describe the core group of players either explicitly as British, or a group that exhibited perceived traits of British or British university culture (e.g. heavy drinking, banter, etc.). This point can be related back to the discussion of co-national support. More precisely, Paulo (2017a) had this to say about the role of his co-national teammates when he initially joined the club:

> "Yeah yeah initially it was really good because it's like the people you can ask questions like when training about anything really you can just WhatsApp them or whatever but now it's irrelevant but when I see them I still speak to them in Spanish and have a bit of affinity but I'm close to everyone so I get on with everyone but I'm lucky because I'm quite fluent in English id find it harder if I wasn't fluent because of their jokes and slang and stuff…" (Paulo, 2017a).

This excerpt may be seen as a good reflection of many of the answers provided by these players, that is to say, the importance of co-national support was mainly associated with a player's early experiences. Specifically, co-national groups were reported as a reassuring presence where new players could speak their mother tongue, and seek advice about both football, and non-football related aspects of their new life. Regarding the former point, common language emerged as the primary factor for friendship formation for many international players. Consider the below excerpt taken from an interview with a Swiss player (Timo, 2018):

> "you have all nationalities you have most nationalities in the team for example I speak French because I was in the French team you get along well with the French lads and other players who come from Spain get along with the other Spanish and get along with the English"

The apparent prominence of one such sub-group lead some players to refer to it as a "group within a group". These findings support previous research illustrating the role of co-national support as a positive transitional factor (Agergaard, 2008). Moreover, previous research looking

at sub-group formation in sports teams has identified linguistic commonality as key antecedent of community formation (e.g. Evans & Stead, 2014). Although aspects of the findings from this research support earlier studies the interview data also provided new insight into the role of both language and sub-groups with regards to adjustment to team practices, specifically, team banter. Banter as a normalised practice or was a challenge for incoming international players:

> "I think for me the biggest difference is how what we call banter here is completely different in [my country] the jokes you make the casual talk...I've never heard some words before I never heard the word 'banter' before university never heard the word 'lad'" (Henry, 2017b).

Importantly, co-national groups could also be seen as a sort of refuge for players attempting to adjust to practices in the community (e.g. banter). In this regard such sub-groups of co-national members could also be regarded as CoPs within the group and thus the team better characterised as a Constellation of Practice (Wenger, 1998). Both international and British players noted the role of co-national friends as "back-up" when making jokes with the group on a whole. For example, language ability also emerged as an issue regarding "getting" the banter. One player noted the difficulty in merely formulating a joke in English quickly enough to be join in group banter:

> "I don't know like say a joke but it doesn't come naturally if you can't think of anything so that does happen with the Spanish people cos you think of the Spanish people and the joke" (Paulo, 2017a).

Here the player also alluded to the role of co-national support. Specifically, if he was unable to make the joke in English quickly enough he could tell it to his co-national friends. Notably, British players were aware of this aspect of transition. As an illustration of the view shared by the interviewees, when discussing why he thought lone international players might be quieter in the club, one player noted:

> "I think that might be because they don't have the backing of their mates you know if they tell a joke and it hits the fan they can't turn around and tell it in French to get a laugh" (Jason, pilot).

Being a fresher was shown to have particular hierarchical constraints with all new players being required to adjust to their new status and role within the club. However, for new international players there appeared to be the added linguistic disadvantage when navigating the team

environment, e.g. understanding and taking part in banter. In addition to the notion of banter was the drinking culture that some of the international players reported. This proved to be complex issue, for example, while some international players saw the weekly nights out and drinking as an opportunity to bond and "commit" to the club (Paulo, 2017a), for others the idea of "drinking loads of beer on a Wednesday" was not something they were initially accustomed to (Henry, 2017b). Heavy drinking could tenuously be seen as a challenging and unfamiliar practice, and thus a barrier, for international players. Indeed, drinking has been shown to be a significant challenge to international students' social participation and integration in a general university setting (Montgomery, 2010). This project demonstrates how community drinking as normalised practice can serve to prevent full-participation among new players.

Non-committed

Finally, at the periphery are those players who are primarily committed to the sporting side of the football club but not the social aspects. Hence, mutual engagement with the community only exists in relation to the context of sport. Considering the interview data these non-committed players were harder to identify and description of this group is largely founded on perceptions of players regarding their teammates, for example:

> "…it's about commitment... I feel there are two types of fresher the ones who go to training a little bit and plays a bit and then the fresher who goes [social] and goes tour and is into it and gets the running joke" (Paulo, 2017a)

Interviewee discussion concerning those players who did not wish to be part of the social side of the club proved complex. One line of inquiry pursued by the interviewer involved whether players thought a teammate's lack of social activity impacted their position within the team, their relationships with more active players, and team cohesion more generally. While some players were adamant that it did not matter as "everyone was part of the team" others openly stated a preference for playing alongside their "mates":

> "…you can see those who are more into it are more committed to the club… and then on the pitch you you just prefer to play with people who are equally on your level in terms of commitment like because you know they care like you care" (Paulo, 2017a).

As noted examples of players reporting non-participation were rare, however, the interview with one player, "Carlos", provided what can be termed a *peripheral* perspective. When asked about the social side of the club this is what he had to say:

> "It hasn't been much it has been much er the culture on the social side is not something I relate to because it involves socialising with drinking I do not drink so if I don't drink after the matches they go to I don't know this place's name" (Carlos, 2019).

The detachment between player and the core social practice of the community (weekly drinking) is such that the he does not know the name of the bar where the football club undertakes this event. Carlos' decision not to participate (or non-participation) in shared practices and behaviours can be seen as an example of "marginality" (Wenger, 1998, p.167). He effectively faces a social penalty as his unwillingness to drink and align with masculine values restricts his ability to participate. Building on this point there appeared to be awareness and lamentation on behalf of the player with regards to this restriction:

> "I do believe I miss some part of it because at the end of the day you want to social and get to know each other but I think the environment they create is not something everyone can relate to or go and enjoy because if you go to try to socialise with people that heavily drink or that see drinking as have to be there as primary case and you do not drink it's kinda pushing in the opposite direction" (Carlos, 2019).

Non-drinking students in British (and North American) universities are argued to face challenges related to social participation while undertaking their degrees with sobriety being classed as deviant behaviour at odds with normative expectations surrounding alcohol consumption (e.g. Conroy & de Visser, 2013b; Herman-Kinney & Kinney, 2013; Piacentini & Banister, 2009). Conroy and de Visser's (2013b) study of undergraduates at a British university illustrated a multi-levelled discursive construction of non-drinking. Carried through one identified discourse was the idea of non-participation as a greater stigma for men than for women (2013, p.1441). This point can be reconnected with notions of belonging as discussed in previous sections and masculine ideals and expectations within British varsity sport teams (e.g. Clayton, B., & Humberstone, 2006: Dempster, 2009). Indeed, such abstinence could impact the player's ability to attain masculine capital as he is unwilling to enact a masculine identity in

alignment with situated community ideals. Clearly visible in the player's comments are a desire to be part of the group but with no means of accessing the community beyond on-pitch practices and thus is *unable* to participate. Returning to the notion of agency and choice as core components of transitional experience, in this respect it is the existing ritualised practice that prevents participatory learning and thus determines a particular trajectory. More precisely, the player's transitional trajectory remains marginal on account of resistance to socialisation.

4.3.4 Intersections between club social structures

The aim of the focus on hierarchy has been to illustrate the team context and the invisible social barriers that players cross as they adjust to the team and majority norms of the CoP. The social context of the team is one that can be seen as pervaded by laddish practices that align with practices and behaviours suggested to exist in British university male sports teams, i.e. heavy drinking, risk taking, banter, etc. (Clayton & Humberstone, 2006; Dempster, 2009). Adjustment to the team requires adjustment to these practices and for those players that buy into the team ethos the process of socialisation begins immediately as through experience (and enforcement) they learn the core rules and traditions. However, although power is an omnipresent aspect of team life, the degree to which an individual player commits himself to the club determines how they experience it.

Players can choose to not participate, limit their participation or be unable to commit to club social practices. Following this trajectory new players are not as heavily exposed to socialisation in the form of practice (traditions, behaviours and rituals) centred on alcohol consumption and nights out. However, this lack of integration comes with a social and structural penalty as it inhibits the player's ability to learn the club hierarchies, traditions and bond with other members of the team. In some ways this can be visualised by considering how new players coped with excessive drinking during club socials, e.g. by hiding in the toilet and feigning sickness. While this proved to be a successful short term strategy (they were able to drink less on that particular night), it also meant that they learned the rules of the drinking games at a slower rate compared to other new teammates. In contrast, players that fully commit

and align with normative behaviours (i.e. laddish) are in turn more exposed to the social practices within the team and are accordingly better placed to build relationships. Thus rather than transition being viewed as involving either committing oneself to the team or being socialised according to various club practices, it might instead be better conceptualised as involving a commitment to participation for these players with the potential for numerous different trajectories.

In aligning with expectations of masculine practice these players may also accrue greater masculine capital (De Visser & McDonnell, 2012, 2013). Dempster (2011) noted that for some participants in his study of male British under-graduates experiences of laddism and varsity sport, selection for the team rested on their ability to socialise rather than their ability to play football. In this respect, the following comments provided by "Gabriel" (2018) are notable:

> "So it's funny because you quickly I've er I kinda know what's going on in the football team you have erm it's based on a kinda meritocracy and if your good merit playing well but there's also a big part of if you're my friend from fresher and now that I'm year 3 and Club Captain I'll choose you I know players who are objectively better in a position than a year 3 but because they are a fresher and because the year 3 is mates with the guy he'll play and you have that and you quickly identify there's 15-20 people who always go to the socials who are always there the ones who have the inside jokes of girlfriends if players that we don't understand because we've not been here so you do have that core group"

Ostensibly, the player's comments allude to nepotism within the club related to the benefits of seniority (i.e. third year players are picked ahead of freshers); however, this seniority is then also connected with membership of the core group. Hence social night attendance and being "one of the lads" is suggested to be an important factor concerning team selection. It should be noted, however, that this player was the only interviewee to *directly* express such sentiments linking selection bias and aspects of laddish behaviour. Some players noted a preference for playing with their "mates" while one specific player ("Stu") reported that some third year team members were given greater game time to ensure that they did not spend their final year on the bench.

Overall, the above description of both formal and informal hierarchies presents a complex picture of the team environment. More formally, the freshers as a group may represent the lowest order of players but individual freshers earn different places within the team through their commitment or alignment with community practice and subsequent trajectories of participation (Wenger, 1998), with each trajectory exposing players to different degrees of learning as they move from the peripheral boundary to the core of the community. This is represented in the below figure (Fig 4.9).

The schema can be exemplified by considering one player's ("Brett") trajectory towards the core. As a first year player Brett is automatically assigned the status of "fresher". Ostensibly a peripheral position carrying social penalties the player is, however, presented with opportunities to participate in club practices. Through engagement with these opportunities (i.e. participating in traditions and rituals), Brett may be considered to be on an inbound trajectory towards the core of the group. Although technically a fresher until the end of the club's season through participation he is able to accrue symbolic capital and thus continue his journey towards the core as more time is spent with the club in the following years. Having earned seniority through both alignment with laddish practice, and duration at the club, Brett's position would allow him to perpetuate club traditions and rituals.

Regarding individual transition a pertinent question to ask would be: why do some players appear to participate more than others? Here a multi-faceted notion of belonging emerges as an important factor in the interview data. First, players spoke openly of the close friendships they had formed with fellow footballers and how social nights became the most anticipated event of their weekly schedules. For example:

"[socials] yeah particularly in my first couple of years that was like literally I lived for that point in the week obviously the football as well all of your best mates and you just get smashed" (Arron, 2017b)

Moreover, this can be seen as a deliberate strategy as players were keen to make the "right" kind of friends and thus wished to be among other footballers. Belonging also manifested with the recurrent positive reporting of the support they received from older players during their first

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months at university that represented academic mutual engagement of the CoP. Furthermore players credited merely being part of the club as providing much needed structure as they were faced fending for themselves for the first time in the lives. Finally, belonging also involved the sense of prestige that players stated came with playing for the football club. In this regard satisfaction with university life can be seen as being facilitated by membership of the football club. While this finding does appear to provide yet further support for the notion that social support has a positive impact on transitional experience (e.g. in academic contexts: Brown, L., 2009; Maunder et al., 2013), in this study dependency on the team as a source of social support clearly varied with different players and levels of commitment and hence, participation within the community. More precisely, less committed players appeared more eager to make a point of the non-footballing friendships groups they were part of at university.

