**"What happens in the changing room, stays in the changing room."
Unearthing bullying, banter, teasing and victimisation in men's
professional football.**

By

James Allen Newman

A doctoral thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
award of the degree of

Doctor of Education

University of East Anglia
School of Education and Lifelong Learning

October 2019

Abstract

While positive relationships have received substantial focus within sport and exercise psychology literature, negative relational concepts such as bullying remain under explored. Bullying research continues to favour Olewus' (1993) classic definition, which is based on repetition, intentionality and negative actions based on power differentials, even though it may not be applicable to sport. The lack of an appropriate definition of bullying, coupled with the nature of professional football, where excessive forms of banter and teasing are often tolerated (A. Parker, 2006), suggested this would be an ideal context to further explore the confusion around these terms. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of how male professional footballers conceptualise bullying. In addition, this study sought to explore to what extent bullying in professional football differs from teasing, victimisation and banter.

To address this purpose the study was designed and analysed according to the principles of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 professional footballers. Given the focus on bullying within professional football, a contextualist position was adopted, utilising psychological and sociological theories and research to interpret the findings.

The findings from this study revealed the contextual theme of 'the football environment', three key superordinate themes in relation to the main research questions such as the 'bullying act', the 'bully and victim' and 'the dividing line', as well as the additional superordinate themes of 'banter and teasing'. Bullying was made up of repetitive, abusive elements, which were based upon power differentials. Despite divergence in the participants' accounts at times, bullying was also seen to be independent of banter and teasing. Overall the findings made a vital contribution to the psychological literature by demonstrating the individually nuanced, contextually dependent nature of bullying, while providing key recommendations for education and welfare programmes in football.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Appendices

Acknowledgements

I would like to express special thanks to my supervisors Dr Victoria Warburton and Dr Kate Russell, for their support and highly detailed feedback throughout the duration of my research study. In particular, I would like to thank them for sharing their expertise with me regarding the concepts under investigation, as well as the methods and analysis used in this thesis. I also appreciate their support for conducting this research within the professional football context.

A special thanks goes to the three professional football clubs who gave me access to participants, despite the challenging subject matter. They treated me like a member of the family and went beyond reasonable expectations to provide me with further participants, when required. I would particularly like to thank all 18 players for their time and considered responses to my questions. They all behaved with great politeness and dignity. Thanks also to Sheffield Hallam University for providing initial contacts for the study and for their support, both in terms of finance and time to complete this thesis. In addition I would like to thank my office mate and colleague Dr Tom Maden-Wilkinson for kindly taking the time to review my final work in full, at the end of the thesis process.

I would like to thank my wife Filippa for your support when I had to work on the study, your interest in the topic and your love throughout. Lastly to my beautiful children Polly and Tommy, I am truly blessed as you shine a light into my life. I hope this makes you proud.

Keywords

Bullying - "… it is a negative action when someone intentionally inflicts injury or discomfort upon another, basically what is implied in the definition of aggressive behaviour. Negative actions can be carried out by physical contact, by words, or in other ways, such as making faces or mean gestures, and in intentional exclusion from the group. In order to use the term bullying, there should be an imbalance in strength (an asymmetric power relationship)…" (Olewus,1993, pp. 8-9).

Banter - "… The playful and friendly exchange of teasing remarks." (Oxford Dictionaries, 2019).

Hazing - "… Hazing is defined here as the generation of induction costs (i.e., part of the experiences necessary to be acknowledged as a "legitimate" group member) that appear unattributable to group-relevant assessments, preparations, or chance." (Cimino, 2011, p.242).

Sledging - "… Sledging, or 'trash talk' or 'chirping', as it's known in other parts of the world, has long been part of competitive sport. Often described as 'gamesmanship', quick-witted athletes have provided numerous examples of spontaneous, creative and humorous banter as part of the play contest." (Duncan, 2019, p.183).

Teasing - "…Teasing is ambiguous. On the one hand, the literal content of teasing is typically negative… On the other hand, there is often a positive component of teasing as well." (Kruger, Gordon, Kuban, & Dovido, 2006, p.412).

