Join LSA

http://www.leisure-studies-association.info/LSAWEB/Join.html

LSA MEMBERSHIP ENTITLEMENTS

— LSA Conference and Seminar registration special member prices
— LSA Newsletter (3 issues annually)
— Special rate subscription available for LSA Journal Leisure Studies
— Significant reductions on LSA Publications, one of the most substantial Leisure Studies resources published
— Preferential terms for students / retired / unemployed

SUBSCRIPTION — The Subscription period is for 12 months from any starting date. CATEGORIES are UK (corporate, individual and student), Non-UK (corporate, individual and student)
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Chair’s Comments

This is my final column for the LSA Newsletter as Chair of the Association. The Constitution of the Association sets a time-limit on membership in all roles of the Executive Committee. I have always defended such democratising limits, in private and in public, as I think it sets out a philosophical and political position on hierarchy and on inclusion. No one is bigger than the Association they serve, and no one should be allowed to retain control of the leadership of the Association for ever. Other learned societies do not have such fixed-terms of office. Some Chairs of some Associations of which I am a member seem to have been in place for as long as I can remember. They would argue that it is important to maintain continuity, to keep good volunteers with long experience in the decision-making process. I believe the LSA does that through the involvement on the Executive Committee of Professor Ken Roberts, and of course the important work of our paid administrator Myrene McFee. Thus it is a constitutional imperative that I stand down at this, the end of my seventh consecutive year of service on the LSA Exec. By the time you read this a new Chair and new members of the Executive Committee will have been nominated and elected at the AGM. If you are not attending the AGM, I encourage any of you who might be interested in becoming members of the Executive Committee to contact the new Chair.

My term as Chair is ended, but I will not be going away. I am still committed to working with the LSA, with my friends and colleagues on the Executive Committee, to ensure that the aims of the Association are furthered. In my term of office as Chair I have initiated a number of projects around internationalisation, working with other leisure learned societies, membership, new digital communications and publications. There is a proposal at the LSA AGM to introduce a new formal title and role for ex-Chairs of the Association. We are proposing that ex-Chairs may be invited to become Ambassadors for the LSA. The roles will be negotiated with each Ambassador, but we expect the roles will at a minimum formalise the ‘cheerleading’ jobs those ex-Chairs do, and some of the expert advice they give behind the scenes. But the new Chair and the Executive Committee may also agree with some of those Ambassadors that they will work on specific tasks. Here I will hold my hand up and declare an interest: I want to keep working on some of the tasks I have been working on in my time as Chair. So it’s good bye for now, but I may well be back!

Professor Karl Spracklen
June 2013
K.Spracklen@leedsmet.ac.uk

Guest Editors’ Introduction to the Special Theme — Narrative and the Body in Sport and Leisure

We are pleased to be invited as guest editors for the special theme section of this edition of the LSA Newsletter. In this collection of articles we have sought to draw together scholars for whom the body and narrative ways of knowing are central to their work across sport and leisure contexts. This reflects our personal interests which revolve around embodiment, narrative identity formation and auto/biography in sport and physical culture. In 2010/11 Emma won the LSA Nikki Ventris Memorial award for undergraduate dissertation of the year, a version [i.e. slightly amended for the purposes of presentation here] is also featured in this issue. It focused upon the biographical disruption of one male athlete who transitioned from a high performance footballer to disability track athlete following an unexpected medical complication which resulted in lower leg amputation. Emma explores the simultaneous disruption to the physical and associated senses of self and identity, over a significant period of time spent with the participant. The ways in which specific bodies, developed via sport, have elective affinities to tell particular kinds of stories or narratives is focused upon. It makes for insightful yet often uncomfortable reading.

My own on-going research, which often involves collaboration with Andrew Sparkes in the Research Institute for Sport, Physical Activity and Leisure at Leeds Metropolitan University, is concerned with issues similar to those Emma explores, as they revolve around body-self-culture relationships over time as evidenced through sporting autobiographies. Narrative inquiry is central to an interest in autobiography, where it can be used to illustrate certain forms of analysis in action, provide opportunity for reflection
on how selected autobiographies can act as narrative maps of experience for themselves and others, and generate critical questions about what is said and left unsaid to the reader. Specifically, I have focused upon the illness experiences of elite athletes (e.g. see Stewart, Smith and Sparkes, 2011), and now begin to explore the relatively sparse terrain of female sporting autobiographies.

As a brief introduction for those who may be unfamiliar with this approach, Arthur Frank (1995) encapsulates the conjoining of concepts in this theme well. He notes that we tell stories about our bodies, out of our bodies and through our bodies. It is these stories we are told and the stories we tell about ourselves and our bodies that are important in terms of how we come to impose order on our embodied experiences and make sense of events and actions in our lives (Sparkes, 1999). In this sense, narratives are socially shared linguistic forms made available by culture, which may act as a menu from which persons can select to make sense of lived experience, and for the construction of autobiographical selves and identities. However, crucially, as Sparkes and Smith (2011) emphasize, narrative resources are not evenly distributed in any given society with regard to social class, gender, ethnicity, race, age, sexual orientation and disability. This said, the ability of particular persons to tell or not tell particular stories is of interest, where the body is linked to wider social structures that shape the meaning-making process (McAdams, 2006).

Over a decade ago Sparkes (1999) argued that narrative forms of analysis have much to offer in understanding embodied experiences as lived and expressed in the telling of culturally situated stories, located within systems of inequality. He posed a list of questions for future research in this area, some of which are addressed in this special feature in which the contributors to this newsletter’s special theme section engage with the complexities, possibilities and problems of narrative ways of knowing across various social categories. Firstly, Cassie Phoenix gives an introduction to narrative inquiry, foregrounding the ageing body in sport and leisure. Following this Helen Owton addresses the much under-researched topic of illness in sport by exploring lived experiences of asthma. Finally, we are reminded of the “stuffness” of life as described by Sparkes (2009) and Sparkes and Smith (2012) that includes explicitly engaging with the ‘fleshed out’ bodily sensations and lived experiences told through bodies in particular contexts. Jacquelyn Allen-Collinson illuminates how at times female embodiment in certain spaces can be starkly uncomfortable in the context of long distance running.

We ask that you think with these shared stories: we hope they might provide some insight for synthesis into your own scholarly and personal stories.

References

Carly Stewart cstewart@cardiffmet.ac.uk
Emma Pullen epullen@cardiffmet.ac.uk
Cardiff School of Sport

ELECTION: No candidates were put forward in this year’s election process, so nominations and voting for 2013–2014 will be conducted from the floor at the AGM. Tuesday July 9 2013 (5pm), University of Salford. LSA Members are entitled attend the AGM without registering for the conference.

Special Theme Guest Editor/s and topic for LSA Newsletter No 96 (November 2013) is not yet determined. Please contact S.S.Lawrence@leedsmet.ac.uk if you would like to put together a collection of articles for the LSA Newsletter on your chosen leisure studies subject.
LSA Dissertation Prizewinners

The Executive Committee is pleased to announce the Under-Graduate and Post-Graduate Dissertation Prizewinners for their work completed in 2012.

Sue Glyptis Memorial Award for Post-Graduate Dissertation of the Year

EMILY SHEPPARD (University of Bedfordshire) for her dissertation ‘An Analysis of the Economic Leisure Constraints Experienced by Fans as a Result of Holding Home Sports Fixtures at Alternative Stadia’. Supervised by Dr. Denise Cardwell.

Nikki Ventris Memorial Award for Under-graduate Dissertation of the Year

RICHARD WEBB (Liverpool John Moores University) for his dissertation ‘A Qualitative Evaluation of an NHS Weight Management Programme for Obese Patients in Liverpool’. Supervised by Dr. Louise Platt.

Both prizewinners have received a £100 cash award and both are attending the LSA 2013 conference at University of Salford as guests of the Association. Both will present their work during parallel sessions of the 2013 conference.

For more information about LSA Dissertation Prizes
http://www.leisure-studies-association.info/LSAWEB/Prizes.html

Got an idea? Got a new job? Got an announcement? Got a complaint? Just wrote a great book? Just went to a great (or awful) conference?

Well, then, say something!

Contact
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Myrene McFee mcfee-usa@earthlink.net

Newsletter 96 circulation November 2013 (copy deadline October 1)
Newsletter 97 circulation March 2014 (copy deadline February 1)
Newsletter 98 circulation July 2014 (copy deadline June 1)
Newsletter 99 circulation November 2014 (copy deadline October 1)
Sport, Festivity and Digital Cultures
7-9 July 2014 Hosted by University of the West of Scotland, Paisley Campus
Committee Chair Prof. Gayle McPherson

Guidelines for submitting proposals   Register interest   Travel & accommodation
Contact Conference Organisers   lsa2014@uws.ac.uk

Deadline for proposals Jan. 15, 2014

LSA 2014, Sport, Festivity and Digital Cultures brings together comparative and contrasting perspectives on both the digital age in leisure and digital practices as leisure — as prevalent in cultural forms such as sport or festivity and other leisure pursuits. The conference takes place in a particularly important year for both Scotland and the global sporting and cultural communities. Scotland plays host to the XXth Commonwealth Games in Glasgow and the Ryder Cup in 2014 at Gleneagles. Culturally, 2014 also marks the second “Year of Homecoming”, encouraging the successors of the global Scottish diaspora to return home for a year of cultural “extravaganza and festivity”.

LSA 2014 Conference Themes (see expanded themes)

• Sport (sport tourism; sport and the outdoors; sport and festivity; sport and community engagement)
• Festivity (festivals, events and identity politics; festivals, events and the common good; assessing the cultural value of festivals and events)
• Digital cultures (festivals, events and digital cultures; sport and digital cultures; digital leisure communities)
• Emerging researchers. The conference will host a PhD Strand with Panel Question and Answer session and early career workshops led by LSA members. Papers across (and beyond) the main conference themes are encouraged.
• Open stream. In addition to papers addressing one of the main conference themes, novel research outside those thematic foci is also welcome. The open stream of the conference is designed to encourage / enable conference participation for Members and others for whom the current year’s theme is not within their particular area of interest, but have a contribution to make to leisure studies theory, methodology, policy and pedagogy.

LSA Student Bursaries see full details
How can leisure academics, policy makers and practitioners develop and harness their subject area to help address significant issues in an increasingly complex world, with its varied and contrasting challenges? The key question we have for delegates of this conference is where does leisure fit amongst these significant issues and what can leisure studies offer in response to the challenges our society is now facing? Leisure academics, scholars, researchers, managers and service delivery staff are invited to attend the conference to engage with these issues.

The conference will consist of keynote presentations, workshops and a variety of oral presentations held in themed sessions. The core conference sub-themes are:

- Leisure and Health
- Educating through Leisure
- Leisure and Social Change
- Leisure, Environment and Sustainability

The conference is being co-hosted by the Sport and Active Leisure Group from the Faculty of Education, Monash University and the Centre for Sport, Health and Wellbeing, Brunel University, UK. The conference will be held at Monash University's Peninsula campus.

The campus is located in Frankston, approximately 50 kilometres (1 hour) from central Melbourne. Frankston is at the tip of the beautiful Mornington Peninsula, home to beautiful coastlines and over 80 wineries. Frankston has a thriving city centre and a beautiful sandy beach.

For more information visit [www.education.monash.edu/research/conferences/anzals/index.html](http://www.education.monash.edu/research/conferences/anzals/index.html)

All enquiries can be directed to the conference chair, Ruth Jeanes via email educ-anzalsconf@monash.edu
Class has not featured as a principal theme of an LSA conference for many years, a reflection in part of the dominant discourse of the New Labour era in which policy spoke to social inclusion and excluded communities rather than to poverty and class differentiation. However, with an ever-widening gap between the richest and the poorest and the withdrawal of many basic forms of state provision, class is once again informing political and social discourse in Great Britain. It is therefore timely to re-invigorate academic debate around the relationship of class to the social distribution of leisure opportunity and practice.

This conference will address questions concerning the meaning of social class, the influence of class on the consumption of leisure, the role of leisure in forming class identity, the mediation of class through everyday leisure, the impact of the withdrawal of public sector leisure provision on access to leisure opportunities and the relationships between class and leisure provision and planning. LSA 2013 aims to appeal broadly to an international audience drawn from leisure theorists, academic researchers in sociology, cultural studies, public policy, economics, youth work, social and cultural history and museology; practitioners, policy makers, curators; research and postgraduate students. Sub-themes are intended to encourage debate about the relationships between class and leisure from different perspectives. This call for papers invites submitters to speak to one or more of the sub-themes, thus enabling papers dealing in depth with one specific theme as well as those offering a blended approach through a combination of sub-themes.
Sub-themes

The Everyday — is an important though contested concept in leisure studies. While class is an everyday reality in the socio-cultural production of leisure, pleasure may signify a break from the everyday. Leisure is thus simultaneously everyday and other than everyday. This strand explores the ways in which everyday leisure is shaped and normalised by class and in which its consumption may subvert and challenge class boundaries. It provides scope to investigate everyday leisure and the construction of leisure lives at all levels of class and across other indicators such as gender, age and ethnicity.

Policy — Social and economic policy frames and is a framework for leisure practices. In an era of political and policy change, questions arise how lifestyle and leisure practices will evolve. Leisure studies scholarship could usefully return to questions of stratification and social division in such times. In an era of stripped back public spending, restructuring of welfare and the project of the ‘Big Society’, there is an opportunity to readdress questions of the relationship between policy, politics, the structures of inequality and its relationship with leisure behaviour, orientation, meaning and spending. After years of absence, class may re-emerge not only from the wilderness of political lexicon but also as a crucial stratifying variable in academic study.

Consumption, Urban Leisure and Leisure Legacies — have been the subject of numerous studies which have aimed to understand how different classes engage with diverse leisure activities. How-ever, it is generally agreed that people with different incomes (and therefore class) have access to different leisure resources. Although this statement may have been particularly true in the past, the definition of leisure, its consumption and its legacy have changed greatly, especially during the last twenty years. Therefore, this theme aims to explore different aspects of the consumption of leisure, legacies and how the notion of social class is mediated through them.

Leisure Provision — Leisure industries may be seen as a response to demand for commercialised leisure or the driver of demand for commercially provided leisure. The leisure industries will be conceptualised broadly here with papers exploring aspects of travel and tourism, popular spectator leisure (football, rugby, cricket for example), adult commercialised leisure including pubs, clubs and alcohol, gambling, the commercial music industry and other aspects of commercial leisure. This theme offers opportunities to explore the socially stratified nature of differing types of commercial leisure provision and the ways in which these reflect and maintain class divisions.

Hosts: University of Salford and University of Bolton

Working together the Universities of Salford and Bolton will present a unique conference based upon two adjacent northern towns with an illustrious history and a vibrant present of leisure provision. Celebrated as, respectively, Ewan McColl’s ‘Dirty Old Town’ and Mass Observation’s ‘Worktown’, Salford and Bolton epitomise the collective identity of an industrial working class that has now all but disappeared, but also represent towns in which class differentiation is readily visible in leisure opportunity and resource.

The North West offers a microcosm of leisure places and practices that reflect and contextualise issues of social class within leisure studies. National extremes of wealth and privilege are well represented in Greater Manchester with areas of exceptional poverty and disadvantage separated from wealthy and privileged neighbourhoods by only a few miles. We intend to make use of these distinctions in wealth and access to resources by connecting the conference to local places and sources. There will be a display by and a visit to the Working Class Movement Library which is situated on the University of Salford campus.

One strand of the conference will relate to Bolton, the locale of Mass Observation’s ‘Worktown’ which sought to investigate the everyday leisure of working class people, through a visit to the Worktown collection at Bolton Museum and the holding of a related parallel session there.

One keynote session will be held in Bolton One, a new on-campus facility built through a partnership of the University of Bolton, Bolton Council and NHS Bolton as a Centre of Excellence and research in Health and Well Being. Transport will be provided to Bolton for delegates wishing to attend these session.
LSA 2013 Venue
The conference will be held on the University of Salford campus and will make use of the accommodation available on that campus.

The University of Salford is a mile and a half (three kilometres) from Manchester city centre and 1.6 miles from MediaCityUK. There are excellent transport links, with Salford Crescent railway station on campus and regular bus services. Trains from Manchester International Airport run hourly and take 30 minutes to campus. The airport can also be reached by car within 20 minutes.

University of Salford Interactive Campus Map  http://www.salford.ac.uk/travel/campus-map
Travel information  http://www.salford.ac.uk/travel/travelling-to-the-university

LSA 2013 Conference Committee

Dr. Bob Snape is Reader in Leisure and Sport, University of Bolton. He was Secretary of the LSA 2001-2007 and has served as Publications Officer 2010 to date. He was a member of the Conference Organising Committee of LSA2002 at the University of Central Lancashire and is principal organiser of LSA one day Recording Leisure Lives conferences held at Bolton 2008–2012. He is principal editor of the five volumes from this conference to date.

Neil Robinson lectures at Salford University Business School, teaching at both under- and postgraduate levels. Neil has a wide range of teaching experience within HE both in the UK and overseas. This includes distance learning programmes in Malaysia and Hong Kong and consultancy roles for British Airways and Panda Hotels, Hong Kong. Neil has also served on the executive of the Association for Tourism in Higher Education and has been involved in the design of the Quality Assurance Agency subject benchmarking statements for Hospitality, Leisure & Tourism. He holds a number of external examiner roles in UK Universities and has research interests in dark tourism, heritage, stand-up comedy and musical legacy associated with place.

Dr. Carolyn Downs organised the first International Conference on Gambling and Social responsibility held in the UK (2008). She has been awarded large grants under the European Union Lifelong Learning Programme for her research on entrepreneurship — the ELIE Project (2012-2012) Employability: Learning through Enterprise and Entrepreneurship and its follow-on ELIENTAL: breaking barriers to enterprise (2013-2016). Alongside her post at Lancaster University Carolyn holds a Visiting Research Fellowship at MMU in the Research Institute for Health and Social Change and also maintains an active interest in social history, publishing regularly on the social history of gambling.

Phil Binks is currently a Senior Lecturer in the School of Health and Social Sciences at The University of Bolton and is a current member of the LSA. Programme Leader for the BA Sports Development and BA Sport and Leisure Management degrees. Phil has been a member of the LSA for the last 9 years in which time he has presented parallel sessions at the last 8 annual conferences and has contributed to a number of post conference publications.

Ana Borges da Costa is currently undertaking a PhD at the University of Bolton to explore the potential contribution of circle dance to well-being through the subject field of occupational therapy. She is an occupational therapist by background with over 23 years experience and she has also been teaching circle dance for the past 17 years, in both Brazil and the United Kingdom. Ana is a current member of the LSA Executive Committee.

Anna Catalani is a Lecturer in Museum and Heritage Studies, University of Salford. Her research interests are in the area of material culture, museum and heritage studies. Anna is particularly interested in the process of identity construction through collections, in different societies and historical contexts.

Kerry Moores joined Salford Business School in 2006 during her teaching training after completing her Hospitality and Tourism Management Degree at Salford in 2005. Kerry has worked in the University of Salford’s Business School since 2007. She has previously taught hospitality and business management as her original specialist subjects. However over the years her skills have developed in enterprise education, which has become an area which she now plans to develop as part of her PhD. Kerry is an active member of the new Leisure, Research and Heritage group (LRH), which is convened by the University of Salford. Through this group Kerry has gained multi-disciplinary perspectives on a wide range of leisure related issues. She has presented a paper on the role of food in working class lives at the Recording Leisure Lives conference held at the University of Bolton and has recently embarked upon a PhD in Enterprise Education.

Trevor Taylor has been a lecturer at the University of Salford university for 27 years teaching in Hospitality, Leisure, Tourism and sport related subjects. He is a past president of the Institute of British Bakers. His research interests are related to sport, in particular tennis, in which he has had publications and urban leisure, on which he has presented papers at various conferences. He has helped students to publish in subjects including equality in sport funding in relationship to Olympic and paralympic athletes, and the social effects of binge drinking. His personal leisure interests are watching golf and playing tennis; he is also chairman of a local tennis club.

Conference committee contacts
Dr. Bob Snape  R.Snape@bolton.ac.uk  Dr. Neil Robinson  n.robinson@salford.ac.uk

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## LSA 2013 Conference (draft) Programme

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<td>Refreshments</td>
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<td><strong>KEYNOTE TWO</strong></td>
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<td>Professor John Walton, Ikerbasque</td>
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<td>‘Leisure and Class in and out of Fashion: Historical Approaches in Britain, from the</td>
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<td>5.00</td>
<td>Leisure Studies Association AGM</td>
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| 9.00     | PARALLEL SESSIONS B   | **B1 CONSUMPTION**  
Hsuan Hsuan Chang, Ming Chuan University, Taiwan  ... Gender Differences in the Leisure Involvement and Flow Experience Toward the Extreme Sport Participations.  
Callie Spencer and Karen Paisley, University of Utah  ... From Fairy Tales to “Kinky Fuckery:” Reading, Class, and Biopolitical Production.  
Steven E. Mock and Maley Tudor, University of Waterloo  ... Involvement in Sexual Minority-focused Sport as a Buffer against Internalized Homophobia.  

**B2 THE EVERYDAY**  
Laurel P. Richmond, California State University and Corey W. Johnson, University of Georgia  ... “As long as me and mine eat, I’m alright”: Experiences of Women on Welfare.  
Evangelia Chamourgiotaki University of Peloponnese, Corinth  ... Leisure and the social reproduction; the narratives of twelve immigrants.  
Corey Johnson, University of Georgia & Joshua Trey Barnett Indiana University  ... Dixie and Dominique ‘Get Real’: Performativity, Politics and Capitalism in Drag Space  
Shu-Ching Lee, Chengchi University, Taiwan  ... Crossing Boundaries: ‘Naked Travel’ as an approach to exploring ‘intersectionality’ in transnational migration research  

**B3 LEISURE PROVISION**  
Yolanda Lazaro Fernandez  ... Enjoying learning. A leisure experience for adults/senior citizens at University.  
Aurora Madariaga Ortuzar, Idurre Lazcano Quintana, Yolanda Lazaro Fernandez, Sheila Romero Da Cruz  ... The construction of a concept of educational leisure for childhood from the perspective of different agents.  
Sung Hun Choi, University of Ulsan  ... Analysis of Leisure Patterns for Married Women during the Life-Cycle in South Korea.  
Richard Webb, Liverpool John Moores University  ... A qualitative investigation into the follow up support offered to patients after an NHS obesity weight management programme in Liverpool  

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<td>10.30</td>
<td>Refreshments</td>
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| 11.00    | KEYNOTE THREE  
Professor Bren Neale, University of Leeds. Title t.b.c.  

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<tr>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
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| 12.30    | Higher Education Academy — Presentation by Lynne Bibbings, Discipline Lead for the Hospitality, Sport and Tourism, Higher Education Academy.  

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| 1.00     | PARALLEL SESSIONS C  
**C1 URBAN LEISURE**  
Joanne Knowles, Liverpool John Moores University  ... The reinvention of Weston-Super-Mare's Grand Pier as postmodern leisure space.  
Sarah-Joy Maddeaux, University of Bristol  ... “A favourite summer resort for all classes of citizens”: Class and Respectability at Bristol Zoo Gardens, c. 1835-1939  
Bob Snape, University of Bolton  ... “Tear his bloody arm off”: all-in wrestling, bowls, and micro histories of everyday working class culture in Mass Observation’s Worktown.  

**C2 LEISURE PROVISION**  
David Lamb Edith Cowan University  ... Living the slow life: A middle class privilege (The slow life in Fremantle, Western Australia).  
Gabby Riches, Leeds Metropolitan University  ... ‘It’ll Always Be That Way’: The Exploration of Working Class Identities within the Leeds Heavy Metal Music Scene  
**Wednesday 10th**

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<td><strong>C3 LEISURE POLICY</strong></td>
<td>Lady Hale Social Space</td>
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<td>Mawarni Mohamed ... Young Partners Policy as a Context for Youth Development and Social ill Prevention</td>
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<td>Idurre Lazcano Quintana, Aurora Madariaga Ortuzar, Joseba Doistua Nebreda, Sheila Romero Da Cruz ... The value of inclusion in leisure. An operational strategy focused on people with disabilities.</td>
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<td>Deborah Stevenson ... Stimulating and Regulating the Urban Night-time Economy: The Case of Sydney, Australia</td>
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<td>3.00</td>
<td><strong>KEYNOTE FOUR</strong></td>
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<td>Professor Ken Roberts, University of Liverpool</td>
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<td>‘Social Class and Leisure during recent recessions in Britain.’</td>
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<td>4.00</td>
<td><strong>PARALLEL SESSIONS D</strong></td>
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<td><strong>D1 POLICY</strong></td>
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<td>Susie Brown Loughborough University ... Increased participation and engagement through alternative sports in schools: a comparison of two case studies from the Matalan yoUR Activity programme.</td>
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<td>Geoff Nichols University of Sheffield and Rita Ralston, Manchester Metropolitan University ... The legacy costs of delivering the 2012 Olympic Games through regulatory capitalism.</td>
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<td>Linda Wilks University of Hertfordshire ... ‘An economic world reversed’: the symbolic capital of the London 2012 volunteer.</td>
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<td><strong>D2 LEISURE PROVISION</strong></td>
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<td>Sílvia Cristina Franco Amaral Universidade Estadual de Campinas ... The social legacies of mega events in Brazil.</td>
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<td>Ana Borges da Costa University of Bolton ... “There is a place for everybody”: circle dance, leisure and well-being.</td>
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<td>Ciaran McDonald, Institute for Capitalising on Creativity, University of St Andrews ... ‘There’s more important things than bloody arts’: Exploring cultural regeneration in peripheral urban communities in Dundee and Edinburgh.</td>
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<td>Karl Spracklen Leeds Metropolitan University ... Whiteness and the English Middle-Classes at Leisure – A Case Study of the National Trust.</td>
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<td><strong>D3 CONSUMPTION</strong></td>
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<td>Anna Catalani ... Museums, festivals and democratisation of culture</td>
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<td>Nai-Yu Chen ... The shaping and implications of museum experiences: a multiple case study of heritage museums in Liverpool.</td>
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<td>Dulce Filgueira de Almeida ... The Dances and their meanings in the Kalunga Quilombola Community in Goiás/Brasil</td>
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<td>Louise Platt ... Dealing with the myths? Injurious speech in the construction of tourism places.</td>
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<td>Optional Informal Evening Meal</td>
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**THURSDAY 11TH**

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<td>9.00</td>
<td><strong>PARALLEL SESSIONS E</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>E1 EVERYDAY</strong>&lt;br&gt;Needham Yancey Gulley Athens Technical College and Laurel P. Richmond, California State University ... Risky Leisure: When Volunteering Endangers Your Way of Life.&lt;br&gt;Rhiannon Lord and Carly Stewart Cardiff Metropolitan University ... Time for a change? Bodies, uniform regulations and the formation of identities in female trampoline gymnasts.&lt;br&gt;Pauline McGovern and James Nazroo University of Manchester ... The space of possibilities of older people: social class, leisure and health.&lt;br&gt;Kay Biscomb ... More Generations of Women: social mobility and sporting opportunities.</td>
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<td><strong>E2 URBAN LEISURE</strong>&lt;br&gt;Steven Gelder and Crispin Dale University of Wolverhampton and Neil Robinson University of Salford ... Stand Up Comedy, Social Control and Political Agendas? : From Foucault to Frank Boyle, just stand up, please sit down.&lt;br&gt;Ana Paula Cunha Pereira, State Office for Education in Rio de Janeiro; Silvia Cristina Franco Amaral, State University of Campinas); Jonathan Long, Leeds Metropolitan University ... The impacts of the second home business upon the leisure practice of the inhabitants, in Brazil, Rio de Janeiro.&lt;br&gt;Deborah Stevenson University of Western Sydney ... Stimulating and Regulating the Urban Night-time Economy: The Case of Sydney, Australia.</td>
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<td>10.30</td>
<td>Refreshments</td>
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<td>11.00</td>
<td><strong>KEYNOTE FIVE</strong>&lt;br&gt;Dr. John Haworth, ‘Leisure, Work, Enjoyment and Well-being’</td>
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<td>Dinner</td>
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<td>1.00</td>
<td><strong>PARALLEL SESSIONS F</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>F1 EVERYDAY</strong>&lt;br&gt;Paul Gilchrist University of Brighton ... The leisure identity of the labouring-class poet: reflections on the works of Robert Gilchrist, ‘Bard of Tyneside’.&lt;br&gt;Brett Lashua, Carnegie Faculty, Leeds Metropolitan University ... One Day on Earth: Everyday leisure, crowd-sourcing and global media.&lt;br&gt;M. Taylor ... Everyday participation and “nonparticipation” in the Taking Part Survey.</td>
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<td>2.30</td>
<td><strong>CLOSE OF CONFERENCE AND INVITATION TO LSA 2014</strong></td>
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**Conference committee contacts**

Dr. Bob Snape  R.Snape@bolton.ac.uk  Dr. Neil Robinson  n.robinson@salford.ac.uk
This is the fourth presentation of the LSA Leisure Research Showcase — a feature designed to provide up-to-date information about the rich diversity of current leisure studies research in the UK and internationally. Showcase 4 marks the beginning of a second year in which we have featured contributions from the UK and quite a few non-UK countries, reflecting the very much increased number and proportion of LSA Members who hail from outside the UK, as well as the expanded reach of the Newsletter after the same three (and this also the fourth) distributions in a digital format.

The Showcase will continue to aim at providing opportunities to learn about forthcoming, newly launched, on-going and recently completed studies as they are happening, often before they have reached the stage of formal academic publication.

The Showcase will also have a role in contributing to the wider dissemination of the end-products of research that may not automatically come to our attention. These may include, for example, reports from substantial contract research studies that are in the public domain but have not been widely disseminated across academic networks.

We hope LSA members and colleagues will continue to find the information they read here useful and be keen to contribute relevant items to future issues.

LSA Showcase (Inaugural) Director
Prof. Tess Kay Tess.Kay@brunel.ac.uk
and copy to LSA Newsletter
Myrene McFee mcfee-usa@earthlink.net

Thanks to Tess Kay who — having suggested that the LSA Newsletter might carry a feature of this type — inevitably found herself taking on the role of the inaugural director for the first year and then some.

We now seek a successor to Tess; please email Myrene McFee if you would like to take on this role.

Leisure Research Showcase 4

Showcase 4 presents contributions from scholars in Taiwan, South America and Africa, immediately confirming the universal relevance of leisure studies.

First, Yu-Hsien Tseng’s research into physical activity among the elderly both centre’s leisure addresses both the global health agenda around physical activity and the global demographic trend of ageing.

Next, Marianne Meier makes a significant contribution to advancing the rapidly burgeoning field of sport for development research, with her detailed critical scrutiny of the diverse meanings of the concept of ‘role models’ within different international development contexts in three different African countries.

And Maria Beatriz Rocha Ferreira and Gláucio Campos Gomes de Matos write on their research into leisure in an Amazon community — perhaps one of the most remote locations in which leisure studies research has been conducted.

- The study of elderly women’s leisure-time physical activities in life course transition.
  Yu-Hsien Tseng,
  National Taiwan University

- ‘Sporting role models’ as potential catalysts to facilitate empowerment and tackle gender issues: an empirical study in Malawi, Zambia and South Africa.
  Marianne Meier,
  Technische Universität München, Germany

- Cassava plantation, ‘ball games’ and women in the Amazon communities of Bicó, Cuiamucu and Canela Fina.
  Gláucio Campos Gomes de Matos,
  University of Manaus, Brazil and Maria Beatriz Rocha Ferreira
  Gláucio Federal University of Grande Dourados, Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil
How and why multi-purpose leisure facilities respond to climate change

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Bob Stewart
Contact: Bob.stewart@vu.edu.au
Victoria University
Key Words: Leisure facilities, resource based view, global change

Abstract
This research examines the ways in which multi-purpose leisure facilities — pivotal places for delivering aquatic, and exercise, and indoor sport programs - have responded to the global change problem. The study was framed by a Resource Based View (RBV) of organisations which theorises that the capacity for effective responses will be dependent upon the breadth and quality of the resources available for strategy formulation and implementation. Using an intensive case study methodology, two multi-purpose leisure facilities (MPLFs) in Melbourne were targeted for analysis. It was found that while the managers of each facility were aware of the climate change problem, the preparedness to initiate change — either through mitigation or adaptation — was more pronounced for the facility that had a strong base of ‘environmental knowledge resources’. These resources were used to pursue adaptation strategies that included sustainable transport options, more efficient electric power and water use, and strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The results of the study therefore show that accessibility to “environmental resources” is a key factor in determining MPLF responses to climate change. Managers who displayed more environmental sensitivity and knowledge also responded in a more adaptive manner.

The research also highlights a limitation of RBV theory, since it alone does not explain many of the more site-specific ways in which MPLFs are responding to climate change. And, while the small sample allowed the researcher to provide a snapshot of how two MPLFs are managing the climate change problem in a large city, it also concedes that it is uncertain as to just how generalisable the results are to similar facilities elsewhere. As a result, the research argues that there is a need to visit a larger sample of MPLFs and investigate areas such as adaptation responses and mitigation responses in more detail. The study concludes by noting that the role of stakeholders in shaping the responses of MPLFs is also worthy of further scholarly investigation, and the application of stakeholder theory in combination with RBV represents a promising line of inquiry.

Business and economic benefits of Victorian aquatic and recreation centres

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Associate Prof. Bob Stewart
Contact: Bob.stewart@vu.edu.au
Victoria University — College of Sport and Exercise Science / Institute of Sport, Exercise and Active Living

Funding for this research has been provided by Aquatics and Recreation Victoria and Victoria University.

This research commenced in August 2012 and is scheduled to be completed by May 2013.

Key Words: Aquatic and recreation centre, business benefits, economic significance

Abstract
A limited range of studies has investigated the economic and business benefits of the aquatic and recreation industry in Victoria. The previous studies have limited capacity for ongoing development because they have used different sources of data, indicators of benefits and applied different economic multiplier indices to judge overall economic significance.