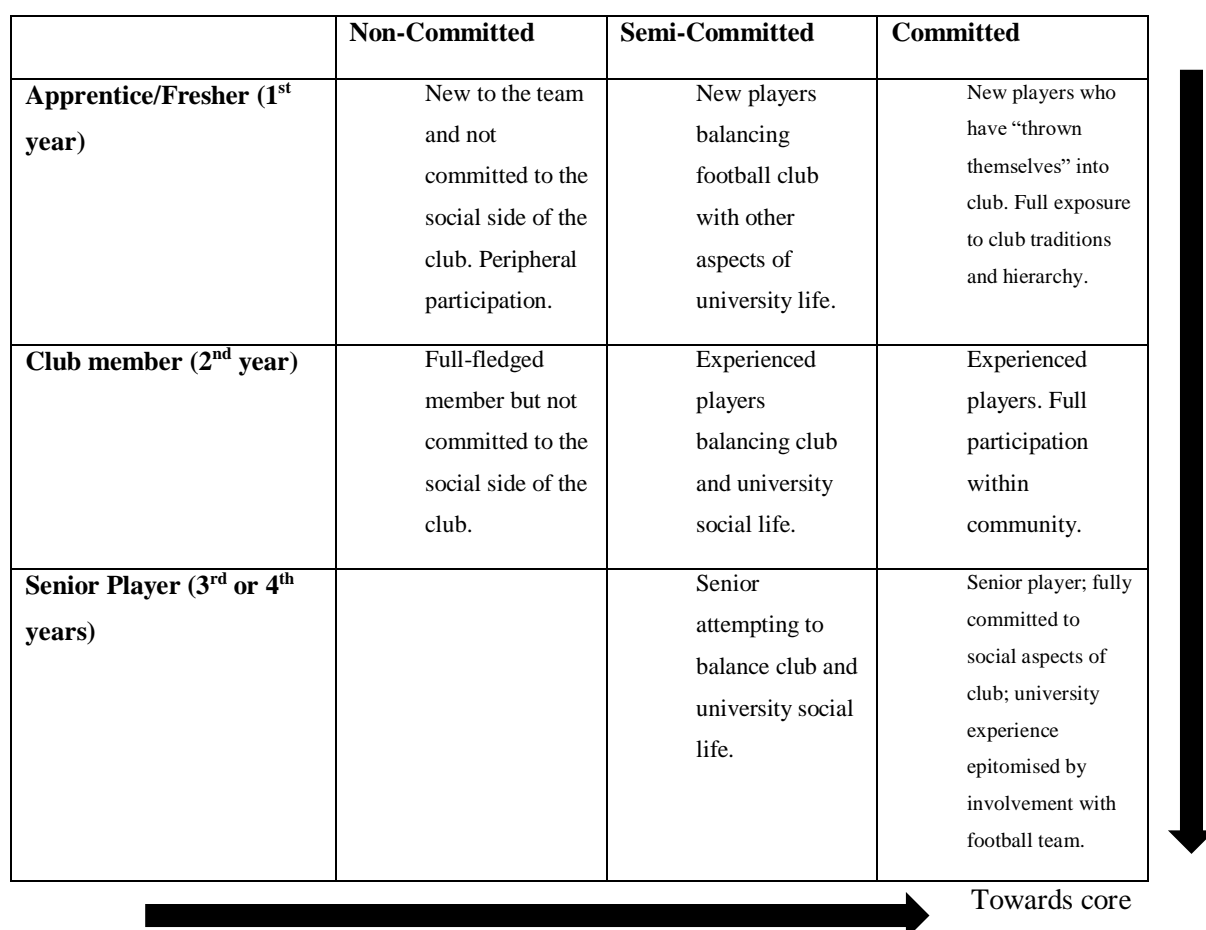|	Non-Committed	Semi-Committed	Committed
Apprentice/Fresher (1st year)	New to the team and not committed to the social side of the club. Peripheral participation.	New players balancing football club with other aspects of university life.	New players who have "thrown themselves" into club. Full exposure to club traditions and hierarchy.
Club member (2nd year)	Full-fledged member but not committed to the social side of the club.	Experienced players balancing club and university social life.	Experienced players. Full participation within community.
Senior Player (3rd or 4th years)		Senior attempting to balance club and university social life.	Senior player; fully committed to social aspects of club; university experience epitomised by involvement with football team.

Towards core

Figure 4.9 Formal and informal hierarchies with the CoP

These findings also have major implications for understanding the club's cohesiveness and stability as a community. In professional sport player turnover has been shown to be

detrimental to team cohesiveness (Davis et al., 2014). In comparison varsity sports teams are noted for their extremely high turnover of players as the academic experience of most players is short (a maximum of four years), and thus senior players are consistently lost every year. In this study, I argue that through active socialisation and a commitment to existing community practices a new core is formed from freshers who most align with the values of the club. Indeed, in addition to discussion surrounding commitment (of freshers), this was stated specifically by one player:

> "[…] normally you get 6 or 7 proper who will become core members of the club like proper mates but for me there are few internationals and a few boys who come to everything but they don't who they aren't that funny but don't get along with everyone well they get along with everyone but not that high level connection if that makes sense" (Jordan, 2017b)

Other senior players referred to freshers as the "future" of the club. In a CoP knowledge is passed from established members to new members (Wenger, 1998). In the context of the football club knowledge is transmitted through practice, routines and traditions. In this manner core club values are carried forward from year to year by those freshers who "buy" into the club ethos and who themselves will be transmitters of community practices. Indeed, the player quoted later went on to become club captain.

4.3.5 Section summary

This section presented the findings of the thematic analysis that was carried out with the aim of building a picture of transitional experience in relation to adjusting to both football club, and university. Regarding the latter, recurrent in the data was the freedom that players reported in choosing how to experience higher education and university life, and the accompanying disorientation produced by not having anyone to tell them what to do. Constructed as central to coping with transitional challenges were participants' resourcefulness and maturity, and the reestablishment of a social support network in the form of the university football club. Central to these experiences and indeed, across interview reporting, is the notion of choice and agency.

Player reporting of their experiences joining the football club pointed to a specific trajectory underscored by several key milestones e.g. the club trials and social initiations are argued to

form gateway events regarding on-pitch and off-pitch transition, respectively. It was argued that descriptions of the club describe a particular CoP where specific norms, behaviours, traditions and routines exist and equally, align with values associated with laddish masculinity. Where descriptions of the trials were accompanied by thematic consistency relating to being "worthy" footballers, descriptions of the social events could similarly be said to be founded on adjustment to the drinking practices of the team, i.e. being a worthy drinker, or lad. Accordingly, socialisation was found to be a crucial factor with regards to transition.

However, the adoption of club practices was also argued to involve a commitment to club practice with different levels of commitment determining a player's transitional trajectory. Specifically, the more committed a player to club practice and the greater the alignment with majority norms and behaviours, the closer to the core of the community they become. Non-participating players face structural penalties as they remain at the periphery of the CoP and are consequently unable to form bonds and *belong* to the team. Hence, transition can be said to be a commitment to socialisation or participation.

In harmony with conceptualisations of transitions as fluid (Angouri et al., 2017), findings from the analysis point to team transitional experience not as static and fixed but as ongoing. Although it was possible to identify a number of landmark events that could be argued to having contributed to a fresher's transition in the form of community learning, no single moment precipitated complete transition to the club. Even the initiation ritual which is often cast as a specific transitional event for varsity athletes (Johnson & Holman, 2004), could not be separated from the learning that had been undertaken before the ceremony, and the learning that continued after. As observed by Johnson (2011), continued adherence to group values and practices is fundamental to having membership validated. Rather than considering the most committed freshers to having "finished" their transitions, it is more reasonable to argue that they are simply more advanced in their trajectory towards the core of the group with their understanding of position continually negotiated within the CoP.

Finally, revisiting the original model of lived transitional experience (Fig. 1.1) with the discussion of the thematic analysis acknowledged, a processual map is presented reflecting the core findings of the thematic analysis. Represented in the model is the individual agency pervasive through descriptions of transition, the core stages that expose newcomers to community practice, and the rituals and traditions underpinned by laddish masculinity that serve as situated learning opportunities. It is argued that in this context transition as a process is a product of these overlapping factors. This will be returned to at the end of the thesis. This is represented in Figure 4.10 below:
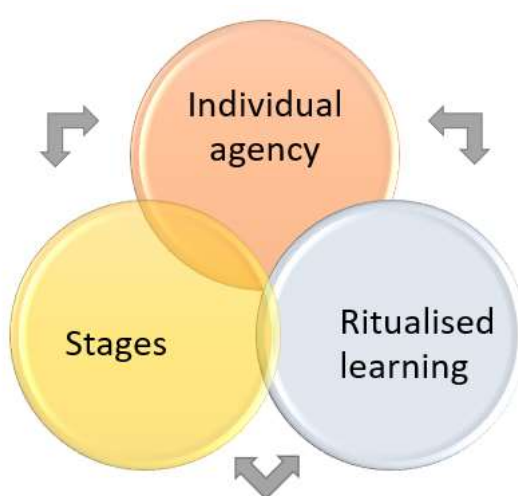
Figure 4.10 Processual model of transition

The following analysis sections will seek to build on the findings of the thematic analysis by taking a closer look at players performed masculine identities (in addition to describing them), and how club ethos is discursively propagated to new players. The next chapter of analysis will introduce *narrative* as an analytical consideration and specifically focus on the stories that players told during interview and the relevance of them with regard to transitional experience.

5.0 Narrative analysis

5.1 Flashpoint stories

Close reading of the data revealed that during interviews some interviewees used stories as a response to specific interviewer questions. The focus of these stories varied with players

retelling incidents that occurred during football matches, initiations, club socials, etc. It is argued that player story selection was not arbitrary but specifically selected as a discursive means of both making sense of team transitional experiences and identity construction in the form of a masculine performance. Indeed, regarding the latter point Miglbauer maintains that "in interviews most identity work is achieved through story-telling" (2017, p.200). Subsequently, unpacking participant stories was seen as useful way of zooming in on individual experience and understanding participation within the CoP.

Heuristic in design, the analytical approach broadly drew on discursive approaches i.e. in the form of considering structure (Labov, 1997) and positioning (Bamberg, 1997). Specifically, particular emphasis was placed on the evaluative element of structure which may appear multiple times in any particular story (Frank, 2010) and conveys specific interpretations (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2011). Ochs and Capps' (2001) notion of tellability and Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) concept of indexicality are also drawn upon to support claims made in the analysis. These stories were also mined from a content perspective to extrapolate the "whats", in addition to the analysis of the aforementioned "hows". It is believed that this combined approach provides the researcher with a unique tool for understanding participant experience and identify construction and thus complimenting the findings of the thematic approach.

Although a total of 26 stories were identified across interviews only 6 were used for analysis due to the need to ensure a manageable data set. Analysing these stories it became clear that some related to the same core concept e.g. agency, belonging, etc. Therefore, for clarity the format of the following analysis is structured according to particular theme.