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The topic of positive relationships has received vast attention within the sport psychology literature in the last twenty years. These positive relationships measured through variables such as friendship quality and cohesion have resulted in desirable outcomes including more adaptive forms of motivation, increased enjoyment and greater team success (Carron, Colman, Wheeler, & Stevens, 2002; Carron, Eys, & Burke, 2006; Herbison, Benson, & Martin, 2017; Jowett, 2007; A. L. Smith, Ullrich-French, Walker II, & Hurley, 2006; Weiss & Smith, 2002) . Whilst this research has blossomed, the recommended focus on negative relationships in sport (Partridge, Brustad, & Babkes Stellino, 2008), has remained relatively unaddressed to date. This is a concern given more recent reviews have highlighted how influential figures such as coaches, parents and peers can impact levels of dropout from sport (Sheridan, Coffee, & Lavallee, 2014). Using coaches as an example, greater understanding of the dysfunctional side of the coach-athlete relationship as well as how coaches and athletes manage their interpersonal exchanges may offer practical utility in the sports setting (Jowett, 2007; Jowett & Poczwardowski, 2007).

To date, dysfunctional relationships in sport have been characterised by terms such as teasing, victimisation and bullying (Partridge et al., 2008; Shannon, 2013; Slater & Tiggemann, 2010). Whilst this research may be limited, the issue of bullying in sport received significant media attention, when one of England's most high profile sportsmen, Kevin Pietersen, highlighted a "bullying culture" within the England Cricket team dressing room (BBC, 2014b). This issue has not just been isolated to cricket, as in football figures such as José Mourinho have been accused of being "a bully" (BBC, 2014a). The prevalence of this behaviour is of particular concern, given that the implications of bullying range from lowered levels of physical activity through to burnout and psychiatric problems (Demissie, Lowry, Eaton, Hertz, & Lee, 2014; Kumpulainen, Rasanen, & Henttonen, 1999; Yildiz, 2015). Moreover, some authors have suggested that behaviours such as bullying, may negatively impact on motivation in

physical activity contexts (Partridge et al., 2008). The concern around bullying in sport has led organisations such as STOMP Out Bullying in the USA and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) in the UK to develop sport specific anti-bullying policies, whilst sporting bodies such as the Football Association (FA) have revealed concern with the impact negative behaviours have on drop out from sport (The FA , 2007; NSPCC, 2016; STOMP, 2016).

The issue of bullying in sport has become so prevalent that STOMP Out Bullying (2016) sought to define this term within this context, whilst covering other serious issues such as cyberbullying and sexting through to homophobia, racism and violence in schools. Their advice surrounds diagnostic steps for parents to undertake if they suspect their child is being bullied in this environment. In the UK the NSPCC (2013) highlighted that disrespectful and harmful treatment was a commonly reported experience of young people in sport ranging from criticism of performance through to being teased and bullied. Two-thirds of the time this behaviour is driven by teammates and one-third of the time coaches are the perpetrators (NSPCC, 2013). The highlighting of bullying in sport by these organisations emphasises the need for sporting organisations to educate their participants about this issue. One such organisation is the FA, who sought to address negative behavioural issues through their 2007 Respect Programme with the aim to "create a fun, safe and inclusive environment" (The FA, 2007, para. 1). Whilst this raising of awareness and development of policies to support children's positive sporting experience is undeniably positive, there has been less attention on adults' sporting experience in this regard. This is a concern given the dwindling numbers of adult, male football teams (The FA, 2015), suggesting further research on adult footballers is merited to build on the encouraging work with children. Extending this focus to adult male professional footballers may also make a key contribution to organisational psychology literature in relation to bullying; by focusing on workplaces practices where hyper-masculine ideals are prevalent.

One way of exploring how adults conceptualise bullying in football is to consider what the term means to these participants. The classic definition of bullying asserts that this is an intentional, negative action which inflicts

injury and discomfort on another (Olewus, 1993). This could be through physical contact (e.g. hitting, pushing and kicking) or intentional exclusion from a group which can be classified as a form of relational bullying. A key component to this, is that there should be an imbalance in power between the bully and victim, such that the victim is unable to defend themselves (Olewus, 1993). Typically, this behaviour is carried out "repeatedly and over time" (Olewus, 1993, p.9). Other authors extended this to define bullying as an act involving a systematic abuse of power including physical, verbal, relational and cyber aggression (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010; Williams & Guerra, 2007). These definitions suggest that football is an ideal context in which to study bullying, as its competitive nature provides opportunities for bullying to occur. For example, permitted physical contact within the rules of football potentially legitimises the opportunity for a bully to be physically aggressive to a victim. Equally football is ungoverned as a sport by weight classes thus natural imbalances in physical strength between participants could lead to injurious acts resulting out of physical dominance. Additionally, this context provides an environment wherein relational bullying could take place e.g. physically less able participants being ignored during a game. The issue of bullying may also be deeply rooted in the structures of a team or group, to the extent that key figures may hold the balance in power highlighted by Olewus. For example, coaches and managers hold power in terms of decision making about who is selected for their team. It is worth noting that whilst existing definitions can be exemplified using football examples, they do not conceptualise bullying in specific sporting contexts, questioning the degree to which they can be contextualised to this environment. Additionally, they tend to focus purely on children and adolescents rather than adults, suggesting a further limitation to the conceptual understanding of bullying.