Research objectives and likely significance to stakeholders
The purpose of this pilot study is to establish a research method, and identify sources of secondary and primary data that will be applied in a more comprehensive research project in the future. The study will use a multiple case study approach. Initially, readily available secondary data will be used to provide an overview of the economic, personal, health and social benefits that can be attributed to services delivered by local government aquatic and recreation centres. Centre interviews will be conducted at six centres across Victoria to investigate the business and economic activities of the centres’ operations. The final stage will conduct a survey of the six centres’ customers / members to ascertain their activity patterns, expenditure related to centre activities, and their perceptions of the health and social benefits attributed to their participation in aquatic and recreation centre activities.
The study of elderly women’s leisure-time physical activities in life course transition

Yu-Hsien Tseng, National Taiwan University
Supervisor Prof. Jui-Fu Chen at National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan.

Contact: tsengblue@ntu.edu.tw

Background

A population report released by the Taiwanese government stated that the number of people in Taiwan aged 65 has reached 7,719,000, 10.6% of the population (Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, Executive Yuan, R.O.C, 2010). Elderly people suffer from the effects of physical degeneration and chronic diseases that are caused by insufficient physical activity. Mannell and Kleiber (1997) indicated that the process of aging includes different mental and physical transitions that influence people’s levels of participation in leisure activities. Theories of leisure and aging, such as active theory, disengagement theory, and continuity theory, have been used in research on older people’s engagement in leisure activities (Harahousou, 2006; Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). However, these theories focus only on a single phase of aging, referring to older people or older retirees. By contrast, life course theory emphasizes people’s life trajectories and the transitions and turning points that occur in the course of life. Therefore, life course theory can provide researchers with a more adequate understanding of the biological, personal background, and social contexts concerning people and the transformations that occur in life (Elder, Johnson, & Crosnoe, 2002).

Harahousou (2006) indicated that, because middle-aged women are limited by their family duties and confined by their gender role, they rarely have the opportunity to participate in public or leisure activities. Previous research has shown that married women’s participation in leisure activities is more limited than that of married men (Scraton & Watson, 1998; Krenichyn, 2004; Mannell & Kleiber, 1997), and that it is not until retirement that women can re-engage in leisure activities. The research on elderly women and leisure participation revealed that elderly women are unable to endure intensive physical activities; rather, they prefer activities that require less competitive and intensive effort, such as walking (Lee, 1999). Furthermore, feminist geography, which is concerned with the intersection of production and re-production in geographical spaces, offers a forum for questioning the construction of masculinity and femininity and the gender-power relations exercised in the society (McDowell, 1997). Thus, this study adopts feminist geography as a critical perspective of leisure space and focuses on the choice of sites for leisure-time physical activities among elderly women.

Aims

This study explores the experience of leisure-time physical activities in the life-courses of four older women. Furthermore, it clarifies how the residential environment, women’s life development, and the gender-based division of labor in the family influence the experience of leisure-time physical activities.

Methodology

Using in-depth interviews, the researcher collected qualitative data from four elderly women aged over 60. The participants were chosen using purposive random sampling. All of the participants were aged over 60 and lived in Taipei. All of the participants were married and had children. Only one participant still lived with her husband; the other participants were widows. Three of the four participants received elementary education; only one participant completed college education. Regarding their health conditions, three of the four participants were suffering from cancer or diabetes. All of the participants engaged in regular leisure-time physical activities.

Each participant completed a semi-structured interview that lasted from 60 to 90 min in the participant’s home and university campus. The data categories were coded and structured according to life course theory, and the feminist geography perspective was adopted to identify the critical information concealed in the data.

Results

I. The influences of elderly women’s leisure-time physical activity

A comprehensive overview of elderly women’s leisure-time physical activities revealed the effects of various factors. The results are outlined as follows:

1. Social and cultural background influences

Between the 1940s and the 1950s, Taiwan experienced an economic boom. The Taiwanese people devoted themselves to a labor-intensive market. Thus, many young girls began substituting the labor in domestic work and became responsible for family duties.

2. Differences in educational resources

Because the Taiwanese government began offering primary education in that period, the participants who received an education in their early youth had a more substantial chance of becoming engaged in physical or leisure activities. The physical activities provided by the schools benefited people who participated in future leisure activities.

3. Domestic work involvement

After marrying, the women in this study became restricted by domestic work, bearing children, and family duties. Because leisure arrangements must match the needs of family members, personal interests become less crucial and are rarely considered when choosing leisure activities.

4. Confirmation of retirement

It was not until their later lives or retirement that the women in this study could regain their personal free time and space. Retirement and relief from family duties enable women to rear-
range and participate anew in their own leisure activities. By the time they retire, women begin to return to their previous leisure activities or explore new activities.

II. Elderly women’s leisure-time physical activity experience across time and space

The participants, who were born in the 1940s and the 1950s, were influenced by the economic boom of that period, leading them to become involved in the labor market. Young women were considered part of the labor force in industries and in their families. Women were considered a labor force in both private and public settings: in private settings, women provided services as unpaid housekeepers; in public settings, they were the critical labor force that was used for developing Taiwan’s industry (McDowell, 1997).

Moreover, all of the participants married between the ages of 18 and 24, and had their first child between the ages of 18 and 27. When the women married, they performed most of the domestic work, and took care of their children and family. In Taiwanese society, married women must look after not only their children but also other family members, such as parents-in-law. From a feminist geography perspective, married women play productive and reproductive roles. Thus, the family is not simply associated with a residential setting but is also a group in which gendered-power relations are exercised (Crawford & Huston, 1993).

As women become older, they gain more independence and free time, and have fewer family duties and reduced financial pressure. All of the participants in this study revealed that they engaged in more leisure-time physical activities. However, the turning point for them was the onset of illness, which caused them to work less than before and engage more in leisure-time physical activities to improve their health (Rowe & Kahn, 1997). Nevertheless, aging and sickness restrict elder women’s choice of leisure activities; thus, the women in this study were compelled to engage in activities that were low in physical intensity.

Studies that adopt life course theory highlight that as women become older they must face the discontinuation of family leisure and disconnection from family members (Harrington, 2006). However, these studies have ignored the diversity found in family composition. With the diversity that individual members bring to family composition, elder women remain partially responsible for family duties. Elderly women re-engage in leisure activities not only to improve their health but also because of their fear of becoming a burden on their children. By engaging in leisure activities, older women can regain freedom and maintain health.

References

Research in progress

‘Sporting role models’ as potential catalysts to facilitate empowerment and tackle gender issues: an empirical study in Malawi, Zambia and South Africa

Marianne Meier
Technische Universität München
Contact marianne.meier@tum.de

The potential of sport to add value to international development and cooperation for the benefit of women, men, girls and boys irrespective of the degree of development of a country is increasingly acknowledged. However, basic prerequisites need to be considered to transcend ‘wishful thinking’ and move beyond romantic ideas of, for example, football as a miraculous cure for problems in Africa.

There is an undifferentiated understanding of the concept ‘role models’ in the field of Sport and Development. Invoking ‘sporting role models’ (SRMs) is generally based upon the assumption that they are (or need to be) positive and worthy of emulation. Furthermore, the historical association between masculinity and sport leads to the predominance of male SRMs who are often celebrated as brave, powerful and patriotic heroes. Even though sportswomen increasingly attract public attention in the ‘Global North’, there is still a lack of female SRMs in

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Africa. Therefore, SRMs represent a crucial issue for gender equity in the African context.

The three NGOs examined in Malawi, Zambia, and South Africa all use football as a tool for ‘social change’ in their communities. This study reviews and interweaves existing interdisciplinary sources on SRMs related to gender and development to offer a more nuanced approach. The potential of famous SRMs was mainly scrutinised through a literature review, whereas this study’s main empirical interest concerns medium (or high) interaction SRMs involving local NGO coaches.

Derived from a theoretical frame of reference, this study provides a ‘heuristic framework’ depicting the potential of SRMs to promote empowerment emphasising gender dimensions. Thereby, this study mainly follows Pleiss & Feldhensen (1995) utilising the three adapted categories ‘Mentors’, ‘Role models’, and ‘Heroes’ which reflect different model types situated on the continuum of interaction (MacCallum & Beltman 2002). This trichotomy accommodates some inevitable overlaps and suits the African context. The continuum with the three ‘model types’ serves as structural framework of this study, but not at the expense of dynamic role modelling features. This study turns major attention to ‘Role models’ (type 2) with a considerable focus on ‘Heroes’ (type 3). Since a predominant significance of one-to-one support by close family members (and mentors) is fairly uncontested, this study gives less coverage to type 1.

The role model discourse is reviewed with a special emphasis on developmental theories involving socio-cognitive and interactionist/socio-contextual perspectives. Furthermore, constraints and inconsistencies of role modelling are identified. Referring to a socio-cognitive approach, this study emphasises theoretical groundwork by Bandura (1977, 1986) and Lockwood & Kunda (1997, 1999) indicating the importance of ‘similarity’ as well as ‘attainability and relevance’ regarding role modelling. Another aspect which is especially relevant for type 2 SRMs (such as coaches) involves the broadly supported ‘mastery vs. coping’ approach (Bandura 1997; Weiss et al. 1998; Kitsantas et al. 2000; Vescio et al. 2005; Singh et al. 2006). Relating to an interactionist/socio-contextual perspective, this study applies Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ‘ecological model’ structuring the environment into interacting micro-, meso-/ exo- and macrosystems. Despite important criteria such as social status, ethnicity, age, education level, etc., this study pays particular attention to gender as a determinant role modelling factor. The nexus of gender and role modelling is categorised on the basis of three dimensions coined by Reimann (2002) which involve ‘gender identity’ (micro), ‘gender structure’ (meso/exo), and ‘gender symbolism’ (macro).

Another feature of this study’s heuristic framework in-volves a pedagogical application of the ‘empowerment’ concept. Empowerment is defined as both a process and outcome (UNIFEM & UNGC 2010) necessitating a holistic perspective and a strong resource-oriented approach (Scales & Leffert 1999; Herriger 2006). Additionally, the fact that nobody can be empowered ‘from the outside’ is stressed (Rowlands 1995, 1997). Then, pedagogical and empowerment premises are scrutinised, focusing on children/youth by considering adult and peer role models. Thereby, the importance of ‘quality relationships’ between model and observer is identified as ‘transmission mechanisms’ (Schulman & Davies 2007). Since personal development does not happen by coincidence, empowerment-enhancing pedagogical interventions are divided into three interacting levels: presence and mind-set, intentional teaching, and transfer (adapted from Gould & Carson 2008).

This study is qualitative and interpretative in design, but adopts a mixed methods approach with respect to data collection and a qualitative analytical stance using ‘methodological triangulation’ (Denzin 1989; Flick 2009). The applied methods involved questionnaires, focus group discussions, self-recording video, and key informant interviews. The ‘case study design’ gives credit to local particularities. The methodological approach is mainly driven by contextual circumstances (illiteracy, oral tradition, etc.) and other necessities of being “responsive to real-world conditions” (Patton 2002, p. 253). Therefore, most data were collected through the ‘channels’ which worked best for the locals, but always ensuring ‘trustworthiness’ (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Cousin 2010) and therefore research quality.

This study emphasises the reciprocity of empowerment through role modelling: quality relationships not only influence participants over time, but also affect the well-being of SRMs themselves. Thus, ‘empowerment of SRMs’ represents a precondition to successfully facilitate ‘empowerment through SRMs’. Other basic components include authenticity as well as consistency of actions and messages.

Some international trends concerning SRMs are identified despite the heterogeneity of the sites investigated: the predominance of male football, the lack of SRMs for females, and the overall tendency to favour male SRMs. Other results explore the popularity of theoretically ‘deviant, but outstanding athletes’ such as Esther Phiri in Zambia or Natalie du Toit in South Africa. Bredemeier’s (1994) ‘bracketed morality’ and Hargreaves’ (2000) ‘gendered heroism’ are two relevant concepts for all SRMs who will challenge stereotypical gender perceptions over time. These findings indicate that athletic success fuelled by patriotism may soften rigid socio-cultural norms and ultimately transcend gender, bodily, or ethnic constraints.

Bibliography
Cassava plantation, ‘ball games’ and women in the Amazon communities of Bicó, Cuiamucu and Canela Fina

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Maria Beatriz Rocha Ferreira
Visiting Professor, Federal University of Grande Dourados, Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil
Contact beatrizdevloo@gmail.com

Aim The aim of this research is to understand the role of women in the social structure in Brazil’s Amazon River communities, known as ‘ribereirinhos’ (river dwellers). The social structures chosen for study were the cassava (manioc) plantation, an economic activity, and the practice of football, called ‘ball game’. This research is part of a broader study on socio-cultural practices, figuration, power and behaviour differentiation in the communities.

Community localization The three communities selected were Bicó, Cuiamucu and Canela Fina (fictitious names for the communities to conceal their identity) in the county of Boa Vista do Ramos, located in the state of Amazonas. This county is 270 km from the city of Manaus as the crow flies or 367 km by river. The trip from Manaus to the city of Boa Vista dos Ramos takes 16 to 17 hours by boat, and from there to Bicó, Cuiamucu and Canela Fina takes another 2 hours by motor canoe.

Method The method of the study was based on ethnography, which allowed us to describe social-cultural activities of the communities. Observations, interviews, conversations and dialogues were used to collect the information. The concept of figuration as explained by the theory of Nobert Elias enabled us to understand the research area as inserted in webs of broader functional interdependencies, where women have an important role in the social-cultural organization.

Results Cassava is cultivated in slash-and-burn agriculture in traditional Amazonian communities, on pieces of land called ‘roça’, measuring approximately one hectare. The process starts in July and can be extended until October. Firstly the root is harvested by hand, raising the lower part of the stem and pulling the roots out of the ground, then removing them from the base of the plant. The upper parts of the stems, approximately 20 cm, with the leaves, are plucked off before harvesting, and kept for approximately 4 months. Secondly the families burn the area to prepare the planting of the stems, which starts around September. This is a special event; it is done through ‘puxirum’, which is a traditional collective activity in the region, involving children, youth
and adults of both sexes to help a family to develop its needs. It is an exchange of favours between community members and can occur also in activities such as planting, felling and home construction.

The planting of cassava helps the community to supply their food needs and to gain a small amount of money or means to exchange goods to attend their material needs and wishes. This agricultural activity through ‘puxirum’ equalizes relations of power in the community, related to consuming, trading or selling. In this system, the women have important roles as cooks, and in planting, watering the cassava and distributing water to men working on the field.

The ‘puxirum’ gathers approximately 40 persons, working a hard half-day. The figuration of it is done as follows: hosts, cooks, diggers, planters, cassava mowers, cassava distributors, water dispensers (water-sellers), water carriers. The host family has to prepare everything in advance. The figurational inter-dependencies are quite defined regarding the gender social roles. Men do the strenuous labour such as digging; planting is considered a weak task for them, more suitable for women.

Women stand in the positions of cook, cassava planter and water distributor. The woman, in her feminine qualities, makes ‘puxirum’ in a more cheerful and fun way. When men assume the role of water distributor, the others complain about the water, saying that it is sour or bad. Women bring a different “spirit” in the possession of cup or bowl; move gracefully distributing water and saying, “look, the water, who wants water, fresh water”. They have a fundamental role in ‘puxirum’ for everybody has to drink water in the hot and humid Amazon. Both men and women practice these activities in good mood and pleasurable excitement, laughing and telling jokes, which makes the work enjoyable. The women’s behaviour contributes to the de-routinizing function of the work.

The daily activities in the communities are interrupted with football, called ‘ball game’, during the weekends. The weekly work routine is broken with the practice of the ‘ball game’, on weekends. At this time, women and men share moments of pleasure and playful like in ‘puxirum’, without the obligation to work for subsistence. This leisure time involves element of choice, de-routinizing function without obligation, and controlled de-controlling of emotional control during the games.

In summary the ‘puxirum’ and the ‘ball game’ reproduce the collective participation of the communities, expressing a power balance among families and between men and women, with pleasure and fun to soften the hardness of the difficult life in the region.

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If you would like to offer news of recently completed or ongoing research in the next LSA Newsletter issue (Showcase 5, November 2013; copy deadline October 1, 2013) or propose a theme to feature in it, please contact LSA Research Showcase Director c/o Myrene McFee mcfee-usa@earthlink.net

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The Spaces of the Serious Pursuits: A Typology

The word ‘space’ in leisure studies is shorthand for three angles from which to view free-time activity. They are leisure space as institutional, as temporal, and as geographic. That is, leisure may be defined and examined as it fits in the social organization of community and society; in the span of daily, weekly and annual time; and in the surrounding environment, whether artificial or natural (Cohen-Gewerc and Stebbins, 2013). Leisure as institutional and temporal space has been examined extensively, and a good deal of attention has also been given to the geographic basis for free-time activity.

The dominant focus from these three angles has been on leisure in general, which in the case of institutional analysis could hardly be otherwise. Temporal analysis, as seen in the time-use studies, typically examines the proportions of time spent at leisure in general compared with work in general (e.g., Cushman, Veal and Zuzanek, 2005; Robinson and Godbey, 1997). Variations in the proportion of time spent at work and away from it as observed in different countries and different segments of the population within countries are among the most intensely scrutinized subjects in leisure studies.

Still, temporal space may also be understood more particularly, as in the idea of ‘discretionary time commitment’ (Stebbins, 2006). This kind of commitment refers to the un-coerced, allocation of a certain number of minutes, hours, days, or other measure of time that a person devotes or would like to devote to carrying out a given activity. In other words, discretionary time commitment finds expression in leisure and in work where workers have some control over their time. In these areas of life the focus is always on particular activities and kinds of activities rather than on leisure in general.

Leisure space conceived of in geographic terms has conventionally referred to the places where leisure activities are pursued. These places may be natural or artificial or a combination of both. And nowadays they may be virtual. David Crouch summarizes the importance of understanding leisure in terms of geographic space thus conceived:

Leisure happens, is produced in spaces. These spaces may be material, and related to concrete locations. Yet the spaces, and therefore geographies, of leisure may be metaphorical, even imaginative. Imaginative spaces are not merely in the virtual space of contemporary nature but also in
the imagination of consumer and the representations of the agencies providing in producing leisure sites: visual culture and other narratives of communication.... Space, then, can be important in metaphorically ‘shaping,’ contextualizing leisure and commercial and public policy prefiguring of the meaning of leisure sites, and the leisure experience may be transformed by the way in which individuals encounter those spaces and activities. (Crouch, 2006: p. 127)

In the language of this article, leisure activities also occur in geographic space as just described. This context helps shape those activities and give them meaning for the individual participant. As Crouch’s words imply, geographic analysis usually focuses on leisure in general.

Just as the idea of discretionary time commitment in leisure has opened up a discussion of the particular uses of time vis-a-vis its general use, so it is for geographic space. There are also particular ways in which this space is used and these ways vary according to the kind of activity engaged in. The remainder of this article is devoted to identifying these ways for the serious pursuits.1

Space and the Serious Pursuits

Sam Elkington (in press) moves beyond general leisure to look more particularly at the spaces of serious leisure. He explores how and in what ways space is experienced by participants when pursuing an amateur, hobbyist or career volunteer activity. The serious leisure perspective (SLP), he notes, has failed in the past to address the issue of space on the phenomenological level. In this respect we must note that space is not synonymous with place. Rather the first has an ‘aesthetic’ meaning. Any given space ‘reveals a perceptual environment that joins a distinctive physical identity and coherence, a resonance, with a memorable character with which an individual actively engages through action’.

Furthermore, Elkington says it is evident that ‘place possesses a certain resonance and form as a repository of social, cultural or personal significance in the form of knowledge and memories’. Knowledge and memories are, in turn, part of a culture. They depend in various ways on the physical setting for how people remember events experienced there in the past.

Serious leisure participants also develop a strong attachment to and identification with the space in which they pursue their core activities. Elkington states that the strength of attachment is substantially determined by the capacity of that space to facilitate expressions of skill and knowledge and to generate desired experiences, among them, that of flow. He applies his ideas about the spatial meanings of serious leisure to all the core activities pursued there.

I wish to add here that they may also be applied to devotee work and therefore to all the serious pursuits. Furthermore, it is possible to show how and where these meanings vary by category of core activity. The next section contains a typology of the spatial meaning of the core activities that animate the serious pursuits.

The Spatial Meaning of Core Activities

All leisure activities revolve around one or more core activities. The latter are defined as: ‘the distinctive set of interrelated actions or steps that must be followed to achieve the outcome or product the participant finds attractive (e.g., enjoyable, satisfying, fulfilling)’ (Stebbins, 2009, pp. 5–7). In common with other leisure participants, those engaged in the serious pursuits interpret in light of the related core activities the space in which they are pursuing them. I have so far identified seven types of space for this kind of work and leisure.

1. Conquered space A wide variety of serious activities have as part of their core the conquering of some sort of space. That is, the special meaning of that space is constructed according to how it bears on the core activity being undertaken. Here we find the sports, board games, nature challenge activities, participation activities and possibly others. For example, football players know at any time during a match that, if they are to win, so many yards or metres must be covered. In the ‘nature challenge activities’ (Davidson and Stebbins, 2011), climbers for instance are aware of the height and other physical features of the mountain face they aim to ascend. Then there are the routes to be followed or spaces to be occupied in the various board games and in games like chess, checkers and cribbage.

As an example of the role of space in the participation activities, consider how it is conquered when fishing. First, there is the space in which fish are caught: open sea, trout stream, backwater bayou or local pond. Second, there is the question of the depth of water in, or on, which to fish: close to the bottom, just below the surface, on the surface (e.g., dry-fly fishing). The meaning of space is both complex and distinctive in such participant activities as caving, hunting, canoeing and SCUBA diving.

2. Showcase space Showcasing creative works is the realm of the fine arts and entertainment fields. The theater, concert hall and comedy club exemplify one genre of space for displaying these efforts. Another is the variety of exhibition venues for presenting paintings, sculptures and ceramic pieces, which include, depending on the art,
shops, streets, offices, pedestrian corridors, and these days even some transportation terminals. Nonetheless, they do share some of their space with busking street performers, who may also present their acts in pedestrian corridors as well as along certain streets. Additionally, subways stations are a main space for some of these artists. Showcase space is different for writers. For them (and the liberal arts hobbyists who read their works), the book shop and the book fair are central.

3. Resource space This is space needed by amateurs, hobbyists and occupational devotees to produce something or perform a service, a type that includes all the necessary equipment and supplies found within it. The scientist’s laboratory is arguably the archetypical example. Although often less clearly defined, scientific field stations constitute another space for scientific core activity. Here observations of birds or insects are conducted or, looking upward, astronomical phenomena are viewed. Then there is the atelier for making and tinkering. Included here are the kitchen and woodworking shop as well as the miscellaneous locations in which the skilled trades operate, among them, the garage and back garden (for gardening, work on old cars, etc.). In devotee work, construction sites and locations where repairs and maintenance are conducted (as in plumbing, heating and roofing) exemplify resource space.

The study is the prized space for writers (when not showcasing their works). It is likewise for ‘committed readers’, or those hobbyists who read extensively to acquire literary knowledge, a passion that necessarily takes time and requires concentration (Stebbins, 2013). And paralleling this use of space for core activities are the places where musicians, dancers, athletes, and others go to maintain and perfect their skills.

4. Sales space For the occupational devotees in small business, the shop from which they vend their product or service is a special space. Along similar lines we find the public outlets for hobbyist makers of, say, quilts, knit goods and ceramic objects. They sporadically --- and for some even regularly --- set up stands at craft fairs, shopping centres and flea markets, among other places.

5. Helping space This is the space within which help is provided. The help may be that of either volunteers or professionals, with the latter being classified here as devotee workers. Among the second the offices of counselors and consultants serve as a main space within which they pursue their core activities. Other spaces for some of this group’s core activities may include a home office, a public or institutional library and a specialized book store.

Career volunteers also have their distinctive spaces. These are evident to some extent by where they serve, as in a zoo or museum, on a board of directors (board room or equivalent), at a primary school, or at a hospital. This core activity space for volunteers who work to preserve or maintain the natural environment is a river, forest or the town’s park as well as the air we breathe, the water we drink and the earth we live on. Recreational volunteers serve in spaces like camps, sport centres, municipal recreational facilities and sites for sporting competitions (e.g., gymnasias, swimming pools, ski hills, running courses).

6. Virtual space This is what Elkington has labeled ‘virtual space’ (Elkington, S., personal communication, 31 October 2012). It is the home of, among other activities, the Internet-based serious pursuits. A main use of such space occurs during leisure-based surfing of the Web, the serious leisure expression of which is seen in the reading undertaken in pursuit of a liberal arts hobby. Another facet of this space is evident in skilled, knowledgeable gaming done in interaction with other people in cyberspace. In these examples --- and there are no doubt others --- the space in question is our vague sense of what cyberspace actually is. It is impalpable, difficult to fathom and, yet, real enough to give its users a unique spatial sense. Above all it is vast. So much so that John Perry Barlow, an American poet and essayist, once joked that ‘in Cyberspace, the 1st Amendment [in the American Constitution] is a local ordinance’.

7. Tourist Space Much of modern tourism is centred on space of some kind, including scenic vistas, architectural wonders and urban streetscapes. For most tourists, seeing such attractions is a type of casual leisure, namely, sensory stimulation. More rarely, however, some tourists make a hobby of viewing and studying a particular type of space: such enthusiasts might tour around the world to
contemplate its tallest buildings, different old towns (where a city began), or ancient ruins. As an example Bauckham (2013) has studied ‘groundhoppers’ or people passionate about getting to know in detail through direct observation the many different (association) football grounds on which the world game is routinely played.

Conclusions

These seven types of spaces are perceivable by way of some or all of the following properties: visual, olfactory, tactile, and auditory (including little or no sound). That is, they are available to us through our senses. Moreover, some serious pursuits have core activities that are spatially anchored in more than one of the seven types. Thus, athletes have space to be conquered and another space to use as a resource; the painter has an atelier (resource) and one or more exhibition venues (showcase).

This foregoing is not necessarily an exhaustive list of the types of spaces in which the core activities constituting serious leisure and devotee work are pursued. As with all early conceptual work on the SLP, the modus operandi here is exploration. In other words, I want with this article to put on the table some ideas about space and its effects while participating in the serious pursuits. These ideas can serve as sensitizers for recognizing the spatial properties of the serious leisure/devotee work experience in the activity under study.

What about casual and project-based leisure? Are there not spaces within which the core activities comprising these two forms are carried out? Of course there are. And those spaces should likewise influence the meanings that the projects and casual activities have for participants. How often have we endured an evening in a restaurant which is too noisy or too hot? (That the food is good or bad is not a spatial issue.) Or consider giving a public talk as a one-off project where acoustics, sight lines and lighting might be problematic. A typology of the spaces of the core casual activities is possible, but probably not yet possible for the core activities of project-based leisure. We presently lack sufficient data on the latter with which to construct a valid spatial typology, however preliminary. As for the former constructing such a typology will be a big undertaking, for casual leisure is a much larger, and probably more diverse, field of interests than that of the serious pursuits.

So, we have some ground to cover. Our ethnographic understanding of leisure of all kinds will be the richer for having paid closer attention to this heretofore ignored dimension of the geography of leisure.

Notes

1. The serious pursuits are comprised of those known as serious leisure and those referred to as devotee occupations. The justification for blending these two lines of leisure and work is set out in Stebbins (2012).

2. In activity participation the hobbyist steadfastly does a kind of leisure that requires systematic physical movement, has inherent appeal, and is pursued within a set of rules. Often the activity poses a challenge, though always a non-competitive one.

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This piece raises attention as to how we may understand leisure, tourism and sport as ways towards awareness of ourselves in relation with the so-called ‘other-than-human’.

For an increasing number of writers it has been walking that draws much attention, almost as the means of relating with ‘nature’, ‘the wild’ and, perhaps, ourselves. I am thinking of, for example, the serious authors Rebecca Solnit, Richard MacFarlane, academics Tim Edensor, Tim Ingold. Somehow what is conveyed is an effort of varied involvement and intensity, from gentle ambling and observation to an intent pursuit. But in numerous ways we can discover our feelings about nature and concern for the environment, as much with our two feet finding the curves and textures of the ground, as via our eyes that can gently engage or keep at a distance. Swimming is another act of relationship, in water or under or on it, canonised by reviews of Roger Deakin’s book. Fishing, with possible uneasiness regarding the equity of encounter, can be conservation alert and undertaken in a feeling of relationship rather than exploitation. Swimming and walking both hold the character of a trodden journey, in some ways a resemblance of life and of living; an amble or a target, perhaps both.

In these journeys we can go hand in hand, metaphorically and literally, with others who have engaged us in feeling, and literally in a tactile engagement with the land and what it grows. Gardening offers a deep and complex relationship with the world, an awareness and feeling with nature, environment and place. As anyone may notice who has come across my writing on culture...
and cultivation, a practical and conceptual story of allotment and community gardening, it is in the variety and diversity of acts — clearing, dragging, cutting and tending — where much sheer hard work holds the potential for a deep and shifting relationship. A small plot of ground where we work — and play — can feel like ‘the wild’, like living with nature.

These different ways of discovering relationships with nature are each distinctive but share so much. Moreover they each suggest that our relationship may be in nature, rather than in relation to or with it. Surely we are all part of nature, you and I. The relationship is more than simply one of what we do, it is more how we feel, how we let feeling happen, on our own, accompanying a friend or surrounded by others.

How feeling and relations happen seems to be both subtle and complex. It can be said that the media, television and books, and the wider arts affect how we anticipate nature and shapes our relations with the world. W.G. Sebald’s Rings of Saturn, a remarkable story of walking the Suffolk coast, showed resonances with cultural histories that for Sebald are frequently very deep, prompted by objects or by evoked memories, impressions, emotional responses. A building, a shell, a tree that he comes to on his journey can contribute to his feeling about things as he wandered. Yet much of the immediacy and personal memory, in its depth and continuity, and whilst inflected by those contexts, occurs in the act: in the moment of doing. Our own relations and feelings fold into becoming part of the ongoing contexts in which we live. Solitary walking can bring either a deep engagement — or, as often in Sebald’s case, estrangement; walking with another, or others, can bring a sharing of feelings, spaces and times.

A particular moment and character of encounter with our surroundings can prompt vivid, intense feelings. Smells of earth and leaves can be the active templates of feeling and relating, new awareness and knowing. Painting can be a way of relating with the other-than-human, too. I recall a day, a while back, picking peas. That day the peas became a painting. I recall with significance. In the little plot about a metre square, the leaves and the pods; the sticks that held them reaching upwards and holding onto their fruit. Mainly different soft, pale, blue-grey-greens in colour, a shimmer to me, and a variety of textures as my hands brushed the pods and tendrils that touched my arms and hands as I rooted for the peas.
After completing the little harvest I made a few sketches, brief and suggestive, of the feeling of touching and seeing. In making these I held alive and intense the moment of gentle connection that I had felt in the picking. Making the sketches reworked the feeling, in the different tactility of reflecting and rethinking in the new gestures and rhythms of drawing. After a time I made a watercolour from these sketches, nothing much artistically, but again over this extended time I was able again to hold and to rework the resonance of the relationship that I felt in the original act of picking, but in a different way.

I hope talking in this way does not seem merely a romancing of ‘nature’, or of particular leisure practices and their unexpected performativities — typical of much nature-place-landscape writing. I realise the risk. The feelings that emerge in the notes above can occur anywhere, anytime, for anyone. When I was working with Billy Bragg making a film on allotments for BBC2, he mentioned that he became aware of, even engaged with nature [read the other-than-human] when his mum asked him to go to the alley behind the houses where they lived in east London to pick mint for Sunday dinner. These stories of connection with the other-than-human happen to be ones I have come across closely, in conversational interviews and in my own experiencing, as well as in literature. Any leisure practice can take us into ourselves anew, in these cases in relation with, or ‘in’, as part of, nature; in our relations with others, present or absent; we can build something of a character of our ‘belongings’ — not an easy word, as it sounds — and that can be mixed with dis-orientations; and also values, attitudes, meanings; perhaps like that spot in a fugue where all the parts converge at their most complex and dense, and usually somewhat dissonant. Nature can also be found ‘in its absence’, as the art of found materials by Richard Wentworth expresses; and in its careful and caring manipulation by installation artist John Newling. All these may amount to unpleasant, awkward, regretted and painful feelings, a dissonance, and as Sebald’s narratives imply, estranging. Yet whilst not merely naively celebrating, it would be romancing in another way merely to critique. Some of the books noted here embed in the past; important but incomplete. There is rich scope in extending our enquiries with/in nature, and in ways that offer empowerment to us and to the wider nature.

Note: Parts of this short essay are extracted from, developed and applied from a forthcoming essay in Earthlines.

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David Crouch June 2013

DAVID CROUCH is a member of very long standing of the Leisure Studies Association. He has served on the Executive Committee, has performed as keynote speaker at LSA conferences, and has contributed as author and editor to LSA Publications volumes. David’s research and writing crosses a number of fields of cultural geography, social anthropology, cultural and visual studies, art theory. These are connected through an attention to life and space that includes landscape, everyday life and its tourism, community involvement and the work of artists. This work includes an interest in gentle politics, belonging, disorientation and cultural identity, and human poetic expression in diverse forms of creativity.

David’s wide range of experience includes BBC film work, including film production and programme consultancy; writing for and being interviewed by national broadsheets and specialist press; national, regional and international television and radio, reflecting range of research and writing expertise. Most recently, BBC Radio 4 Questions, Questions; BBC online. He was editorial board member of Leisure Studies (1999–2007), and now serves on International Journal of Heritage Studies and Tourism Geographies, Tourist Studies. David’s most recent publications include Flirting with space: journeys and creativity, Ashgate 2010; The Media and the tourist imagination, Routledge 2005.