5.1.1 Making choices: agency

Story 1: The team providing discipline

Thematic analysis of data regarding participants' initial arrivals to university illuminated both independence and disorientation as key factors emergent in player comments. More importantly, however, with such reporting underlying associations could be made with notions

of masculinity, and belonging to the club as a friendship group. Analysis of the following excerpt seeks to expand on these associations by providing an in-depth look at identity claims and retrospective meaning making as done through a participant's story. Here the interviewer has asked Gabriel (2018), what challenges he faced during the initial period of university:

1. **Dan:** was there anything that you found particularly difficult at all during this period?
2. **Gabriel:** so yeah term 1 for me was bit like ups and downs there first part of the term was fresher's so I
3. went out a lot I made a lot of friends woke up late etc. didn't go to any lectures and it was kinda hectic
4. and then I went back to [city]a bit more often and let's say it was a bit more difficult I started to
5. question my course do I really like what I'm doing etc. is it really worth it is it really worth the
6. amount of money I paid the amount of time I do I started to question this and there was a time when I
7. spoke a lot with my periods and then towards the end just before the Christmas break it went it kinda
8. went better things started to click back and now that I'm back I was kinda apprehensive coming back
9. beginning of term 2 and I've been here for a week and it's a lot better morning to doing my sports and
10. people call it the fresher's blues I'm not sure what it was but I did have a slightly down period but yeah
11. football kept me going because though sometimes you just don't wanna wake up and train you
12. just rather stay in bed and sleep but having this far football kinda being compulsory for me it gave me a
13. discipline and kept me going because I just couldn't slouch in bed well I could but then I wouldn't
14. make it in the team and I would feel like I've failed my goal so yeah football helped me to stick to it

Gabriel frames this story by recounting the start of term in relation to going out and attending lectures. This experience is reconstructed as having been unstable with the story revolving around the narrator's difficulties during his introduction to university life. Specifically, in the form of doubting his course and the decisions he had made. This specific part of the story may be considered reportable (Labov, 1997) or tellable (Ochs & Capps, 2001). Building from this, however, lines 11-14 represent the participant's retrospective evaluation of the experience and thus the "so what?" (Labov, 1997), aspect of the story. Here the club is credited with imbuing the player with "discipline" with the narrated character forming the subject in a passive construction. Thus, belonging to the football team is narratively constructed as important to the player successfully transitioning to university life. However, I argue that this evaluation represents only the participant's *explicit* meaning-making of the experience. Equally, it is possible to infer that an implicit evaluation involves the narrated character having made it through the early stages of university life (lines 9-10) through the choices he made with agency

forming a key element of the overall story and the actions of his past-self. As theorised in the previous section individual agency is argued to form a core component of the process of transition. In this particular story this involved academic adjustment but with the club as CoP forming a central part of the experience.

Overall the narrator self-positions as capable of managing the experience (the directly stated role of the club notwithstanding). In this regard the player is able to project to the interviewer both a sense of belonging, and a mature (masculine) identity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Leathwood, 2006). Moreover, adding to the portrayal of a masculine self is the reasoning that associates personal responsibility and competitive drive, e.g. line 14: the possibility of failing his goal of "making the team". Hence, where the team gave him the discipline to remain in studies, his own discipline allowed him to overcome the described challenges and succeed in his goal. Indeed, in this sense the participant can be seen as aligning with both masculine and sporting ideals e.g. being independent, overcoming adversity, etc. Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2003) note that interview contexts offer (male) participants the opportunity to project a masculine self, while also presenting a potential threat to that self. In this excerpt, Gabriel narratively weaves elements of both dependency (community) and autonomy (agency) as part of self-positioning.

Story 2: the right kind of mates

1. **Dan**: erm could you provide any examples of say a difficult experience
2. **Arron**; a difficult experience erm yeah this sounds silly literally the first day one of the times
3. when I questioned whether I've come to right place I came in the the first day first night on
4. university and my flat like didn't want to go out *like on my first night like we stayed in* we
5. had a few drinks you know like pretty much everyone was like sitting around it was the
6. Scottish referendum at the time and they were sitting around having like a really heated
7. debate about the Scottish referendum and I was like "I'm not sure this is like"…..this wasn't
8. what I was expecting so that made me question like what my decision up till very soon
9. before I joined I had planned on going to bath with primary thing the sport so I was
10. questioning whether I'd made a mistake at that point but once I got into the football I'd say
11. that it was easier because I became mates with people similar to me

This particular story was told by Arron (2017b) and was told in response to the interviewer's focus on the player's initial experience of university. The structure of the story is complex as it is interspersed with temporal jumps in the form of retrospective evaluations that are given in the "here & now" (Georgakopoulou, 2013). We are orientated to player's first night on campus (lines 4-7) and his (unwilling) involvement in a discussion surrounding the 2015 Scottish referendum. The participant as narrator attributes flatmates with the characteristics of not wanting to go out and hence positions them as intellectually minded. His retrospective stance towards events is to note with dismay that he did not go out on his first night. Indeed, in the interview the utterance was voiced with incredulity. In doing so, he also implicitly positions as someone who *is* outgoing and had expectations of university life. Similar to the previous story the tellability is enhanced by the narrator constructing these events as something of a crossroads, i.e. questioning his decision to come to this particular university.

Arron frames the experience as difficult and again choice emerges as an important element of the story particularly with regards to community membership. With regards to content it also shares a thematic similarity with the previous story, more precisely, it involves both a player's reconstruction of early challenges associated with transition, and the positioning of the football club as remedy to those challenges. While this research has focused specifically on the university football club, transitioning into a complex system such as a university involves negotiating membership in different communities. This excerpt illustrates how participants justified their choices. Where in the previous story the club was attributed with providing structure, in this story the club provides the kind of friends that the player was looking for: football mates. In this sense the participant's expectations with regards to friendship group and the association with belonging and identify are made relevant. More precisely, a difficult moment for the player involved not being able to participate in practice with like-minded others.

5.1.2 Indexing and aligning with masculine practice

Story 3: Negotiating membership: the "right" kind of lad

1. **Dan:** what was the distance between the shooting?
2. **Brett**: we chose this it was our idea to do this it was probably 2 metres ….it was fine for me I
3. shot him first I did 3 shots on him and then the gas canister was used and it had clearly run
4. out a lot because he drew blood from just a paintball shot it was just horrible on his back and
5. the other 2 were quite badly bruised whereas if you look at my back I had bruises but hardly
6. comparison and we worked out that's cos the gas had been used up slightly which I didn't
7. know before but if I had known before I would have made use of it I was lucky my
8. punishment was I there were some horrible punishments but mine was the lad that came 2nd
9. last and I and when I say I came last I was told it was fixed that I was gonna come last
10. because what happens when you come last you almost its gotta be someone who would do if
11. you get it not like right I'm not doing that and they thought I'd do it and I did and me and the
12. guy had to have a race to see who would cut off the most hair in 2 minutes and yeah as a
13. result my hair was all uneven so it got shaved off that night I went back to some older
14. students house in [town] and said and then you go into the shower cos you are covered
15. in eggs form the initiations because eggs are thrown everywhere and then you get showered
16. and they they just cut my hair shaved it all off and I asked for a 3 all over thinking that wont
17. be too bad as in in hair clippers id didn't realise it was beard trippers I was literally like 0.5 all
18. over in terms of hair

To provide context for this excerpt, the participant "Brett", had been asked to discuss the social side of the football club before he moves discussion to the subject of initiations. On the surface this section of talk may be seen as Brett simply retelling this part of the initiation experience as part of his position as interviewee. However, this particular segment betrays a number of other positions and important identity work. Firstly, to provide context the listener has already been orientated to Brett's viewpoint discussing the punishment with the tellability of the construction enhanced by Brett's framing of the club's initiations as a "secretive event" and stating that his is unable to "reveal too much". In the words of Frank: "stories have the capacity to make one particular perspective not only plausible but compelling" (2010, p.31). In constructing the event as secretive he also positions himself as the bearer of confidential information. Dialogically the interviewer is indirectly positioned as an outsider who would not (normally) be privy to such knowledge concerning intimate club practices.

Following this overall excerpt can be seen as comprising two stories: one retelling the task, and the other retelling the punishment. Temporality is again a factor in the storytelling with the

participant applying retrospective meaning to events. Briefly considering the first story we learn of the physical pain endured by the initiates and the extent they feel they need to go to in order to impress their new teammates. In the context of the story this involves both the initiation event and the underlying normative practices of the community. Foreshadowing what comes in the next story the player's self-positions as someone who takes risks which, in turn, can be associated with masculine ideals among young men (Mitchell et al., 2001). That this story is accompanied by the player laughter and is carried through an air of boastfulness can be seen as further evidence of identity construction related to "laddish" identity.

Moving to the second story the listener is retold the events surrounding the "punishment" with the recipient being introduced to the revelation that even though the player did not come last during the event he was chosen to receive the worst punishment because senior players selected him (lines 9-12). Indeed, the characteristics of being daring *and* willing are assigned by the narrator to his told-world character (i.e. "they thought I would do it and I did"). Hence, in the telling-world Brett self-positions as the *right* kind of club member (i.e. a "lad"). In many ways this represents the main evaluative stance of the story. Laddishness is again indexed by risk-taking behaviour, specifically the participant's risk taking and willingness to participate.

Finally, in 14-18 the story concludes with the player heading back to his teammates flat to clean up and have what remained of his hair shaved off, however, unfortunately for the narrator more hair is removed than was to be expected. The addition of this latter narrative element can be seen as further enhancing the overall tellability of the story by drawing attention to the physical sacrifice the narrator made to become part of the team. Notably embedded in this story is also a foreshadowing of the rewards for being committed. Specifically, following his punishment, Brett then accompanies senior players back to their flat. This is not an insignificant point. As noted in the thematic analysis, there was a clear spatial divide between freshers and senior players with freshers living on campus and senior players living together in the local town. While ostensibly the story covers initiation as experienced by this player, under the surface, meaning lies with the player's retrospective stance in that in committing to the punishment (and

thus laddish practice) he was able to access the core of the community. Ultimately the narrative can be seen as illustrating the price (and reward) of participation in the form of alignment with community (masculine) practice. Such participation and associated learning within the community facilitates this particular player's trajectory towards the core of the group. Indeed, this reconstructed experience can be seen as illustrative of the core understanding that runs through this work: transition as a process of socialisation through participatory learning. This particular example happens to give a description of what might be considered total exposure to, and full participation in, the community's socialising practices.

Story 4: Becoming a better drinker

1. **Dan:** "Ok yeah that's cool one thing you mentioned erm the social side and stuff like that if we
2. move away from the on pitch stuff and everything and you said you mentioned about missing out
3. how does the social side work again if we go from the start"
4. **Steve** "So *laughing* every Wednesday there's at [the university] there's something called [social]
5. **Dan:** "Mmm"
6. **Steve:** "And it at the universities it will be like sport social stuff but for some reason I have no idea
7. why at [the university] it's called [social] this is like for every society people will be there like are
8. You[social] on Wednesday it's such a new word it's so bizarre but like you turn up on
9. Wednesday you sit in a group funnily enough and you play a lot of drinking games and its literally
10. the best part of my week by a country mile just it involves a lot of drinking I didn't expect before I
11. came to uni because I'm local I'd always go down the town and obviously where everything was
12. and sort of thing and erm I was laughing I considered myself quite a good drinker in terms of if
13. you go out with a bunch of mates which I would regularly especially after my exams summer was
14. a very good time you drink a lot and I always considered that I could handle it quite well this is a
15. different kettle of fish completely you've gotta prepare yourself"

The thematic analysis identified heavy drinking as a core practice of the football club and club social events were characterised as where new players "learned to drink". Although complex in structure due to the player intermixing both past and current perspectives the story presents an example of what this meant as a transitional experience while also illustrating identity construction in alignment with laddish values and club practice. On the surface "Steve" (2019) is explaining the social activities associated with the football club and hence self-positions as a club member in an explanatory role (lines 6-9). Beyond such superficial analysis, however, is

the positioning work regarding both the team identity and the player's identity in relation to the club. The core social practice centred on drinking is described by the player who positions not only as a drinker but a "good drinker", and thus as having the right credentials to participate in the specific practice of the team. The boastful nature of this claim reinforces the masculine performance with drinking being constructed as normalised practice by the participant and hence orientation to masculine ideals (Clayton, B., & Harris, 2008; De Visser & Smith, 2007).

The practice of drinking lots of alcohol is associated with having a "very good time" in the telling world. However, drinking as practised by the team is constructed as a step-up from that which the player is used to and thus as an activity that required adjustment. Previous research has found the notion of *holding one's drink* to be clearly related to constructions of masculinity (De Visser and Smith, 2007). In this story masculine practice is indexed by excessive alcohol consumption. Here parallels can be drawn here with other transitional challenges, e.g. being able to cope with university education, managing independent living, etc. Similarly, coping with alcohol consumption as practised by the team is constructed as a rites of passage for the player. Indeed, through participation within the community the player is required to improve his ability to drink copious amounts of alcohol and prove his worthiness to the community.

5.1.3 Negotiating community hierarchy

Story 5: Being powerless

1. **Dan**: ok so moving away from the social side of things…a little bit moving onto team cohesion could
2. you describe any challenges you've experienced besides from your injury of actually playing for the team itself
3. **Henry**: yeah last year I played in the […] team and the 2nd game we played we lost
4. [heavily] it was the worst defeats of the club in a long time it was a horrible game I didn't do very well
5. the whole team didn't play very well it's sort of its really it was a huge challenge you had lost you can
6. feel something going on because you've lost everyone from the club has played from really young and
7. losing that badly is really rare and it's with people you've only known for 2 weeks and it's a really
8. weird experience because if the captain is gonna yell at you because you've only known him for 2
9. weeks and its sort of something that impressive that much of a defeat and I remember it was a
10. challenge because I got into a sort of argument with one of the players I just disagreed with him but
11. because he was older and I thought I was right but you aren't allowed as a fresher to just yell at

12. someone like that I've always been a captain and I've never been in that position before when someone

13. yells at you and you fight back and it's not acceptable and you can't do that in the football team

This story emerged as part of the overall dialogue following lines of inquiry relating to the player's general experiences and aspects of the social side of the club. The story again follows elicitation from the researcher who has asked a question relating specifically to a challenging experience. Multiple positions are apparent in this story. First, Henry takes up the position of interviewee by directly answering the interviewer's question and orientating the interviewer's focus to an incident where his team lost heavily. In the told-world it is notable how the narrator first makes a distinction in attributing actions to his past-self and then the team as a separate entity (lines 3-6). More precisely, that neither himself nor the team played well. As evidenced throughout the analysis the tellability of the player's contribution is enhanced as the recipient is retold the events of the story from the viewpoint of Henry as a new player, we are placed in the player's boots having only known his teammates for "2 weeks".

However, the key moment of the story, the orientating action per Labov (1997), is the personal challenge presented by the argument with the senior player (lines 9-12). Georgakopoulou (2010) has shown how identity claims in interview data are often actor focused. An integral piece of the storytelling in this excerpt is the player's self-positioning as a leader and a fighter who was required to constrain these characteristics as a form of deference to the older player and by extension hierarchical tradition within the club (community). In essence the underlying meaning of this story can be interpreted as the leader learning to be led as a core aspect of transition in the player's experience. The interviewer is able to construct an identity aligning with masculine ideals, i.e. naturally individualistic, assertive, competitive, etc. (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), while simultaneously using the story to demonstrate his powerlessness in the context of the community. This story can be seen as underlining membership as both negotiated and learned with a balance existing between individual agency and deference to structure (socialisation). This can be compared with those players who do not participate in the club's social activities as they do not align with club practises and thus suffer a social penalty.

A valid assumption to make is that for new players who resist or ignore hierarchy on the pitch would also experience a similar penalty with regards to their participation within the community.

Story 6: "If you do anything to my lil fresher – I'll kill you"

1. **Dan**: yeah like you say you didn't feel that would in any way manifest on the pitch at all
2. **Henry**: no like I remember my first game this game just did a bad tackle and he started talking to
3. me and started saying he's gonna punch me or something and so the centre back of our team who
4. was very very big guy just said walked up to him and said "if you do anything to my lil fresher I'll
5. kill you" and I've never seen him that was my first game and he was protecting me it was
6. unbelievable they are so protective of their freshers in the first year and they put so much effort
7. into showing you are with them now and you are part of them I was surprised and really really
8. happy it's unbelievable how much effort they put in to make sure you are comfortable off the pitch
9. and on the pitch

Similar to the previous story this involves the participant reconstructing self as powerless and teammate as powerful. Hierarchy is thus made relevant with the key difference involving the fact that the powerful teammate is constructed as an ally protecting the player from an "Other" player. Considering the story, once again the recipient is orientated to the perspective of the teller, or rather the teller's past-self. In the telling world the antagonist (the opposition player) and protagonists (Henry and teammate) are clearly stated and tellability is enhanced through the dramatic threat of violence as retold by the player. It can be argued that the overall purpose of the telling is to demonstrate the protection and acceptance that this player (and new players) receive on becoming a member of the club. In the told world this is explicitly stated as part of the player's retrospective evaluation of the retold events. The notion of team protection (hence togetherness), is evoked in the recipient's mind through contrastive descriptions of the characters in the story, e.g. the "very very big" teammate, the "lil fresher". To give further weight to the portrayal of the club as protective and welcoming of new players, the "protector's" voice is animated, specifically in the form of uttering a threat to the opposition player. Overall, such narrative work points to identity construction specifically associated with the team and the protection received. However, it also brings to the surface notions of

dependency in the form of needing to rely on senior players for protection on the pitch, in addition to support off it (e.g. in the form of coursework).

5.1.4 Summary

This section sought to build on the findings of the thematic analysis by placing focus on storytelling as undertaken by participants during the interviews. Following a heuristically formed analytical approach it was possible to illustrate how players positioned themselves when reconstructing particular events. Where coding pointed to a CoP as aligning with masculine ideals, player storytelling involved the dual relating of a key transitional experience carried though the performance of a masculine (laddish) identity, e.g. involving specific self-portrayals: "good drinker", "leader", "risk-taker", etc. Such positioning often appeared to manifest concurrently with identity claims relating to being a member of the team with the club forming a key narrative feature in the stories.

5.2 Team discourses as shared repertoire

Where the preceding analysis section focused on player storytelling in relation to transitional experience this final section of the analysis chapter discusses the revelation in the data that individual players appeared to be drawing on basic values (or team ethos) that were shared throughout the team and propagated by senior team members. Following Wenger (1998), community stories shared among members can be considered part of a CoP's shared repertoire. Moreover, in the words of Galipeau and Trudel (2008) they are what separates one CoP from another. Indeed, the thematic analysis illuminated the socialisation processes that new players experienced on joining the team, equally it can be argued that such shared narratives are a form of discursively propagated socialisation.

5.2.1 A team of mates: narratives as shared repertoire

It is useful to briefly outline the analytical process that led to the identification and categorisation of such discourses within the team. Preliminary analysis of the 2017 interviews revealed similarity in sentiment and more pertinently, language choice in player retellings of

specific experience. Indeed, such specific phrasing was also apparent when players chose to draw on the voice of senior players when discussing what they had reportedly been told on joining the club during, for example, club welcome talks. Informal discussions with players first confirmed the annual club welcome talks, and in 2018, more formal member checks with the then club captain revealed that the team also circulates "welcome" emails among new club members. This represented a watershed moment in the analysis, and the overall project, as it unveiled an element of socialisation as manifested through discursive practice. In addition to the notion that the retrospective meaning players attributed to transitional experience was, at least to some extent, constructed from what the club had told them. The club welcome email is presented below in Figure 5.1:

A massive congratulations to you all, it's a great achievement to get into the club, and a testament to all of your footballing abilities. With tonnes of stuff to get involved in, hopefully the [club] can be a huge part of your time at [the university]. The club is so much more than just a football team. While matches always take priority, social events, help with studies and most of all your best mates will be in the club. My biggest piece of advice would be to throw yourself into everything as much as possible. It's important to do as well as you can in your first year but for most of you it won't count so it's a perfect year for making the most of opportunities in the club.

This Saturday, all four teams are playing [team] away and you will all be part of the squads. It's an absolute worldie day as we will follow up the fixture with club pres and a night out in ****, which you are all invited to. Please confirm you can make it on Saturday ASAP! The full schedule is below.

Figure 5.1 Sample of text from the club "welcome" email (2018).

Team building strategies designed to facilitate cohesiveness and group identification in team sport have been investigated largely by sport psychologists and organisational scientists (e.g. Rovio et al., 2010). One indirectly explored focus of interest is how core expectations and values in sports teams are transmitted through formal leader figures, e.g. coaches and club captains (Cotterill & Fransen, 2016; Loughead et al., 2006). As described in the thematic analysis the football team does not have an official coach but rather the club captain and respective team captains are responsible for leadership and organisation. As core community members these players both dictate the nature of the community's practice, embody

participation and set expectations of alignment (Wenger, 1998). In this context the welcome email is written and sent out to new players by the serving club captain each year and can itself be seen as forming part of the club's shared repertoire alongside welcome talks and meetings.

In one of the few studies investigating sports team identity construction from a discursive perspective, Wilson (2018) illustrated how ritualised communicative and bonding practices serve to construct team identity in unfamiliar spaces. In this study the welcome email produced by the team may be seen as evidence of not only the transmission of club values but also social (community) identity construction. Turning our attention to the text, the recipients of the email (e.g. the freshers) are positioned as skilful footballers and the achievement on "getting in" is clearly emphasised. In this manner membership of the club is portrayed as prestigious and exclusive.

As discussed earlier within the context of university, membership of the football club can be attributed with significant social and symbolic capital for a number of reasons. In the welcome email (and talk) this status is explicitly stated and forms the first level of the group's identity. Sporting commonality, however, is superseded by the club captain constructing the club as a friendship group, and crucially, as a new player's most important friendship group ("…and most of all your best mates will be in the club"). Thus group identity is also centred on the notion of the club being "a team of mates". Framed as part of the club's shared repertoire it has been noted that the emails are sent out every season. However, it is notable this email is almost completely identical to the emails sent out in 2016, 2017 and earlier emails (see appendices). Hence it can be argued that not only is the form of message exactly the same but also the content thus representing the discursive recycling of core values.

Examples of interview data will now be drawn on to support the prevalence of such discursively shared stories. For example, while the notion of belonging and membership recurred throughout the data expressions of closeness such as the "team as mates", or "team as family" appeared to specifically noteworthy. Consider the following extract taken from the interview with "Frank" (2017a):

Dan: If you feel comfortable what were initiations like?

Frank: I mean yes initiations it's just basically where you have to make a fool out of yourself mine was so completely horrible I just thought making a fool was like dancing that was one thing I didn't get so cos you have to make something that actually like drinking or eating something and I didn't know what to do so I got punished so I had to eat a whole jar of pickled eggs but other guys had to do something else as well so that was shock obviously that its fine it's just part of it and afterwards you get and obviously if you don't go to initiations they don't care but rugby initiations are much worse but football they don't want to hurt you they just wanna make fool of you because we're all mates to be fair the captain actually said something to me "you know I'm the club captain but I'm just the leader of my mates" I mean which is pretty true because his friend group is the football team they don't want to hurt they just wanna get you in the team…"

Retelling his initiation experiences the participant positively frames the role of teammates and portrays his own past-self as agentive through repeated usage of the pronoun "I". In this way he is responsible for not "getting it" and thus being deserving of punishment during the ceremony. In this manner, despite senior team members actually being responsible for the initiation (and punishments), they are not explicitly held responsible. On the contrary, members of the football team are only positioned as agents with regards to the benevolent action of "not wanting to hurt" new players. To reinforce the events of his retrospective evaluation of the initiation event "Frank" self-positions as a member of the football team ("we're all mates to be fair") and accordingly constructs the football team as a friendship group. Moreover, the voice of the club captain is drawn upon to further emphasise the notion of team as friendship group. This directly relates to the social properties of the community as attributed by the player.

The following excerpt taken from discussion with "Jonny", occurred towards the end of the interview. The club had already emerged as an important narrative feature for this player that could be associated with belonging, specifically, regarding its construction as a source of support for the player's first weeks at university. The interviewer has asked a direct question regarding the team and meaning:

Dan: "er what does the team mean to you?"

Jonny: "ooof"

Dan: "nice easy one for you"

Jonny: "without being a classic answer it's pretty much like a family there's boys in there who within the first 2 weeks I knew I'd be mates with them for the rest of my life and I'm moving into a house next year with two boys that are already playing in a team and one that got in but wants to first concentrate on his course for the first few or something like so next year especially with us going off to things he'll definitely join in yeah if it wasn't for football I wouldn't know who to move in with next year I wouldn't have mates someone be like oh you want a quick game of FIFA it's just little things that just make the uni experience ten times better basically"

Team membership is directly equated with being part of a "family" and the friendships formed with other players are stated to be so strong that they will last beyond the player's university experience. The interviewee's retrospective stance "I'd knew I'd be mates with them for the rest of my life", which can be seen as an expression of finding one's place, aligns with the comments made by the club captain (Fig. 5.1). Moreover, the consequences for *not* belonging are explicitly stated: the player would not have mates. Embedded within the overall context of attending university this reflection is important with regards to transition and the player attributing meaning to his overall experiences. In this regard the player draws on the community's shared repertoire in the form of team story to relate his own, ostensibly, personal experience and in doing so demonstrates his own learning as a community member.