David is also an exhibiting artist. Recent art shows — Solo — University of Derby March 2010; Bull Yard Gallery, Southwell Fall, 2010; Southwell Minster, late 2010; The George Gallery, Newnham-on-Severn, Gloucestershire March-May 2009; Southwell Minster, 2012; Tarpey Gallery, Castle Donnington, 2012

Mixed shows — Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham July, 2009; Gallerie, Newark, Fall, 2010

Invited work for mixed show, Richard Attenborough Gallery, University of Leicester, Spring 2011

David Crouch “Slope”, oil on canvas, 2012 (1m x 1m)
NARRATIVE AND THE AGEING BODY IN SPORT AND LEISURE

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According to Sparkes and Smith (2011), over the life course our ‘real’ bodies change and we come to inhabit them and know them and ourselves in different ways. Of course, just how we learn to inhabit different bodies in the flesh and give meaning to them over time is a complex relational process that has consequences for our being in the world. Central to this process is the role of narrative.

What is narrative?

As noted by Smith and Sparkes (2009), it is difficult to give a single and clear-cut definition of narrative, or draw a precise boundary around its meaning. This is partly because various definitions exist in the literature. Narrative can mean different things to different people. For example, the term ‘narrative’ is often used synonymously with ‘story’, yet as various scholars have argued, narratives and stories are different and the distinctions need to be recognised (Frank, 1995; Maines, 2001). Moreover, Riessman and Quinney (2005) warn that if the term narrative is used yet is under-specified or not defined, it runs the risk of becoming vague, over-used or even mis-used. These authors observe the tendency for researchers to refer to any prosaic qualitative data as ‘narrative’ or claim to do ‘narrative research’. However, on close inspection they are often neither inviting and generating narratives nor doing this kind of inquiry. Thus, whilst it is inappropriate to police borders or language, for narrative to have conceptual and analytical force, and lest it be misunderstood as to mean ‘anything and everything’, a working definition is required.

Thus, here, narrative is taken to mean a complex genre that routinely contains a point and characters, along with a plot connecting events that unfold sequentially over time and in space to provide an overarching explanation or consequence (e.g., Gergen, 1999; Nelson, 2001; Riessman and Quinney, 2005). It is a constructed form or template which people rely on to tell stories.

As such, in contrast to a narrative, a story is an actual big or small (Bamberg, 2006; Freeman, 2006; Phoenix and Sparkes, 2009) tale an individual or group tells and performs. It is a verbal or non-verbal act of telling that is the work of a human agent embedded in a social world, and the process of storytelling is something...
they do or perform to transmit a message. Story, therefore, best refers to actual tales people tell; and narrative is best used when discussing general dimensions or properties, such as tellability, consequences, sequences of speech act, structures, thematic/ categorical content, rhetorical tropes, and/or temporality, which comprise particular stories. Given that narratives only exist in particular stories, and all stories and narratives, the distinction between the two is difficult to sustain (Frank, 1995). But although researchers often use story and narrative interchangeably, people do not tell narratives, they tell stories: ‘let me tell you a narrative’ sounds strange. The subtle semantics of narrative suggest, for instance, a thematic content, a structure underpinning the story, or a performative dimension; and narrative analyses locate such properties and dimensions that storytellers rely on but may not be fully aware of (Frank, 2000).

Like the term narrative, it is difficult to give a single and clear-cut definition of ‘narrative inquiry’ as a methodology since, in part, there are multiple meanings of the term throughout the literature. Narrative scholarship is a varied, on-going, and contested enterprise rather than a singular, ossified one (Smith & Sparkes, 2006). That said, Smith and Sparkes also emphasize that there are points of contact between the different understandings of what a narrative inquiry is. For example, various forms of narrative inquiry share a commitment to viewing identities as constituted through narratives, emphasizing that we are relational beings, and taking seriously the storied nature of our lives and lived experiences as they unfold in time. Thus, for these authors it is neither beneficial nor fitting to prescribe this as narrative inquiry. Instead, it is perhaps more useful to propose what narrative inquiry can be. This is particularly so since, as Webster and Mertova (2007) remind us, narrative inquiry itself “does not strive to produce any conclusions of certainty” (p. 4).

Rather than committing to (neo)realism or (post)-positivism, narrative inquiry can be committed to and informed by the philosophical assumptions of interpretivism, or what more recently has been described as ‘non-foundationalism’ (Smith and Deemer, 2000). As such, it does not commit to the assumption that narratives can describe objects in a world ‘out there’, apart from and independent of the researcher(s). Narratives are not understood as a transparent window into people’s lives, but rather as an on-going and constitutive part of reality (Gubrium and Holstein, 1998). In this light, they are a form of social action as Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont (2003) explain:

[N]arratives and interview accounts—are themselves examples of social action. People do things with words, and they do things with narratives. They use biographical accounts to perform social actions. Through them they construct their own lives and those of others...Such accounts are certainly not private, and they do not yield accounts of unmediated personal experience. If we collect spoken (and indeed written) accounts of “events” or “experiences,” then we need to analyse them in terms of the cultural resources people use to construct them, the kinds of interpersonal or organisational functions they fulfil, and the socially distributed forms that they take (p. 117).

Why is narrative important?

There are a number of reasons why narrative is a pervasive and crucially important form of human activity. First, it uniquely acts in human consciousness, shaping human conduct, projecting possible futures, and affecting who we are and can become (Phoenix and Sparkes, 2006). Second, narrative enables the world to be experienced. What we (including researchers) are able to know as experience, therefore, depends on the stories that we tell and hear. This is because, to borrow from Murray (1999), individual stories do not “spring from the minds of individuals, but are social creations. We are born into a culture which has a ready stock of narratives which we appropriate and apply in our everyday social interaction” (p. 53). Thus, by focusing on narrative, researchers can generate knowledge regarding how particular individuals experience leisure while engaging with the contested domains of leisure during the historical time period in which their life is lived. Third, narratives are important because they are intimately connected to the body, or ‘bio-social’ (Smith and Sparkes, 2011; Phoenix and Grant, 2009). In other words, the meaning that telling a story (to oneself and others) provides includes bodily sensations and experiences as it is the body that carries the experiences that are the topic of the stories. Within this process, the corporeal character of the body as an obdurate fact shapes the stories that come out of it. For Frank (1995), in making sense of our experiences we not only tell stories about our bodies but we also tell stories out of and through our bodies. Here, the body is simultaneously cause, topic and instrument of whatever story is told. Thus, the kind of body that one has and is becomes crucial to the kind of story told.

The ageing body in sport and leisure: a narrative perspective

Narrative inquiry has facilitated important insights into the ageing body within the context of sport and leisure, particularly in relation to the increasing emergence of Masters sport. Specifically, within a cultural context that constructs older bodies as feeble and incompatible with athletic dispositions, the social and cultural position of ageing athletes appears contradictory. Accordingly, a key theme to emerge from the literature concerned with Masters sport focuses on its potential to resist dominant narratives
of ageing, which pathologise bodily change and reinforce decline (see Gullette, 1997; Tulle-Winton, 2000). For example, Dionigi (2006) and Tulle (2008) have conducted socio-cultural research with older athletes to examine how they engage with these contradictory narratives of ageing. Each has presented a complex picture of how older adults become aware of their own ageing and the strategies they put in place to manage it through sport. In particular, through a focus on embodiment, Tulle asserts that Veteran elite runners — to whom she refers as being “atypical older social actors” — can “help us redefine how we might understand embodiment throughout the life course and in the later years” (p. 330). Tulle contends that sports participation in later life may reflect and can even instigate social change by increasing embodied agency and by widening the range of culturally available ageing identities beyond that of unitary, universal, and inevitable decline, or resistance to the same.

More recently, Phoenix and Smith (2011) have problematized common interpretations of resistance as being a uni-dimensional construct. Drawing upon the storied experiences of mature natural bodybuilders, they illustrate the extent to which what is resisted and how it is resisted differs within the context of physical culture depending upon the message, intended audience and consistency of the new narrative (of ageing) being told. An awareness of these differences can contribute to a more sophisticated understanding how resistance to the narrative of decline is storied in its everyday telling along with the nature of that resistance to dominant narratives of ageing that can potentially damage the identities of older adults.

Analysing narratives

Narrative analysis, as an umbrella term, is a method that takes the story itself as the object of enquiry rather than simply accounts, reports, chronicles, or a few brief words. For Riessman (2008), “Narrative analysis refers to a family of methods for interpreting texts [e.g., oral, written, and visual] that have in common a storied form” (p. 11). Narrative analysis can be described as a technique that seeks to interpret the ways in which people perceive reality, make sense of their worlds, and perform social actions. The purpose, notes Riessman (1993), is to see how respondents in various settings, such as interviews, impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives. Narrative analysis therefore points to the ‘in-process’ nature of interpretations and resists offering the final word on people’s lives (Frank, 2004).

In addition, context can be a key analytical concern through being attentive to the ‘wheres’ and ‘whens’ of storytelling (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004; Phoenix and Howe, 2010; Phoenix and Smith, 2008). Furthermore, as Gubrium and Holstein (1998) suggest, on one side of narrative analysis we may focus “on how a story is being told”, whilst on the other side we may have a “concern for the various what’s that are involved — for example, the substance, structure, or plot of the story” (p. 165). This is echoed by Hiles and Cermák (2008) who write, “The point is that in narrative analysis we must focus on both the what and the how of the re-telling, upon both the story that is being told as well as the way in which it is being retold” (p. 155). Thus, an important goal of narrative analysis becomes understanding both what stories describe and how.

Despite such characteristics and understandings that many narrative analytical techniques generally share at a broad level, it needs to be recognized that there are many different kinds of narrative analysis. This is reinforced by Coffey and Atkinson (1996) who remark, “There are no formulae or recipes for the ‘best’ way to analyse the stories we elicit and collect. Indeed, one of the strengths of thinking about our data as narrative is that this opens up the possibilities for a variety of analytic strategies” (p. 80). Organised through the umbrella term ‘narrative analysis’, two standpoints toward analysing narratives may be teased out from within the literature (see Phoenix, Smith and Sparkes, 2010). These may be termed a ‘story analyst’ and ‘storyteller’ (see Figure 1).
Story analysts and story tellers within sport and leisure

Using a story analytic technique, the researcher collects, invites and generates stories, and then conducts an analysis of them (Polkinghorne, 1995; Smith, 2013). As such, stories are considered as fundamental data for systematic, rigorous, principled narrative analysis (e.g. structural or performative). Rather than letting stories do the work of analysis and theorizing, the researcher steps back from the story and employs analytical procedures in order to abstractly scrutinize and think about its certain features. The researcher also theorizes it from a disciplinary perspective to develop theoretical abstractions.

The findings of this process are then often told and represented using the conventions of the realist tale as described by Van Maanen (1988). These are experiential authority, the participant’s point of view, and interpretive omnipotence. For Sparkes (2002), realist tales connect theory to data in a way that creates spaces for people’s voices to be heard in a coherent context, and with specific points in mind. Producers of realist tales often do not claim to capture and produce ‘The truth’ or ‘The reality’ of a phenomenon. Instead, realist tales done by narrativists are frequently framed by the assumptions of interpretivism and narrative inquiry as a methodology as outlined above.

Narrative research adopting the standpoint of the story analyst can be found within the study of ageing, sport and leisure. For example, Griffin’s (2010) analysis of visual narratives within a non-elite women’s running group provides insight into how midlife women are attracted to a running identity. Using the concepts of gendered identity performance and commercialized feminism, Griffin highlights how the visual culture of the women’s running group incites a story of moral, gendered obligation for sport/exercise participation through midlife and beyond. This, she argues, has implications for framing and facilitating would-be participants’ stories of identity construction, socialization, embodiment and physicality within this women-only context.

Other research that has highlighted the dominant narratives circulating in society relating to ageing, sport and leisure includes studies by Partington, Partington, Fishwick, and Allin (2005) and Phoenix and Sparkes (2006). These researchers have drawn attention to the key narratives constructed in the subculture of sport and subsequently drawn on by athletes to give meaning to their ageing, changing performing body. For example, “age is a state of mind,” “life begins at 40,” and “growing old gracefully” characterise stories that acted as narrative maps, guiding the athletes through the unknown as they approached midlife (Partington et al., 2005). Meanwhile, reminding us that ageing is not the sole prerogative of people in midlife and old age, Phoenix and Sparkes (2006) illuminated how narrative maps projected by older team members can also act to frame young athletes’ perceptions of their own ageing process.

Adopting a story analyst standpoint towards ‘big’ and ‘small’ story data (see Bamberg 2006; Georgakopoulou, 2006; Freeman, 2006) is seen to a far lesser degree within this domain. An exception in this regard includes Phoenix and Sparkes’ (2009) case study of “Fred”, a physically active male in his seventies. This programme of research utilised Ellis, Keisinger and Tillmann-Healy’s (1997) notion of interactive interviewing: an interpretive practice involving the sharing of personal and social experiences of both respondents and researchers, who tell their stories in the context of a developing relationship. For Ellis et al., “Interactive interviewing requires considerable time, multiple interview sessions, and attention to communication and emotions. It may also involve participating in shared activities outside the formal interview situation” (p. 121).

The analysis of Fred’s narrative performance illustrated the active work involved in accomplishing a positive ageing identity through the use of both big and small stories. Indeed, Fred drew on a variety of narrative resources ranging from the media, friends and experiences of his physical body over time. From these resources, he artfully crafted a coherent narrative of positive self ageing that stood in opposition to prevailing Western notions of negative ageing. His use of what seemed a well-rehearsed, established personal story of ‘Life is what you make it’ provided a point of resistance to the dominant meta-narrative of decline that is currently associated with ageing in Western society and links ‘growing older’ with negative images of deterioration and emptiness (Gullette, 1997). As part of Fred’s narrative accomplishment of positive self-ageing, he skillfully combined within his personal story two interrelated strands that situated his identities of ‘being fit and healthy’ and ‘being leisurely’. These were connected in a dynamic fashion by the big and small stories that operated in his life.

Another stance that might be adopted toward conducting narrative analysis is that of a storyteller. Like story analysts, storytellers often collect, invite and generate stories. In contrast to story analysts who conduct an analysis of stories, for storytellers the analysis is the story (Bochner, 2001; Ellis, 2004). Stories, it is argued, already do the work of analysis and theorizing. This is because, as Ellis and Bochner (2006) suggest, a good story itself is theoretical. When people tell their stories, they employ analytic techniques to interpret their worlds. Stories are themselves analytical and show theory.

Given this shift in emphasis from telling to showing, storytellers move away from abstract theorizing toward the goals of evocation, intimate involvement, and engagement with stories. To help achieve these, whereas story analysts most often write realist tales, storytellers produce
Moving Stories project. Of inquiry forms a key objective of the aforementioned Frank’s (2010) framework of socio-narratology, this line repertoire of different future imaginings. Informed by told if these stories are to expand the listeners narrative an audiences’ ability to engage with the stories being Phoenix and Griffin (2013) discussed the importance of impact of stories told by older athletes on young adults, to the stories that they hear. In this regard, exploring the further avenue for narrative inquiry is how people respond considering what stories can do (Frank, 2010). Indeed, it would seem that physically active older adults have the ability to capture the social and individual imagination. Thus, a further avenue for narrative inquiry is how people respond to the stories that they hear. In this regard, exploring the impact of stories told by older athletes on young adults, Phoenix and Griffin (2013) discussed the importance of an audiences’ ability to engage with the stories being told if these stories are to expand the listeners narrative repertoire of different future imaginings. Informed by Frank’s (2010) framework of socio-narratology, this line of inquiry forms a key objective of the aforementioned Moving Stories project.

Cautions and caveats

For all its promise and potential, however, within the context of ageing, sport and leisure, Phoenix and Grant (2009) outline a number of concerns with viewing the body as storied. First, it should be recognized that changing any dominant social narrative — including those pertaining to the ageing body in Western society — is no easy task. In fact, the promise of change can be misleading, and narratives of physical endeavor and achievement, such as bodybuilding pensioners, marathon-running grandparents, surfing octogenarians, and so forth (see Clark, 1995), although intended to resist dominant deficit narratives, can inadvertently reinforce ageist attitudes. Second, Plummer (2001: p. 100) draws attention to what he terms “the commodification effect” of storytelling:

We start to live our lives through the stories of others, repeating and rehearsing others’ stories as if they were our own, turning them along the way into commodities — literally stories that may be exchanged or sold. A consequence of this is that certain stories can become endlessly recycled, retold, and clichéd, rendering them boring to be listened to; they start to get a tired, outdated feel about them — we have heard them all before. Clearly this is a concern and would need careful consideration if we are to effectively project positive stories of ageing, sport and leisure. A third limitation of viewing the body as storied is emphasized by Williams (2006), who notes that overly focusing on how the body is storied can potentially downplay the reality of the biological aspects of the body. At times the biological body is forgotten or bypassed entirely. Here, our knowledge of the older, physically active body risks being reduced to the social, to narratives, to power–knowledge relationships. In the process, the biological aspects are at risk of at best being rendered unimportant and at worst being lost altogether.

These cautions noted, narratives do matter. They are useful as a theoretical, methodological and analytical tool to better understand the body in sport and leisure. To move narrative work forward along these lines, such cautions as outlined above will need to be considered. I hope this article stimulates further work in this domain.

Note

1 “Moving Stories: Understanding the impact of physical activity on perceptions and experiences of (self-)ageing” C. Phoenix (PI). Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, UK (RES-061-25-0491). For more information, see: http://www.ecehh.org/publication/moving-stories

written, oral, theatrical performances, and/or, for example, visual creative analytic practices (CAP) as described by Richardson (2000). Here, textual, verbal, ethnodramatic, or visual representation cannot be divorced from analysis, and each should be thought of as analytic in its own right (Richardson, 2000; Sparkes, 2002). They are, as Richardson (2000) suggests, “a way of “knowing”—a method of discovery and analysis” (p. 923). Accordingly, whereas story analysts tell a story, storytellers aspire to show it and, in turn, a theory through CAP: data is recast to produce a story and the story is a theory.

There are very few examples where researchers have adopted the analytical standpoint of storyteller within the study of ageing, sport and leisure. One exception is “Across the Tamar” by Douglas and Carless (2005). This performance ethnography includes poems, stories and songs to communicate research findings concerning the place of physical activity in the lives of rural living older women in Cornwall. Other examples can be found in the ESRC funded ‘Moving Stories’ research project, which aims to understand the role of leisure time physical activity in shaping perceptions and experiences of (self-)ageing. Specifically, the ‘MOVE’ photographic exhibition (Phoenix, Orr, Bailey and Smalley, 2012) shows a visual narrative of older adults doing physical activity, with the purpose of challenging stereotypical images of what the ageing body can and cannot do. Similarly, the digital story ‘Moving Stories: A Short Film’ produced as part of this project (re)presents a number of key analytical findings including themes such as confidence, empowerment, competition, injury / rehabilitation, and pleasure from life history interviews with fifty one physically active older adults. The use of creative analytical practices to convey the hows and whats of narrative data is neither simple nor straight-forward. Drawing, once again, upon the medium of film, Kluge, Grant, Friend and Glick (2010) provide a critical reflection on the methodological, logistical and ethical issues involved in their telling of the ‘inside’ story of a beginning Masters athlete through film.

The scope and value of CAP come to the fore when considering what stories can do (Frank, 2010). Indeed, it would seem that physically active older adults have the ability to capture the social and individual imagination. Thus, a further avenue for narrative inquiry is how people respond to the stories that they hear. In this regard, exploring the impact of stories told by older athletes on young adults, Phoenix and Griffin (2013) discussed the importance of an audiences’ ability to engage with the stories being told if these stories are to expand the listeners narrative repertoire of different future imaginings. Informed by Frank’s (2010) framework of socio-narratology, this line of inquiry forms a key objective of the aforementioned Moving Stories project.
References

Douglas, K. and Carless, D. (2005) Audio-CD. Across the Tamar: Stories from women in Cornwall. Bristol, UK: (Independently produced CD of songs, poems, and stories created from a qualitative research project into the place of physical activity in the lives of rural living older women in Cornwall.)
Narrative Affinities of the Lived Experiences of Asthma and Sporting Embodiment

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Over the centuries, asthma has received extensive research attention in the academic literature predominantly through a biomedical, positivistic, quantitative perspective, which tends toward the reification of the body, treating the body as a thing to be measured (e.g., measuring asthma with a peak flow monitor) with sensory experience unavailable to patients (Cousser, 1997). Much of this previous type of research has focused on establishing causes and searching for medical ways to treat and control the symptoms of patients who are then constructed as either ‘compliant’ or ‘non-compliant’ with these medical regimes. Some qualitative studies have focused on the experiences of managing asthma and the strategies individuals employ. Research findings suggest that asthma can be a real social ‘handicap’ which can sometimes deleteriously affect levels of physical activity and sporting participation (Chan, Piira, and Betts, 2005; Coughlin, 1988; Prout, Hayes, and Gelder, 1999; Gabe et al., 2002; Williams et al., 2008). Yet, very few studies have explored how participants negotiate the best form of treatment for individuals from their experiences in sport.

Whilst, initially, personal narratives about asthma largely informed clinical practice (e.g., Seneca (C. 4 B.C.– A.D.65); Floyer (1698); Proust (1871–1922); Brookes (1994)) academically, contemporary narrative aspects have been lacking. More recently, research has focused on narrative aspects (e.g., Tiihonen, 1994) and sensory dimensions of asthma experiences (Allen-Collinson and Owton, 2012), but there is still a distinct lacuna in terms of qualitative research into the experiences of living with asthma, and specifically in relation to sports participation and sporting embodiment. Therefore, one of the key purposes of this paper is to seek an understanding of the body-selves of sportspeople with asthma in the totality of their lived experience through a narrative analysis. The salient narrative themes that were identified from this study are then portrayed relating to (i) restoring health; (ii) fighting asthma; and (iii) integrating asthma. These themes aim to enhance our understanding of the way sportspeople experience living with asthma through a narrative lens. By this means this paper aims to contribute to, and take forward the literature of sporting embodiment in two key areas: (i) narratives of on asthma and sporting embodiment; (ii) qualitative studies of chronic illness experiences in sport. Firstly,
I give a brief description of narrative inquiry and how narrative analysis was employed here; secondly, definitions of asthma are presented, and I then turn to delineating the research project that was recently undertaken.

**Narrative inquiry**

Narrative inquiry was employed using stories to describe human experience and action (Oliver, 1998). More specifically, narrative inquiry allows for interdisciplinary study of the activities involved in generating and analysing stories of life experiences (e.g., life histories, personal narrative interviews, journals, diaries, memoirs, autobiographies, and biographies) and representing this research (Schwandt, 2007, p. 204). Such meaning making by individuals and communities can be insightfully explored by an analysis of these narratives. Narratives provide a structure for our very sense of selfhood and identity (Smith and Sparkes, 2009a, 2009b; Sparkes, 2004). Frank proposes that “To think with a story is to experience it affecting one’s own life and to find in that effect a certain truth of one’s life” (1995, p.23). Stories are at the very heart of human and personal meaning making which is why narrative theory and practice is reshaping qualitative inquiry in every area of social science. As Connelly and Clandinin (1990: p. 2) highlight:

Humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and collectively, lead storied lives. Thus, the study of narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world.

Given the biographical approach and the literature that suggests that the onset or diagnosis of chronic illness can be a biographical disruption, this research drew upon Denzin's Interpretive Biographical Analysis (IBA) method as a way to describe “turning point moments in individuals’ lives” (1989, p.7). The subject matter of the biographical method is the life experiences of a person (Denzin, 1989). In this sense, the history of a person’s memories, emotions and volitions can also provide a window into the understanding of an individual's chronic illness within a particular socio-cultural framework (Somers: 1994, p. 614):

People are guided to act in certain ways, and not others, on the basis of the projections, expectations, and memories derived from a multiplicity but ultimately limited repertoire of available social, public, and cultural narratives.

Together with Denzin's (1989) IBA, I drew from Crossley's (2000) steps of narrative analysis which firstly involved repeatedly reading through the whole interview transcript about 5 or 6 times to gain familiarisation and a general gist of emerging and significant themes. Then the next stage involved grasping principal elements of the personal narrative, which included: narrative tone; imagery; and themes (McAdams, 1993).

The collection of the data attempts to explain the lives of individuals, their stories and their experiences, and the meaning of those experiences and then make sense of them. In addition, narratives are dialogical and multi-voiced (Smith and Sparkes, 2009a; Tanggaard, 2009). This can make the analysis particularly challenging because each participant has many different ‘voices’ crossing, delimiting, contradicting or refusing to interact with one another, which is why narrative researchers must be cautious about making claims of causality, finality and transferability (Tanggaard, 2009). I considered these concerns when analysing the participants’ personal narratives and here I address the ‘hours’ of asthma and sporting embodiment; the different ways sports participants experience asthma.

**Asthma**

The term ‘asthma’ is considered to derive from the Greek verb ‘aazein’, meaning to exhale with open mouth, to pant. Characterised as a breathing disorder, its myriad symptoms include coughing, wheezing, tightness of the chest and breathlessness (McArdle et al., 2007). In those with asthma, inflammation of the airways deleteriously affects how air is inhaled into and exhaled from the lungs, thereby reducing pulmonary ventilation. Exercise-induced asthma (EIA), now commonly referred to as exercise-induced bronchoconstriction (EIB), occurs when asthma is brought on by exercise (Wilmore et al., 2008). Within the asthma population, EIB is found in about 80–90% of asthmatics (McArdle et al., 2007), so physical exercise can pose a problem, given that the majority of asthmatics are susceptible to EIB (Pedersen and Saltin, 2006). The situation is complicated, however, as moderate-to-intense physical activity tends to provoke bronchoconstriction in asthmatics, whilst regular physical activity provides physical and psychosocial benefits and is deemed important in asthma rehabilitation (McArdle et al., 2007). Despite its reported prevalence, however, and with some notable exceptions (e.g. Tiitonen, 1994), there is a distinct dearth of qualitative literature on the lived experience of asthma amongst sports participants. In order to address this particular research lacuna, I now proceed to describe the research project on which the current article is based.

**The project**

The appropriate University ethics committee approved the project prior to data collection. The analysis draws from an in-depth, interview-based study involving 14 non-elite sports participants (all diagnosed with asthma, ranging in degree of severity). For some participants, their asthma did not interfere to any great extent with their sports participation and performance, whereas for others, the severity of their condition had required hospital treatment. Recruitment of participants was via purposive, criteria sampling, initially using convenience sampling in terms of having
access to friends and colleagues with asthma, subsequently supplemented by a snowballing process (Patton, 2002: 237), where participants recommended others. The key criteria for selection were: (i) having received a medical diagnosis of asthma; (ii) receiving ongoing medical treatment for asthma; (iii) being currently an active sportsperson or a retired sportsperson. Via this approach, 14 participants were selected, 10 of whom were active sportspopple (4 males; 6 females), and 4 of whom were retired sportspople diagnosed with late onset asthma (2 males; 2 females). It was envisaged that this potentially ‘information-rich’ sample (Patton, 2003: 242) would help address the research aim in terms of providing detailed, information about the lived experience of asthma and sporting embodiment. Extracts from interview transcriptions are included in the analysis below where the following ways of experiencing asthma are discussed: (i) Restoring health, (ii) Fighting asthma, and (iii) Integrating asthma.

Restoring health

Some sportspopple with asthma appear to be able to constantly strive for a valued restored state of health, including via use of their inhaler. For example, to control her asthma one participant takes a steroid inhaler:

One in the morning and one in the evening and that seems to work. [...] I have my ... blue relief inhaler which I take as and when I need it. (Esta, 30s, horse rider, runner)

Similarly, Steven has always taken his inhalers and medication. He was diagnosed when he was 3 or 4 years old and says that he used to struggle quite a lot with it and obviously used to take the steroid inhalers and stuff to make it better [...] changed now as I've got older, [...] the blue inhalers are still there everywhere I go [laughs]. (Steven, 20s, footballer)

During times of struggle with his asthma, Steven takes an inhaler, which resolves his asthma and ‘makes it better’, therefore restoring his state of health. Constantly renewing his ‘healthiness’ has become normal for Steven, so that taking his inhaler has just become just a part of my routine now... so every time I get ready for a, the game, it’s like boots, shin pads, inhaler, towel, like it’s just part of my kit, and like even now to the extent where sometimes, I will go a whole game without needing it... I just, just something’s missing without it. (20s, footballer)

Esta also relies on her inhalers, and says that asthma has “woken me up in the night where I haven’t been able to breathe but ... I just take my inhalers and it’s alright”. She says she feels “panicky [...] not very nice” because “your chest just doesn’t get, bring in the air in... so... um... it’s a bit scary... but then you take your blue inhaler and it’s alright”. Furthermore, “if it’s bad or I can’t breathe I take my inhalers... it tends to... work. Especially the blue one.”. Because the inhalers ‘work’ and restore her state of health, Esta goes on to stress that she will continue to take her inhalers:

I wouldn’t stop taking my inhalers now, because I’ve had a few too many... you know, incidences. But yeah, so it’s all right. Like at the moment, but I still take the medication.

Jane also finds that her inhaler “does help whatever it is that’s causing the coughing. I get a lot of gunk that collects in my throat so it helps with that” (80s, former professional dancer). For Esta, Steven and Jane, then, it seems that at times, medical regimentations become disciplinary regimes, which help to control their asthma. Restoration of health is, however, brought about by an agency outside the body: their inhaler (Frank, 1995).

Nonetheless, asthma management was sometimes complicated in social interactions with some participants. Whilst Esta stresses that she still takes her medication on a regular basis regardless of whether she is having difficulty with her asthma, she also highlights the pragmatisms involved and says that sometimes:

it depends what circumstances you’re in. Sometimes, you can’t just stop [...] try and, just relax and just breathe... but if I can get to my blue inhaler, then obviously I’ll take that but if I can’t, you just try and kind of try and... just breathe.

At times, then, it seems that it is impractical to always ‘comply’ with disciplinary regimes, and contingency is not easily dispelled (Frank, 1995). Esta specifically refers to when she is in public, at work or when she is horse riding. This highlights the context-dependent nature of how participants have managed their asthma. During these times, when she “can’t just stop” she tries to “relax, ‘cause it’s easy to go [deep breath] oh no I can’t breathe. But you have to just kind of try and just be relaxed by breathing slowly” (Esta). Additionally, for Esta, a sense of embarrassment is felt in relation to taking her inhaler in public: “I feel stupid, if I have to do it in public”. She says that she doesn’t know why she feels stupid, but this might explain why she ‘can’t just stop’ to take her medication when she’s in public. Indeed, for Esta, what seems to matter is how others identify her. In public, she avoids being embarrassed by not taking her inhaler, raising again the importance of issues surrounding ‘presentation of self’ (Goffman, 1963). In her case, Esta seems to ensure that she takes her medication regularly in private (in the Goffmanesque ‘back regions’ of
Participating in sport seems to be a context in which bodies-selves are intimately contested and heavily negotiated. Indeed, as Shilling (1993) argues, the progression of the civilising process and this strict control on one’s psychological and bodily functions means that whilst outbursts (de-civilising moments) in everyday life may have been reduced, the struggles are internalised within the individual.

Inhalers, then, appear to be a ‘quick fix’; participants were able to use the inhaler to restore their state of health and sense of self during times of breathing disruptions. Being able to tell a restitution narrative could mean that they are therefore constantly able to strive to restore their sense of health and sense of self, usually through the use of their inhalers. Whilst it is important to acknowledge here that participants want to achieve a restored sense of health for themselves, Frank (1995) argues that contemporary culture treats health as the normal condition that people ought to have restored, indicating an additional expectation from other people wanting to hear restitution stories — the plot being: “Yesterday I was healthy, today I’m sick, but tomorrow I’ll be healthy again” (Frank, 1995, p. 77). However, for sportspeople with asthma, the restitution narrative seems to be: “A moment ago I could breathe, now I’m having difficulty, but in a moment I’ll be able to breathe again”.

Nonetheless, Shilling (1993) states that there is a tendency for the body to be seen as an entity which is in the process of becoming: a project which should be worked at and accomplished as part of an individual’s self-identity (pp. 4–5). It is reliance upon working medical regimes that normally enables this control and to silence their symptoms, allowing them to carry on without disrupting their daily and sporting lives and sporting self unduly. Having discussed some of the ways that sportspeople are able to restore their sense of health, I now move to consider the ways sportspeople fight asthma.

**Fighting asthma**

Participating in sport seems to be a context in which bodies-selves are intimately contested and heavily negotiated. Indeed, Nick refers to asthmatic role models who play sport, which leads him to believe that “the whole idea that it, that it doesn’t need to be a, a performance issue is very clear” (30s, running, martial arts). For others, being fitter than others was considered important:

I was probably one of the fittest, physically fittest in my year [...] at primary school I was, I was pretty much the best swimmer. Um... I played football in, like the boys team and... I did all the throwing and running events in like athletics. (Eve, 20s, footballer, cyclist, swimmer)

Olena seems to think that taking part in sport will make her stronger and she does not “know if I was always encouraged to play as much sport as I was, just in case, but I continued to do it cos, I thought it’d make me stronger” (20s, footballer, professional golfer, skier). Eve gets “really pissed off when I can’t train [...] because I love training [football]”. In this way, their asthma identity is seen as contesting their salient sporting identity. Eve says it kind of ends up being mind over matter [...] it’s [football] actually doing me good and it’s doing my lungs good... but it’s [sighs] [...] Dunno... it’s difficult when you kind of like fighting, [...] it’s weird, you’re fighting for your breath, but you’re really enjoying playing [football], cos it’s not like a constant battle, because you get breaks within the game.

Sporting involvement seems to be like a battle; a double-edge sword. The fluctuating nature of their asthma is also difficult:

I go walking like pretty much everyday. Don’t really do much running [...] it’s unstable but still trying to get the lung function stabilised because it keeps all, because it keeps changing. (Olena)

Nonetheless, Eve does not hold back when she is playing football:

Playing out on a field... I won’t hold back on the tackles or anything like that and if I’ve got the ball on my feet, I will just run with it. [...] kind of like psychological, [...] I’m so focused [...] by the time I get to crossing the ball in... I’ve lost all energy [...] if someone’s coming towards me, I just don’t have that kind of spark or quickness inside me to be able to go in and make the challenge. [...] until my gasping has [...] calmed down [...] then I don’t have the energy and I can’t do anything.