Beyond the notion of belonging in the milieu of the football club a clear connection between team discourses and cohesion as a sporting entity was also evidenced through similar alignment of personal experience and team values. Where the above examples have illustrated what this meant for players insofar as making sense of university adjustment is concerned, the following examples place focus on team narratives as socialisation mechanisms that facilitate togetherness and group unity *on the pitch*. This specific example of talk can be seen as indicative of those players who closely aligned with the team message. This excerpt is taken from the end of the interview and involved the interviewer asking the player: "What does the team mean to you?". This was the following answer:

Henry : Erm I don't know when I think about I remember a quote from Cristiano Ronaldo when at Manchester United "I won the champs league that didn't mean I had dinner with Paul Scholes or Ryan Giggs they weren't my best friends they didn't speak to me that much but during the game we'd fight for 90 minutes or more for them for each other" so for me at university the team are my best friends

they are people I want to keep in touch with even if there's people you don't know that much they just play football for the social side they during that whole game period you are sort of together you are the same unit and that what I want to transmit as a captain and for me that's the bigger chance of winning the game is because you because if you lose the ball you are gonna run for him and foul the guy who's just taken the ball off him that's what is the case at [the university] and I want to make it even more important. My best friends in the football team even the people I didn't get along with even the people I don't really care or know generally on the pitch we'll fight for each other.

Similar to how other players contrasted their high school or club football social experiences with being part of the team, "Henry" (2017b) draws on the voice of a world famous footballer and a highly successful professional team to emphasise the closeness of the university team. At a broader level such comments can be equated with Wenger's (2010) notion of alignment within CoPs. More precisely, by connecting the experience of the university team and a famous professional side he is stating belonging as a footballer. However, in direct contrast to the professional player the participant's teammates in the club are characterised as "best mates", and their fighting spirit stems from the team as a friendship group as opposed to being driven by a sense of professionalism. Thus emphasising his realignment with the practices of the community. Regarding tellability this can be seen as rhetorically effective way of portraying both the team, and his place within the team (Ochs & Capps, 2001). Furthermore, the player presupposes the connection between group togetherness and success on the pitch which is vividly evoked with the notion of teammates "fighting for each other". Participation in this respect directly involves a commitment to other community members. As far as the analysis is concerned this can be seen as foreshadowing the second narrative propagated by the team, specifically, the idea of *commitment*.

5.2.2 Shared narratives: Throwing yourself into it

The above extracts and accompanying analyses illustrate how commitment associated with acceptance of team hierarchy manifested narratively. However, the most notable feature of commitment also emerged as a team narrative and subsequently as an important resource for players with regards to experiential meaning making, e.g. commitment to the club allowed for players to adjust quicker to the club in addition to making the most of their university

experience. Here, the concept of commitment specifically referred to players embracing the social side of the club (e.g. attending nights out, playing drinking games, etc.). Similar to the club narrative of "the team as mates", this thread was propagated by senior players during both the welcome talks delivered by the club captain, and in welcome emails that were disseminated among new players.

Reconsidering the team welcome email (Fig 5.1) the first shared narrative served to construct the identity of the team and the new player's place within the club. In the lines following this the club captain then states: "my biggest piece of advice would be to throw yourself into everything as much as possible", with players following this advice being able to "make the most of the opportunities in the club". For example, the following excerpt taken from the interview with senior player "Stu" (2017b) who has been asked to describe his experiences playing for the men's team:

> **Stu**: yeah so it's absolutely encapsulated my university experience without it would have just been completely different it's just like my whole entire everything I enjoy at uni is part of the football club and so moving so after the first trial the club captain spoke to us "this will generally be the biggest thing in your life" and you kind laugh it off a bit and he's like "you'll be living with football boys in your third year if you throw yourself into the club you'll get so much out of it " and you kinda think yeah but its' only a football club I'm not sure how much I'll enjoy and kinda how it's been this year being the club captain and living with 6 other football boys it is just everything to you playing [in the league] on a Wednesday and then going to the socials on a Wednesday that is the highlight of your week through terms 1 and 2

Here Stu uses the voice of his former captain "if you throw yourself into the club you will get so much out of it". This is the specific phrasing that is transmitted yearly by each new captain as written in the welcome emails and from the analysis it was evident that some players were either drawing on this statement explicitly or at least paraphrasing what they had been told, in order to frame aspects of their transitional experiences. In this particular excerpt it can be argued that both team narratives manifest in the player's retrospective stance towards his experiences and the associated positioning work. The player's positive university experience was determined by his belonging to the club, which in turn, his own participation facilitated. Thus the participant does not merely position as a team-member, but a committed team member whose story serves to illustrate the rewards that buying into the club's ethos will bring.

Considering the different trajectories of participation that may be taken by freshers this can clearly be used as an example of how new players are encouraged to participate.

The below segment of talk taken from the interview with "Paulo" further illustrates the success of the transmission of the commitment story:

Dan: So erm, coming together as a team, so getting that team spirit so learning to play together…so your experiences as playing part of a team…working together with each other, how would you describe your experiences?

Paulo: Ok, Ok, it's good erm the most you're committed to it the better, so you've got training so if everyone is committed to training the better so at the beginning the season when we've all going training we're winning when we at the it starts to fall apart we start to lose games I don't thinking I'm answering your question.

Dan: No no carry carry on

Paulo: it's about commitment if there's commitment to the club that's what the 3rd years ask ask like "this is really good commit to it throw yourself into the football team the more you do it the more you get out of it" the more the fresher do the more they get out of it I feel the two types of fresher the ones who go to training a little bit and plays a bit and then the fresher who goes [social] and goes tour and is into it and gets the running joke if you are just going training it's ok but if you going training with really good friends get much more out of it now a lot of freshers next year are getting all their together with the football team

We can see that the immediate context of the interview involved questions directly related to the player's experiences being part of a team. Hence it can be argued that what follows is influenced by the researcher positioning Paulo and presupposing the existence of team spirit. At the interactional level Paulo's initial response may be seen as somewhat incoherent, however, it is evident that he self-positions as a fresher and a *committed* member of the team (see Figure 5.1). Notably, Paulo outlines the meaning of commitment by drawing on the voices of senior players ("3rd years"), this provides evidence of the team commitment narrative being made explicitly relevant in the player's positioning and alignment with practice. Although the player is actually a fresher himself, the position adopted is from the perspective of the normal club members (i.e. "the more the *freshers* do the more *they* get out of it"). Thus the position taken by Paulo is in line with that of the team with the implicit suggestion being that the more committed a player is the easier his transition will be (e.g. "getting the running joke"), and the better experience they will have. In this respect the player adopts an evaluatory stance to his own experience, which is delivered through his activity of explaining. Ultimately, his alignment

with the community story demonstrates the impact of learning through participation and trajectory towards the core of the community.

This is also clear from the below segment of talk with "Jonny" illustrates how commitment emerged in player contributions. To put this part of the interview into context, this dialogue immediately follows the player discussing the club welcome talk where he mentions the advice that was given to him by senior players (e.g. "try your best", "enjoy it"):

Dan: OK I know the social side pretty part of it if that's fair to say what has been like kinda fitting into the team

Jonny: erm yeah it's been well it think the most important thing is the like fitting in and making friends for life is going to the social events because there's some boys which like I wouldn't be like what you doing you're not going but the more you go the more obviously you more you get to know people then develop like different relationships with different players and you get involved in all the jokes and stuff I think just turning up as much as many things as possible that's the best way like get involved with the boys

Similar to Paulo above, his reconstruction is underscored by the retrospective evaluation regarding transition, which in turn, is delivered through self-positioning as a club member in an explanatory role. However, the player does not directly answer the question regarding his experiences fitting in, rather he goes on to offer his opinion as to the *best way* to fit in. In doing so he implicitly makes club discourse surrounding belonging and commitment relevant, that is to say, going to club socials allows you to make friends for life. Furthermore, an important point regarding transition that can be taken from these examples (and others), is that responsibility for fitting in and making friends is assigned to the players per the team narrative.

One notable example of alignment with club narrative was the way in which a British player positioned a Spanish player as committed and described why the player was worthy of being assigned in this way. Presupposed in the researcher's question is that there is a distinction between social and non-social players. This assumption was derived from the interviewee's earlier suggestion of difference between outgoing and non-outgoing players. Although the player rejects the interviewer's notion that team dynamics might be impacted in some way by such a distinction, he goes on to relate a brief story:

Dan: so going on to more the team itself and playing for the team there is one question I want to ask and this kinda leads into the next kinda area for those lads that aren't so social or don't drink so much does that translate onto the pitch at or does it not make a difference who you are playing with

Jordan: no I don't think and equally there are some players who are very social and love being around them but on the pitch I hate to play with them

Dan: why is that

Jordan; so one example specially is a Spanish lad and he he has thrown himself into the club so to put it into context we went to tour in Tenerife and he's Spanish and we had a lot of problems with the hotel as you can imagine on a tour with 30 boys and his Spanish speaking skills helped a lot with calming them down and that's when I think he really made a name for himself and so so he's now a big part of the club but he's as a player I hate how he plays he takes too many touches and just complaining and we were playing 7 aside we just disagree

Although in this example the player is explaining that good off-pitch rapport does not necessarily transfer to the pitch, of greater interest to the analysis is the brief retelling of the incident involving the "Spanish player" and specifically, how that player made a name for himself in the club. Evident again is the way the interviewee directly draws on the particular phrasing that is found in the welcome emails ("he has thrown himself into the club") and thus the shared repertoire of the community in the form of story. Moreover, laddish practice is also referred to in that the player can be seen assuming that the interviewer can imagine what problems the hotel might encounter when hosting the football team, e.g. the young men's bad or laddish behaviour.

5.2.3 Transition through participation and socialisation

This section aimed to demonstrate how discursive socialisation in the form of the community's shared repertoire is manifested in participant retellings of experience. Specifically, a discourse analytical approach was adopted in order to contextualise player responses and offer more depth to the interpretation of responses. Interviewees were shown to draw on club storylines associated with the team as a friendship group and the importance of participation through commitment to the community. This is a revelatory finding as to date there are no studies considering how stories in the form of shared repertoire are used by sports teams to socialise

members. Not only does this have significance for the overall literature but also to the understanding of team transition in this work.

Transition in this work was theorised as the *crossing of boundaries* and associated periods of change and adjustment (Westerman, 2012). It was argued that central to such transitional experience are the relationships individuals form with others and the consequential social learning that takes place in groups. To this extent transition has been demonstrated to be a complex balance involving participatory learning and socialising practices. The final chapter that follows will bring together the findings from Chapters 4 and 5 in order to provide a finalising discussion.

6 Discussion and concluding remarks

This chapter provides the final discussion of the thesis and brings together the overall findings in relation to both the aims of the research and broader questions presented in the literature. Following this, I consider both limitations and potential further directions in relation to the considered implications.

The first question asked: *What transitional experiences do participants report when joining a university football team?* Although this question forms the primary research direction and sought to unpack the participants' transitional experiences as reported in the data, it is intrinsically connected to the research aims that follow. Transition to university has been noted as a challenging period for first year students requiring adjustment to academic challenges and the social environment in addition to the management of emotional instability as a consequence of the experience (Boute et al., 2007; Fisher & Hood, 1987; Maunder, 2018; Wilcox et al., 2005). Equally, entry into sports teams has been noted to be fraught with uncertainties relating to how new players navigate social dynamics in the form of official roles, power dynamics and existing relationships (Benson et al., 2016). Much previous work has tended to focus explicitly on the impediments to, and facilitators of, successful transition. While not discounting findings relevant to these aspects as identified in this study, I have placed more emphasis on building a detailed picture of the unique social context of transition into university sports teams and the structural complexities involved in its navigation. This is reflected in the discussion that follows.

While analysis indicated transition was experienced across dimensions with social, sporting and academic domains all made relevant by participants, within the context of university, membership of the football club was identified as integral to the members overall experience. Hence following the analysis, membership of the club cannot be separated from transition to university and vice versa, i.e. being a student at university could not be separated from university team transition for those committed to the team (e.g. in the form of ritualised laddish practices and associated learning). Previous work has noted the importance of sports club

membership with regards to friendship networks, well-being and progression to the 2nd year of education (e.g. Jeffries, 2019; Maunder et al., 2013).

Reinforcing the intertwining of university and university sports team transition I argue that membership of the football club formed an integral part of the participants' situated identity construction within the context of university. Membership was clearly linked to social identity, particular through recurrent notions of belonging. However, identity construction also manifested through allusions to place within the university. More precisely, data indicated that being a member of the club was well received by other students. Following Bourdieusian (1984) notions of capital this manifested according to accumulated social capital (extensive access to friends), masculine capital (athletic prowess), with membership being displayed through material capital (club jerseys, training tops, etc.). While it has been argued that new players aligned with normative masculine expectations through, e.g. learning to consume alcohol, it can be equally argued that, for some players, being a student was learned through participation in these practices.

Guided inductively by the data the football club was specifically framed as a Community of Practice (Wenger, 1998) constituted by the three core components required of such communities with each having relevance across dimensions e.g. social, sporting and academic. For example mutual engagement involved off-pitch activities in the form of attending weekly socials; on-pitch activities entailed training and matches; while academic engagement involved receiving coursework support from senior players. Framed as a CoP transition was argued to involve a crossing of the boundary of core club practices with a new player's 'trajectory of participation' (Wenger, 1998) dependent on the degree of commitment to participatory learning within the community.
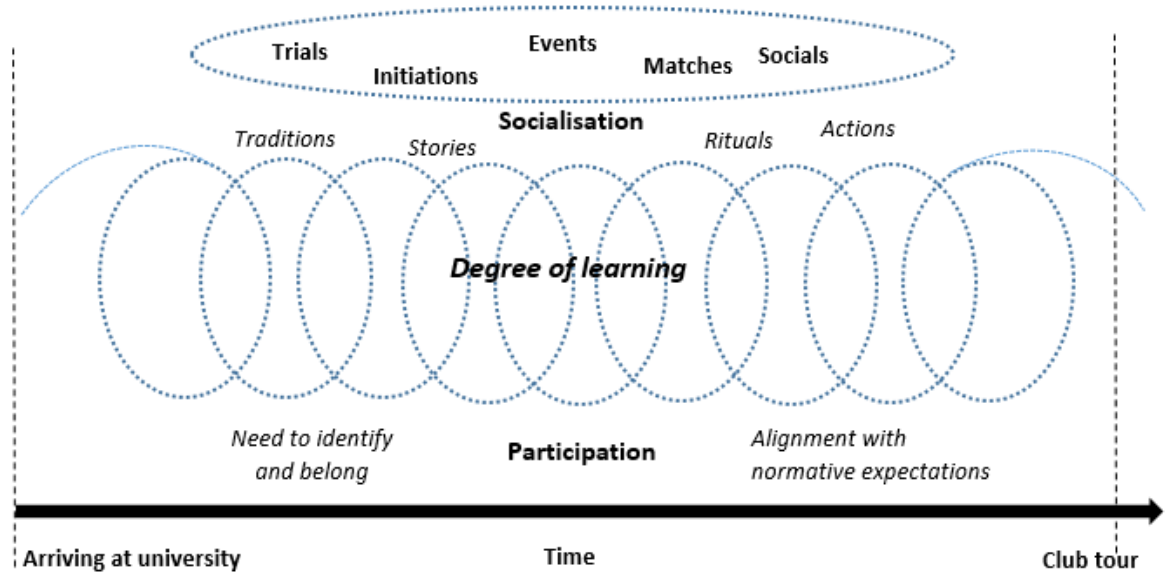
Figure 6.1 Model of team transition revisited

Participation in this respect could be related to the situated learning of e.g. hierarchical structure (and one's place within the hierarchy) with again a multi-dimensional understanding of transition important here. Specifically, hierarchical structure was argued to relate to interlinked structures in the guise of formal and informal hierarchies represented by on-pitch and off-pitch practices, respectively. The transitional process required navigation of these structures which occurred during specific practices manifesting in the form of ritualised traditions. For example, for new players the weekly social represented a site for transitional learning where during drinking games (essentially rigged against freshers) they quite literally learned how to consume alcohol in alignment with core community ideals.

While previous research has employed the CoP framework to consider how banter facilitates cohesion in sports teams (Wolfers et al., 2017) and team unity can be reconstructed in unfamiliar spaces (Wilson, 2018), no previous research has employed the framework with regards to understanding how new players *become* members of teams in the way I do here. I argue that the decision to frame transitional experience in this was appropriate as evidenced by the rich findings. In consideration of these factors a revised model of transition is presented (Figure 6.1.) and may be compared with the initial model that was forwarded at the start of the

thesis (Figure 1.1.). For another model that indicates change over time in relation to professional roles and identities see Kim and Angouri (2019).

This model attempts to show how exposure to specific socialising factors (discussed in Chapters 4 & 5) determined the nature of the transitional experience for participants. Hence, at a theoretical level, the role of structure (and structural learning) is underscored as a key transitional factor. However, the construction and reconstruction of club practices are not independent of the socio-historic context of the university experience. Moreover, this argument does not seek to discount the role of agency as participant decision making (i.e. level of participation) is an important aspect of experience. Combining these factors transition to the team involves four primary factors relevant to the trajectory of participants: 1, the need to identify and belong; 2, the socialising practices of the team; 3, commitment to learning per the first two points; and 4, alignment with expectations of gendered performance. The graph illustrates that continuous nature of the transition and includes reference to the core events that constitute milestones for accessing the community and moving from a newcomer to established status.

Expanding on the nature of socialising practices discussed above I will now turn attention to the second research question related to the role of socialisation: *What role does socialisation play during the process of team transition?* Reproduced community traditions were found to form a core component of transition as a form of socialisation. This formed part of the extensive shared repertoire of the community and was argued to be manifest both multi-modally and across transitional domains. For example, both the initiation ceremony and the club welcome emails constitute traditionalised practice in the form of community actions and community stories, respectively. Regarding the former, initiation ceremonies along with specific events were argued to be ritualised and aligning with previous research work constituted an important transitional stage for the players (Johnson, 2011). While no specific stage is argued to represent "transition", they did represent an introduction to new practices to be learned through participation and represent a core component of transition as process.

Durkheim's (1912/1995) classic proposition of rituals as engendering social solidarity is notable in this respect as ritualised stages and traditions not only have implications for individual transition but also for the cohesiveness of the team. Wilson (2018) has demonstrated how ritualised discursive practices can provide the bedrock for the construction of team identity when playing away from the home sports ground. While in this research specific comparisons can be drawn with the existing literature, e.g. the construction of their university team identity through the ritualised singing of "the ranger" after every club victory, a nuanced consideration of socialisation can also be provided based on the data. More precisely, questions of homogeneous participation arise if we consider the notion of participation in relation to practice (Wenger, 1998). While a sense of belonging was reported across the data set it was most strongly suggested by those who most clearly aligned with club practices through descriptions and evaluations of traditions, events and rituals. These were the players who "lived" for the weekly socials and are argued to form the core of the community. Hence belonging and core membership in this respect is argued to only encompass those players who are already committed to participation. The importance of participation for the re-enactment of the team was particularly visible in team stories.

The identification of discursively propagated "team narratives" as a form of the community's shared repertoire proved very useful as investigations of this phenomenon are not present in the academic literature. Although simple in design, the message projected annually onto new players was shown to characterise the ethos of the club and hence could be directly related to team identity construction (i.e. the team as mates) and guidelines for transition (i.e. commitment brings rewards). Participants actively drew on the stories when constructing their own experiences either through the direct voicing of senior players or indirect alignment when rationalising experience. Here it is acknowledged that these responses may have been coloured by interviewees wishing to portray the club and teammates in the best possible light (e.g. Kvale, 1994). Nevertheless, it is argued that the success of the story was such that in some instances the participants were extrapolating advice on how one should go about becoming a member of

their team, in these instances the core pattern was that the best way is to align with the community story, i.e. 'if you commit to it you get the most out of it'.

Similar to other aspects of the community's shared repertoire the propagation of team stories was demonstrably cyclical with evidence of the same message being disseminated, internalised and re-propagated over a number of years (represented in Figure 6.2.). In this regard new players learn the story verbally and through email, and then experience it through participatory practice (Wenger, 1998). Fully committed players then carry this message forward to the next fresher intake. This can be compared with the tradition of senior players providing coursework support for new members, who then go on to provide support for the next generation of freshers in a cyclical process. Overall, the recycled nature of the community is of immense importance to understandings of cohesion in varsity sport where player turnover is observed to be extremely high (Johnson & Donnelly, 2004). Equally, it can be said to have implications for more general understandings of belonging and membership in sports teams and particularly with regards to how "rookies" come to learn role and place within teams and subsequently transmit this understanding to incoming players.

Figure 6.2 Cyclical propagation of team ethos

The third and final research question asked: *What is the relationship between participation in the club and normative masculinities?* Community traditions and rituals as reported were underpinned by ideals associated with normative masculinity (e.g. Dempster, 2009; Francis, 1999; Stead, 2017). Regarding specific practices the core behaviour involved ritualised drinking games during the weekly social event. This finding is in alignment with previous research that has linked laddishness with excessive alcohol consumption in male varsity sports teams (Dempster, 2009; Francis, 1999; Phipps & Young, 2013), and while only representing a small sample within a specific community, serves to somewhat temper recent suggestions of decreasing alcohol consumption among British students (Phipps & Young, 2013). Drinking games are argued to be a means of facilitating heavy drinking and targeting specific participants (Zamboanga & Tomaso, 2014). They form both a place for willing members to earn masculine (hence community) currency, and less willing individuals to be socialised in the behaviour expected of them. Thus the emphasis is not on the consumption of alcohol, although it is a critical part, but on the content of 'games' that have a clear orientation towards physical strength and punishment. Moreover, the competitive nature of alcohol consumption performed in this way can be seen as exemplifying practice. Indeed, of the ritualised practices identified through reporting in the data the drinking games and associated behaviours reported in the stories may be considered the most emblematic of normative laddishness.

Other core characteristics were reported in the form of team banter and descriptions relating risk-taking behaviour (particularly as reported in initiation experiences). Regarding the former, descriptions of banter were complex. While some participants suggested a hierarchical basis for banter (i.e. banter could not be directed from new to senior players), similar to the findings of Jeffries (2019) other descriptions pointed to an environment where all players could participate in the jokes. Banter as described did not appear to entail humour predicated on misogyny or homophobia as has been linked to iterations of banter in laddish contexts (Clayton, B., & Humberstone, 2006; Jeffries, 2019; Stead, 2017). Although it is acknowledged that the research

did not specifically aim to investigate banter and therefore reporting is naturally based on whatever participants were willing to share in the interview contexts.

One notable finding involved the potential hurdle for non-native speakers to engage in "British banter". B. Clayton and Harris (2008) noted the importance of being quick witted in the male sports team they investigated. Some of the non-native English speakers in this study reported that their joining in the on banter was impeded on account of needing to reformulate the joke in their own language. Co-national groups formed a sanctuary of sorts for new players in this respect as spaces where they could speak their native languages, bond and learn potentially unfamiliar practices. The suggested formation of such sub-groups (or CoPs) in the team invites further research particularly with regards to how normative masculine practices predicated specifically on British laddism are oriented to (or not) by non-British players. In this research the core of the community was argued to be primarily British in composition, however, it was also possible to identify a number of international players as "committed" to club practices. In line with the findings of this research this presents a complex picture which future research might seek to expand on by investigating, for example, why do some international players appear to align with club practice more than others?

While reporting of the initiation ceremony did include laddish practices (drinking, risk-taking, etc.), the severity of excesses described recurrently in the literature (e.g. Griggs et al., 2012; Johnson, 2011) were not described. One noted unusual aspect of the club's ceremony was that new players were not required to attend if they did not wish to. This may be seen as atypical on account of initiation ceremonies being regarded as a mandatory part of joining varsity sports clubs (Holman & Johnson, 2004). A tentative interpretation of these specific findings would be to say that the initiation ceremony, as presented in the interviews, represents a toned down iteration of traditional events. This argument is given further weight by considering the general clampdown on such events in British and North American varsity contexts and the efforts to encourage notions of "positive initiation" and welcome rituals (Johnson & Chin; 2016;

Waldron, 2015). In addition, there appeared to be evidence of an awareness of the negative implications for the team with regards to the mistreatment of new players during initiations.