Nick also expresses how much he has to ‘fight asthma’ when he is training (see Owton, in press for a more detailed poetic narrative).

I can think of [...] asthma was a real nightmare. Loads of times, when I’ve been running with David, and going whoa I’m really wheezing here at the end, but like today just keeping up with him, [...] I’d be going [heavy wheezing noises] and waiting for it to calm down, but knowing that that’s what you do. Not really, not really thinking that this is gonna affect me keeping up with him, we’re both struggling hard, trying to beat each other [...] lungs burst, legs burstin, everything’s burstin but I wasn’t thinking, naaa, crap
asthma's going to blown this for me but knowing when I stop, the asthma's gonna be... probably taking me ages to get my breathing back.

Sport seems to be a context in which contesting or incompatible identities are fought out and Nick argues that he enjoys the idea of pushing himself in sport:

there’s part of me that likes that idea, I quite like pushing myself [...] I like the idea of knowing, [...] I have to stop to be sick [...] although even part of the asthma at the end run, costing a lung literally at the end [...] it's the no pain, no gain mentality, [...] it’s an uncomfortableness... and it probably does limit performance at a certain level, but I’ve not noticed [...] that it’s really impaired me. It's you know, maybe a struggle at the end of hard, hard exercise... I push myself very hard... I’m so used to dealing with that.

Eve additionally experiences breathing struggles when playing sport; “it's almost like fighting against a one way valve”. Despite this breathing struggle involved when playing sport, Eve is not going to accept that she will not be able to do any exercise.

I'm hoping that I won't have to retire at 24 ... I'm not happy but I'm kind of accept the fact that football's gotta go on the back burner but [...] I'm not going to accept that I can't do any exercise.

Asthma seems to be a constant battle. In this way, it seems that because others appear to view them as ‘weak’, some participants increase their sporting or competitive behavior in an effort to restore perceptions of them as fit and strong. Some participants have a ‘fighter attitude’ whereby they feel that they have to prove their self-worth through setting themselves sporting challenges and ‘not giving up’. Ivor particularly needed to set himself a test:

I will find a way of running or do a distance thing again or something and test myself cardiovascularly... I intend to run a marathon [...] and also I am going to walk across the Pyrenees from one side to the other. [...] Nothing will stop me ... I’ll just have to do it a bit slower ... lying down ... first one to crawl across the Pyrenees ... [...] this operation that I'm going to have might solve everything or it might kill me, who knows. (40s, golfer, climber).

Whilst this competitive spirit sometimes means that Ivor struggles through his asthma attacks it seems to mean that he will not give up, reiterated by Eve as well in the following quote:

Some people just wallow in it don’t they. They’re just like, ‘oh I can’t do it cos I’ve got really bad asthma’. But well, no you can if you work within your means you can do whatever you want.

Additionally, Ivor says:

You can click out of illness; you can do that if you are determined enough. I'm not a superhero and lots of day I've failed.

It seems many have the ‘mind over matter’ belief that individuals can ‘click out of illness’. Asthma UK promotes the belief that asthma does not need to be a performance issue or stop sufferers from participating in sport, which can generate conceptualisations of ‘beating it’, ‘overcoming it’, or ‘Kickin it’. In a sporting culture that is often associated with a culture of risk, this way of experiencing asthma might be more acceptable and even valued. In particular, some participants seem to have a ‘fighter attitude’ whereby they feel that they have to prove their self-worth through setting themselves sporting challenges to ‘overcome asthma’. Fighting asthma seems to match a very culturally valued way of being in sport; no pain, no gain, pushing the limits, never giving up, mind over matter (Owton, in press). However, when their asthma gets so bad that they cannot ‘click out of illness’ then they seem to see this as a failure and blame themselves for not being ‘strong enough’. They speak metaphorically of asthma as an enemy: ‘beating asthma’, ‘overcoming asthma’, ‘fighting’ ‘a constant battle’ and ‘struggling’ after playing sport to get their breath back. As Sharma (2001) highlights with regard to the use of metaphors, the very word ‘attack’ is alarming. If someone sees an asthmatic episode as an attack, then it seems likely that they are going to fight it. Furthermore, not only is asthma an attack on their breathing, but it is also an attack on their sense of self; their sporting self.

**Integrating asthma**

Some sportspeople speak of how they have integrated asthma in their lives and sporting lives so they can still participate in sport without the use of quick fixes. Lucy (20s, swimmer) describes the time when she noticed the onset of her asthma during her swimming training at the age of 8years:

I got to quite a high level so the training, like, 7 or 8 times a week. That’s when it really came out. Just sort of like in games lessons and stuff weren’t too intense, so I didn’t really notice it. [...] I had my attack [...] when I was swimming.

Betty (30s, marathon runner) said “I developed asthma when I was about 20 [years]. And... it kind of coincided with my move to Holland”. She initially noticed her asthma when she was running:

I'd start the run and within 5 minutes, I'd notice that my...
During these periods, Lucy says that:

Betty sees asthma as an ‘onset of bronchoconstriction’ as opposed to an ‘attack’. Considered in terms of the connotations associated with such terminology, ‘onset of bronchoconstriction’ might not have the same fear, panic and fight associated with it compared to the connotations associated with an ‘asthma attack’. Betty thinks that:

it doesn’t play a huge role in my life, [...] it’s something that I’ll always have to be aware of because if I take my eye off the ball, then, you know, things can get progressively worse, so I know that I’ll have to be careful with things like smoky environments [...] I’ll always be a little bit dependent [...] I’m not confronted with it on a daily basis where I think, oh my god I have asthma, what am I gonna do, [...] it’s only every now and then, it’s, I feel it as a bit of an inconvenience [...] if I have a period where my asthma does get worse, [...] I do get a bit nervous cos I think, well how much worse can I... you know, in terms of, the medication that I’m on, [...] as far as you can get in terms of treatment.

Instead Betty discusses the way she has integrated asthma into her sporting life over 10 years:

Over the 10 years, I’ve worked out how my body responds to different training [...] I respond to best in terms of... um, increases in fitness and increases in speed and strength [...] after training sessions, I work out how that feels, [...] I often judge from that whether I’ve worked hard or whether it’s been a successful session or not. Um, I often use that find of feedback or that kind of evaluation to work out, you know whether I need to push harder on the next session or ease off.

Betty and Lucy both express the continuous difficulty with their asthma:

I did go through a period where my asthma got quite bad where I did, I had that feeling what I’ve just described where it feels a lot harder and it just, it didn’t really go away [...] 5 months or 6 months where I was trying to work out...um, what I needed to do to stabilise my asthma so [...] that was quite tricky [laughs]. (Betty)

During these periods, Lucy says that:

It just feels like I can’t, I can’t get the air in, um... and that, yeah, that’s the main uncomfortableness of it. But then it’s like the panic side of things as well, is that I’m not getting the air in at the moment. I can’t sort of get enough air [laughs] to make me feel good. You know when you feel satisfied and you have a deep breath, I can’t sort of get that, um, get that feeling, and that’s what makes me feel uncomfortable and then it’s obviously like, oh god, I’m not breathing. This isn’t working, that yeah that [is], mainly physiological but it’s also shit; panic, the panic side.

Whilst struggles still occur whenever the condition re-emerges, it appears that for Lucy and Betty, their biographies have not, in any real or significant sense, shifted (c.f. Williams, 2000). Furthermore, both have managed to integrate asthma into their lives and talk about how “it’s much better controlled now” (Betty, Interview 2, 08/06/10, 441). Thus it is evident that some accept and can adapt to living with contingency and tell a more progressive narrative (c.f. Gergen and Gergen, 1983); they are optimistic that they will stabilise their asthma during times of asthma struggles.

Those who refer to asthma episodes and onsets as opposed to attacks appear to experience less anxiety and panic with their asthma and seem to view asthma as a practical issue rather than particularly associated with any kind of emotion. Asthma seems to be experienced as a learning experience, which is a slow, focused process of finding breathing rhythms, patterns, aural sounds (Allen-Collinson and Owton, 2012), flow, speed in their sport or physical activity. Whilst this learning experience sometimes evolves around their sport, this seems to be more focused on maintaining a healthy self as opposed to a sporting self. In particular, this learning experience means that they listen to their bodies as a source of valuable information and so appear to be more attuned and associated with their bodies. Therefore, it seems that those who talk of asthma as a learning experience seem generally to feel more in control (but not always) and less anxious (but not always) about their asthma because of various psychological skills they develop and mind-body alternative remedies they draw upon. Asthma as a learning experience seems to be more in line with Shilling’s (1993) concept of the body as a project, “which should be worked at and accomplished as part of an individual’s self-identity” (pp. 4–5). Therefore, it seems that sportspeople with asthma undertake a long-term, even lifelong (re)negotiation of identity, which involves ‘emotion work’, various types of ‘somatic work’, and ‘tuning in’ to the environment.

Discussion and conclusion

This paper seeks to take forward the understanding of how sports participants experience and manage their asthma. Whilst some participants are able to restore a sense of health, it seems that often sportspeople are willing to fight asthma by engaging in sport, sometimes at the expense of making their asthma worse and consequently, at times, their health. Sport, then, seems to be a ‘double-
edged sword': sport is supposed to be 'good for them', they enjoy it and sport means a lot, but often participating in sport appears to be a danger to their health because they ‘don’t hold back’ and therefore may take risks [see Owton, in press]. There also appears to be a sense that their bodies have failed them because of asthma. Consequently their asthma continues to contest their sporting and valued self, and when it gets to the stage whereby they cannot mask or hide their asthma symptoms anymore, some struggle to find valued selves amidst their bodily disruptions caused by asthma. Indeed, bodies provide people with the means of acting, but they also place constraints on action (Shilling, 1993).

In relation to more macro analysis, failing to consider economic, political, environmental and social causes of asthma can lead to discourses like ‘blame the victim’, when individuals deviate from the narrow range of accepted behavioral norms. This reinforces peoples’ problems and, once they are internalised, keeps them locked into self-subjugating social narratives (Foucault, 1982). Nonetheless, a lack of control over these participants’ asthma appears to be an immediate and contingent threat on their future sporting self which they fight in order to stay involved in sport and continue to play out their valued sporting self.

The risk of developing these three narratives of experiencing asthma in sport is that they might then also be used (including by medical and healthcare professionals) as another universal, standardised measure which becomes applied regardless of key sociological variables such as age, economic status, gender, ethnicity, and so on, and without regard to the social and physical environments in which people live. Therefore, these ways of experiencing asthma are provided as a heuristic device, and I emphasise and argue that participants do not ‘fit neatly’ into set categories all of the time (Frank, 1995). Participants represent a mixture of narratives ‘types’ and their asthma experiences are context-dependent, commensurate with the phenomenology approach that has been adopted.

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Narratives of and from a Running-Woman’s Body: Feminist Phenomenological Perspectives on Running Embodiment*

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Introduction

The female sporting body has been studied in myriad ways over the past 25–30 years, including via a range of feminist frameworks (Hall 1996; Markula 2003; Hargreaves 2007). Despite this developing corpus, studies of sport only rarely engage in depth with the ‘flesh’ (Merleau-Ponty 1969) of the sweating, panting, pulsating, lived female sporting body (Allen-Collinson 2009). Thus a more corporeally-grounded, phenomenological perspective can enrich our understandings of women’s sporting ‘bodywork’. Here, I suggest that employing a sociological and feminist phenomenological framework can provide a powerful lens through which to explore narratives of the subjective, richly-textured, lived-body experiences of sport and physical activity. Phenomenology of course offers only one of a multiplicity of avenues to investigate sporting embodiment, and here I offer just a small glimpse of its possibilities. To date, sports studies utilising a phenomenological theoretical framework remain surprisingly under-developed, as Kerry and Armour (2000) highlighted over a decade ago, and which largely remains the case (Allen-Collinson 2009), including in relation to phenomenology’s fascinating offshoot, ethnomethodology (Burke et al. 2008; Hockey and Allen-Collinson, 2013). Further, as Fisher (2000) notes, the significance of the interaction between phenomenology and feminism has only relatively recently begun to be explored. It seems timely, therefore, to address this intriguing, potentially productive, but sometimes uneasy nexus, focusing in this instance upon narratives of female running embodiment.

With few exceptions (e.g. Young 1998; Chisholme 2008; Allen-Collinson 2011), there is a relative research lacuna in relation to women’s experiences of sporting/exercising embodiment utilising an explicitly phenomenological theoretical framework. Methodologically-speaking too, a phenomenological approach can offer insightful avenues into accessing female sporting experiences.
experience. In this article, I link feminist phenomenological theoretical perspectives with sociological phenomenology as methodology, employing what has been termed ‘auto-phenomenography’ (Allen-Collinson 2009; Gruppetta 2004) to examine narratives of my own situated experience of female running in ‘public’ space. First, for those unfamiliar with its tenets, I begin with a brief portrayal of phenomenology as both a theoretical and methodological perspective. Two research projects are described. Key themes emergent from the data are then portrayed in relation to narratives of and from my lived-body experiences surrounding the paradoxes and tensions of inhabiting what is experienced as both a vulnerable and also a powerful running body. I first consider the ways in which feminist existential phenomenology in particular can offer us distinctive insights into women’s sporting embodiment.

Phenomenology, feminism, existentialism

Founded by the philosopher, Husserl, modern phenomenology now constitutes a wide-ranging, multi-stranded theoretical and methodological approach which accords primacy to lived experience. Seeking to challenge mind/body dualism and also mind/body/world separation, it examines embodied experiences and aspires to reveal the ‘essences’ of phenomena, the ‘essential’, core structures of an experience. Very different ontological and epistemological positions underlie the many and complex strands of phenomenology (see Allen-Collinson 2009 for a general overview). Existentialist phenomenology and the œuvres of Simone de Beauvoir and Maurice Merleau-Ponty have engaged extensive feminist theoretical attention (e.g. Fisher and Embree 2000; Coy 2009). My focus here is on the ways in which phenomenologically-inspired insights, in combination with feminist theory, might profitably be brought to bear on the study of specific, situated, gendered sporting experiences.

In common with existential phenomenologists, feminist theorists have subjected to trenchant critique the dominance of ‘reason’ and the systematic denial of the importance of the body in human experience. Criticisms have, however, been levelled at some phenomenologists for paying insufficient analytic attention to ‘difference’, including gender, and the social-structural influences and constraints upon individuals. Forms of more ‘sociologised’ phenomenology, including feminist phenomenology, explicitly recognize the structurally-influenced, historically-specific, and culturally-situated nature of human experience, along with the importance of intersubjectivity and ‘intercorporeality’. For, as Weiss (1999) notes, our experience of embodiment is never a private affair, but always already mediated by our continual interactions with other human and non-human bodies. Csordas’ (2002) concept of ‘somatic modes of attention’ is apposite in this regard, as it focuses on the culturally elaborated ways of attending to and with one’s body in surroundings that include the embodied presence of others” (2002: p. 244). I highlight below some of my own corporeal dealings with the presence of other, sometimes threatening and harassing, bodies.

Although departing from Husserlian phenomenology, more sociologised forms of phenomenology interweave insights from other theoretical traditions such as feminism (Young 1998; Butler 2006), and queer studies (Ahmed 2007). Although ‘traditional’ existential phenomenology has oftentimes been accused of taking as tacit norm the masculine (white) body, Merleau-Ponty’s work nevertheless has been adapted and utilised inventively and productively by feminist scholars (e.g. Weiss 1999; Butler 2006; Olkowski 2006). Furthermore, as Kruks (2006: p. 35) observes, Merleau-Ponty’s account of the pre-personal body can, in spite of its sexism, help us grasp significant aspects of human existence that span distinctions such as class, race, and gender. With regard to those very differences, also, I argue that Merleau-Ponty’s existential phenomenology, aligned with feminist theory, allows for conceptions of bodies and action as highly situated, socially-related, and interacting from particular structural standpoints.

Existentialist phenomenology offers a ‘third way’ ontologically- and epistemologically-speaking. It starts not from the assumption of an objective world ‘out there’, nor from a pure, constituting consciousness, but rather from their dialogical relationship — a perspective I find analytically helpful: world, body, and consciousness are fundamentally intertwined and inter-related. One’s own body (le corps propre) is the subject of perception, the instrument of human grasp on the world (de Beauvoir 1972). As Mensch (2006: pp. 73) notes, awareness has a first-person character and is always from a particular point of view, a ‘hereness’ specific to each individual. Perception is portrayed as an active, creative receptivity; phenomena are not merely abstract things ‘out there,’ separate from our experience, but form part of our incarnate subjectivity. We have existential unity with the ‘flesh of the world’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1969), and can experience phenomena at a deeply corporeal, pre- (perhaps ultra-) linguistic level. This is powerfully illustrated for me by Pace’s (2009) narrative of her father’s death: “Bodies respond, often before thoughts enter the mind. Narratives materialize, fear pours over flesh, stealing breath and flattening the world. I felt as though I had no language” (pp. 411–412).

For the in-depth narrative portrayal of our corporeally-grounded experiences of sport and physical activity, Merleau-Ponty’s form of existentialist phenomenology is particularly well-suited, given his interest in embodied consciousness, perception, intentionality, and the ways in which we experience lived spatio-temporalilty. His work has proved fertile ground for those of us pursuing a phenomenological perspective in sports research. For example,
Masciotra *et al.* (2001) provide a detailed phenomenologically-grounded account of spatio-temporal distancing and co-ordination in Karate. Hockey and Allen-Collinson (2007) explore the sensory dimension of the sporting body in general, and also focus upon the haptic, specifically in relation to running and scuba diving (Allen-Collinson and Hockey 2012). The dialectical relationship between ‘player-body-subject’ and the lived-space of the playing field has been evocatively portrayed in relation to ‘the beautiful game’ of (male) soccer, and the ‘silky touch’ aesthetics of star players (Hemphill, 2005). Researchers examining the mind-body nexus in mind-body practices and physical cultures have also found Merleau-Pontian perspectives an inspiration: Morley (2001) for example, examines yoga practice and breath-control, whilst also drawing comparisons between the practice of yoga and phenomenology itself; and relatedly, the role of the breath is also examined by Allen-Collinson and Owton (2012) in relation to asthma experiences and sporting embodiment.

To illustrate phenomenology’s distinctiveness in portraying sporting experience, Kerry and Armour (2000: pp. 3–4) draw upon the example of glycogen depletion or ‘hitting the wall’ in distance running (a feeling well-known to many a runner), contrasting this with a physiologist’s approach, where the latter would most likely focus upon holding constant certain variables whilst manipulating others in order to ascertain whether some distinctive, ‘objective’ process was occurring. Phenomenologists, however, seek to capture as far as possible the lived meaning of hitting the wall for the participant her/himself: how it actually feels to experience this phenomenon, irrespective of whether ‘the wall’ exists in any physiological, cellular sense. There is a burgeoning literature, particularly within psychology (Moustakas 1994) and sports psychology (Dale 1996) centred on operationalising phenomenology as a distinctive empirical approach. Within psychology and health-related studies, for example, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is one approach that has been used extensively, although some IPA-based studies do present philosophical problems from the perspective of those adopting a ‘stronger’ phenomenological approach in terms of engaging in *epoché* (a form of researcher ‘bracketing’), and trying to maintain ‘openness’ to the phenomenon itself (see Allen-Collinson 2009 for discussions).

Researchers employing some forms of ‘empirical phenomenology’ (including IPA) have encountered criticism for not themselves participating in the processes under study. Although this need not necessarily be construed as a weakness of forms of phenomenology *per se*, or indeed of any methodological approach, autoethnographic phenomenology or autophenomenography provides one means of addressing such criticism, and generating the rich, textured narratives of first-person experience central to the phenomenological quest to bring to life and share the felt, lived experience. This approach was used in two separate research projects I describe briefly below: one a collaborative autoethnographic study with a male co-runner and co-researcher (see Allen-Collinson and Hockey 2001, 2008) and one an autophenomenographic study of female running embodiment.

The research projects

Congruent with the ethos of feminist phenomenology and the spirit of the autoethnographic and autophenomenographic genres, it seems appropriate here to situate myself regarding my own running biography, in order to contextualize the data and subsequent analysis. A female middle/long-distance runner in my fifties, I have a running biography stretching over 27 years (I was a late entrant to the running field!), which has required sustained commitment to training 6–7 days a week, at times twice daily. Struggling to keep in check chronic knee problems since my mid-30s, and (hopefully) to continue running into a ripe old age, nowadays I restrict myself to running on just 5 days per week. Although falling firmly within the non-elite category, I do remain highly committed, a ‘serious runner’ in Smith’s (1998) categorisation of athletes and runners.

With regard to the collaborative autoethnographic project, some years ago, my male running partner and I both incurred relatively severe knee injuries, and decided to systematically document our injury and rehabilitation processes over the two-year rehab timeframe (see Allen-Collinson and Hockey, 2001, 2008). We thus each constructed individual ‘injury logs,’ while a third ‘reflective log’ was used to examine the research process *per se*, to interrogate and synthesize emergent analytic themes and also to exchange at times highly divergent views and experiences. Whilst some log entries were quite ‘matter of fact’ in tone, when time permitted we also sought to draft more evocative narratives to capture and record as vividly as possible our subjective, sensorial, emotionally-charged, and very corporeal lived experiences.

In the second study, an autophenomenographic approach (Allen-Collinson, 2011) was utilised to examine my experiences as a middle/long-distance runner, training in public spaces. The autophenomenographic method adhered quite closely to Giorgi’s (1985) guidelines for undertaking phenomenological research in general, but using myself as both researcher and participant (the ‘auto’ element). I documented in detail my engagement with training for middle/long-distance running via a research log maintained for a period of 3 years. This involved drafting notes of training sessions, not only in terms of timings, terrain, forms of training undertaken, weather conditions (as is familiar practice to many runners), but also recording in detail specific, concrete, subjective, and corporeal experiences and feeling states (the ‘phenomena’ element). The length of entries varies between a few sen-
tences and multiple pages of notes, and again I made efforts to produce extended, more evocative narratives when pressure of time permitted.

Adhering to some of Giorgi’s (1985) guidelines, this study included the following elements: i) the collection of concrete descriptions of phenomena from an ‘insider’ (my) perspective; ii) the adoption of the phenomenological attitude, my efforts to be open to the richness and complexity of phenomena; iii) initial impressionistic readings of the descriptions in order to gain a feel for the whole; iv) in-depth re-reading of these descriptions as part of a lengthy process of data-immersion, to identify themes and sub-themes; v) free imaginative variation, where I searched for the most fundamental meanings of a phenomenon, its ‘essential’ characteristics, by imaginatively varying elements of the phenomenon to ascertain whether it remained identifiable after such imagined changes. Given the ideographic nature of the research, exploring my own lifeworld, I departed from Giorgi’s method with regard to constructing general descriptions applicable to a range of participants.

Commensurate with the phenomenological method, in order to identify and bracket (as far as possible) my own preconceptions and presuppositions about female running in public space, I engaged in epoché via two specific bracketing practices not only at the research design phase but throughout the study: 1) discussions with insiders and non-insiders to the distance-running subculture, both female and male; and 2) reading ethnographic accounts of a range of other sporting and physical activities in order to compare and contrast the key elements of these with my running experience, including the gendered dimensions. Although I would certainly never claim to have achieved full bracketing, these practices greatly assisted in increasing critical self-reflection and identifying certain of my assumptions surrounding the experience of being a running woman in public space.

A running woman in public space: contradictions and contraindications

The following discussion highlights some of the key narratives of experience emergent from both sets of data, relating in this case to my use of ‘public’ space for training purposes, often as a solo runner. The ‘public’ is of course not a homogenous body with equal rights of access and participation, not least with regard to gender norms. The social structuring of such space has been subject to extensive analysis. Lefebvre (1977, 341), for example, signals the social structuring of such space has been subject to extensive analysis. Lefebvre (1977, 341), for example, signals the doxical, shifting and contradictory nature of running in public space emerged as salient. On the one hand I found narratives of negative experience: the dangers of, and bodily vulnerability to harassment (verbal and physical), threat and attack. On the other hand, the positive elements, which for me predominate, include narrative experiences of empowerment, social agency, resistance, bodily power, strength and sensory pleasure. All these elements emerged from data analysis as essential components in the experience of training for distance running, although on any single training outing one element might predominate — my experiences of vulnerability and power are held in a state of tension and flux. Here I have space to portray only a few instances of such lived experience, but I hope to convey a flavour…

The paradox of the vulnerable/powerful woman in the running body

Running in ‘public space’ can render women (and also in some contexts of course, men) vulnerable to harassment — verbal and on occasions physical, even serious assault. In my own running biography, on occasion men and teenage boys have lunged at me, some grabbing at various parts of my anatomy; the following field note is unfortunately representative of many analogous occurrences of general, low-level (comparatively-speaking) harassment and indicates my embodied response to one particular sexist ‘street remark’:

Early afternoon, we were running down the high street... I diverted off to nip into the gents’ toilet, so I jogged around whilst waiting for him. Suddenly felt...
The elemental body-world

Exercising outdoors — whether in rural or urban locations — as opposed to indoors, can create for me some lived-body vulnerabilities. At times rural isolation seems to hold more danger: distance from people, safety and sources of help, challenging terrain, encounters with animals. But then the urban also harbours a set of specific dangers, especially at night: dark alleys and underpasses, doorways where men can lurk and lunge out, stumbling, groping drunks, gangs of men and youths disgorged from pubs, spanning the width of the street. But being outdoors is an intrinsic part of running for me (indoor treadmill running is a dire last resort): facing all the elements in the open air, battling against vicious wind, stinging hail and pelting rain, sinking in fresh snow (watch those Achilles’ tendons!), glistening in high summer sun, melting into dark night, coursing over fields eerie in silvery moonlight, running alongside the heavy beat of flying swans. Following de Beauvoir’s (1972) exhortation to women to battle the elements, and commensurate with Merleau-Ponty’s (2001) portrayal of the intertwining of body and world, my body as part of the elemental world is a fundamental component of my running narratives:

As I set off in the last rays of April sunshine, down the hill towards the playing fields and river, dark, lowering cloud obscures the hills on the other side of the valley. It looks as though it’s going to pour down or snow heavily. Sure enough the temperature is dropping rapidly and an icy wind’s edge chills my skin, which chafes against thin cotton tee shirt. Shall I head home for warmer gear now, is there time??... No, but best divert away from the open fields and head towards the scant cover of early spring trees. As I continue, the thin wind is bitter against my slight body, but as my core begins to warm to the labour, a strange sensation comes over me. Like Baked Alaska in reverse: my wind-chilled outer skin is bitterly cold, grey-blue, but it seems as though just a few layers beneath the epidermis, my inner body is glow-warm orange. The strangeness of the feeling preoccupies me so that the discomfort of the cold is forgotten for a while and I can concentrate on a steady even pace. (Autophenomenography, April 2008)

Running abreast

Contradictions and paradoxes can also emerge in relation to which running gear to select — for running-purpose but also for self-presentation in public places: snug-fitting, skin tight, streamlined clothing provides greater functionality for my running body, being neat and aerodynamic, but can also attract unwanted attention and comment. My clothing compromise is usually to opt for the streamlined,
functional kit but — in certain places and at certain times — to seek anonymity and protection via dark sunglasses and a cap/hat pulled down low; MP3 player and head-phones provide a supplementary auditory barrier against lewd street remarks and looks, and can be switched off once I reach the open space of fields and meadows that fringe the city, or when running through darkened streets, which require aural attentiveness. Looser, baggy clothing is too cumbersome and restrictive, flapping in the breeze, catching against and choking the body, whilst ‘proper’ running kit renders me empowered, dynamic, streamlined.

Furthermore, it has taken years, indeed decades, to ‘discipline’ the fleshy expansiveness of breasts to create a more ‘sleek’ running form. From a phenomenological perspective, Young (1992) evocatively portrays how a woman’s breasts can form the centre of her being-in-the-world, more like fluid than a solid, and in movement being liable to sway, jiggle, bounce, and ripple, even when the movement is small. For many women runners, even those who are not particularly full-breasted, such swaying and bouncing can be intensely uncomfortable, even painful when exacerbated by the action of running. Even now, after decades of (non-surgical) breast reduction via running, I wear two sports bras to avoid the embodied discomfort, the ‘dys-appearance’ (Leder 1990) of my breasted body (Gimlin 2006):

Oh no, I find I’ve forgotten to pack the usual two bras in my training bag. Ach well, I’ll just have to try running in the ‘day’ bra. But minutes in to the training run and it’s nigh on impossible! Not only is it incredibly uncomfortable, verging on painful, but my whole body feels huge, ungracefully uncoordinated, and very unbalanced. Surprisingly, it’s not just my upper body but strangely my quads also feel big and billowy, uncoordinated. The two sports bras combination that I normally wear may be ‘unflattering’ (for whom??) to ‘feminine curves’ but their flattening and constricting presence makes me feel ‘contained’, streamlined and aerodynamic. How bizarre that their lack makes me feel as though I’m not a real runner at all. The house is only 10 minutes into the run, so I decide to make a quick pit stop and effect a speedy change. (Autophenomenography, February 2008)

**Sensory pleasures and dangers**

The centrality of the sensory dimension of sporting embodiment has been signalled in recent years (Allen-Collinson and Owton 2012; Hockey and Allen-Collinson 2007; Sparkes 2009), but only rarely features as the focal point within sports studies. Hockey and Allen-Collinson (2007) for example emphasize the importance of ‘listening for hazards’ when undertaking running training in public, where roads, parks, and pathways are replete with hazards—some more deliberate than others—generated by traffic, pavement cyclists, pedestrians, and dogs. For me, this awareness of danger can manifest itself not only via the visual and aural, but also at a deeply visceral level, and in quickened, sometimes ragged breathing, elevated pulse rate, a tightening of my abdomen and a hypersensitivity of skin, especially on arms and thighs:

Decided to take the bracken route down the moor to the track, but as I enter the head-height, dense bracken, I feel hemmed in, trapped – I can’t see what’s around the corner, who might be lurking at the path sides. My breath catches, holds, ears straining for any sound, goose pimples catch the moor breeze, trying to quieten my heart beat so that I can hear… probably just sheep… I have to walk some of the way, the path is too steep, too friable for running, but I’m light and primed for flight as any moorland creature… Hit the open space with relief. (Autophenomenography, July 2008)

In contrast, the sensuous pleasures of running embodiment – when I am not too fatigued to appreciate these — form a key narrative of my running experience. The olfactory dimension, whilst largely neglected in studies of sport generally (Sparkes 2009), does feature strongly in more sensually-focused sporting analyses where smells can confirm the self’s involvement in the sporting present moment, and also substantiate sporting identity via memory (Hockey and Allen-Collinson 2007). The smell of fresh-cut grass, for example, evokes in me strong childhood memories of watching cricket or listening to the radio commentary in my family’s back garden:

As I head down suburban streets to the river meadows, the warmed sweet scent of cut grass suddenly meets me, taking me back to those long, summer-haze holiday afternoons as a child, with all the family sitting out in the back garden in deckchairs, cricket on the radio, a tractor busy somewhere in a distant field and the drone of a light aircraft overhead. My memory mind travels, and a long section of the pathway goes missing in my running mind. (Autophenomenography, May 2008)

Other sensory pleasures of the running body in harmony with landscape and ‘soundscape’ also emerge as salient narratives of embodied experience:

One of those ‘in the moment’ runs tonight. Glorious sunset down by the river, great rhythm, my strides just eat up the ground. Whole sections of the route have gone missing (recalls an earlier fieldnote from a different place, a different time) as John Bonham’s great tree trunk sticks beat out the rhythm. Machine-
gun the pace. Perfect rhythm, perfect timing. Flow. Breathing and beat in synchronicity. As aquamarine finale of sunset darkens to indigo, as the dying Pagey riffs fade away, I walk the last few steps down the path to my front door. Fade out. Synchronicity. (Autophenomenography, January 2008)

These then are illustrative of some of the narratives of my lived experience as a running-woman who habitually undertakes her training in the contested and gendered zone of ‘public’ outdoor space.

**Reflections**

This article contributes in a small way to the feminist phenomenological research literature by examining the nexus of structure and agency in sporting embodiment as played out in my particular life-world, that of a female distance runner. Sporting embodiment is a relatively under-researched area within the feminist phenomenological tradition, but one which provides, I would argue, an excellent domain for the application of its theoretical insights. For me, the constraints of social structure and the potentials of female agency coalesce powerfully in my embodied narratives of outdoor running and are lived out at a deep, individual embodied level in terms of the endlessly negotiated, fluctuating ways of balancing both corporeal and psychological power and vulnerability. Feminist phenomenology offers one way of ‘capturing’ these tensions and paradoxes, partial though that capture must always inevitably be within the phenomenological spirit. An analysis of the linkages between our subjective, lived-body experiences and our situatedness within social structures, offers a powerful means of investigating female subjectivity and embodiment. In particular, it would seem there is a strong rationale for incorporating feminist-phenomenological perspectives into the pantheon of theoretical and methodological approaches to investigating women’s sporting (and other forms of) embodiment. These can generate fresh research insights, grounded in the carnal, ‘fleshy,’ lived, richly-textured realities of the moving, sweating, sensuous female sporting body, which of course also holds cultural meanings, significances, purposes and interests. This is not of course to advocate feminist phenomenology as the only, or even necessarily the best, way of undertaking qualitative investigation into female sporting embodiment, but to propose it as a potent complementary approach, to widen and deepen the focus of the feminist lens. Linked to the power of sociological and feminist theorisations, including those of ‘difference’, phenomenology encourages a (re)consideration of the structures of women’s sporting and physical activity narratives, whilst taking into account the weight of social-structural (including ideological) location and constraint. Feminist phenomenology can help promote deep reflection upon, analytic insight into, and empathetic understanding of how it actually feels to be the woman in the sporting body.

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Got an idea?  Got a new job?   Got an announcement?  Just wrote a great book?  Just went to a great (or awful) conference?   Got a complaint?

Well, then, Say *something*!

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A SOCIOLOGICAL CASE STUDY
EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF SUDDEN BIOGRAPHICAL DISRUPTION ON A MALE ATHLETE’S BODY-SELF RELATIONSHIP

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Abstract
This research sociologically explores the effects of sudden biographical disruption on the body-self relationship of an athlete who has become disabled through sport. In the form of an ethnographic case study, the research presents a phenomenological engaged account of one individual’s social reality as he attempts to reconstruct his body-self and relationship with his social world post disability. The research utilises narrative inquiry, with the biographical data from interviews conceptually analysed according to Frank (1995). Additionally, the use of specific metaphors within narrative analysis is discussed and the scope for future research is considered.

INTRODUCTION
Athletes who engage in sport, notably those who are prominent in the field of competitive sport, are susceptible to physical injury. The effects of physical injury have been understood to stimulate psychological responses, in particular that of extensive emotional stress within chronically injured elite athletes (Shuer and Dietrich, 1997). Of late, an augmentation of theorising through a sociological perspective has contributed to this discourse, providing an interpretation of sporting injuries through qualitative frameworks (Curry, 1993 and Young and McTeer, 1994). Within the body of sociological research concerning physical injuries, scholarly attention has been predominantly focused on the consequences of physical disability on identity and body-self relationships as a result of accidents occurring through sport (Smith and Sparkes, 2002a; Smith and Sparkes, 2002b; Smith and Sparkes, 2005).

In concord with recent studies contributing to this relatively under researched area of sociological knowledge, a narrative turn within the sociological disciplines such as with the sociology of sport has become a significant method of inquiry within this area of study. Research surrounding physical disability as a result of sporting accidents has utilised narrative inquiry with the aim of producing phenomenological engaged accounts of the disruptive effects disability has on the body-self relationship (Sparkes, 1996; Smith and Sparkes, 2004 and Smith and Sparkes, 2005). This study builds on this under-researched area in the form of a case study of a footballer who suffered an amputation as a consequence of an accident occurring through sport. With the intention of utilising narrative inquiry as the conceptual canvas, the research aims to present a ‘true’ account of the embodied issues concerned with an individual’s social world after sudden biographical disruption. Crucially, the research highlights the problems of re-storying the self with limited narrative resources when sport cannot provide the familiar source of narrative refuge, and the effects this can have on a disrupted body-self relationship.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Identity studies underpin much of the current research concerning the consequences of physical disability on identity politics. The emergence of ‘high’ modernity has influenced

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a paradigmatic shift in the reflexivity of the body directing a significant quantity of social research on bodily agency and subjectivity with regard to the construction of identities (Giddens, 1991). Shilling (2003) advocates that the body has transformed from a biological determined entity to a socially constituted being, perpetually mediated by reigning cultural scripts. In this regard, the physical body becomes an individual’s corporeal surface with which to construct a self-identity managed by the current ideologies that are intricately woven into the fabric of discursive practices.

The shift of sociological thought towards bodily agency has in turn directed the theoretical grounding of a significant body of identity research. Social constructionist frameworks reject the essentialist view of a singular social reality and the existence of innate biological features as the backdrop in the construction of an identity (Hargreaves, 1994). Identity literature that is conceptualised through a social constructionist perspective understands identity as a manufactured process, constantly in flux with ideological forces. With the emergence of post modernity, Gergen (1991) describes the body as an open slate on which persons may inscribe, erase and rewrite their identities (p. 228). This notion of identity construction adopted by Gergen tends to ignore the powerful connection between identity and discourse. Hall (1996) draws upon a Foucauldian approach in the understanding of identity, advocating identity as being irreducible to discourse and in turn discursive practices as providing room for individual subjectivity. The various and ever distinctive number of discourses allow for the interaction and interpellation of ideologies that act to form multiple senses of identity. Synnott (1992) articulates this notion, suggesting that an individual’s physical body is defined by numerous social meanings within a range of social spaces. In this manner, the construction of one’s identity is never fixed but a fractured presence in constant display of ideological forces.

The relationship between the physical body and the construction of a sense of self is central within the growing body of literature concerned with identities. The notion of a ‘social’ body is often employed to understand the body as an expression of social phenomena. Douglas (2003) states that the social body continually governs the performance of the physical body. It is the cultural meanings that pervade the stratum of our social world, which manage recognition of the physical self. Theorising by Synnott (2002) expands, suggesting that all attributes with which contribute to the construction of the physical self are essentially socially constructed categories. In this regard, a physical construction such as gender which acts to regulate identities is merely a socially constructed division of the sexed body.

More recently, a considerable volume of research has conceptualised gender through the social constructionist frameworks informing the identity literature (Messner and Sabo 1990; Hargreaves, 1994 and Connell, 1995). Gender studies within the sociological discourse challenge the biological essentialist dichotomies associated with gender that has emerged through the sexual categorisation of the physical body (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Such research focuses on the definitions that constitute the binary opposites of masculinity and femininity, and the manifestations of these definitions within gendered identities. Messner and Sabo (1990) assume a critical position in the theorising of the construction of masculinities. Building upon Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) understanding that a sense of identity is fundamental to embodiment, Messner and Sabo (1990) advocate that definitions of masculinity stemming from the construction of gendered categories act to sculpt identities in this way. Such that, masculinity does not emerge from the body in an innate manner but is rather inscribed on the body, a subjective construct that restricts individual’s autonomy and forces compliance with a specific gendered performance.

Literature by Connell (2005) establishes further the politics of masculinity. In concert with Messner and Sabo (1990), Connell describes masculinity as a ‘discursive construction’ (p. 18), a pattern of behaviour established through the masculine discourse. The works of both Connell and Messner and Sabo are underpinned by the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and the gender order. Hegemonic masculinity can be understood to be a culturally dominant expression of masculine identity, the embodiment of values such as strength, power and independence. The dialectical process of the subordination of women and the inferiority of the hegemonic form of masculinity, contributes to a gendered order of society with males and hegemonic masculinity invested with the most power (Bryson, 1990). More recently, research by Connell and Mess–erschmidt (2005) has begun to reconfigure this understanding of hegemonic masculinity, suggesting that the concept is not fixed. Rather, the practice of masculinity is constantly evolving in conjunction with the ideologies that pervade masculine discourse. The fluidity of such ideologies allows for variations within different social contexts, thus hegemonic masculinity should be understood within different gendered cultures.

**Sport as a gendering agent**

Within the body of gender research, scholarly attention has been directed towards the gendered nature of sport (Hall, 1985 and Messner, 1992). The interaction of identity literature and the sporting discourse serves as a critical instrument in the study of the social interactions and identities at play within sporting cultures (King and McDonald, 2007). Much of this research uses hegemonic masculinity to conceptualise the significance of sport as a gendering agent (Bryson, 1994). The very fact that success within sport requires the embodiment of values that are attributed to the hegemonic masculine (Bryson, 1990) makes sporting discourse a key site for studying the production and perpetuation of masculine identities.

Earlier writings adopt a critical ontology concerning gender identity in the context of sport. Both Sabo (1985) and Theberge (1981) argue that the institution of sport sustains and reinforces patriarchal values of male dominance, which become naturalised as part of a gender identity. Theberge
analyses sport from a feminist perspective, describing sport as a gendering space that encourages masculine domination and the subordination of females. It can be argued that such writings comprise a repressive inquiry into the gendered nature of sport, acknowledging sport as one centralised power block and failing to see the variety of sporting discourses that construct the institution of sport. More recently, research on sport and gender identities has focused on the construction of masculinity within different sporting practices (Sabo and Panepinto, 1990; Light and Kirk, 2002 and Allain, 2008). Studies have contributed to the understanding of the production of masculinity within team games that require aggressive contact between players (Light and Kirk, 2002) and particular sporting cultures in the fostering of a gendered identity. Pringle and Markula (2005) suggest the culture of rugby encourages performers to embody the values attributed to this gender identity in order to excel within this discipline. Research by Pringle and Markula (2008) conceptualises masculine identities in sport through a Foucauldian approach to the body as an instrument in the presentation of power. Foucault (1977) defines the body as vehicle with which and through which power is established. Building on this concept, Pringle and Markula suggest that the very physical nature of sport is invested with control of the physical body. The feelings of pain and control associated with sports performance induce a sense of embodied empowerment attributed to the sporting masculine identity.

**Masculinity, sport and a disrupted body-self relationship**

The relationship between the physical body, identity and masculinity are tightly interrelated, each counterpart mediating and negotiating the other through powerful ideological forces and discursive practices. It is the fragile dynamics that weave these three concepts so closely together that provide a platform in conceptualising research on body-self relationships, in particular the disruption to the body-self relationship through physical impairment or disability on identity politics, in particular the performance of a masculine identity through a physically impaired body (Gerschick and Miller, 1997; Shakespeare and Watson, 2001 and Huang and Brittain, 2006). Within this field of inquiry, a cluster of studies have focused on physical disability as a result of accidents occurring through sport and the difficult terrain of constructing a masculine identity post accident (Smith and Sparkes, 2002; Smith and Sparkes; 2004; Smith and Sparkes, 2005 and Smith and Sparkes, 2008).

The importance of studying the consequences of physical impairment through sport is two-fold. Firstly, it emphasises the value of the body-self relationship to individuals who have a strong sense of identity constituted wholly around involvement in sport. Whilst simultaneously, the highly gendered social practice of sport acts to cultivate masculine identities with which many are aligned to the hegemonic masculine ideal. In this regard, the disruption to the body-self relationship through physical impairment or disability dramatically affects how individuals perceive their masculine identity.

**Taking a narrative approach**

To understand the embodied experiences of individuals who have suffered a disruption to their body-self relationship, research within this field of inquiry has utilised narrative analysis and biographical reflection in order to provide depth in presenting and contextualising such experiences (Sparkes, 1996). Within autobiographical reflection and narrative inquiry, the body becomes a central feature within the construction of individual stories thus making it an effective tool in the study of individual’s unique, embodied experiences (Smith and Sparkes, 2005 and Smith and Sparkes, 2008). Language is essentially derived from culture and is imbued with social meanings. It provides a medium in interpreting individual’s
social and cultural realities within specific contexts and the source of conceptualising and developing cultural identities (Kogler, 2007). McAdams (2006) defines individuals’ lives as saturated with stories that frame social experiences; thus social interactions are fabricated with the telling, interpreting and re-telling of these stories. It is through the articulation of these narrative stories that individuals organise social experiences and events around time. Frank (1995) further describes how narratives are told through the body, given meaning through dialogue and mediated by the self. Narrative research is a valuable interpretative framework in the study of disability through a sociological perspective, as the traumatic disruption that disability causes to an individual’s life is reflected and articulated through individual narratives.

Research by Smith and Sparkes (1999) examines the embodied experiences of male rugby players who have suffered a traumatic accident whilst playing rugby resulting in a spinal cord injury (SCI). The study highlights the power struggles that lie between the reconstruction of men’s masculine identity and disability. The stigmatisation of a subordinated masculinity attached to disability and the hegemonic form attributed to sports, in particular the masculine dominating and aggressive practice of rugby, creates emotional tensions in the lives of the disabled men. Smith and Sparkes use narrative analysis to understand the experiences of each individual, simultaneously illustrating the tensions between reconstructing an identity that is not wholly constituted around involvement in sport. The in-depth interviews of the disabled men define how the athletic identity is still perceived as the hegemonic form for these men, exerting a self-defeating pressure to restore this form of identity regardless of their disability.

Smith and Sparkes (2005) emphasise similar concepts in later work, illustrating the difficult and emotional process experienced by disabled rugby players in the attempt post accident to construct a new sense of identity from the fragments of their former identity. The men reflect, using autobiographical stories to present a picture of their lives prior to the accident and currently, and how they perceive the future in relation to the construction of a sense of self. Such research begins to unravel and dramatically reinforce the notion of the effects of a changing physical body on an individual’s sense of self. The effects of the sudden disruption to the body-self relationship radiate outward from the impaired individual to the social world one inhabits. Smith and Sparkes (2005) describe a particular example of a male rugby player who suffered a severe spinal cord injury in a match that left him paralysed from the neck down. The loss of his everyday social network, wife and job in addition to the disrupted body-self relationship makes the recapturing and composing of a sense of identity difficult.

A narrative framework

Franks’ (1995) ‘The Wounded Storyteller’ is presented in a narrative framework that is often utilised within research that focuses on narrative inquiry. Frank’s work illustrates how illness of the body induces autobiographical stories as a way for individuals to draw perspective on the effects of illness: ‘Stories have to repair the damage that illness has done to the ill person’s sense of where she is in life, and where she may be going. Stories are a way of re-drawing maps and finding new destinations’ (p. 53). Frank advocates three dominant narratives that contextualise the common plot identified in narratives told by persons suffering illness. The restitutive narrative, the chaos narrative and the quest narrative form the process of internalising and reconstructing damaged self-narratives caused by illness or impairment. The contemporary western cultural ideal of restoring health through treatment is promoted through the restoration narrative. Frank defines this narrative with the conventional storyline, ‘Yesterday I was healthy, today I’m sick but tomorrow I’ll be healthy again’ (p. 77). When this storyline cannot be reinforced, seen with physical disability such as SCI, the chaos narrative is told. Lack of control and anxiety feeds the abstract stories that constitute this form of narrative, which are often too disruptive and fragmented to be voiced (Frank, 1995). The final narrative type is the quest narrative. This can be understood to be the acceptance of the illness and with it a representation through a coherent, structured story of hope.

Smith and Sparkes (2005) draw upon this narrative framework in order to contextualise the self narratives of disabled rugby players. Smith and Sparkes identify the numerous narrative types that compose and reflect the disabled athletes’ embodied experiences, creating a textured resource to illustrate the embodied tensions and paradoxical terrain of attempting to reconstruct a former masculine identity whilst coping with a restricting physical body. Earlier research by Smith and Sparkes (1999) accordingly draw upon Frank’s (1995) thesis to begin to explain the problematic fixation on restoring the sporting identity seen by the disabled men. In terms of permanent disability, the restitutive narrative proposed by Frank cannot be transgressed, as the disability cannot simply be healed. Frank outlines examples of restitutive narratives of chronically ill people as they have proceeded to adopt the quest narrative and simultaneously constituted their illness into the construction of their identity. As Smith and Sparkes argue, with permanently physically impaired individuals who have constituted an identity coextensive to the level of sporting performance, regaining this sporting, hegemonic identity is unachievable and transcending the chaos narrative becomes difficult. Individuals’ social worlds contain sets of cultural scripts from which narratives are drawn and appropriately applied. Our access to particular narratives is difficult if they do not exist within our cultural repertoire (Murray, 1999). It is on this premise that Smith and Sparkes (1999) argue that forming new identities becomes problematic when such narratives cannot be contemplated: ‘Quite simply, when it comes to restoring the body-self, people cannot transcend their narrative recourses’ (p. 90).

Exploring this concept and more specifically how personal narratives are closely tied up within the cultural and social realities with which produce narrative plots, Sparkes (1996)
engages in the writing of a personal narrative. The research describes an ongoing problem in the lower back which disrupted his sporting career and personal body project. Sparkes refers to the problem as the 'fatal flaw' (p. 473) and uses a narrative approach in illustrating how the fatal flaw inevitably led to the disruption of his body-self relationship through restricting the use of his physical body and sporting performance. The narratives articulated by Sparkes cannot be removed from the cultural context with which they are told. That is of white, middle-class, heterosexual sporting male; and thus accessing other, available narratives absent from this cultural context in order to reform a new sense of self becomes problematic. He illustrates how the masculine self becomes vulnerable when this storyline is disrupted and, when there is a lack of narrative resources, is often propelled to produce a narrative plot constituted around this identity (Charmaz, 1994).

Rationale for study

There is a variety of literature examining participation of physically impaired individuals in sport (Kolkka and Williams, 1997; Taub, Blinde and Greer, 1999; Howard, 2002 and Huang and Brittain, 2006) however in general, empirical research contributing the study of masculinity and disability remains limited, with only a cluster of studies exploring disability as a result of a sporting accident. With this in mind, I propose to contribute to this under researched field of inquiry in the form of a case study to provide an embodied, phenomenological approach to understanding the power struggles that define the reformation of a masculine identity in the face of physical impairment and a traumatic biographical disruption.

The research seeks to uncover the importance of the physical body in constituting an identity while simultaneously exploring how an individual’s physicality can, in turn, limit and construct the individual’s autonomy in the formation of a specific identity. The research will utilise and draw upon the narrative framework theorised by Frank (1995) in conceptualising the biographical stories told by the participant. The use of narrative inquiry in the conceptual analysis of the participant’s biographical grounded experiences allows for a phenomenological approach in the subjective interpretation of the participant’s biographical disruptions. The narratives articulated by Sparkes cannot be removed from the cultural context with which they are told. That is of white, middle-class, heterosexual sporting male; and thus accessing other, available narratives absent from this cultural context in order to reform a new sense of self becomes problematic. He illustrates how the masculine self becomes vulnerable when this storyline is disrupted and, when there is a lack of narrative resources, is often propelled to produce a narrative plot constituted around this identity (Charmaz, 1994).

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach

The research aims to provide a unique and textured understanding of the embodied experiences of an individual living with physical impairment as a result of an accident occurring through sport. With the intention of providing a detailed representation of such a social phenomena, I am assuming a holistic approach to the research with the flexibility to utilise a range of strategies of qualitative analysis within a qualitative inquiry (Sparkes, 2002). In this regard, I hope to provide scope for a substantial amount of rich data to emerge in order to build up an evocative account of the individual’s social reality.

Within this qualitative inquiry, ethnography will define the methodological framework. There are no established rules grounding ethnography, allowing for a diverse field of data collection in turn producing numerous forms of data (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). This provides me with the room to explore unique and contemporary methods of data collection. The ability to use multiple methods of data collection within the ethnographic framework provides me with the tools to immerse oneself into the participant’s social world and gain detailed data during the everyday social interactions with the participant.

This research will aim to interpret the social meanings which are fabricated and mediated through social interaction with Tom (pseudonym) – the participant. It is the linguistic medium that allows the transference of the participant’s perspectives within his social reality and provides the grounds for my interpretive understanding (Brockmeier, 1996; Outhwaite and Turner, 2007). The research does not aim to generate objective knowledge through a positivist paradigm that postulates a singular truth, but rather a subjective analysis of the numerous relationships that Tom holds to his social world, and thus the action of determining shifting truths based on his lived social experience (Emmerson, Fretz and Shaw, 1995). With this in mind, a phenomenological approach is critical in underpinning the qualitative framework (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). The study will assume an inductive form of research, with the gradual emergence of important themes and areas of interest concerning the nature of the research during data collection. Preceding the study, key ideas from previous research have been noted, directing areas of interest within the field of disability, identity and narrative inquiry.

The participant — brief biography

Tom, now 31 years of age, lost his right leg at the age of 18. From a young age, Tom started playing football and continued to play through school and college. Known locally for his athletic talent, particularly football, Tom played in the first North Walsham football team on the East Coast near Norwich. Through college Tom engaged in a variety of sports including cricket, track and field athletics and cross county running and continued to play football for the college team. Training for both college football and his home club team took up the majority of Tom’s time as he played games on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays and continued to train the remaining days of the week. Tom’s social milieu revolved heavily around the football culture with his social network consisting almost entirely of friends on the football team. It was his ambition
to play a high level of football in the near future. In his own words he describes the accident — the first injury Tom had suffered during his football career:

‘I turned up about 15 or 20 minutes late. The accident actually happened as the second half kicked off, it was literally within 10, 15 seconds of the second half kicking off. I literally just kicked of because obviously I played up front, ran through the centre, made a run round the back of the defender as I was put through by a mate, took the ball round the keeper, kicked it one side of him to round the other to put it in an empty net…. And the goalkeeper just came out and said you’re not doing that, and he went straight through me just snapping tib and fib [Tibia and Fibula] clean.’

He was immediately taken to hospital. Tom suffered compartment syndrome and had numerous operations in an attempt to try and save his leg. His leg was finally amputated from just above the knee. Tom spent more than six months in a wheelchair before the swelling reduced enough to allow him to wear a prosthetic. During this time Tom’s life and narrative experience became dramatically disrupted. Unable to walk and consequently play football, Tom suffered emotionally, a lasting effect on his body-self relationship.

**My biography – position as a researcher**

As I present Tom’s story I must also present my own, as how I know what I know about Tom is affected by my relationship with him and the numerous identities I embody. As a keen track and field athlete I am heavily involved in the athletics culture within the university campus. It was the early summer months that I came into contact with Tom, an amputee athlete who is training to compete in the long jump at the London 2012 Paralympic games. I had just finished a training session sometime in the late May and sat down next to him on the track. I became immediately aware of his body, not because of his amputation or his strong muscular stature, but because he was heavily tattooed down both arms. I started to engage in conversation with him, and he told me that he had only recently moved to Cardiff to train for the Paralympics on scholarship after being talent-identified through a fast track disability athletics programme.

I got to know Tom throughout the summer months of the athletics track season, talking to him briefly in training sessions and engaging with him further away from the track at social gatherings with the training group. During this time, Tom told me fragments of the story behind his amputation and I became increasingly interested in many aspects of his story. As a female, able-bodied athlete and a student interested in the sociology of embodiment, Tom’s identity and the relationship and feelings he holds about his body came increasingly interesting to me, leading me to ask him if he would think about participating in my undergraduate dissertation. I gave him a brief oral explanation of the study, describing the type of sensitive data I was hoping to access and the means of data collection I would use. Following this, I provided him with an information sheet, and some time to think about participating, giving him a chance to ask any questions concerning the nature of the study. He was happy to engage and signed an informed consent sheet ready to participate.

I intended to understand and present the consequences of biographical disruption in the form of amputation on a masculine body-self relationship within a male dominated world. As a student I have a privileged position in being able to give Tom a voice in expressing his story and the lived experience of problems associated with sudden biographical disruption and disability/amputation. However as a female trying to gain an understanding into a male’s social reality there will be a limit to my ability in accessing this world, as my female identity within a patriarchal culture presents specific power struggles within our gendered relationship. As Dewar (1991) notes, the numerous power relations that saturate our relationship will add to the subjectivity of interpretation within the research.

**Data collection and methodological tools**

In depth, unstructured qualitative interviews will be conducted. In understanding the complexity of disability and body-self relationships, unstructured interviews provide room for the emergence rich of data and important themes, which can be articulated upon at the point of surface (Veal, 1997). Due to the subject of the research, it is likely that the interviews may be highly emotionally charged as Tom retells his story. With this in mind, interviews will last between 30 minutes and 1 hour. Each interview will be recorded and environments chosen by Tom. My friendship with Tom cannot allow me to become a detached listener during the process of interviewing; as he shares his experiences I aim to become as much of an active listener as possible, as Wolcott (1995) suggests, providing room for Tom to elaborate on his story.

Participant observation and everyday engagement will be a continuing process of data collection throughout the duration of the study. Prolonged engagement with Tom over a wide range of everyday activities will provide the research with depth of empirical data and an understanding of Tom’s perspective within numerous social contexts (Emmerson, Fretz and Shaw, 1995). Observation will primarily take place within the social setting of the training culture, with much of both Tom’s and my time currently being spent within this social milieu. This allows for me to engage in prolonged interaction with Tom in a familiar environment where my presence is naturally unobtrusive and comfortable. In turn, my stance within this environment should impact the depth of the empirical data. It is of importance to consider a reflexive position during participant engagement and observation, especially with a continued and often intimate presence of myself in the study. To acknowledge my personal reflections and stance during the study and to facilitate a level of reflexivity, I will keep a written journal of the time spent with Tom, noting down my thoughts, feelings, insights, reactions and concerns.
The researcher’s journal has been noted as an important aspect of data collection during ethnography (Glaser and Strauss, 1967 and Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Mine will allow me to engage with my own personal thoughts and provide a means of stepping outside of Tom’s social world, disengaging from assumptions and theoretical concepts that may influence my interpretations (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). Participant engagement and observation will aim to endeavour a phenomenological understanding to grasp in greater depth the embodied perspectives of the participant. The sensory domain has been recognised as socially significant within ethnographic inquiry, as individual perceptions and senses are essentially ‘conditioned by culture’ (Classen, 1997 and Sparkes, 2008). With this in mind, I will become aware of and pay attention to the participant’s sensory expression during engagement and within my researcher’s journal.

Field notes will provide a further methodological tool within the study. In conjunction with in depth interviews and observation, field notes assist with capturing experiences with the participant as a written, descriptive account (Emmerson, Fretz and Shaw, 1995). The process of writing field notes will be continual throughout the duration of the study. Field notes will be written up as part of my researcher’s journal in chronological, narrative format. Tom will be asked to read my researchers journal, if he wishes to, and form a response to it.

**Data analysis and research design**

Due to the inductive nature of my research, the point between finishing data collection and engaging in analysis an interpretation cannot be specified. My researcher’s journal will be an ongoing, continual process of self-reflection and a form of data collection throughout the duration of writing up my research and as I prepare to change the nature of my relationship with Tom from researcher to friend.

Post interview, the data will be transcribed verbatim to provide a written transcript for analysis. Analysis of data will assume a systematic and inductive process (Tesch, 1990), utilising the constant comparative method as noted by Maykut and Morehouse (1994). This entails categorising units of the written transcript with similar themes and meanings, creating analytical categories as they emerge in a continuous process (Goertz and LeCompte, 1981). Analytical categories will be based upon references to the embodied experiences experienced by Tom and narrative patterns across the written transcripts, theoretically informed and interpreted by the work of Frank (1995) outlined within the literature review. The inductive, interpretive nature of my research requires me to assume a subjective interpretive epistemological position throughout data analysis (Morgan and Smircich, 1980).

The research will be based upon an emergent research design using a case study approach (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). Understanding Tom’s individual embodied experiences within a variety of social and historical contexts requires the ability for myself to immerse and live myself into Tom’s world in attempt to understand the experiences from within. I had already begun this process as I spontaneously engaged with Tom during the summer months down at the athletics track and progressively built a relationship with him over the next few months. As I began to acknowledge fragments of his highly emotional and disruptive story I understood that his life, his experiences and his story would require a holistic approach in the capacity to interpret his experiences in depth, whilst allowing me the flexibility of a range of methodological resources. Sparkes (1998) utilised this method when similarly researching the effect of prolonged injury as a consequence of a disrupted sporting career and with this, disrupted body-self relationship and biographical interruption. The use of a single participant allowed for Sparkes (1998) to gain greater access into the participant’s world and against this backdrop, utilised the volume of data collection available to present rich narrative descriptions in a lived context.

During my ethnography, I will spend on average around 4 hours a week with Tom over a period of 6 months. Following time spent with Tom I will write diary entries into my researcher’s journal, keeping a progressive account of our time spent together.

**Judgment criteria within my ethnographic research**

Positivist, traditionalist epistemological and ontological assumptions based on scientific notions of a singular truth that adhere to notions of validity, reliability and generalisability fail to be transferable to a qualitative case study (Lincoln and Guba, 1980 and Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba, 2007). In this regard, I wish to judge my research using five criteria as described by Richardson (2000) used specifically in the judgment of works within the social scientific domain. Richardson (2000) abandons judgement claims applied within the natural sciences and quantitative philosophies and understands the constructivist, interpretive nature of social research, applying criteria of ‘substantive contribution’, ‘aesthetic merit’, ‘reflexivity’, ‘impact’ and ‘expression of a reality’ (p. 937).

I feel I have adhered to these judgement criteria. With my study contributing to a relatively under researched area concerning body-self-identity and injury/disability within narrative inquiry, as defined within my literature review, I feel it makes a substantive contribution to understanding this social phenomena. Through the use of a case study and the theoretical grounding I have provided a deeply embodied representation of an individual’s social reality within this social context. I hope to have succeeded aesthetically in style, providing an engaging read which stimulates the reader into a sense of understanding and empathising with another individual’s perspective. I have aimed to be as reflexive as possible, clearly stating my position as the researcher. I feel my research reflects the epistemology of post-modernism, as I define my research as relative, interpretive and subjective – attempting to present a picture of various social relationships, power struggles and shifting truths one experiences within a post-modern social world. As the researcher, as a friend and
as a training partner I am bound up within numerous social relationships with the participant. I have kept an ongoing reflective journal of my experiences thoughts and feelings. Tom has the chance to read this, reflecting on the research and research relationship and forming a response. I have used the journal to form part of my reflexive research practice, correspondingly, highlighting, reacting and adjusting my research practice in response to ethical matters (as discussed in the section below). In reference to the criterion of ‘impact’ and ‘expression of reality’, I hope the research will stir the reader emotionally, allowing the reader to make connections with the research. Grounding my work theoretically within narrative inquiry aims to represent a lived experience in a more embodied sense, a phenomenological, ‘true’ account of Tom’s body-self.

**Ethics**

The phenomenological engaged, constructivist inquiry that this case study is grounded within aims to readjust the research barriers that constitute positivist paradigms in attempts to produce an embodied interpretation of Tom’s social world. As Lincoln (2009) describes, qualitative research is that is located within such forms of inquiry in many ways attempts to break down the power structures that pervade the barriers between researcher and participant. This said, within this research ethical guidelines have been fully adhered-to with recent ethical literature being acknowledged as part of ethical practice.

In terms of the research, all chapters will be available for Tom to read and comment on, including the researcher’s journal which will contain field notes from each meeting. Tom [pseudonym] will appear anonymously throughout the writing up of the research. Throughout the duration of interviewing I have adopted the position of ‘active listener’ as described by Lincoln (2009) and Wolcott (1995). As elaborated earlier, it provides Tom room for expression while assuming as much of an unbiased voice from myself as a researcher. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) advocate reflexivity within social research as a resource in ethical practices. Reflexivity, for example as with my researcher’s journal, allows a critical reflection of my position and self within the research. Although reflexivity is often associated with reflection on the levels and interpretation of epistemology or ‘truths’ within the research, it also provides a reflection of the ‘micro-ethics’ and the sensitivities that are produced in phenomenological engaged social research (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004).

**RESULTS**

**A life with purpose: pre-amputation**

Tom recounts his ambitions and feelings towards football prior to the accident which ultimately led to his amputation. Tom engages in the personal narrative of football, organising past events around this narrative type and claiming an athletic, football-orientated identity. As Sparkes (1999) notes, personal narratives allow individuals to align with specific identities, constructing lives through the claiming of a self. Talking of his self before amputation, a clear identity was formed, embodied within a life narrative associated with football and a football career. Tom describes life prior to his amputation:

“I played for the first team in my town, played county level, played for my college when I was at college, I was a generally happy go lucky sort of cheeky individual really, thinking my life was football and that’s where it would end up.”

In another example, he recalls:

“Well basically, basically, you know I was being scouted you know and I wanted to be a footballer whether you know, I got semi-professional or whether I made professional, whatever that’s what I wanted to do, football was my life, you know... it was everything really.”

As I spend increasing amounts of time with Tom, we often talk about his life prior to the amputation, with Tom often commenting “I lived for my football”. These narrative descriptions provide a window into Tom’s intimate relationship between his identity, life and narrative experiences.

**Narrative chaos and loss of control**

The unexpected amputation of Tom’s leg disrupted his previous narrative resource. The inability to play able bodied, professional or semi-professional football disconnected him from his earlier narrative, constructed around, and constituted by his involvement in football. The loss of this narrative resource was unexpected and sudden and his ability to associate and restore himself with other catalogues of narratives was not available within the cultural milieu Tom inhabited. The ability to connect to narrative resources is a complex interaction of experiences, time and biography (Atkinson, 1997), availability being intricately linked to the numerous plots and repertoire of identities within varying cultures.

Tom describes his feelings towards his life after the amputation:

“... that was, that was it, my life was over. It was over. I didn’t really care. I hated everyone, I hated myself. [...] I lost all my friends, my own fault I lost my family, I pushed everyone away but I lost all my identity, I lost all meanings, I lost all motivation, you know, I lost everything, everything.”

Frank (1995) argues how an interrupted narrative inevitability results in a perceived life without meaning by the sufferer, often meaning or purpose, although uncertain, is found through the suffering. Tom constructs past events echoing this loss of meaning he feels to his life. However this loss of meaning and a need for purpose is also reinforced as he describes life currently:

“There’s no value to me, and that’s what I am forever trying to find, a purpose, something to make me feel...”
Tom comments:

“That’s it. I float, I’ve floated since the accident, I know deep down I have to find myself a part time job because I need a bit of extra cash and I am terrified of looking for work because I can’t cope with routine. I can’t cope with, I just, I can’t cope with one day waking up and thinking I don’t want to see anybody and not being around people.”

Tom’s loss of narrative resource is often connected to expressions of control and the effect of his amputation on controlling the direction and everyday structure of his life. Body functioning inhabits an unconscious space while in an unproblematic form (Leder, 1990). In this sense bodily capacities are predictable for most, but as Frank (1995) notes, a loss of predictability, such as disability is often accompanied by a loss of control, as the reliability of bodily functioning is not under conscious control. Tom describes his feelings of lack of control with regard to his amputation and becoming disabled:

“You know, it’s like having everything taken away from you. Completely out of control.”

In another example, Tom recalls:

“My leg controls everything I do, it has such an effect on me, if … my leg is sore I can’t wear my prosthetic [and that] means I have to go around on crutches. … I hate being out and about on crutches, even then it makes me, just limits what I can and can’t do; days I feel crap and shitty I have to put a smile on my face.”

Tom continues to comment:

“Everyday it fucks me off, it’s just, what’s reality today? I have to hop, put my leg on, I have to do this, do that, you know what I mean, it’s just a pain in the arse.”

The sudden disruption to Tom’s biography as well as his physical self, and the inability to connect to other narrative recourses impelled Tom into a depressive disorientated state of living triggering numerous suicide attempts (See Researchers Journal in Appendix). During an interview, Tom comments:

“I was at home most of the time and that’s when the problems started. I drank a lot, on medication, on anti-depressants. On all sorts of stuff and that was probably the worst I have ever been, when I lived in that flat I was close to ending my life on several occasions, you know, staring at pills and drink and I just wanted it to be over.”