Overall, following definitions and understandings of behaviour in male varsity sports teams, the CoP was deemed to be a specific community of lads. However, in line with modern understandings the community is not argued to be homogenous. Rather, the data provided evidence for both alignment with, and resistance to, club practices (see Jeffries, 2019).This was found to directly influence a particular player's transitional experience. More precisely, a clear core group most epitomising laddishness was identified whereas decreased participation could be connected with decreased (social) position in the community. Non-participation and hence non-alignment with core community practices was associated with peripheral (marginal) participation and penalisation with regards to a sense of belonging with the group and opportunities to be assigned senior roles. This is a notable point as it invites further investigation of players who may wish to experience the bonding and sense of belonging in male varsity sports teams (Jeffries, 2019) but resist socialisation strategies on account of personal beliefs and values.

As a methodological contribution the identification and analysis of player stories has potentially fruitful implications. Miglbauer (2017) notes that interviews are important sites of identity work while most identity work is often achieved through storytelling according to Baynham (2011). Within these stories agency in the form of personal decision making appeared to be contrasted with the need to defer to aspects of the community (i.e. hierarchy) as part of transitional navigation. Hence, identity construction could be seen as encompassing self and team with regards to understanding the experience of finding place within the community.

In closing the thesis, I now turn to limitations and implications/applications for future research.

6.1 Limitations of the research

The project presented numerous challenges during its four year duration. Some were specific to this work and others can be associated with PhD research in general. While the vast majority of

these were remedied in situ there are some limitations that must be acknowledged. It is acknowledged that the primary data collection method is the semi-structured interview and thus relies heavily on self-reporting. Reconstruction of experience proved apt with regards to the narrative approach, I believe however that the overall understanding of experience could have been strengthened by further observations of practice beyond the trials and training sessions that were attended. However, gaining access to team social events proved difficult. Although senior team members welcomed my presence at these events *unofficially* they felt that the privacy of the group and the bonding atmosphere manifest therein would be impacted if I was required to gain consent from every member present. Strictly following ethical guidelines this posed an insurmountable problem and thus such participation and observation was not undertaken.

One further limitation involved the backgrounds of the participants who were primarily white, middle class and attending a prestigious university. The "laddishness" as manifest in descriptions is typically associated with this particular demographic (Anderson, 2010). Future work therefore might seek to involve a more rounded sample and consider competing norms of masculinity and look beyond white hetero-normative constructions. However, this is of course dependent on team composition.

6.2. Practical implications

This work has contributed empirically to a modern understanding of all male sports groups in a British university context. Methodologically, through the use of narrative and discursive approaches to using storytelling as a means of understanding the socially lived experience of players joining teams, and identifying specific discursively propagated socialisation practices. At a theoretical level it has provided insights by reframing transition in teams as a process underpinned by both decision making and structural forces. A result of this research has been the conceptualisation of a transitional process model grounded on the notion of a university sports team as a Community of Practice. I am hoping this model makes a contribution to sports transition research; in this model socialisation is explicitly argued to form a part of transitional

experience and the work shows the relationship with participation to hegemonic practice. Hence my work has expanded greatly on Benson et al.'s (2016) consideration of socialisation in sports teams. More precisely, it has offered a longitudinal focus involving one specific team where practices have been identified and considered in-depth. Future research can build further on this line of investigation and follow the transition process for new players for a full year or beyond.

While this research involved a British varsity sports club there is clear potential to build on these insights within the domain of professional sport. Transition is argued to entail a commitment to situated participatory learning and not merely a case of adjustment to perceived values and behaviour. Transferring this knowledge to a professional sports team I argue that a full appreciation of the transitional experiences of athletes is dependent on the revealing contextual factors external to the team and the socialising forces at work. In a professional setting these considerations might include whether such socialisation is driven by the playing staff as a specific community, by the coaching staff as a means of formal socialisation, or both, e.g. teammate socialisation as directed via head coaches. Finally, a novel aspect of this work has been the application of Wenger's (1998) notion of "trajectories of participation" to a sports team. The demonstration of its utility for understanding transition and socialisation in this work could prove useful to future researchers focusing on sporting environments.

Away from professional sports one other particularly important practical contribution relates to the participants, i.e. young male students in a university team context. As noted in the introduction modern day British campuses are exerting much energy attempting to tackle "lad culture" with the very notion of "lads" evoking images of badly behaved, drunk and sexist young men. Indeed, the home university of the author has itself been the subject of much public scrutiny following the "lads' chat" scandal (Giordano, 2019). However, this work concurs with recent work by Nichols (2018) and Jeffries (2019) in urging a more nuanced approach to how "lad" groups in society and university are approached. The thesis shows some of the contractions further research can unpack, while the community was centred on a core of

members aligning with hegemonic behaviours traditionally associated with laddism, this was not shared and accepted by all players. The nuances of positions of team members is open for future research to investigate.

Hence, while the team could justifiably be categorised as a lad community, it is a lad community situated in an environment epitomised by shifting attitudes e.g. with regards to hazing and initiation ceremonies. While this research stops short of characterising the participants in this study as exemplary bearers of progressive attitudes per Anderson (2010) it is important to acknowledge the complexity of trajectories taken by individual players. Equally, what has been understated in the research is the sense of belonging that players constructed with the team. For the vast majority of participants the team was constructed as either being an important part of their time at university, or as absolutely epitomising the positive experience. Indeed, for some players the team was stated as being the only reason they were still at university. These considerations again return us to the discussion offered in Chapter 1 that concerned both the need to tackle laddish behaviour and the need build a better understanding of the purpose of such groups, particularly in challenging situations such as the transition to university.

Finally, a notable finding, which has clear potential for application, is related to on-pitch experiences of the players. Central to reporting of challenges associated with varsity football was the physical nature of the football played. Such perceptions could be associated with both differences related to different playing styles (e.g. English football as more physical), but also on account of the physiological differences between first year and third year university students (i.e. 18 and 21 year olds). Non-native speakers in the team also reported the need to learn English terms associated with football but not used in their respective home countries. Although these participants were educated and able to use the English language accordingly (on account of undertaking degrees at a British university) "football English" was unfamiliar to them. Due to the lack of research investigating British varsity sport these findings are valuable as they illuminate some of the challenges experienced by first year student-athletes in relation

to the footballing aspects of their transition. Increased awareness of these challenges could prove useful for high performance coaches working with varsity sports teams.

Concluding the thesis there are several potentially fruitful avenues of investigation that can follow from this research. First, in line with the acknowledged criticisms above a new study might adopt ethnographic traditions in a mixed methods approach provided access can be gained. This could build a stronger case for the descriptions of the team environment and an understanding of practice. As noted in the methodology chapter observing the football trials gave me a better appreciation of the experiences of triallists and helped me to understand the scale of the event. Second, expanding on the identification of shared team narratives future research might seek to identify specific communicative practices with regards to team transition, e.g. what stories are shared within a team, what are new players told on entering teams, how do new players reconstruct these stories in relation to (or as a part of) their own transitional experiences in the team? Finally, building on the narrative approach a researcher might seek to analyse storytelling with regards to transition as retold in interviews with professional athletes.

In closing, as universities aim to offer students opportunities to develop their skills and talents holistically, the role of clubs, societies and sports teams is particularly relevant. Understanding the social environments of university sports clubs can shed further light on the complexity of the process and provide ways to support future professional athletes transitioning in and out of critical life stages.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Sample of information for participants form

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Study Title: Transnational adjustment through the eyes of migrant athletes, their teammates and coaches

Investigator(s): Daniel Clayton

Introduction

You are invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish.

(Part 1 tells you the purpose of the study and what will happen to you if you take part. Part 2 gives you more detailed information about the conduct of the study)

Please ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

<u>PART 1</u>

What is the study about?

The study seeks to understand the experiences of international athletes as they adjust to life in the UK and at UK Sports teams.

Do I have to take part?

It is entirely up to you to decide. We will describe the study and go through this information sheet, which we will give you to keep. If you choose to participate, we will ask you to sign a consent form to confirm that you have agreed to take part (if part of this study is an online or postal questionnaire/survey, by returning a completed questionnaire/survey, you are giving your consent for the information that you have supplied to be used in this study and formal signed consent will not be collected where postal or online questionnaires/surveys are concerned). You will be free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and this will not affect you or your circumstances in any way.

What will happen to me if I take part?

I will interview you about your experiences adjusting in different countries and playing sport.

What are the possible disadvantages, side effects, risks, and/or discomforts of taking part in this study?

You may be asked a sensitive question that you may not want to answer. Rest assured that your participation is voluntary and you are not obliged to answer all questions. You have the right to finish the interview at any point without the need to give me a reason. Furthermore, the information you give will be fully anonymised

Appendix 2: Consent form

CONSENT FORM

Participant ID: *If applicable*

Title of Project: *Transnational adjustment through the eyes of migrant athletes, their teammates and coaches.*

Name of researcher(s): *Daniel Clayton*

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet provided for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my *medical*, *social care*, *education*, or *legal rights* being affected.

3. I give consent that the interview will be recorded for the purposes of the study

4. I understand that my data will be securely stored for a minimum of 10 years, in line with the University of Warwick's Research Data Management Policy. *(Please amend to reflect funder requirements, if necessary)*

5. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant	Date	Signature

Name of Researcher taking consent	Date	Signature

Appendix 3: Club "Welcome" email 2016

Hi Boys,

A massive congratulations to you all, it's a great achievement to get into the club, and a testament to all of your footballing abilities. With tonnes of stuff to get involved in, hopefully the [club] can be a large part of your time at [the university]. The club is so much more than just a football team, while matches always take priority, social events, help with studies and most of all your best mates will be in the club. My biggest piece of advice would be to throw yourself into everything as much as possible. It's important to do as well as you can in your first year but for the majority of you it won't count so is a perfect year for making the most of opportunities in the club.

In terms of general weekly stuff, the 1s and 2s train on Monday morning 7:15-9:00, the 3s and 4s on Tuesday morning 7:15-9:00. BUCS matches are every Wednesday afternoon after which we have our weekly social. The whole club trains on Thursday night, then we're looking to train alternate Saturday mornings.

I'll be in contact again tomorrow with further details about this weekend and more information about the club.

Yours in football,

Club Captain 2016-17

Appendix 4: Club "Welcome" email 2017

Booooooooooys,

A massive congratulations to you all, it's a great achievement to get into the club, and a testament to all of your footballing abilities. With tonnes of stuff to get involved in, hopefully the [club] can be a large part of your time at [club]. The club is so much more than just a football team, while matches always take priority, social events, help with studies and most of all your best mates will be in the club. My biggest piece of advice would be to throw yourself into everything as much as possible. It's important to do as well as you can in your first year but for the majority of you it won't count so is a perfect year for making the most of opportunities in the club.

<u>Saturday</u>

- 10:45- Fresher meet and greet at OC1.02 in the Oculus- bring all your kit as we'll go straight to the bus to the [university] game afterwards. I'll give a bit of information about the club this year then it'll just be a chance to have a chat with everyone in the older years. The whole exec will be there, then anyone else in older years is more than welcome to come. For any non-freshers that aren't coming to this meet time for the bus is 11:10 @ the piazza.

- 14:00- all 4 teams are playing [university] away and will kickoff at 2. Make sure you try and wear a tracksuit to the game. 1s and 3s will be in red (if possible fresh try wear black shorts and red socks but no worries if not), 2s and 4s will be in white (fresh try and wear black shorts and white socks). The team sheets will be sent out this evening are very rough guides to the teams for now, don't read too much into them. The club prides itself on the fluidity of its teams, it doesn't matter what year or what position in the club you hold, and teams are picked on merit of players to win games. As the year goes on players will undoubtedly move up and down teams, we just want a chance for all of you to play games.

- 16:15- after the game we'll grab a shower if the facilities there are decent then the coach is booked back to campus (should get back at 5:15). We'll grab a drink and a bite to eat probably in fusion- you don't have to come to this but everyone is very much encouraged too. Then we'll give you all a chance to go back and get changed at your accommodation before getting the bus back to [town]. We'll be having pres at our football house in [town] before heading to a party at another football house. All of you are invited to this and it would be sick to see some of you there but we understand you might have other stuff on.

Any questions, don't hesitate to get in touch,

Club Captain 2017-18

Appendix 5: Club "Welcome" email 2018

Booooooooooys,

A massive congratulations to you all, it's a great achievement to get into the club, and a testament to all of your footballing abilities. With tonnes of stuff to get involved in, hopefully the [club] can be a huge part of your time at [university]. The club is so much more than just a football team. While matches always take priority, social events, help with studies and most of all your best mates will be in the club. My biggest piece of advice would be to throw yourself into everything as much as possible. It's important to do as well as you can in your first year but for most of you it won't count so it's a perfect year for making the most of opportunities in the club.