“For me my life was over, I had nothing to live for, but that was the thing that stopped me, the effect it would have on my family you know, I was very close [to them].”

**Disrupted body-self relationship**

The unproblematic functioning state of the body allows for a unified body-self relationship (Charmaz, 1994). When disability or illness disrupts the physical body, the unification between the physical and the sense of self is often assaulted with individual corporeality becoming an insecure terrain. Williams (1999) describes how the disruptive nature of disability on individual biography and lived narratives perturbs the individual’s social reality. The manifestation of a physical problem disturbs the social identity that has been actively constructed around their sense of social reality and biography. In the case of Tom, he comments:

“I couldn’t look at myself, I hated myself, I didn’t want anyone looking at me, you know. I couldn’t, I can’t describe how much I hated myself, I don’t think, I don’t think it’s possible. It got to the point where I wanted to end my life, that’s how much I hated it, just, didn’t want anyone close to me.”

In another example, Tom comments:

“I don’t particularly like being me, whereas previously I could have said I am quite happy with myself, but [now] I’m not and it’s just admitting that I hate it. I mean, I put this persona on that I’m comfortable but you know, with the training group everyone likes being around me, they see me as you know someone that is quite happy in their own skin, but I hate me, I hate living my life, I hate getting up everyday.”

**Regaining control and a sense of self:**

The traumatic disruption to Tom’s lived narrative and the disturbance this causes his body-self relationship is reflected through the stories he tells about life soon after his amputation and how he attempts to re-construct himself currently. Frank (1995) terms these narrative types as ‘chaos narratives’, stories told with poor, if not any, logistical linguistic form. The embodiment of these chaos narratives is concerned with body related feelings of control and dissociation. As Frank (1995) notes, the predictability of the body has failed catalysing feelings of a loss of control and the inability to direct life to a familiar narrative. Accompanying this, the disrupted body self relationship reflects itself in a dissociation from the self and the body as the body becomes a restraining component of the self. Tom’s heavily tattooed body is a reflection of a deeply embodied chaotic self. He comments:

“I suppose for me it was a kind of release, all I was aware of was the pain of the tattoo and I forgot all other pain… all the hurt I had been through and was going through with my family at the time as well, and just, in terms of my body I was still hating myself …. I still abuse my body now, you’re well aware I’m still getting tattoos now, I just, I don’t have a very high opinion of myself at all and never have had since the accident. I don’t care really about myself, I would chuck myself headlong into anything, just because I don’t care, what’s the worst thing that can happen now. In terms of tattooing it was an addiction, it became an addiction, I needed to feel that different type of pain, and I suppose some people would turn to self harm and things like that but for me I probably wouldn’t want to cut myself but I was just letting other people scar.
me, terribly, and it become an obsession and I basically lived in a tattooist’s for a couple of years and had quite a lot of my body covered.”

Tom recalls:

“At the time it was just the pain thing, the release, I could lay there, I could sit there and I could just disappear, because I would have to zen out because it hurt so much and I was having tattoos in, you know, on my hips, my ribs, down my spine, on my nipple, you know all the most sensitive areas I could. I literally was having them where I knew it would hurt the most.”

Tom comments:

“I was angry still. Although you don't see me as a very angry… because I try and keep positive, and it's over the top, and I, I am hurting everyday still. You know what I mean, everyday I wake up and it's a reminder of what someone’s done to me, and you know just because of the neglect, having to be in my situation every day. I was waking up at the time and I just hated myself, I just, what can I do today? I had quite a lot of free cash at the time and just went and just got a tattoo, you know what I mean. But then, I have said to you before when we first met, I think I am more mentally sound now and happier but I'm still having tattoos and I'm still laying for hours upon end being hurt, that's the crazy thing. I think I'm getting better, I think I'm turning corners and getting somewhere but I'm not, and that will always be the case because … it's something I can't get away from, everyday I have to deal with it, and like anybody you have good days and you have bad days and when I have a bad day it's a very bad day.”

The chaotic body becomes monadic in orientation often resisting support and the inability to relate with others (Frank, 1995). Throughout the duration of time I spent with Tom I noted his difficulty in connecting emotionally with others, resulting in numerous failed relationships. Sexual behaviour with females after his accident became habitual and excessive, resulting in numerous failed relationships. Sexual behaviour, his extreme tattooing can be seen as Tom's attempt to regain control and a sense of self. Sexual behaviour, affecting the taken for granted, unified relationship between body and self. Since the amputation, Tom expresses feelings of a fragmented, vigorous dislike for his body as it continually encroaches on his ability to regain a performing, fit body and self. The biographical disruption experienced in the face of a permanent disruption to his physical body disconnected him with from core notions of a sense of self constituted through a highly athletic, football identity, affecting the taken for granted, unified relationship between body and self. Since the amputation, Tom expresses feelings of a fragmented, vigorous dislike for his body as it continually encroaches on his ability to regain a performing, fit athletic body as well as a valued sense of self. The narrative framework of restitutions, chaos and quest as advocated by Frank (1995), theoretically informs the type of stories that are embedded within these narrative forms, as we notice the stories and emotions Tom expresses as a demise and preoccupation within a chaos narrative.

**DISCUSSION**

From the time spent with Tom I have come to understand that he inhabits a body which he perceives as of significantly less value to him after amputation, dramatically impinging on his body-self relationship. The biographical disruption experienced in the face of a permanent disruption to his physical body disconnected him with from core notions of a sense of self constituted through a highly athletic, football identity, affecting the taken for granted, unified relationship between body and self. Since the amputation, Tom expresses feelings of a fragmented, vigorous dislike for his body as it continually encroaches on his ability to regain a performing, fit athletic body as well as a valued sense of self. The narrative framework of restitutions, chaos and quest as advocated by Frank (1995), theoretically informs the type of stories that are embedded within these narrative forms, as we notice the stories and emotions Tom expresses as a demise and preoccupation within a chaos narrative.

**Living in chaos**

As Tom becomes imprisoned in a body that he perceives as worthless and constraining, his body and sense of self become opposing entities, impairing the body-self harmony that once existed preceding his amputation. From Tom’s narrative...
descriptions, it can be understood that he transcends between narrative categories, often living within a form of chaos narrative and shifting in concurrence with types of stories he expresses. Chaos and control are intricately linked, as the loss of control that is experienced by ill/impaired individuals becomes the catalyst in strengthening the stories that exist within this narrative type. The highly athletic body Tom inhabited and was associated with ultimately became what Frank (1995) refers to as a disciplined body. The regimentation of the body that sport fosters through practices such as training creates an embodied feeling of predictability as the body functions and performs without conscious acknowledgment (Gadow, 1982). This inevitability feeds individual awareness of being able to predict and control such bodily actions. As Frank (1995) notes, “The Disciplined Body-self defines itself primarily in actions of self-regulation; its most important action problems are those of control. The disciplined body experiences its gravest crises in loss of control” (p. 41).

The loss of control that Tom experiences after amputation can be viewed as a deeply embodied fear, illustrated through his physical body, which he uses as resource for expressions of control in regard to excessive tattooing. The sense of controlled pain that he experiences in tattooing becomes a habitual process of a means to regain feelings of control as he reconstructs the external territories of the body. The link between chaos and control that sustains the preoccupation within a chaotic narrative can be demonstrated through tattooing, as tattooing becomes a mediator between predictability of pain in accordance with the connections it has to control.

According to Frank (1995) disassociation with the body accompanies feelings of uncontrollability. Tom’s devalued conception of his body and the annihilated feelings he experiences with regard to his physical body creates a relationship of disassociation, as habitual tattooing becomes a behaviour that not only epitomizes feelings of control, but also a means to relive the lost feelings of association he once had with his body prior to the amputation. This bodily association can be linked to the unified body-self relationship that Tom felt prior to his amputation. For example, when discussing tattooing, Tom expressed, “At the time it was just the pain thing, the release, I could lay there, I could sit there and I could just disappear”.

As Tom embodies a chaos narrative he becomes what Frank (1995) terms ‘monadic’ in orientation. Frank (1995) recognises the monadic body as one that is viewed as separate and unable to relate or recognise support, primarily producing desire for itself. The habitual and excessive tattooing Tom engages with becomes a monadic practice that may be associated with a mirroring body. Although the mirroring body is constructed around conventional displays in presentation for others, it acts alone in usage: thus the body is monadic in orientation. In attempts to reconnect feelings of association with his body through the use of tattooing, Tom embodies a mirroring body in the reconstruction of sense of identity and a greater body-self relationship. In such a way, Frank (1995) states, ‘The mirroring body-self is compulsively associated with its body, but the body is now a surface; again, the visual is primary. The mirroring body produces desires, but its desire is monadic. What the mirroring body-self wants, it wants for itself’ (p. 44). With the postmodern societal landscape increasingly orientated towards corporeality, the body becomes the key mediator in the articulation of subjective expressions of identity (Shilling, 2006). This said, and in the face of a fractured identity which Tom experiences through amputation and the loss of his athletically constituted sense of self, the excessive attempts to modify the body through tattoos may be a means of creating a balance with the self and reinforcing self-control.

There is a limited amount of literature exploring the nature of tattooing in the context of a body/self crisis, with research being focused on the use of tattooing as a means of using the body’s surface as a way of enhancing cultural capital and a regulated communication of identities (Featherstone, 2000 and Atkinson, 2004). For Tom, tattooing in part may also be an attempt to re-embody himself, constructing a different body-self relationship by reinforcing a new sense of identity. The orientation towards a mirroring, monadic type body-self that is excessively associated with reconstructing the bodily surface is a reaction to a constant concern for a hegemonic identity synchronous with the acute disruption to bodily notions of predictability and control. The disciplined, sporting athletic body is understood to occupy a privileged position within western culture, especially in terms of the reproduction of multiple forms of masculinity (Whitson, 1990). Post amputation, Tom inhabited a body and a self-identity that was constituted around normative notions of masculinity. Tattooing, to some extent, can be seen as a mechanism for Tom’s attempt to construct a surface that complies with these normative expectations of masculinity in regaining a body-self relationship on which he places a greater sense of value. In many ways, he may be attempting to re-story his life. Tattooing becomes a vehicle in accessing narrative resources and catalogues of identities that he feels provides him with a biographical plot, which feeds off an identity composed through the tattoos. Connecting with tattoo narratives and using tattooing as a means of modifying the self during individual suffering constitute what Oskanen and Turtianen (2005) define as actions which fight against chaos narrative plots. In saying this, it is suggesting that Tom’s tattooing has provided a means of affiliation with a narrative plot. However, as Tom’s words indicate, he did and still does struggle to find a form of narrative refuge, and has an inability to connect with further narrative plots.

Franks’ (1995) notion that different sets of bodies have what he categorises as ‘elective affinities’ to different narrative plots may also have a bearing on Tom’s excessive tattooing. The embodiment of specific identities and values developed through varying cultural contexts before biographical disruption have an effect on the perceived value placed on the different narrative plots that become available post biographical disruption. The ideologies that fabricate
the discursive practices of sport also foster the embodiment of the disciplined and the dominating body. Both these body types are concerned with control, with dominating bodies tending to exert emotion in the form of aggressive behaviour in the face of a biographical crisis (Frank, 1995). The process of connecting with a tattoo narrative allows Tom an inward channel for his anger which he expresses in his biographical data. In accordance, McLane (1996) describes tattooing as a form of self-mutilation within the context of a disrupted body-self, noting it as a process of regaining a sense of force over the body. Re-storying one's life through a tattoo narrative reflects Tom's desire to sustain a dominant body type post amputation. Correspondingly, the effect of heavy tattooing on the body's exterior surface allows access to performing the embodiment of this body-self with corporeal integrity.

For individuals who have suffered a biographical disruption through illness or disability, re-storying the self is a difficult and constraining terrain for numerous reasons. Often, the ability to find connection with alternative biographies and begin to reform a life course and sense of self is problematic due to the dominant illness narrative within western cultures, in what Frank (1995) terms the restitution narrative. The restitution narrative assumes a narrative plot of ‘yesterday I was healthy, today I'm sick but Tomorrow I’ll be healthy again’ (p. 77). The narrative ideals and story line of the restitution narrative is deeply saturated within numerous and varied western discourses concerning health, well-being and fitness, its pervasive plot become an internalised ideal concerning illness within a post modern world. The restitution narrative provides a cultural framework of specific and defining behaviours concerned with the embodiment of illness, and as Smith and Sparkes (1999) note, allow the sufferer to make sense of the lived experience of illness. However this narrative plot cannot be sustained in the face of permanent disability such as Tom's amputation. The permanency of Tom's condition and the sudden, traumatic interruption to his body-self as a result of it, make the restitution plot inaccessible in an absolute sense, forcing him into a chaos narrative. In accord with the inability to suffice to the dominant plot of the restitution narrative, the ability to connect with other narrative resources and fabricate a new sense of self requires the interactions of experience, time and biography (Atkinson, 1997). Personal narratives are derived and produced from cultural experience, essentially evolving as cultural constructions and which form the foundations for subjective expressions of identities. For Tom, the immersion in a sporting culture, which constituted a deeply embodied core identity, became his biographical narrative, his cultural experience limited to a narrow repertoire of sporting, culturally valued identities.

Disability stories are rarely told or experienced within sport; with tales of injuries often being glamorised and assuming the culturally dominant plot of the restitution narrative. This is illustrated through research by Sparkes (2004) who focuses on the narrative path followed by Lance Armstrong in his experience with cancer, outlined in his published autobiography. The restitution plot is adopted within his biography allowing him to restore his body-self relationship post illness and return to elite sport. These 'hero' narrative plots that follow the restitution narrative pervade stories of injury/illness in sport, dominating discourse concerned with injury in sport through outlets such as autobiographies.

In this way, other narrative plots and identities become marginalized, stabilizing identity hierarchies within sport and contributing to the problems of accessing cultural narratives that operate to re-story selves for individuals who have become disabled through sport (Sparkes, 1996 and 1998). For most, the ability to connect to narrative resources is constraining, requiring experience and time to reform biographies that are perceived as valued. However, for Tom, whose physical body is stigmatised by the socially constructed category of disability (Stone, 1995), the inability to connect to socially valued biographies and identities becomes increasingly limiting. Furthermore, the constant pain to which Tom makes numerous references within his biographical grounded experiences, and the effect it has on his everyday actions, may also impinge on his ability to connect to other narrative resources. Recent studies on pain within the social scientific paradigm have focused on the biographically disruptive effect it can have on individuals, and in turn, the effect of pain in perturbing the deeply embodied meanings attached to identities (Richardson, Ong and Sim, 2000). The everyday pains and sensations that Tom experiences in his physical body as a consequence of his amputation is a continuing, immutable assault on an already fragile body-self relationship. Pain forces awareness of the body, trapping what Leder (1990) categorises as a generally absent presence into a state of permanent body consciousness. This inescapable state of being that Tom experiences through perpetual pain may make it increasingly difficult for him to find a harmonious body-self relationship within other narrative plots. In terms of disability and/or amputation, the cultural repertoire of narrative resources that provide a platform to reforming a valued and a more stable body-self relationship is continually limiting.

**Metaphors in the expression of a chaos narrative**

Tom expresses his chaotic stories through the use of metaphors which saturate his biographical text: for example, forces as emotions, and life as a temporal entity (Becker, 1997). Metaphors seek to linguistically mediate the subjective experiences of human existence as situated actions. The socially shared and conventionalised stock of metaphors that saturate language provide a catalogue of culturally contextualised ways of expressing phenomenological and embodied experiences (Gergen, 1999). In this way metaphors facilitate the ability to relay individual experiences that may be difficult to articulate through a cultural conventionalised body of language. Scholars such as Becker (1997), whose work focuses on the use of metaphors in biographical disruption, suggest that, in the case of disrupted body-self, metaphors are drawn upon in the process of constructing the self.
Stewart, Sparkes and Smith (2011) further comment, stating ‘the metaphors we are told and [that are] made available by the cultures we inhabit, and the metaphors we learn to help tell stories about ourselves, are important in terms of how we construct one way of being in our world and acting within it’ (p. 8).

The metaphors present in the biographical text illustrate Tom’s feelings towards his life since the amputation as a journey, where he makes references to himself as ‘forever trying to find’ [hyperbole] and ‘flotted since the accident’. These metaphors that link to a disrupted life story and a fragmented sense of being are what Stewart et al. (2011), categorise as being embedded in and presenting the chaos narrative. Becker (1997) suggests that metaphorical resources are drawn upon to describe emotional chaos that is experienced by the sufferer in an attempt to articulate feelings on bodily phenomena. This is intricately illustrated within Tom’s biographical data where he makes references to the fragility of his emotions, which mirrors and is often synchronic with the delicateness of his body-self relationship.

Very rarely, if not at all, does Tom engage with metaphorical resources that present a quest narrative. Stewart et al. (2011) suggest that the journey metaphor is often described as complete or travelling forward and beyond when the sufferer transgresses into quest. For example, Tom references ‘I think I’m turning corners and getting somewhere but I’m not, and that will always be the case’. Tom cannot envisage moving beyond the embodiment of the chaos narrative and this may be acutely linked to his inability to connect to other narrative resources. However as Stewart et al. (2011) note, the ability to express the emotional dimensions of illness and or disability through the cultural inventory of metaphorical resources is exclusive, often limiting the depth to which personal experiences can be linguistically mediated and with this, limiting personal recovery and transcendence into quest.

**Disability sport as a narrative resource**

In some ways, Tom has been exposed to alternative narrative resources of disability sports, which was perceived as a form of rehabilitation after his amputation. Although Tom played disability football for Great Britain for several years his apparent detachment from disability sport as a valued alternative biography is deeply illustrated within the biographical data. Tom often refers to his achievement within disability sport as being of little or no value to him, maintaining the fractured feelings of living separate lives, that of able bodied and then disabled.

From Tom’s biographically grounded experiences of disability sport, it would appear that disability sport as a narrative resource for athletes who have become disabled through sport may not be the most advantageous rehabilitation process in repairing a disrupted body-self relationship and valued biographical path. This may be much to do with the body type that male athletes inhabit which drives an elective affinity to a certain narrative type, while simultaneously being affected by the social inferiority of disability sports in relation to able bodied.

Able-bodied sport for male athletes is associated with the cultivation of hegemonic forms of masculinity, a discursive practice that forms a masculine and hegemonic cultural habitus surrounding sporting males (Duncan and Messner, 2000). The dialectical process grounding this ideology defines specific spheres of bodies and practices that are perceived as culturally and socially inferior in relation to the hegemonic counterpart: as disability does not occupy a privileged place within western culture and dramatically conflicts with the bodily values associated with hegemonic forms of masculinity, the narrative resource of disability sport is culturally and socially perceived as of less value. Tom’s body-self relationship developed around these dominant notions of masculinity within the cultural context of a hegemonic, politically valued body type and practice such as football. As Charmaz (1994) notes, these athletic identities become deeply embodied aspects of the body-self and the individuals’ self stories. Operating within this body type pre-amputation and internalising an embodied core identity formed in such ideologies feeds Tom’s affinity to engage with narrative resources that are as culturally valued as his previous biography. For him, disability sport fails to be of a valuable narrative resource, preventing Tom from constructing a unified relationship with his body-self post-amputation and within the social reality in which he now resides.

Furthermore, for Tom, disability sport may act to heighten his awareness of the fragility of his body-self, illuminating the dimensions of uncontrollability over his physical body. In this way, disability sport fails to diminish the immediate body consciousness Tom is trapped with but rather catalyses the perceived failure of the body and affects the ability to restore the self. This said, questions might be raised to the use of sport in rehabilitation for those who have suffered disability through sport in restructuring a valued biography and sense of self. From the biographical text, it would appear that Tom still engages with disability sport although it fails to provide a valued alternative biography for him. Sport is essentially the only social reality he knows and disability sport provides Tom a familiar way of being in the world. In this regard, disability sport may provide some form of rehabilitation for athletes who have suffered disability through sport. But for Tom it seems to have imprisoned him within a world of little value to him, further limiting his experience and cultural repertoire of biographies that are available. This in turn, sustains him within a chaos narrative and a discontinuous body-self relationship.

Although this interpretation of Tom’s biographical text presents an oppressive view of his social reality and critically highlights the extent of sport as a form of rehabilitation, the process concerned with the ethnographic research begins to compose questions to the means of expanding narrative recourses. Such questions have been raised by Sparks and Smith (1999) in the study of rugby players who have suffered spinal cord injuries through sport, but the embodied expen...
riences of Tom’s biographical data crucially highlights the importance of narrative resources in transgressing into quest and unifying body-self.

Research process and the move to a communicative body

Over the course of the ethnographic study in which increasing amounts of time were spent with Tom, the depth in which he revealed and articulated the stories, experiences and emotions concerned with his amputation also increased. For Tom, it was one of the first times he had talked in such a capacity about his life before, during and after loosing his leg. Since the amputation Tom had silenced his experience, failing to affix his story and experiences with others who had suffered in a familiar fashion in the organization of what Richardson (1990) defines as a ‘collective story’. Collective stories help form a re-plotting of a biographical course that deviates from wider cultural stories by emotionally grouping individuals together who have suffered similar experiences. The isolation Tom experiences for lack of vocalising his experiences to others may link to his failure in forming a collective story and the inability to connect with other biographical courses. Disability sport as a form of rehabilitation seemed to fail in enabling Tom to form a collective story with other disability players. This can further be identified by his turn away from a team disability sport to an individual sport such as athletics in concord with his need for a greater level of bodily control as defined within his biographical data.

Towards the end of the study, Tom makes a decision to visit a young boy who is having his leg amputated as a consequence of other medical problems in a hospital near Tom’s home on the East coast (See researcher’s Journal in Appendix). This action represents a move to a communicative body. Frank (1995) describes the communicative body as a body that relates to others’ suffering, becoming dyadic in dimension. The communicative body is an ‘idealized type’ (p. 48), with bodies assuming such ethical capacities in particular moments of their being. The importance of Tom responding in this way to the young boy in hospital indicates a shift to the embodiment of a quest narrative as the communicative body becomes embedded within quest stories, accepting the contingency of illness/disability and reaching out to share experiences with others (Frank, 1995).

The process of engaging in the research in which Tom communicates and begins to expose the suppressed experiences of his amputation may have developed his mechanisms of self reflection. As Williams (1984) has indicated, the process of communication after biographical disruption operates as a form of narrative reconstruction. In such a way, the means of prolonged communication and reflection on past events that has been facilitated for Tom through the research process may benefit in reconstructing a more stable body-self and relationship with his social world. In many ways, re-storying oneself and expanding on narrative resources may start with reflection on past experiences, stories and events. This said, questions of the modes used in professional aftercare for those who have suffered traumatic biographical disruptions through sport could be raised, with the process of communication perhaps becoming central to rehabilitation as a preferred measure initially than participation in disability sport.

Implications and future research

Many implications can be drawn from the interpretations made and presented within this research. Importantly, disability sport as a form of rehabilitation for athletes who have suffered disability through a sporting accident can be noted, suggesting more care be taken to expand narrative resources outside of sport through processes of prolonged communication and reflection.

Future research concerning this area of study may look to the embodied experiences of female athletes coming to terms with disability and/or illness. Gaining insight into the ability of female athletes to re-story themselves after a sudden and forced move into a different body-self would be valuable. Such reflections on female athletes’ embodied experiences within this context may further illuminate the fragility of the embodiment of masculinity and a strong masculine identity in the face of existential uncertainty. This area of study provides much scope for future research to continue and build upon, especially that of the problems of aftercare in developing valued alternative biographies for individuals who have problems in connecting to narrative recourses.

CONCLUSION

This research has investigated the sudden disruptive effect of amputation as a result of a sporting accident on an individual’s biographical course and body-self relationship. The power struggles that lie between a masculine identity and amputation have also been highlighted, with a unified and valued body-self relationship being largely centred on the construction of a masculine identity. Utilising Frank (1995) in the conceptual underpinning of this research, the findings have identified the importance of narrative inquiry in understanding the effects of sudden biographical disruption on the body-self such as with amputation as a consequence of a sporting accident.

Crucially, the problems associated with connecting to narrative resources after a sudden biographical disruption, where the individual’s biography has previously been wholly constituted around a sporting narrative, have been investigated. Additionally, the research has expanded upon the use of metaphors in attempts to re-story the self and the connection of metaphorical recourses to narrative frameworks.
References


Young, K., McTeer, W. and White, P. (1994) Body Talk: Male Athletes

APPENDIX

Extracts From Researchers Journal

30/October/10  4pm

Planned to meet Tom for a quick coffee, as I haven’t managed to catch him alone yet this week. The 2 hours we spend just chatting about his family. He was brought up with his mum and sister, an absent father who served in the army. He rarely saw his father only on festive occasions such as Christmas. After the accident, he explains how he came home from the hospital and started to suffer from depression from that point in, which of course gradually degraded as he continued to suffer. Attempts from his mum to get him sorted were futile and ended in dispute with her asking him to move out. He tells me how he moved into a flat and with that his depression dramatically worsened as he stewed by himself in his own space. This led to alcohol abuse, propelled by his lack of social network. Tom described how he lost all his friends after his accident, they were all footballers on the same team as him and he ceased knowing them after losing his leg. He continues to explain how he lost his girlfriend at the same time. I listen attentively. This is a new story that he never shared with me. It’s more detailed than the others, and even as I don’t press him he continues to tell me, each layer revealing a greater depth of sorrow to me. And I can see it as I talk to him, in his face and his body language. He doesn’t look at me, just continues. It’s hard to follow, his sentences are abrupt, he halts at different points, it seems an effort to gain any flow.

I hope this story is more detailed because he is trusting me more, not as a researcher but just another person that is willing to listen, unbiased and empathetic and one who cares.

When I get home, I start writing notes down. It’s difficult for me, the story was distressing, fragmented and I am not sure where to even begin.

4/November/10  9am

I spent the morning doing weights with Tom. His new tattoo is done, he shows me the design, I look at it for a few moments but it doesn’t mean anything to me and I can’t see how it would mean anything to him. However it does fill a gap. Again I ask why? Again he tells me he doesn’t know. He tells me one more to go and his whole arm will be complete. We train for around 2 hours and then get a coffee on campus for an hour with the rest of the training group. He asks me if I am ok after what he told me last time we met, he tells me he is worried that I will judge him and not want to spend time with him anymore. I assure him that’s not the case, again. I think he might actually feel like he has a purpose engaging with him anymore. I assure him that’s not the case, again. I think he might actually feel like he has a purpose engaging in my dissertation, a commitment to something.

5/November/10

1pm: I’m having lunch with Tom. I tell him I will need to record our conversations in the form of interviews. If I get the feeling he doesn’t like that idea, I tell him that I’m the only one that will listen to it and he seems better. It’s delicate information and I don’t want to make him feel uncomfortable with me recording it. I ask how the tattoo is looking, he doesn’t seem to
care, just tells me it’s a little dry. There seems to be no lasting pleasure with his tattoos, and yet he is covered in them.

14/November/10  11pm

Tom tells me he is seeing a new girl, what happened to the last one? He explains that it wasn’t working out, she was engaged. Did he know that was always going to be difficult? His high relationship rate screams to me that there are problems.

17/November/10  2pm

Tom opens up again about the year after he lost his leg when he was suffering from depression. We are sat in coffee one again, and I direct the course of the conversation asking when he started getting tattoos. It was in the year after his accident, he was stewing in his flat, drinking and just abusing himself through other means. He had little friends, and what he did have he pushed away along with his family. He said having the tattoos was a means of self-harming while he was ill, back then he had no idea why he was getting them (just like now). I say nothing for a while and then he tells me how he hit a low, taking himself for the first time outside and throwing himself in front of traffic. He explains how he finds it hard to recall the really bad bits, only through counselling did he begin to remember these parts, although they were always suppressed somewhere in the back of his mind. He remembers how he hated the wheelchair, part of the reason why he would never go out. He keeps repeating that he was just a mess. That time period, that episode of his life, seems to be a merge of stories. They have no chronological order in my mind – I can’t work out what happened when, first, last, in the middle. I know he lost his leg when he was 18 and in the year preceding that, it was a ‘mess’. The reason why I don’t know is because he doesn’t seem to know. It’s just a bundle of episodic moments with no temporal positions.

23/November/10  2:30pm

I catch up with Tom again briefly as I have training at 4ish. We have decided to have a change of scenery, so we sit in Starbucks instead of Coffee one chatting over large mugs of lattes. Tom is wearing shorts, always shorts. I ask if he gets cold legs and since meeting with him I don’t think I have seen him in trousers once. He lifts up his sleeve and surprises me with another tattoo and is thinking now that maybe he will get one has become so easy and without any prompts he begins to explain that he has been asked to visit a young boy in hospital who is having his leg amputated. The reason is due to other health complications and that there was always a chance of amputation. He wants me to go with him. This is probably not a good idea as our research relationship is already beginning to collapse the more I spend time with him and the more he opens up to me and the more I start to care about him as a whole. Although as his friend I probably should go. I shift the conversation away from the question as I enquire into the boy’s health complications and start connecting this action to Franks (1995) thesis. This altruistic act that is emphasising with other another person’s situation is the first I have ever come across with Tom. He is obviously worried about it as he describes his fear of hospitals and the effects this has on him even to a sensory level. But I prompt him by telling him to go. I know I am breaking every rule concerned with an ‘unbiased’ listener but I can’t help believing that this is one of very few steps taken by him to attempt to leave some of the chaotic world he inhabits behind him. He asks me again if I will go with him and I tell him I can’t, I have to train and finish some university work. This is true but there is a vast part of me that feels guilty for not being there, almost like I am letting him down.

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EMMA PULLEN      THE EFFECTS OF SUDDEN BIOGRAPHICAL DISRUPTION

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In August 2003, at the age of 25, Arsenal Football Club striker Thierry Henry stated, “I’m obsessed by the idea of making my mark in history. And Arsenal is my paradise” (Cross, 2003: p. 53). Although hailed for his vision on the pitch, it seems unlikely that the player could have foreseen the events of 9 December, 2011, when his legacy was permanently marked with the unveiling of a bronze statue. This tribute was sited outside Emirates Stadium, the club’s Islington (north London) home since 2006, where they simultaneously unveiled statues of their legendary manager, Herbert Chapman, and former captain, Tony Adams. Whilst each subject is undeniably a significant figure within the history and culture of Arsenal, comparison against the complete UK football statuary shows these three statues, and particularly that of Henry, to be atypical both in terms of design and subject selection. In this article we analyse the motivations of Arsenal FC (football club) in establishing a project to visually interpret the club’s history and identity in and around the Emirates Stadium, the role of statuary within this project, and the significance of their subject choices and portrayals.

The club now known as Arsenal FC was founded in 1886 by workers of the Royal Arsenal as Dial Square FC, subsequently reorganised and renamed as Royal Arsenal and then Woolwich Arsenal. Originally based in Plumstead, south London, a move was engineered to a site in Islington in 1913. In the 1930s, as Arsenal dominated English football under manager Herbert Chapman, redevelopment began on their hitherto modest ground, Arsenal Stadium, more commonly known as Highbury. According to Inglis (1987: p. 239) the West Stand, completed in 1932, was “the most advanced, the most architecturally dazzling grandstand ever seen in Britain”, and the East Stand, rebuilt in 1936, “the finest grandstand of the era” (p. 241). In 1987, Inglis described the little-changed Highbury as “the most balanced and orderly ground in the country. There is not a line out of place; all is in total harmony” (p. 243). From the storied marble halls of the East Stand reception to the local Underground station that Chapman insisted on having renamed as ‘Arsenal’ (ibid. p. 242; p. 239), the stadium and its environs were intrinsic to the club’s identity. Team manager Arsene Wenger described it as having a “natural soul” (Clarke, 2009), while Thierry Henry stated, “It’s a feeling you can’t describe. There is something about Highbury… People are always going to talk about Highbury” (Spurling, 2006: p. 336).

However, by the late 1990s, it had become apparent that Arsenal would struggle to continue to compete domestically and in Europe if they remained at their beloved home ground (Walters, 2011: p. 56). Their rivals were increasingly entering, and reaping the benefits of what Paramio et al. (2008: p. 521) have identified as the ‘postmodern’ era of stadium construction, heralded by the introduction of tightened safety regulations and coalescing with the embourgeoisement of top-flight professional football from the early 1990s. As well as the prioritisation of all-seater accommodation and increased standards of comfort, security and accessibility, developments emerged beyond the requirements of legislation. Clubs sought to introduce and nurture new income streams parallel to and beyond traditional matchday revenue, with stadiums increasingly valued as “postmodern cathedrals of consumption, tourist attractions, leisure centres, business centres [and] icons of city marketing” (ibid.) — multi-functional spaces for which Bale (2000: p. 93) offers the label ‘tradium’. With Arsenal’s planning applications for capacity expansion and redevelopment at Highbury rejected on the grounds of its listed building status1 and the necessity of demolishing local housing, their opportunities to tap into the lucrative hospitality and leisure markets were restricted. The club instead focused on the construction of a new 60,000-seater stadium at Ashburton Grove, less than half a mile from Highbury. Planning permission was granted in December 2001 and construction began in March 2004 (Walters, 2011: p. 56). When the club vacated Highbury in May 2006, its listed elements were spared demolition and incorporated into a housing development, Highbury Square, in which the footprint of the former pitch formed a communal garden. The luxury flats were marketed to Arsenal fans as the ‘ultimate expression’ of their fandom (Flowers, 2011: p. 182).

It is somewhat ironic that this commercial development retained the name ‘Highbury’, given that during construction, the Middle East-based Emirates airline bought the naming rights to the new stadium as part of a wider sponsorship package worth £100m. Chairman Peter Hill-Wood stated that, as a fan, his preference would have been to name the stadium after a figure such as Herbert Chapman (BBC, 2004). ‘Emirates Stadium’ represented a jarring change from almost 100 years of rooted localism under the Highbury moniker. Boyd (2000: p. 339) states that
a commemorative or located name helps “anchor the team and the stadium … in the community, creating a narrative that links and explains the interdependence of the parties involved”. The use of a corporate name, common in many new-build stadia, instead “considerably abbreviates the narrative that connects team, space and community” (ibid.). To this day, many Arsenal fans attempt to continue this narrative of local rather than corporate identity, referring to the stadium as Ashburton Grove. One fan stated online, “I wouldn’t name my house after a corporation so why should I refer to what will undoubtedly become my second home by a corporate handle?” (Dawes, 2006). Despite this, and as predicted by Boyd (2000: p. 335), the association of ‘the Emirates’ with Arsenal has become imbued in the public consciousness. When the naming deal was extended in November 2012 through to 2028, the bulk of the money was attached to shirt sponsorship, the justification being that “the stadium is now widely known as the Emirates, regardless of any contract with the airline” (Riaich, 2012).

As the club prepared to move, another significant change occurred. Arsenal FC’s crest had traditionally incorporated the coat of arms of the Metropolitan Borough of Islington. This prevented it being copyrighted, undermining the club’s income streams as well as their identity (Day, 2003). A new, fully copyrightable badge was commissioned, featuring the cannon of the previous badge, albeit simplified and flipped to face eastwards, positioned below the word ‘Arsenal’ in a new logo. In interview, Jon Lee of 20|20, the branding consultants who designed the badge, stated that the forward-facing cannon projects ‘tradition with vision’:

"They were a very visionary club, they had a lot of firsts, they did a lot of things for the first time, mostly led by [Herbert] Chapman in the [19]30s ... the tradition of vision was at the root of this business, it was such a wonderful way of expressing Arsenal Football Club that it stuck. ([J. Lee, interview, January 24, 2012]"

However, the Arsenal Independent Supporters’ Association (2002) criticised both the design and “the high-handed decision to ignore the opportunity to involve supporters in the process”. It was the club’s perceived sole ownership of the decision-making process around its identity that caused more concern to fans than the driver of the change, namely the club’s claim to ownership of the badge itself. The fans’ disquiet over a loss of identity did not abate upon the opening of the Emirates Stadium in the summer of 2006. The stadium exterior exuded a sense of “rampant capitalism” through the juxtaposition of giant Arsenal badges with equivalently sized Emirates Airline corporate logos (Bandini, 2006). The interior of this purpose-built, one-club venue failed to fulfil its potential in creating the desirable visual dynamic that it “could not possibly belong to any other club” (Inglis, 1987: p. 132) — the uniform red seats did not even have a cannon or ‘AFC’ motif picked out in white. The fans’ yearning for the identity that Highbury had provided was emphasised in an online comment: “The move is great, don’t get me wrong, but please make it feel like the new Highbury instead of a construction site where our team Arsenal play” (“Saiful07”, 2006). Michael Artis of 20|20 describes the stadium in its early years as “This great monolithic statement … but it felt a bit cold and didn’t feel like home” (M. Artis, interview, 24 January, 2012).

In August 2009, the club reported “a consistent message [from the fans] that, while Emirates is a superb modern stadium, they want us to make it more of a home”. Their solution was ‘Arsenislation’: defined as “turning the Gunners’ home into a very visible stronghold of all things Arsenal through a variety of artistic and creative means” (Arsenal.com, 2009a). This process of transferring elements of the club’s history and identity, both tangible and intangible, was intended to establish the new stadium as a home through referencing the past, resurrecting the club narrative that the Emirates Stadium had served to cut off in the eyes of some fans.

An early example of this attempted continuation of narrative came with a change of nomenclature at the new stadium. The four stands at Highbury — the Clock End, the North Bank, the West Stand and the East Stand — had been a source of collective identity for their occupants, in addition to and distinct from their broader identification as Arsenal fans (Flowers, 2011: p. 1180). Relating through a shared perspective, their communities were enhanced through chants, such as “We’re the North Bank Highbury”, and the use of collective nouns, for example “Clockenders”². According to Ramshaw and Gammon (2005: p. 234), these would typically be examples of immovable, intangible sport heritage; that upon the move, the fans’ topophilic rituals “would necessarily have to be altered, abandoned or simply forgotten”. The potential for this was enhanced by the stadium’s bowl-shaped configuration, which Flowers (2011: p. 1180) identifies as typically favouring “totalising homogeneity”. But although the seating plan at the new stadium utilised colour-coded ‘quadrants’, a concept more reminiscent of a car park than a club’s home ground, former Highbury regulars continued to pledge their allegiance, frequently reviving old, spatially-rooted chants (Bandini, 2006). The nostalgic defiance of the fans combined with the non-committal naming fostered a culture where what might elsewhere have been an immovable heritage became transferable. Fairley (2003: p. 287) defines nostalgia as a preference towards objects — encompassing people, places, experiences or things — from when an individual was younger or about which they have learned vicariously through socialization or the media. In August 2010, the club renamed the four sides of Emirates Stadium with the names of the four stands at Highbury and and installed a replica of the Clock End clock on the roof behind one goal (Arsenal.com,
This “more ‘human’ naming” (Arsenal.com, 2009a) effectively sanctioned the fans’ organic sharing of nostalgic affection within the new stadium, making a tangible connection rather than the fragmented nostalgia of singing for their Highbury seat. Independent supporters’ group REDAction (2010) backed the club in stating, “Wherever you sat at Highbury, forget about it, that’s the past. We want to hear lots of noise from each of the new ‘stands’”. Although the Arsenalisation strategy is ultimately based on referencing the past, the formation of these new communities is a progression reflecting the ideals of the forward-facing cannon.

The loss of the intrinsic history and identity of Highbury drives this strand of Arsenalisation, which sees Highbury’s associated intangible heritage relocated into the blank canvas of the new stadium in an attempt to translate the fans’ “rituals, traditions, chants, memories [and] nostalgia” into “tangible movable sport heritage” (Ramshaw et al., 2005: p. 234). Arsene Wenger stated, “You want to transfer the history of the club somewhere into the walls … it is important that in this new place the history and the values of the club are kept alive” (Arsenal.com, 2009b). Arsenal held a competition for fans to design banners that might conceptualise these ideas, inviting references to “a favourite player past or present or simply a celebrated moment in Arsenal history” (Arsenal.com, 2011a). The results variously reference songs — “She Wore A Yellow Ribbon”3; victories against local rivals — “We Won The League At White Hart Lane”4; excerpts from famous commentaries — “It’s Up For Grabs Now”5; former and current players — Dennis Bergkamp6, Thomas Vermaelen7; and statements of identity — “You Can’t Buy Class”8 (Arsenal.com, 2011c). The more casual fan might struggle to interpret the more oblique references above, thus reinforcing a hierarchy of dedication and boosting the self-esteem of those who understand them. Similarly, when displayed inside the stadium, the colours, motifs and use of a ‘native tongue’ on the banners proclaim ownership of home territory.

The collaborative production process illustrates the symbiotic relationship between club and fans. The banners feature the club’s varied iconography, such as the cannon and the clock. Although owned by the club in origin and copyright, the fans utilise these graphics as a source of identity. In return, fans offer the club the knowledge of their most pride-inducing chants, slogans and cult heroes, and with it intrinsic authenticity. In summary, the fan-designed aesthetic combining the club’s tangible heritage with the fans’ intangible culture legitimises the process of Arsenalisation, strengthens the fans’ claims to ownership of the club’s heritage and identity, and validates an individual’s support of the club through their ability to comprehend. Ramshaw (2011: p. 12) suggests that sport heritage becomes manifest during periods of decline. While ‘decline’ is a moot point, the reality is that Arsenal FC have not won a trophy since moving to the new stadium, which has perhaps helped scope the direction of Arsenalisation. With no recent success to rally around, and in Highbury, the loss of an icon with which previous success was associated, the need for identity based on topophilia has been enhanced. The defensive and defiant nature of the fans’ banners — “Class is Permanent” (Arsenal.com, 2011c) — act as a social buffer, an enshrining of traditions to protect their values and identity (Ramshaw, 2011: p. 13). The ongoing process of Arsenalisation will inform and reveal the images, formats and values, including present team success, most central to the development of identity.

The largest and most striking example of Arsenalisation is the outside of the stadium itself. Around the upper exterior are a series of huge banners depicting 32 Arsenal legends from throughout the club’s history, all interlinked (Arsenal.com, 2011b). Titled Heroes Together, this collage forms the predominant view on the approach to the stadium, making a clear territorial statement. The players are depicted from behind, looking into the stadium interior, which aids identification through names and numbers but also signifies the club’s most influential playing figures as one team, watching over the modern-day side (PanStadia, 2010: p. 127). While fans were consulted on the chosen 32 figures, it was the club themselves who introduced individuals from far back in the club’s history, such as founding father David Danskin (J. Lee, interview, 24 January, 2012). This action maintained “engagement with the fans so you can embrace their thoughts, but it’s not so dictated by that most recent memory” (M. Artis, interview, 24 January, 2012). The fans’ four ‘top voted’ candidates — Thierry Henry, Dennis Bergkamp, Patrick Vieira and Tony Adams (PanStadia, 2010: p. 128) — are all recent figures.

Whilst its size and placement on the stadium exterior make Heroes Together a potentially impersonal statement, other visual depictions of the club’s history work on a more human level. One example is the Spirit of Highbury display. Mounted on a large metallic frame, a montage based on a traditional football team photo depicts all 482 players and 14 managers of the Highbury era (Arsenal.com, 2009c), moving left to right from the long shorts and moustaches of a sepia-tinted 1913 to the red shirts, white sleeves and sponsor logos of the early 2000s. The vast temporal scope of the piece serves to establish a framework of continuity (Ramshaw, 2011: p. 11) in which the club’s present environment is reverentially linked with Highbury. Located on a small plaza aside from the main concourse, from which the stadium interior is not visible, there is space for reflection, and the inherent exclusion of the stadium interior is bypassed.

As Paramio et al. (2008: p. 521) indicated, the stadium is valued as a tourist attraction, catering for the myriad types of support in the globalised culture of modern football and the non-matchday attraction of the venue (Ramshaw, 2011: p. 12).
p. 16). For those with a match ticket, the act of attending places them in constant contact with the club’s reconstructed identity. A series of graphic displays on the interior concourses depict images, and describe fans’ and players’ memories, of 12 ‘Greatest Moments’ in the club’s history. Of the moments, selected through a fans’ vote on the club website (Arsenal.com, 2009a), 10 encompass the 16–year period between 1989 and 2005. The only choice that lies beyond the broad scope of ‘living memory’ is that which honours the influence of Herbert Chapman. The relative recency of the fans’ selections reflects the club’s recent successes, the primacy of memory over detailed historical comparison, and also the voting process, which was technologically biased towards a younger element of the support. Unlike the impersonal Heroes Together display, the concourse murals (and the aforementioned Spirit of Highbury image) are scaled and located to encourage socialisation and discussion, evoking collective as well as private nostalgia (Snyder, 1991: p. 235).

In December 2011 a further development in the process of Arsenalisation was announced. Bronze statues of three ‘hugely influential figures’ were to be erected outside the Emirates Stadium: Herbert Chapman, Tony Adams and Thierry Henry (Arsenal.com, 2011d). With 13 of the 19 other Premier League clubs at the time already having erected at least one statue of a former player, manager or chairman at or close to their home stadium, Arsenal were relatively late adopters of a wider, albeit recent fashion. A monument of such permanence and cost would not exist without a strong impetus behind its creation, and as such both the statue and the individual represented are likely to be “imbued with their creators’ values, ideals and ideologies” (Osmond et al., 2006: p. 83). The interpretation of a statue may vary between viewers and over time, with this ability to carry multiple meanings leading Osmond to posit them as “hollow icons” (ibid., p. 85). Therefore, a club’s choice to erect statues, the choice of subjects, and the choice of aesthetic forms all project important messages about its beliefs, aims and culture.

As of 1 January, 2013, 63 figurative subject-specific statues, which collectively depict 60 distinct association football players, managers, chairmen, owners, or founding fathers, had been unveiled in the United Kingdom (Stride et al., 2012a). The very first was in 1956, of Harold Fleming at Swindon Town FC’s County Ground, but this chronological outlier can be viewed as an ephemeral development; no further statues were erected in the following thirty years, with the subsequent expansion of the statuary positing it as a distinctly modern phenomenon (Stride et al., 2013: p. 1). Less contemporary, however, are the players typically depicted. Analysis of the inventory of UK football statues indicated that subjects were likely to be long-serving, loyal (one-club) players, with their statue most often unveiled 30–40 years after the mid-point of their career (beyond this point they were unlikely to be honoured). This reflects a preference for statues of storied subjects whose careers remain within first-hand living memory of a large proportion of the club fanbase and whose presence will evoke nostalgia amongst fans, specifically for their performances, the fans’ younger selves and a less transient football culture. With the popularity of statues a recent development, this preference for nostalgia has tended to focus the representation of decades of club history on the 1950s and 1960s, and, as the nostalgic ‘frame’ of the fan demographic has moved inexorably forward, the 1970s (Stride et al., 2012b: p. 24).

The inducing of nostalgia is just one example of the opportunities provided by a statue (or indeed many of the visual tools utilised by Arsenalisation) in implementing the marketing strategy of a football club. The cultivation of a fanbase, particularly in foreign markets, is bolstered by the ability to project success and status. A statue can allow a club and its fans to bask in reflected glory (Cialdini et al., 1976: p. 366), either by association through portraying a famous player or manager, or the more immediate depiction of a trophy-hefting captain. Furthermore, whilst success is an attractive trait to potential supporters, legitimacy and cultural distinctiveness are also influential for new fans picking their affiliation, as well as providing reverential claims for more dyed-in-the-wool followers. Ramshaw et al. (2005: p. 230) suggest that tangible sports-related heritage objects “create personal and collective legacies” which these groups can rally around. Prominently positioned, and often in the vicinity of a club museum, the statue offers a backdrop for the club’s TV appearances or the fan seeking a photo opportunity. The statue also serves to evoke memories of “previous experiences enjoyed and endured” (Seifried et al., 2005: p. 57), both inspiring pilgrimage (Holbrook et al., 2003: p. 107) and sparking the sharing of oral histories between fans that, inspired by a tangible focal point, can continue down the generations.

Using a comparison of the three Arsenal statues in the established contexts of both Arsenalisation and the existing UK football statuary, we will analyse each statue in turn, with a particular focus on that of Thierry Henry. We aim to illustrate how the values, ideals and ideologies of Arsenal FC and their interactions with their intended audience impact on the club’s subject choices and designs, subsequently assessing whether the club’s motivations have been fulfilled. In this case study, the simultaneous unveiling of all three statues, which coincided with the club’s 125th anniversary celebrations in 2011, allows for a comparison of these factors unconfounded by extraneous temporal or environmental effects.

In the first instance of such an approach in the UK football statuary, unnamed sculptors affiliated with a sculpture business, MDM, created the pieces. This was due to time constraints and to ensure a consistency of
style (J. Lee, interview, 24 January, 2012). The designs, figurative and in bronze, remain broadly consistent with other football statues in the UK. While retaining this notion of tradition in concept and form, in other ways Arsenal's use of statues is visionary. Herbert Chapman, at present the only pre-war English manager to be honoured with a statue, managed Arsenal from 1925 until his death in 1934, putting his career beyond the memory of almost all living supporters. As such, his image is unlikely to generate nostalgia; however, his legacy is reflected through the design and siting of his statue. Although he built a team that won two league titles and an FA Cup under his leadership and continued to be successful after his death (Arsenal.com, 2008), the portrayal does not explicitly celebrate success in the way that many statues of managers do. Instead, he is sited in the middle of the outer stadium concourse, arms behind his back and looking up at the original clock from Highbury now installed on the exterior of the new stadium (J. Lee, interview, 24 January, 2012), a pose that acknowledges just one of Chapman's many innovations that have become features of the matchday landscape (Inglis, 1987: p. 240), hence capturing the notion of 'tradition with vision'. Standing upright, Chapman resembles an admiring but aloof father figure (see Figure 1). The AISA Arsenal History Society (2011) had approached the club suggesting the erection of a statue of Chapman in August 2010, as "an icon at the ground which referred to the club's history and which they could show to friends and family". The Society's suggestion provides a contrast to the previously cited evidence of the club's greatest moments vote, suggesting that while fans select their greatest moments based on nostalgic living memory, Chapman is viewed as the single iconic figure that represents the club.

The three statues are consistent in their presentation, being affixed to low bronze bases, but lacking a plinth or plaque. Tony Adams’ statue is sited on the west side of the stadium (see Figure 2). Club captain between 1988 and 2002 and a heralded England international, the powerful centre-half is depicted with arms aloft celebrating a rare goal, scored in Arsenal's 4–0 title-clinching victory over Everton in the 1997–98 season at the North Bank end of Highbury. As such, the statue has been placed at the equivalent compass of the Emirates (J. Lee, interview, 24 January 2012). Sculpted at one and a quarter times his 6'4" frame, the statue resists excessive fan interaction due to its sheer size, but the towering artefact perhaps reflects his renowned leadership capabilities. While the choice of Adams is consistent with the existing statuary based on his credentials of club loyalty and success, he still represents an unusually recent player to be honoured.
The Thierry Henry statue (see Figure 3) is the most atypical of the three in comparison to the wider genre. The club's all-time leading goalscorer, Arsenal fans have voted Henry as their greatest ever player (Arsenal.com, 2008b). As “fluent and urbane” off the pitch as he is on it, the Paris-born Henry is an instantly recognisable celebrity, endorsing brands such as Renault (The Guardian, 2006). Notably, he is both the first contemporary player and the first black player to be honoured with a statue in the UK. Unlike Adams and Chapman, this is not just a statue of an Arsenal legend, but a global celebrity, projecting glamour and style and appealing to casual sports fans and tourists, as well as to a young and female demographic. The statue’s audience therefore reflects the stadium's multiple functions (Paramio et al., p. 521). His fame and recency means no translation is required as to the identity and contextual significance of the statued figure and his contextual significance, as is potentially the case with Adams, Chapman and much of the UK football statuary (Stride et al., 2013: p. 16).

Both the location and form of the statue contribute to its impact. Henry is sited in front of the Spirit of Highbury display, in a small plaza off the main outdoor concourse, a location with twofold significance. Firstly, the backdrop posits Henry as the iconic figure of the Highbury era, deliberately chosen ahead of Chapman, Adams or indeed any other candidate, and signifies continuity, spatially and temporally merging the past and present (Ramshaw, 2011: p. 11). Secondly, unlike the open environs of the other two statues, this area offers, even on a busy matchday, space for reflection, close viewing, and photo opportunities. This is enhanced by the form of the statue, which reflects the accessibility and style of the subject in its aesthetics. Henry is depicted on his knees in a goal celebration, fists clenched, yet maintaining an aura of poise and control that contrasts with the overt euphoria of Adams. The resulting low-level statue is atypical amongst other football statues in the UK, which almost always depict their subject in a standing position and are typically raised beyond reach upon a plinth. Whilst sculpted at one and a half times life size, the kneeling posture and the lack of plinth invite interactivity, enabling fans to make contact with every part of Henry.

The combination of subject, setting, aesthetic form and interactivity makes Henry’s statue by far the most popular of the three with visitors, a point exemplified when the official Arsenal Facebook page (2013) invited fans to submit their pictures posing with the three statues. Over half featured the statue of Henry, and in several cases individuals have put an arm around him. As Snyder (1991: p. 233) states, statues are “agencies of socialization wherein the memories symbolically transmit values and norms”.

Figure 2 The Tony Adams statue
The association of Henry with Arsenal and his expressive celebration transmit values of passion and glamour that reflect on the club as a whole. By breaking from the typical patterns of subject selection and depiction, the desired outcomes implied by the choice of a statue — that fans interact with the piece, with each other, and as such feel a deeper association with both the individual depicted and the club — are enhanced in their impact by the subject, its design, and its location (Osmond, 2010: p. 106).

Osmond (ibid.) states that statues serve to evoke feelings, memories and identity in those who observe and interpret them, engaging individuals at different levels of understanding. Griggs et al. (2012: p. 95) go further, suggesting that the sporting figure himself inspires these differing contextual meanings through the cultural narratives of their greatest moments. While the statue features no material explaining so — indeed, as with the statues of Adams and Chapman, the brief inscription on the base simply states his name and Arsenal career dates — it depicts Henry celebrating a goal against Arsenal’s fierce rivals Tottenham Hotspur at Highbury in 2002. Indeed, like the Adams statue, the location of the Henry statue at the Emirates deliberately references the corresponding end at Highbury (J. Lee, interview, 24 January, 2012). As with the fan-designed banners, the oblique reference to a particular incident reinforces a hierarchy of understanding and fandom, which can be applied using the four-level theoretical framework of sports fan psychology established by Funk et al. (2001). The first two stages, denoting ‘awareness’ of and subsequently ‘attraction’ to a particular sports team or athlete (ibid. p. 121), encompass casual sports fans and tourists, who would recognise the statue as Thierry Henry, celebrity and star player. The next stage represents those with an ‘attachment’, or “a stable psychological connection” to the team (ibid. p. 132), in this case Arsenal, able to appreciate Thierry Henry, their club’s all-time leading goalscorer. All these observers, however, just see a generic goal celebration. The full level of interpretation is reserved for the fourth level of fandom, that of ‘allegiance’ — the most committed and knowledgeable fans (Stride et al., 2013: p. 9).
While other football statues inspire facilitation across generations, the Arsenal statues offer a multivalence — a depth of potential detail to be discovered. The ensuing legitimisation of an individual’s support facilitates a sharing of knowledge through the ‘fandom strata’ of those viewing, from the lifelong supporter to the casually affiliated tourist. The ability to impart knowledge bolsters an individual’s sense of self-identification (Belk, 1990), while those learning the detail may progress along a continuum from awareness to allegiance through the addition of functional and symbolic knowledge (Funk et al., 2006: p. 206). Through their layers of multiple and changing meaning the statues therefore evoke not only fleeting nostalgic memories, but drive deeper affiliation. For example, the core message of the Herbert Chapman statue — celebrating his influence and success — is evidenced subtly in his gaze at the stadium clock. According to Artis (M. Artis, interview, 24 January, 2012), “You don’t see it all on the first visit, second, third, fourth; you get to know it, you share the stories and you hopefully notice something new every time”. The opportunities for both sharing and learning the significance of such design features mean the affiliation of both the most and the least informed observer is strengthened.

The choices of Henry, Chapman and Adams represent a shift in motivation from previous evidence that football clubs tend towards statue subjects with careers 30–40 years in the past in order to evoke nostalgia (Stride et al., 2013: p. 6). The recency of Henry’s Arsenal career, including his brief return on loan in January 2012, means there is not yet a generation of Arsenal fans who have not witnessed him first-hand, hence no need for the development of a cross-generational oral history and little evocation of nostalgia around Henry himself. As Wildschut et al. (2006: p. 36) have suggested, the source of nostalgic memory is instead the momentous event depicted. These moments provide a source of heightened emotion when recalled, as reflected in one individual’s recollection of the Adams goal (quoted in Spurling, 2006: p. 271):

[His] celebration, when he walked towards us with his arms outstretched, still makes the hairs on my neck stand up when I think about it now. It was almost religious in the way it happened. And the power of the experience was unbelievable.

The intensity of this recall with no reference point suggests that the use of such “flashbulb memory” visual images in a permanent and highly visible form, as with the Adams or Henry statues, will have a similarly powerful impact upon supporters, constructing a significance for the individual that goes beyond that of the collective (Griggs et al., 2012: p. 99; p. 92). Even if not present, individuals can feel nostalgic for events related to a group with which they feel a sense of collective identity (Fairley, 2003: p. 287; Fairley et al., 2005: p. 184). Osmond (2010: p. 110) refers to statues as “living biography”, their meaning established through the constant interpretation and reinterpretation of their features by an interactive community. While the chosen subjects may not have nostalgic impact in themselves at the present time due to their recency, the permanence of the pieces and the power of the moments depicted will see this develop over time, gaining rather than losing nostalgic impact. Ultimately, the Henry statue will morph into both a nostalgic image and an object of nostalgia, providing Arsenal with an icon whose “hollowness” denotes not meaninglessness but rather a fluidity of meaning that represents continuity, community and ownership.\(^{11}\)

Notes

1 The East Stand, designed by William Binnie, was Grade II listed with the West Stand, designed by Claude Waterlow Ferrier, locally listed.
2 Clockenders is also the name of an active Arsenal blog ([http://www.clockenders.com](http://www.clockenders.com)) whose archive dates back to April 2007. This establishing date shows the ‘Clockenders’ collective noun was still in use during the Emirates era but prior to the club’s official renaming of the stands in August 2010.
3 She Wore A Yellow Ribbon is a song popular with Arsenal fans, typically at FA Cup matches. The lyrics are as follows: “She wore, she wore, she wore a yellow ribbon, she wore a yellow ribbon in the merry month of May. And when I asked, oh why she wore that ribbon, she said it’s for the Arsenal and we’re going to Wembly. Wembly! Wembly! We’re the famous Arsenal and we’re going to Wembly”.
4 Arsenal have twice won the championship of English football’s top division at White Hart Lane, home of arch-rivals Tottenham Hotspur. In May 1971, they sealed the first part of what would become a league and FA Cup ‘double’ with a 1–0 win, while in April 2004 they secured the title with four games to spare thanks to a draw in the North London Derby, ultimately going unbeaten for the entire season.
5 In the final game of the 1988–89 season Arsenal were away at Liverpool, with the home side top of the league on 76 points, a goal difference of +39, and 65 goals scored. Arsenal were second on 73 points, with a goal difference of +35 having scored 71 goals. As such, Arsenal’s only chance of taking the title was to win by two clear goals. In injury time, with Arsenal 1–0 up, their midfielder Michael Thomas was put through one-on-one. Broadcast live on television, a rarity at the time, Brian Moore’s commentary of the goal — “Thomas, charging through the midfield, Thomas, it’s up for grabs now! Thomas! Right at the end!” — has gone down in legend.
6 Dutch international Dennis Bergkamp made 423 appearances for Arsenal between 1995 and 2006, scoring 120 goals. The first game at the Emirates Stadium was his
testimonial in August 2006.

Belgian international Thomas Vermaelen has played for Arsenal since 2009. A defender, he was named as captain in 2012.

This banner can be perceived as a slight against city rivals Chelsea FC, bought by a Russian billionaire in June 2003. Their subsequent trophies won (three league titles, four FA Cups, two League Cups and the Champions League and Europa League titles) have led to accusations of ‘buying success’. Arsenal’s trophy successes in the equivalent period comprise one league title and one FA Cup. The banner may also be a reference to Manchester City FC, who were bought out by an Arab consortium in 2008 and have since signed a number of Arsenal’s key players and won a league title and FA Cup.

Only 10 individual managers or coaches have been depicted in a statue in the UK, all with careers in the post-WWII (World War) era.

Examples include Brian Clough and Peter Taylor, who are depicted at Derby County lifting the League Championship trophy; Bob Stokoe, whose statue represents the moment he ran on to the Wembley pitch to celebrate victory for Sunderland in the 1973 FA Cup Final; and Bill Shankly, who is depicted celebrating Liverpool’s 1973 title win, arms aloft and wearing a fan’s club scarf.

In February 2013 information was leaked online that a new statue was to be unveiled at the Emirates Stadium, the subject Dennis Bergkamp — another stylish international hero, only recently retired (The Guardian, 2013). Clearly then, in the eyes of Arsenal FC at least, their visionary use of statues has been validated.

References


Working-class Stereotypes in Comedy and the Consumption of Humour as Leisure

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Introduction

Leisure activities, akin to the social class structure of the United Kingdom, are wide and varied and much has already been written in relation to traditional working-class pastimes such as wrestling, greyhound racing and football. Many of these traditional pastimes have been consumed in a two-fold way, firstly in a passive manner at spectator level, or more actively with physical engagement being employed to facilitate the action (whether individual or in a group collective). Rojek (2000) correctly points out that leisure is generally associated with positive actions: activities post-work, a reward for hard work, or even as a social conditioning tool employed by the state to effect control (Foucault 1986). The academic arena also reinforces the mantra that leisure consumption is a positive experience. Within the doctrine of Western culture, leisure is often characterised as a form of remuneration for work, a period of time and space where the individual can be free from the daily shackles of everyday life constraints. Finally, the benefits derived from regular leisure consumption are themselves multifaceted and include wellbeing of society, relaxation, personal development, maturity, kinship, self-development, education and cultural diversity, to name but a few.

One area of passive leisure consumption which has traditionally had support from the lower social classes (working class) is that of stand-up comedy. Whilst passive consumption of such an experience is enjoyed at spectator level and has experienced mass patronage over the years, its contribution to the social fabric of working-class Britain has yet to be fully recognised. The next part of this chapter will define the phenomenon of stand-up comedy and then review its chronological development.

Stand-up comedy (SuC)

Stand-up is a style of comedic delivery, normally performed by a single actor/comedian who enters into a monologue style discussion. The usual environment is that of a live venue, where the audience may interact, or enter into verbal exchange (often known as heckling) with the performers. Two of the contributing authors, Robinson & Dale, performing as The Weathermen (1997) at The Night and Day Bar, in Preston (United Kingdom), recall a performance in which members of the audience took to shouting (or heckling): “Get off, you are rubbish”, "What time is the real act on?", “It’s way past your bed time little boy”. This was received with much delight by The Weathermen who responded in equal measure: “Who let my Dad in?”, “At least I am being paid tonight”, “I didn’t know we were celebrating Halloween in Preston — that’s one hell of a mask you’re wearing”.

The manner in which SuC is delivered is entirely up to the performer. Indeed the modus operandi of performance is often the hallmark of the comedians’ style: examples include Mike Reid (East End of London, quick fire jokes), Ben Elton (UK political overtones within each joke, with delivery getting ever quicker throughout the duration of the joke), and individuals with slower styles including American comedian Emo Philips and the UK’s very own Cornish pasty, Jethro. Material used in SuC can be rearranging, from observations about regionality and eccentric acts of family and relatives (see Peter Kay, Dave Spikey, Jethro, Max Boyce, Jasper Carrot, Billy Connolly and Lenny Henry), to the more extreme and often risqué (Blaster Bates, Richard Prior and Russell Brand), to the downright rude and offensive (Chubby Brown, Bernard Manning, Eddie Murphy (circa 1983, Delirious), Andrew Dice Clay (AKA the Dice Man), Derek & Clive and Frankie Boyle. Material used is often, but not exclusively, jokes, stories and one-liners, or a combination.

SuC has traditionally been performed in clubs (night clubs or working men’s clubs and politically affiliated environments such as the Conservative Club). The 1970s Granada TV production of The Comedians showcased a collective of comedians who had been selected from the comedy network of North West England. Whilst some of the performers were not originally from the NW, they had performed in the many clubs of Manchester and the local vicinity (performers included Stan Boardman (Liverpool), Bernard Manning (Manchester), Mike Reid (London), and Frank Carson (Northern Ireland). Whilst The Comedians proved to be hugely popular, its format was simple, this being working-man’s club comedy, airbrushed and presented in a studio setting. This proved very lucrative to many of the performers, who saw themselves go overnight from club land also-rans to media comedy darlings. Whilst recent years have seen the SuC appeal grow in stature, some have argued that the quasi stadium/corporate manner
in which the format is now delivered (examples include Lee Evans, Jason Mannford, John Bishop, Jack Dee, Ricky Gervais and Michael McIntyre) has lost much of its original appeal and class patronage. 

**Chronology of stand-up comedy**

SUC has a long heritage in the UK, originating in the music halls of the 18th and 19th century: individuals such as John Orlando Parry, George Grossmith and George Formby, Gracie Fields, Max Miller, Will Hay, and Flanagan and Allen were just a few of the major stars as during this period. Those performers who have made an impact on contemporary comedy of the 1930s, 40s and 50s, including Morecambe and Wise, Arthur Askey, Ken Dodd, Jimmy Clitheroe and Max Miller (the music-hall performer), all rose through the twentieth century music hall circuit, a precursor to SUC. Whilst UK comedy has long been an open shop, a fertile environment associated with freedom of speech and the pushing of boundaries, this was not always the case. Heavy censorship administered under the regime of the Lord Chamberlain’s Office, which lasted till the late 1960s (see Theatres Act 1968), required all comedians to submit material and proposed scripts pre act for viewing and ultimately for censorship. Script material would be returned to each individual with heavy editing, terms removed and alternative lines added, with no-go sections underlined and removed; acts was not allowed to deviate from the censorship or editing.

Though the works of this period respected the laws of censorship, the production material displayed a more risqué approach. Indeed, the great George Formby (1936), in his song *When I’m Cleaning Windows*, has been interpreted as giving ‘two fingers’ to the Lord Chamberlain’s Office (the song was later banned from airplay on the BBC). Indeed, the song sees the agent of discovery (the window cleaner) advocating voyeurism (“I go window cleaning to earn an honest bob; for a nosey parker it’s an interesting job. If you could see what I can see, when I’m cleaning windows. The blushing bride she looks divine, the bridegroom he is doing fine, I’d rather have his job than mine…” etc).

Whilst the end of World War II saw much relief and happiness in Europe, many de-mobilised soldiers left military service having experienced SUC in the context of military gang shows and wartime concert groups. A number of the great comedians of the 1950s were members of Army concert groups. Eric Sykes, Spike Milligan and Peter Sellers, for example, honed their trade in the military, and after the war emerged as the seminal comedy group the Goons, who greatly influenced the late 50s and early 60s comedy scene and subsequently the 1970s, manifesting its influence in the likes of Monty Python. With the rise of television and radio, many traditional music hall circuits closed due to lack of funding and limited user patronage, and with the increase in TV and radio many comedians were destined for greatness.