This Saturday, all four teams are playing [university] away and you will all be part of the squads. It's an absolute worldie day as we will follow up the fixture with club pres and a night out in [town], which you are all invited to. Please confirm you can make it on Saturday ASAP! The full schedule is below.

Saturday

- 10am - Fresher meet and greet upstairs in the [university]. Bring all your kit as we'll go straight to the bus to the [opposition] game afterwards. I'll give a bit of information about the club this year then it'll just be a chance to have a chat with everyone in the older years.

- 1.30pm – KO, all 4 teams vs [opposition]. Make sure you try and wear a tracksuit to the game. 1s and 2s will be in white (if possible try wear black shorts and white socks but no worries if not), 3s and 4s will be in red (try and wear black shorts and red socks). We will let you know what team you're in on Friday evening. At this stage, they are very rough guides to the teams for now, don't read too much into them. The club prides itself on the fluidity of its teams, it doesn't matter what year or what position in the club you hold, and teams are picked on merit of players to win games. As the year goes on players will undoubtedly move up and down teams, we just want a chance for all of you to play games.

- 5pm - After the game we'll grab a drink and a bite to eat in [restaurant] - you don't have to come to this, but everyone is very much encouraged to. Then we'll give you all a chance to go back and get changed at your accommodation before getting the bus back to [town]. We'll be having pres at our football house in [town] before heading to a night out at [nightclub]. All of you are invited to this and it would be sick to see you there!

Club Captain 2018-19

Appendix 6: Guiding questions

- *Could you describe your experience when you first came to the university?*

- *Could you describe any difficult moments that you faced during this period?*

- *Was there anything that helped?*

- *How did you come to play for the football team?*

- *Could you tell me about your experiences with the team so far?*

- *What was your initial experience of playing for the team?*

- *Could you tell me about the trials?*

- *Have you faced any challenging moments playing for the team?*

- *What has helped?*

- *Could you tell me about the social side of the club?*

- *What has it been like fitting into the club?*

- *Could you tell me about initiations?*

Appendix 7: Sample of original transcripts

Interview with Gabriel (2018)

Dan: could you elaborate on it being well received to be in a sports team?

Gabriel: I think when you erm when you tell people you play for the men's football team they tend to understand quickly they you have a good level of football and when you say you are in a buccs team and represent the university they know well objectively there are 650 people who turn up for trials in term 1 and they I think this year year 1 players they took only 12 of year 1 players they also took freshers but year year 2 fresher so people realise that and its and it well seen and also people tell you when you apply for jobs that's its also good to have extra curricula activities that's you done so that's also a bonus

Dan: ok well on that point moving forward to that actually team itself you just alluded to the trials how did you come to play for the team itself

Gabriel: through trials?

Dan: yeah yeah

Gabriel: yeah so I had a another friend from school who also played football we knew each other for 5 or 6 years we got along well we played football together so we turned up for the trials we made the first cut and then on the 2nd day they told us yeah we'd like you to join the football team and then what happened I had a friendly I played for the 2nd team and then er the captain on the 2nd team "listen" so I play winger so I could also help out upfront and the captain on the 2nd team said "listen I don't think we have a place for you on the 2nd team" and so I got dropped down to the 3rd team so that was fine by me I was already very happy to be part of the team in any team and I knew that in year 2 and year 3 I will most likely progress and always make the starting eleven so I joined the 3rd team and my first game was an away game and I played the 2nd half and I was elected man of the match I was happy I played well and then the next week I got my first start and I didn't play well at all and the n it was sorta ups and downs and then the 3rd team this season we've lost every game except for the last game so we haven't had well we've had a rubbish season and that's down to that's down to maybe us not kinda maybe us not being sometimes best team selections maybe sometimes some players being dropped out some substitutions etcetera just team spirit in general hasn't be I don't really know but it was to good to finish on a high its funny because trainings are always good good intensity, we know what we want to do at each training session yeah so that's good. Well initially I must say I joined also the volley ball and

Dan: Ok

Gabriel: the tennis teams so I had a choice. What team do I join cos I didn't manage to get into the buccs tennis team but I did manage to get into the buccs volleyball team and I thought to myself I could always play tennis further down the line, volleyball volleyball isn't very prestigious in England its not like you say you joined the volleyball team that's something in France volleyball is like a national sport like the French volleyball team won the world league last year so it's very good so if you play volleyball people in France are a lot more impressed than in England what I realised talking to English people was that volleyball when I talk about English football mates they were like that's a girl's sport and they kinda took the mickey so then I said to myself listen I can play tennis later but that 11 aside I will most likely only be able to play at university and then once I get a job or whatever its very difficult and time consuming and then I was happy because what the football team I was talking about the class spirit in the French section that I missed and I found a part of it that I in the football team because you have this same group of people ok not as often as classroom in French

section but you see them you form bonds you form this link and seeing people regularly helps create this community spirit that is lost in seminars and lecturers and that I found in the football team

Dan: could you describe how the trials themselves how it works….is it literally just a case of playing a game?

Gabriel: Yeah the trials are funny because everyone turns up and people who turn up in trainers who aren't footballers who saw the event on Facebook who just thought they'd pop along then you have erm people who know what they are doing and then what's funny I remember maybe its quite intimidating at the start because you have all those because you don't know whose whose you just have a bunch of guys in their football kit looking at you looking at every move you feel under pressure and then because we are so many you kinda relax it is competitive it is rough because everyone wants to out try each other its not about winning the game its about you putting in a good individual performance and being loud so that was I knew I knew more or less id make the first cut but then on the second day you notice the same kind of people looking at you from the touchlines they'll taking notes looking at who's who so yeah you really try put ….because of the amount of people there were so you really had to outshine your teammate so yeah so it was quite difficult quite competitive

Interview with Frank (2017)

Dan: so if you could describe your experience just moving to [university] moving to the area

Frank: Well erm because I grew up in […] obviously a huge city it was weird for me to come to [the university] and [the city] it's a campus uni I believed it was not difficult but different at the beginning to have this closed bubble because basically you just see the same people all the time like in London for example it's just everything is so big you don't people on the streets but here you always see someone but moving here that helped actually because you just adapt better if you see familiar faces and know where to go if you want to meet people in terms of the moving process its obviously different to [my home country] but not that much but also I lived in UK and come back it was actually pretty frictionless

Dan: Ok what would be the perhaps the most challenging thing you've faced coming here

Frank: good question, the most challenging thing I've faced has actually been getting back to university life where I've just worked and had 1 and half years off

Dan: yeah could you describe a particularly challenging moment in the last 4 months

Frank: yeah erm challenging moment was probably actually happened with the football team because me and my captain kinda had a dispute that made me quite upset actually I don't I was new to the team and me and him had a big fight that's still not fully resolved but that was one of the things that made me not sad but think about things I generally overthink about situations

Dan: ok if you are happy to we could return to that point afterwards. Going back to the men's team how does that work how did you come to play for the team?

Frank: Ok so basically a friend of mine is actually in the second year and he always told me how its such a good uni football team for someone like me because we always played in the football team together I played I would say semi-professional not really high but like second league in [my home country] in the youth team in the area so basically I've always lived football I support [local team] I've season tickets there basically I love football so erm I just went to trials and I talked to the guys I just I got in the team thankfully and then onwards just kind of went with the flow enjoying the socials played the games talking to the guys basically form my love of football

Interview with Steve (2019)

Dan: you've just started you came to the university in September for the freshers week so if you went back to that moment could you describe your experiences moving to the university

Steve: I'd say the first few weeks freshers week was fine cos I had like my mum ringing me every day because bless her she didn't want to let go because my sister went to [local] university local again so she stayed at home so she didn't move out so this is like my sisters older than me I'm sorta the first one leaving the house so like the first few weeks I sort of coped alright and then like after the first few weeks I went through a period where I started to struggle a little bit because I work a job the football requires a lot of commitment not that id change any of it because its literally two of the best decisions I've made in coming to uni is moving out I could've stayed at home and drove but that would have been such a foolish decision I would have literally miss out on everything so moving out was the probably the best decision I've made I've learnt so much and joining the football club but erm those first 4 weeks were very good freshers week its totally different experience to anything I'm ever used to

Dan: mhmm

Steve: it's a good experience nothing negative those first 4 weeks were a good time in the week a good period of life

Dan: Ok erm was there anything particularly challenging during the first one or two months

Steve: There are a lot of jobs parents do you for you or whoever you live with they do for that you do not realise happens I'm gonna sound very spoiled here like washing up at home I have a dishwasher so now I have to it takes cooking like I consider myself quite a good cook it takes cooking from like a 30 minute job like 20 minutes chicken in oven then eat the chicken takes cooking from a 20 minute job tom a 45 minuet job because you have to wash up after even the added stress because you've eaten such good food and like I've gotta wash up so annoying id say other than that work stress a bit because ive had to get a transfer

Dan: Mmm

Steve: The hence the new people I'm working with are not I wouldn't say nice not as its not as good an atmosphere as my old store so I had to adjust to work and new people erm yeah that's probably the only thing I've found challenging

Dan: Ok that's fair enough erm was there anything that helped during this period at all

Steve: My flatmates see a lot of people have said to me that had very negative experiences with their flatmates noise mess mess is the biggest one people have been griping over just general ;politeness but my flatmates I've been so lucky cos all of em are very normal individual there's 2 we rarely see there are international students I've seen one of them one since the beginning day and its term 2 I don't even know if he's here anymore laughing but the other boys we've got I've got a really good group of flatmates that and I would say the football team because I love playing football I played it since I could remember

Interview with Daniel (2019)

Dan: Could you tell me a little bit about yourself where you come from and what you might be studying

Daniel: Ah so I live in [city] for my whole life when I was at school I did a lot of sport football rugby cricket athletes whatever and then I academic wise physic maths did these at a level and then

Dan: Hmmm

Daniel: Guess I'll do engineering then

Dan: 2:00 Sure and when did you arrive there at the university

Daniel: Ah October 23rd

Dan: You remember the exact day laughing

Daniel: Laughing it think it was the 23rd

Dan: Is that a little bit late?

Daniel: Wait

Dan: September 23rd?

Daniel: Wait no September 23rd yeah

Dan: Laughing

Daniel: Sorry yeah you are right I was like a week before term actually started in freshers week

Dan: Ok Ok and are you living on campus then now

Daniel: Yes

Dan: You are OK so if you went back to October around that period erm could you describe for me your experiences moving to the university

Daniel: Erm I settled in quite quickly generally fine changing environments my flat mates got on quite well and made most of freshers week and then yeah

Dan: Ok and during this period was there anything you found particularly challenging

Daniel: Erm other than waking up for 9am lectures not particularly just kinda been coasting through my course thus far nothing too stressful had exams time being everything's gone together

Dan: Quite smooth ok just on that point why do you think that is that things have gone quite nice has there been anything hats helped

Daniel: Erm I guess the lectures have all been good they way they format everything online if I miss lectures for whatever reason I can go and catch up in no time and obviously being in the football club there after at least an engineer in every year of study so if if I ever do need to ask for help I just talk to one of them

Dan: How does that work if you don't mind telling me?

Daniel: So if we're at training this year I just asked them how much work do I really need to be doing what are the kinda important things I need to pay attention to

Dan: And you just can go to anyone

Daniel: Yeah

Appendix 8: Table of Participant information

Pseudonym	Age	Nationality	Year of Study
Andrew	19	British	1st
Arron	20	British	2nd
Brett	18	British	1st
Carlos	24	Spanish	1st
Cristian	22	Spanish	1st
Damon	18	British	1st
Daniel	19	British	1st
Frank	19	German	1st
Gabriel	18	French	1st
Guy	18	French	1st
Henry	20	French	2nd
Jason (pilot)	20	British	2nd
Jonny	18	British	1st
Jordan	20	British	1st
Leandro	19	Spanish	1st
Matt	21	British	3rd
Oliver	19	*(Omitted)*	1st
Paulo	19	Spanish	1st
Steve	18	British	1st
Stu	21	British	3rd
Timo	18	Swiss	1st
Toby	19	German	1st
Tom	18	British	1st