**Regional comedy**

Each region of the UK is unique in culture, landscape and its people. This gives license for comedians to exploit regional peculiarities and create humorous stories and anecdotes that resonate with local audiences. Comedians hailing from predominantly working-class areas have skilfully honed their acts to elicit nostalgic recollections associated with ‘place’. The industrial landscape of Britain in the early 20th century was diverse, with distinct industries that created personalities worthy of comic attention. Regional stereotypes were mercilessly moulded, manipulated and exaggerated for comic effect.

Billy Connolly talks of his apprenticeship in the Glasgow shipbuilding yards with a library of stories and anecdotes that build on the notions of nostalgic idealism, of working-class employment in male-dominated environments. Stories were of course given comic license and manipulated for greater impact. Connolly’s progression as a comedian followed an introduction to the entertainment industry via a serious foray into folk music as half of the duo the Humblebums. When Connolly went solo, the introduction to each song became increasingly more humorous and protracted. This was recognised by Nat Joseph, head of Transatlantic Records who guided Connolly’s transition to full time comedian. Connolly’s success arguably revolved around anecdotes and stories that skirted the edge of acceptability: for example, famously likening the last supper to a night out in Glasgow.

Jasper Carrott, who went on to national acclaim, also commenced his career within the heartland of Birmingham and its many industries. His early career began in the Boggery folk club in Solihull. Folk clubs were common venues for many regional comedians. Musical talent was ‘second fiddle’ to an ability to make audiences laugh. Carrott’s comedy style during this period was very much ‘observational’ — for example suggesting that the living rooms in a ten mile radius of the British Leyland plant in Longbridge were all painted ‘Allegro orange’. Max Boyce similarly consolidated his Welsh roots working in the colliery from the age of 15 to 23. The experiences of a hard life in the pits also served to influence his future life in both his music and his comedy, but perhaps more significantly in his poetry which was the focus of his early performances. He began to pen poems of his life in the valleys which evolved into folk songs performed at events such as the Dyffryn Lliw eisteddfod. Boyce’s performances in the early 1970s in local clubs and sports centres began to take on a more light-hearted approach that included anecdotes and humorous elements. This gave rise to the comedic side of the act from which, like Connolly and Carrott, national audiences were educated in the culture and humour of particular UK destinations.

London’s contribution to comedy ranges, from the music hall act Gus Elen to Mike Reid (who later consoli-
Indeed, the neo-liberal period of the 1980s advanced the crossover of comedy into a mainstream leisure activity. The media have performed a key role in facilitating NIA in Birmingham, respectively. Examples include comedians Peter Kay and Ricky Gervais. The staging of comedy in national arenas, once the domain of comedy as a leisure pursuit. This has now grown to the temporary comedy and leisure. Each of these will be discussed in the following.

First, comedy has arguably always been a commercial activity where early publicans, music hall, working-men's clubs and owners of public arenas charge a fee to audiences for entertainment. The chapter has previously discussed the significance of music halls to the commercialisation of comedy as a leisure pursuit. The standards of ethics and decency in humour about leisure are therefore interesting to address. Consider 'blue' humour during the 1970s. The following jokes illustrate that working-class Londoners from the East End were condoned through humour. Again this was typical of the indigenous landscape, is to pick fun at stereotypical personality traits of other regions to reinforce the superiority of the locality. Brummies' are caricatured as thick and uncultured, Cockney's as shifty wideboys, Geordies as loud, wild and 'in your face', Scousers as unemployed thieves and 'scallies'. This is further emphasised with 'mocking' attempts at recreating regional dialects.

**Comedy in leisure**

Comedy in the context of leisure can be viewed from four different perspectives; the commercialisation and commodification of humour; humour as a reflection of our social times, the civilising of leisure behaviour; and contemporary comedy and leisure. Each of these will be discussed in the following.

First, comedy has arguably always been a commercial activity where early publicans, music hall, working-men's clubs and owners of public arenas charge a fee to audiences for entertainment. The chapter has previously discussed the significance of music halls to the commercialisation of comedy as a leisure pursuit. This has now grown to the staging of comedy in national arenas, once the domain of large music acts, that now also play host to popular comedians. Examples include comedians Peter Kay and Ricky Gervais performing at the M.E.N in Manchester and the NIA in Birmingham, respectively.

The media have performed a key role in facilitating the crossover of comedy into a mainstream leisure activity. Indeed, the neo-liberal period of the 1980s advanced comedy through a variety of channels. This included the “The Comedy Store” in London which became the focus of “alternative comedy”. This generated a genre of comedians who had their own television shows such as Ben Elton's “The Young Ones” with Rik Mayall and Ade Edmonson, and “French and Saunders” with Dawn French and Jennifer Saunders. This helped popularise comedy in all its forms. Thus comedy, has over time, been commodified as a “leisure product” targeting different markets, and this has been capitalised upon by media companies and promoters.

Second, humour about leisure can reflect our social times. This can further be argued to influence power relations in gender, race, class and culture. Indeed, humour about leisure can be used as a cloak to reinforce stereotypes and marginalise groups in society. Drawing on Foucault and Said, Shade (2010) notes the use of mother in law jokes for power and control. The following joke illustrates this point: “I took my mother-in-law to Madame Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors, and one of the attendants said, 'Keep her moving sir, we're stock-taking'”. In this context a visit to a tourist attraction is used as an accessible and subtle means to reinforce gender stereotypes and caricature older women as potentially intimidating and physically unattractive (Shade 2010).

Third, humour has been used to reflect a civilising of leisure behaviour. For example, the following joke (circa 1970s) clearly displays patriarchal themes associated with alcohol consumption, smoking and swearing in public places: “I don't drink, I don't smoke and I don't swear ... Bloody hell, just left me fags down the pub.” Clearly, in today’s some-free public house environment that joke would lack contemporary resonance. Economic pressures have led to many local pubs closing down and the smoking ban forbids the consumption of cigarettes in enclosed public places. The pub is therefore not necessarily the social hub of life, particularly in communities, where it can be used as a location for portraying jokes.

The civilising of leisure behaviour is also reflected in the blasé manner in which physical violence and attack were condoned through humour. Again this was typical humour during the 1970s. The following jokes illustrate this point: “Just saved my mother in law from drowning, took my foot of her head” (Anon); and “Take my mother in law, I wish somebody would” (Anon).

The standards of ethics and decency in humour about leisure are therefore interesting to address. Consider 'blue' humour by the likes of Frankie Boyle and Chubby Brown who attract mass audiences to their shows. Yet the material is culturally and racially driven and is perceived as such for delivery in mainstream forms of media. Nevertheless, even “established comedians” have an alternative side, and it is not unusual for their on stage acts to be different from what they portray on radio or television. Max Miller, a traditional music hall performer, had a “white book” and a
“blue book” targeting different audiences.

Fourth is the significance of time and how leisure comedy is used as a basis for reflecting contemporary society. For example, the following jokes identify current topical issues: “What’s got four legs and 250,000 grand in the bank … Harry Redknapp’s dog” (Anon); and “I needed a password eight characters long so I picked Snow White and the Seven Dwarves” (Anon). This reflects the immediacy of comedy via social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) where worldwide events are instantaneously broadcast to a global audience. Comedy thus transcends national, cultural and demographic boundaries and humour becomes accessible to all beyond traditional modes of consumption such as civic halls, theatres and comedy clubs.

Conclusion

Many traditional working-class leisure pastimes have been mass-marketed as pure entertainment, attracting a global fan base — for example, wrestling, which began as a serious amateur sport. Snooker similarly has penetrated international boundaries. Comedy has evolved in the same way from early music halls aimed at local audiences to national arenas targeting the mass market. Comedy in the modern era is represented in countless locations and its continuity as a worldwide industry is ensured. Furthermore, opportunities for the general public to exploit their own comic abilities (or not!) to national and international audiences have emerged via media shows suggesting “Everywhere’s Got Talent”.

With the removal of socially constructed ideals of what is appropriate, comedy has become more segmented since the days of the early music halls. The preference of today’s younger audiences for satire and alternative humour is balanced with the traditional comedy favoured by an ageing society. Comedy is likely to continue to reflect the landscape, exploiting economic disparities, social conditions and differences in culture and region.

References

of femininity and served to exclude other notions of the female body; and second, that this feminine ideal caused unnecessary levels of anxiety, discomfort (mental and physical) and body consciousness.

We present the views of the trampoline gymnasts in the form of creative fiction (see Sparkes, 2002) — a space for anonymous narratives to be read by audiences that might not otherwise read them. Our respondents (aged 14 to 17 years) also reflect the vast majority of the membership of BG, 75% of whom are under the age of 18. With a lack of empowerment for athletes in general, and young athletes in particular, this small-scale study acts as a platform for the expression of opinion from a constituency of sports practitioners who are seldom afforded a ‘voice’.

Following a discussion of research design and method, the chapter is organised into six further sections. The most significant of these are the two narrative tales: sections 3 and 6. These anchor the substantive themes of the discussion sections: 4, The leotard, femininity and the trampoline aesthetic; 5, Regulatory discourse and social discipline; and 7, Body consciousness and puberty. In each of these sections connections are also established with some of the extant literature, before some concluding comments (section 8) act as a summary.

2 A brief note on method

The project was initiated to explore the attitudes, beliefs and meanings of femininity and the body held by female trampoline gymnasts, especially in relation to leotards. Focus group discussions were used which placed the young people at the heart of the investigation allowing them to express their experiences of these complex sociological phenomena (Veal, 1997), and to provide rich and illuminating data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Focus groups (rather than individual interviews) also had the benefit of being more appropriate for the age of the participants — generating a greater amount and variety of data (David and Sutton, 2004), as well as helping diffuse power relations between the researchers and the researched. This is especially important as the two of us responsible for data collection [RL and GW] were older than the participants.

One, a male, had no former experience of trampoline gymnastics; the other, a female, was actively involved as a coach in the trampoline gymnastics club that the participants attended. Measures were also taken to diminish some of the potential social barriers: for example, through wearing casual clothes and simplifying the language used, and by first asking general questions to ensure participants were comfortable with the researchers before addressing the specific subject matter of the research.

Ethical considerations were a priority, particularly given the age of the participants and the possible disclosure of private and personal information (Halloway, 1997). Approval was sought and granted from the UWIC Research Ethics Committee. Throughout the research, we emphasised our intention to understand the experiences of young female trampoline gymnasts, and recognised that this might include recollections of a potentially sensitive nature (Mason, 1996).

The focus group discussions were transcribed and anonymised. Three substantive themes were identified and these formed the basis of the two creative fictional narratives. These were inspired by our interpretation of the participants’ words, and crafted (we hope) with sufficient empathy to convey their perceptions and attitudes accurately.

3 Fictional narrative: Preparation is everything

Sarah Thomas prodded her sparkling silver teeth, her slim fingers poking at the gap at the front. She’d always hated it. “Mum!” she bellowed, “Can you do my hair!”

Mrs Thomas stomped into the bathroom, welcomed by an array of utensils and accessories. She began scraping Sarah’s long blonde hair into a ponytail. “Mum, you’re hurting!” Sarah moaned, struggling to get away from her mother’s grasp.

“Stop whingeing, we haven’t got time!” her mother continued, coiling Sarah’s hair into a plump bun and securing it with a number of bobbles. She then trapped the rebellious strands that remained with a hair net and grips. Finally, she decorated the style with a glittering silver ‘scrunchy’ to match Sarah’s leotard. A choking cloud of hairspray hovered in the bathroom as Sarah began to apply a thick layer of creamy foundation, revealing her face as a blank canvas. She applied an ebony frame around her eyes and to her lashes; a puff of rouge powder to her cheeks and smeared a pale pink gloss on her lips.

Returning to her bedroom she pulled her sparkling silver and blue leotard past her silky slim legs. She admired herself in the mirror, the leotard hugging her tiny figure. “Aren’t you ready yet? Your Dad is waiting for us in the car” Mrs Thomas asked, in a slightly irate tone.

“No!” Sarah scowled, “I hate this ‘thing’ Mum, look at it! My legs are horrible and my belly is bloated. It’s killing.”

“Don’t be silly, we haven’t got time.” Mrs Thomas comforted her daughter, whilst passing her tracksuit bottoms, “and nobody looks at your legs! I’ve got some tablets in my bag that are good for period pain, take some in the car and you’ll be fine.” Sarah adjusted her leotard over her hips, as best she could. Finally she enclosed herself in her baggy tracksuit and quickly gathered her bag.

In another house, Janice slouched in front of the mirror, wiping her glistening wet cheeks and began to apply thick foundation to her round, red, blotchy face, sweeping her spiky hair out of the way. She’d been preparing for her first trampoline competition for weeks. Butterflies roamed her stomach. She had not finished when her brother set upon her, “careful you don’t pop all your spots doing that” he laughed. Steven was Janice’s annoying younger brother who knew just how to provoke a reaction from her at the worst times. Janice felt a lump in her throat and her eyes well. “Get out you little brat!” she screamed.
“What’s going on?” Janice’s mother enquired as she entered the room. She immediately identified the problem, “Steven, leave your sister alone. Out!” she pointed toward the door. Steven mumbled as he left. Janice couldn’t hold back the tears anymore, floods streamed down her face. “I can’t do it Mum!” “You’ll be fine when you get there;” her mother dismissed her welling, reassuringly patting her on the back. “It doesn’t matter how much of this stuff I put on I’m still spotty and ugly”, Janice continued to wail. “No you’re not darling”.

“Look at me!” Janice screamed, standing in her beautiful, shining leotard. Janice was one of the larger girls in her trampoline club and the months of enduring taunts from the other girls were now echoing in her ears. They didn’t know she had heard their laughs when she bounced and her top had risen up revealing her ample stomach. She prodded at the dimples and lumps that were trying to escape from the navy velour skin that encased her. The sparkling blue arms of the leotard clung to her own, making them feel stiff. Her thick legs wobbled as she moved to see her buttocks. Janice howled. “Come on love, you’ve got to get ready, Wendy will be waiting for us”.

“Ring her and tell her I’m not coming. I can’t do it, look at me, and imagine me bouncing on a trampoline.” Janice continued to stream tears down her round cheeks.

“What about the girls in the team? You don’t want to let them down do you?” Her mother asked.

“They hate me anyway. I don’t care. I’m not going. I’m never going again!” Janice retorted.

“Now love, you don’t mean that, you love trampo … ” Janice’s mum stared into her daughter’s red, puffy eyes. She could see her daughter was distressed. “Janice, are you sure?”

“Yes”, Janice sobbed through her hands that were clapping her face. Her mum left the room.

“Wendy? It’s Janice’s mum” Janice overheard her mum on the phone, “I’m afraid Janice won’t be able to make it to the competition, she’s not been very well this morning … “ Janice felt a wave of relief. Her sobs slowed and she crept down the stairs and placed her chubby arms around her mother, who stroked her hair.

4 The leotard, femininity and the trampoline aesthetic

Sport and physical fitness are complex sites of multifaceted gender dynamics and sexual politics that have historically enforced and maintained hegemonic masculinities (Connell, 1987, 1995; Messner, 1992; Messner and Sabo, 1990). At the core of these is an intimate concern with the physical body. Connell’s (1987) analysis of gender focuses upon the ‘exterior’ body, its shape size and musculature and further examines how men’s and women’s bodies are defined as different through social practices, giving bodies and thus human embodiment qualitatively different meanings. There has also been a focus on the social construction of the feminine body in sports (Bolin, 1992; Gilroy, 1989; Hargreaves, 1994; McDermot, 1996) and fitness (Markula, 1995; 2001; 2003) which has shown these arenas as sites of struggle where the meaning of gender has been negotiated and contested.

The sport of trampoline gymnastics is one such site of struggle that must be understood as more than just a physical activity. It also reflects and transfers meanings and values, and takes the body as its starting point. It is a clear signifier of gendered ideals, and is a body on display. Body-hugging leotards create a body-consciousness that is legitimised by notions of ‘ease’ and ‘freedom of movement’. Milano, the manufacturer and sponsor of BG for 17 years, explicitly advertises its designs, “to enhance the beauty and grace of the sport” (BG, 2009b). The seasonal catalogues of leotards and tracksuits for gymnasts and trampoline gymnast competitors are produced and distributed, featuring pictures of young female gymnasts, moulded, shaped, flexed and manipulated by the designer. The ideal female figure is sculpted in a very personal display — on occasions, an almost naked look, sheathed in bright and shiny colours. Importantly, the majority of these models/gymnasts appear to be pre-pubescent. This is particularly striking when parallels can be drawn between some research on sportswomen in the media that likens their pictures to soft pornography with cameras lingering on athletes’ breasts, buttocks and crotches (Duncan, 1990; Hargreaves, 1993). Rarely photographed in sporting poses, the models/gymnasts in this particular catalogue are sexualised modelling a skin tight leotard with a high ‘V’ shape cut around the crotch, requiring that they wear little or no underwear.

The gendered inscriptions of trampoline gymnasts extend to other forms of body management that also adhere to the ‘beauty and grace’ that leotard manufacturers promote. The trampoline gymnast ‘body project’ (see Shilling, 2003) is worked on continually to comply with a particular feminine ideal. Stories of significant time spent working on appearance (such as hair and make-up) were central to these athletes’ experiences. When asked if they would ever consider cutting their hair for sport3, all instinctively replied “No!” Hair length was a clear marker of explicitly heterosexual feminine identity. One of them laughed nervously and enquired, “are you hinting towards the, don’t laugh, lesbian view here?” — which was followed by group laughter. A picture emerged of the feminine trampoline gymnastics identity characterised by being heterosexual, beautiful (enhanced by plenty of cosmetics) and well groomed (with long hair, every strand sprayed into place), glamorous, graceful, and perhaps most of all, thin. Jenny explained: “The rest of us are all quite skinny, whether we all think so or not, we’re all pretty skinny, so I’d say trampoline, you think gymnast, you think skinny, girl, possibly tall, you know, really slight and stuff”.

5 Regulatory discourse and social discipline

Sport plays a fundamental role in disciplining the female
body in western cultures (Chase, 2006; Costa and Guthrie, 1994; Hargreaves, 1994). After negotiating a set of ‘female appropriate’ behaviours in everyday life, women’s bodies are further subjected to social mechanisms particular to the sporting body that continually reinforce a specific ideal. As such, the female body has become a site of continual self-scrutiny (Markula, 1995), or in Foucauldian terms, by using the panoptic metaphor, ‘self-surveillance’ (Foucault, 1978). In this way trampoline gymnasts may come to internalise and embody the social signifiers and systems of their sport as supported and recreated by sexualised and embodied discourse. Using an openly suppressive (or even oppressive) power mechanism, athletes were disciplined by the previous uniform rule that for higher levels of competition required female competitors to wear a leotard without shorts or long tights. Importantly too, they are also persuaded to accept control through an invisible gaze that requires them to monitor their physical appearance to meet their internalised perception of the feminine ideal. The leotard is therefore a vehicle through which the power of desired body aesthetic discourse is invested and intensified. Elaborating on her earlier remark, Jenny added:

Well you might look at us and think we’re all pretty skinny, but I’m pretty sure everyone can name thousands of things wrong with themselves. I mean you might not see, but we feel it and if we’re wearing something where we don’t feel confident, you don’t feel comfortable at all. [Emphasis added]

Even those athletes who felt that they fitted the trampoline gymnast ideal felt uncomfortable and dissatisfied with their appearance at times. So whilst there may have been a heightened sense of self esteem from achieving the required aesthetic standards, this was not an uninterrupted euphoric (Markula, 1995), and spilt into life outside the sport. Through the evaluative gaze of others, Laura outlined the pressure she feels to shave her legs for school sport:

When you go into, like, school knowing that you have a PE lesson and you were going to wear shorts then you’d purposely shave your legs beforehand, ’cos you wouldn’t want to go into a PE lesson with hairy legs.

In short, the perceived pressure to conform to a conventional beauty standard (of smooth shaven legs for females) is entrenched in the trampoline female gymnast ideal. When trampoline gymnasts compete, they are on display — and they are aware of it. The awareness of the gaze acts to constrain the individual, who acts accordingly and conforms (Foucault, 1978).

There were occasional instances of private reflexive resistance to the discursive power and authority. Holly raised an important question about the rules set by BG and the Federation Internationale de Gymnastique:

I can understand the need for leotards to some extent — but the long sleeved one — because of the tightness to the body. But I wouldn’t argue with that because the tightness is needed, but not like skin. Because that just makes it about sex appeal doesn’t it, really? And that’s not fair to any gymnast. It’s not about that.

Jenny was just as direct: “It’s as if they’re using sex appeal to attract people to the sport, which is all wrong. What’s going on? It’s just all wrong”. Their remarks reveal the tension between leotards as enhancing performance functionally for technical purposes, and of being judged on a body aesthetic. Perhaps more important still is their perception of the rules of their sport as sexually exploitative and sexualising.

The singular dominant ‘ideal’ femininity that is produced and invested in trampoline gymnastic bodies is legitimised by the leotard and it is oppressive because of its singularity (Markula, 1995). The parallel with the experiences of women fashion models is unavoidable. Both share a set of body management routines that include a stylised mode of dress, application of make-up, dieting and exercise that appear to be congruent with the transition into female adulthood. As in the fashion industry, this singular account of embodied femininity in trampoline gymnastics works to oppress, exclude and marginalise other forms. A short excerpt from the focus group discussion sheds light:

Jenny: We had a girl here, like, a while ago.
Holly: She finished a while ago.
Jenny: Yea she used to be in the club, but she was quite big.
GW: She was quite big, was she?
Jenny: Yeah. And like the rest of us thought, that’s quite big.
Jenny: It’s as if they’re using sex appeal to attract people to the sport, which is all wrong. What’s going on? It’s just all wrong”. Their remarks reveal the tension between leotards as enhancing performance functionally for technical purposes, and of being judged on a body aesthetic. Perhaps more important still is their perception of the rules of their sport as sexually exploitative and sexualising.

It is easy to see how young women who did not fit with the perception of an homogenised ‘ideal’ femininity became shunned and even ostracised. As an exclusionary mechanism, the dominant social order remains unthreatened and reinforced, and alternative (which de facto means subordinate) forms of behaviour are denied social legitimacy, recognition and credence (Ezzell, 2009).
6 Fictional narrative: The competition — round one

Sarah sat poised in the middle of the trampoline awaiting the judge's signal to start her routine. Her coach, Dianne, and her team mates stood to the corners of the trampoline willing her to succeed. "Sarah Thomas?" asked a kind man with white hair, dressed in a formal suit.

"Yes," Sarah barely replied.

"When you're ready you may begin," he explained. Sarah stood, turned to the judging panel, her cheeks glowing like hot coals and presented in the traditional fashion. A sensation of lightness, as though she had little control of her body, flowed over her in a wave. Her stomach churned. She turned to her focus point, took a deep breath and pushed into the trampoline bed. With every bounce her leotard stretched and pulled. She could feel it rising, but knew there was little she could do. She finished, stopped and held her balance, thinking only of pulling her leotard that was doing little to cover her buttocks. Applause rose in the hall. Dianne and the girls greeted her from the stage, handing her a pair of shorts. She clawed at them quickly with her highly groomed nails.

Simon swayed through the streams of gymnasts. He was one of the younger men on the judging panels and was well acquainted with many of the gymnasts. His eyes widened at the group of girls dressed in silver and blue.

"How are you doing girls?" he grinned.

"Alright Si? Just supporting Sar," replied Louise, the eldest in the group.

"Oh yeah, I was just judging you … you did alright. You need to work on that kick out in your back somersault though, and we had to take some marks off you because we could all see your knickers."

"What?" Sarah flushed.

"You need to go and take your knickers off, or are you 'on' or something?" Simon laughed. Sarah flushed scarlet, her stomach fluttered.

"Di, I'm going to the toilet", she mumbled before moving swiftly.

"Don't tease her Si, she's got to get back on in a minute!" Dianne glared at him, disapprovingly.

"Si, why can't we wear shorts anymore?" asked Louise.

"We'll take marks off you. It's better if you don't wear them!" he replied. "Besides you've got nice legs, what do you want to hide them for. It's not like you've got legs like her!"

Simon pointed to a slightly larger gymnast. The girls giggled at the wave of ripples that rose up the legs of the performing gymnast. These became howls of laughter as they watched the girl tumble out of her final somersault into the visibly uncomfortable split leg position. A number of other gymnasts close by smirk and try to hide their mean smiles as they watched her flail to the arms of her coach, her tears clearly visible.

Sarah emerged from the toilets with red eyes. This morning's incident with Simon had significantly impacted upon her performance, leaving her outside of the medal tables, and she seriously considered whether this was something she was prepared to go through again.

7 Body consciousness and puberty

In a sporting culture of display, the leotard was not popular with these young trampoline gymnasts. This was not merely a matter of disapproval of the revealing nature of the garment, Laura also noted that there were implications for the quality of skill execution: "It shows too much … and if you feel like that it starts affecting your performance". The onset of the menarche heightened body consciousness, and they described that they began to feel particularly uncomfortable in leotards around the age of 10 to 13 years when they began to experience the development of breast tissue, the growth of body hair, and the onset of menstruation.

Attitudes towards these maturational changes have often been characterised by embarrassment (Hargreaves, 1994; Clarke and Gilroy, 1994) and are evident in the euphemisms surrounding the subject as well as sanitary protection advertising campaigns, packaging and education. Being 'on' and other ways of talking indirectly about menstruation has an underlying tone of being undesirable with a need to keeping it hidden. Television campaigns echo this discourse with slogans such as "no leaks, no show, no worries" (Clark and Gilroy, 1994: p. 15). The high V-cut of leotards leaves few options for choice of sanitary wear other than a tampon.

Despite the 'ease of movement' argument, these young trampoline gymnasts described increased anxiety during performance due to the uniform regulations. Far from enhancing 'the beauty and grace of the sport' as Milano claim, the BG rule that leotards should be 'skin tight' actually prevented a full range of movement and inhibited confidence. As Becky explained, all of this was compounded by intolerance from unsympathetic competition judges. Institutionalised and enshrined in competition rules, hers was an unpleasant experience of the competitive environment:

"I was in a competition and one of the judges said 'can you take your shorts off?' I explained the issues that I was 'on' and they wouldn't take it and they told me to take my shorts off otherwise I can't compete."

The competitors' performances were also angst-laden. Particular elements, like 'straddles' were troublesome because they reveal the crotch and inner thighs; and the end of the routine when the athletes 'present' to the judges was also a concern as they often felt that their leotard had risen up with their buttocks showing. Jenny was candid once again:

You see this a thousand times, you’re like stop, present and then pull the leotard out of your bum. Well you shouldn't have to worry about that, your routine’s done then and you shouldn't have to worry about that. It shouldn’t be based around what you wear®.
In addition to self-scrutiny, the use of photography at competitions added to the angst for some trampoline gymnasts. British Gymnastics has a policy that has led to professional companies (often with male photographers) being employed to take photographs during competition which are displayed and sold at the event. Holly described one of her own experiences:

I was “on” which made everything ten times worse but despite that I would have felt awful … I couldn’t wear shorts and I just remember doing my straddle and just seeing some guy with a camera taking a photo and was just thinking I’m not wearing shorts, I’m wearing a leotard which has a piece of material like well the same size as knickers isn’t it, underneath me. Yeah it’s stupid. They ride up and they ride in!

8 Concluding comments

There are two sets of concluding comments that emerge from this chapter. The first is methodological, and relates particularly to the use of fictional narratives. The second is a commentary on trampoline gymnastics as a sport that illuminates gender relations and reflects traditional notions of femininity.

The use of a research design that empowers athletes, especially young athletes, is not commonplace. In seeking to represent the views of (at least) some trampoline gymnasts, we do not claim, of course, that all girls and young women have experienced the sport in the way that these participants have. Neither do we suppose, though, that theirs is a unique experience not shared by anyone else. In short, there no reason to think that their views are atypical.

The focus group discussion provided an important forum for these young trampoline gymnasts to express their opinions, and to do so away from the sport’s institutional gaze with an assurance of anonymity. Some of the evidence cited above is reassuringly forthright on those themes and issues about which they felt strongly. We trust these data, and from them the narrative tales in the form of creative fiction serve to highlight the central arguments. We have contextualised and interpreted them in the discursive power. From an instrumental marketing perspective, short hair enhance the grace of the sport by restricting body ‘excess’ or ‘overspill’. It may be that some of these models are not pre-pubescent. However, we are unable to say with any confidence that the majority of these gymnast models are adult young women.

There are three substantive points that emerge from the study. The first relates to the leotard as crucial to the particular femininity associated with the trampoline aesthetic. Trampoline gymnastics takes the body as its starting point and then displays it. The body-hugging leotard helps to create a body-consciousness, and to heighten it. The minor rule change introduced at the start of 2009 might suggest an increasing awareness of the views and concerns of the athletes themselves, but it does little to address the underlying (re)construction and reification of a singular femininity in the sport with all the implications that has for its participants.

The second important finding is the self-surveillance and self-regulation that these young trampoline gymnasts experienced. They had internalised the social signifiers and systems of their sport which help to support and recreate an institutionally sexualised and embodied discourse. Moreover, for those girls and young women who are in some way incompatible with the perception of an homogenised ‘ideal’ femininity (or who think that they are), there is an exclusionary mechanism that serves to maintain the dominant social order.

Finally, it is not merely self-surveillance to which these young trampoline gymnasts were subjected. It was also the scrutiny of others. Part of that, of course, is the inherent nature of a ‘display’ sport. Yet the involvement of others — especially relatively young men — in the judging and photography of the sports performance became problematic. During the transition from childhood to adulthood, elevated body-consciousness proved to be an even greater source of anxiety.

People do, of course, create their own social realities and identities through interactions with others (Lorber, 2008), but for young trampoline gymnasts the opportunity to shape the reality of their sporting world is severely limited. The image and practice of the sport for women is created within the discourse of an homogenised heterosexual femininity which is predicated on the need to wear body-revealing leotards. In turn, the young athletes in this study had internalised their responsibility to adhere to their perception of the feminine ideal, and until presented with the opportunity to participate in this research there was no hint of questioning the perfect image or resisting the discursive power.

Notes

1 Competition levels range from A through to H, with A being the highest. Level D denotes the highest level of regional competition before moving to national level. It is the first level at which male and female competitors are required to compete separately.

2 It may be that some of these models are not pre-pubescent. However, we are unable to say with any confidence that the majority of these gymnast models are adult young women.

3 From an instrumental marketing perspective, short hair might be considered a logical solution to enhancing the grace of the sport, given that the function of the leotard is to enhance the grace of the sport by restricting body ‘excess’ or ‘overspill’.

4 Jeremy Bentham’s ‘panopticon’ was an eighteenth Century prison structure in which a guard tower at the centre of the
surrounding cells allows the guard to see all inmates without the inmates being able to see the guard: the design produces a constant possibility of being subject to surveillance, which makes the prisoners docile (Duncan, 1994). The extension of this metaphor to understanding social discipline is based on the idea of permanent visibility ensuring the function of power. Foucault uses the idea of self-surveillance in which the individual becomes her/his own guard and is therefore disciplined without the actual gaze of a prison guard (Markula and Pringle, 2006).

5 Tsang’s (2000) experience of similar beauty ideals and the pressure to not have hairy legs in female sport reminds us that this is “the active construction of a femininity that is being played out over my legs. This is something I am ‘told’ (by my friends, by myself, by society) I can and should control” (p. 49).

6 British Gymnastics competition rules require gymnasts to demonstrate their stability by holding position at the end of their routine for three seconds; failing to do so results in points deductions. Competitors are therefore unable to adjust their leotards during this three second period.

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Ana is currently undertaking a PhD at the University of Bolton to explore the potential contribution of circle dance to well-being through the subject field of occupational therapy. She is an occupational therapist by background with over 23 years experience in the field of mental health in both Brazil and the United Kingdom. Ana has been teaching circle dance for the past 17 years. Related publications include: Borges da Costa, A.L. (2012) Circle dance, occupational therapy and well-being: the need for research, British Journal of Occupational Therapy, 75(2), pp. 114-116; Borges da Costa, A.L. (2012) Circle dance: a leisure occupation promoting well-being, Leisure Studies Association Newsletter, n. 91, pp. 25-26
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Tom's research interests relate to sport and leisure, social identities, ‘race’ and ethnicity, multiculturalism and equality and diversity, and he is currently undertaking research into sports museums and the post-match drink phenomena. Publications: ‘The making of English cricket cultures: Empire, globalisation and (post) colonialism’, *Sport in Society* (2011) 14(1); ‘Common cricket cultures? The British Empire, homogenisation and post-colonial reinventions’, in Long, Fitzgerald and Millward (eds) *Delivering Equality in Sport and Leisure* (LSA No. 115) 2011; “All Yorkshiremen are from Yorkshire, but some are more ‘Yorkshire’ than Others”: British Asians and the myths of Yorkshire cricket, *Sport in Society* expected, 2011; (2011) Aye, but it were wasted on thee: ’Yorkshireness’, cricket, ethnic identities, and the ‘magical recovery of community’. *Sociological Research Online*, 16(4).

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David is a Reader in Events & Culture in the School of Creative & Cultural Industries at the University of the West of Scotland (UWS). He has undertaken a number of consultancy and contract research projects spanning the cultural and sporting realms for public, private and third sector organisations. His academic research interests focus on events and festivals (sporting and cultural) as markers of identity and as mechanisms for the achievements of wider economic, social and cultural externalities. He is co-author of *Event Policy: From Theory to Strategy* (Routledge July 2011) and has published book chapters and journal articles in the events area.

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Returning to LSA Executive in 2012 after previously serving for several years. Liz works in the field of leisure, lifestyle and social policy. She has worked in these fields at universities in the UK and on secondment in Canada. She also worked for the UK government for several years in social and labour market policy research, specialising in disadvantage and inequality in employment. Liz’s current interests build on her policy experience and knowledge in the leisure field. Her research relates to the relationships between social policy, sport and physical activity policy and quality of life and wellbeing. She has recently published work on the relationships between fatherhood and leisure and leisure in the ‘Big Society’. She has considerable experience in research and evaluation project management and methodology. She is a contributor, as editor and author, to a number of LSA Publications volumes.
**LSA Members — July 2013**

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