Within the wider sports domain authors such as Stirling (2009) highlighted the lack of conceptual clarity around bullying and noted confusion regarding whether it overlaps with concepts such as abuse, harassment and maltreatment. Typically sporting research has viewed bullying synonymously with other terms such as teasing and harassment (Piek, Barrett, Allen, Jones, & Louise, 2005; Sweeting & West, 2001). Given that sporting participants may interpret these terms as the same or distinct from one another, it feeds the lack of conceptual clarity around bullying. This

uncertainty is of concern within football, as teasing may be seen as a pro-social vehicle of light-heartedness within a team environment or as a personal attack, much in the same way as bullying. Currently, from a research perspective in men's professional football, it is unknown whether either, both, or neither stance is taken. This uncertainty may have profound effects on participants' experiences, coaches' abilities to recognise bullying and the ability for administrators to devise policies to address this issue. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to explore how male professional footballers conceptualise bullying, in order to inform coach and player education around how to identify and address this behaviour.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definitions of Bullying

Within psychological research literature, Olewus' definition of bullying an intentional, harm-doing, aggressive behaviour, which is carried out repeatedly and over time when an imbalance of power exists seems to be readily accepted (Fekkes, Pijpers, & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2005; Frisen, Jonsson, & Persson, 2007; H. Smith et al., 2009; Swain, 1998; Volk, Dane, & Marini, 2014). The power differential in particular, is seen by some authors as an aspect which sets bullying apart from related behaviours including teasing and as such this bullying behaviour can include physical, verbal, relational and cyber aggressive acts (Cook et al., 2010; H. Smith et al., 2009; Williams & Guerra, 2007). Typically, research focusing on bullying has favoured Olewus' definition mainly on the basis of its commonality and usefulness (Volk et al., 2014). In addition, the repetitive nature of bullying highlighted by Olewus has also been supported by different researchers through questionnaire data (Book, Volk, & Hosker, 2012; Craig & Pepler, 1997). Given this extent of support and that this definition has been cited in excess of 4900 times (Volk et al., 2014) it would suggest that it unanimously provides conceptual clarity for practitioners within sport and organisations more broadly to identify bullying within their settings.

Despite the popularity of Olewus' (1993) definition several key aspects have been contested, implying that even though the definition is heavily cited, it may not be universally accepted in all contexts. Firstly, the importance placed on intentionality and repetition, has been disputed from self-report data within schools (Carrera, DePalma, & Lameiras, 2011; Sawyer, Bradshaw, & O'Brennan, 2008; Vaillancourt et al., 2008; Volk et al., 2014). One of the few studies to focus on experiences of bullying within adult sporting participants highlighted similar questions around intent (Kerr, Jewett, Macpherson, & Stirling, 2016). Secondly, Vaillancourt and colleagues' (2008) raised serious issues around not only the aspects of intentionality and repetition but also the facet of a power imbalance, given that their participants' definition of bullying deviated from Olewus' key

components. This led Hymel and colleagues (2013) to assert that despite the vast amount of research in this field, there is no adequate definition of bullying. Ultimately, this leads to potential issues of application in that without an adequate definition it is difficult to understand and tackle this phenomenon (Aalsma, 2008; Volk et al., 2014). Despite years of research into bullying, especially in schools, this lack of an accepted general definition of this behaviour makes it even more difficult to specifically understand and prevent this behaviour in specific domains such as football.

To ameliorate such definitional concerns Volk and colleagues (2014) set about a theoretical redefinition of this term to consider three of the contested components of Olewus' definition:

(i)   intentionality (which was framed in their review as goal-directedness);

(ii)   power imbalance and

(iii) harm.

Initially Volk and colleagues (2014) combined and questioned other research in this field (Berger, 2007; Crothers & Levinson, 2004) to suggest whether certain negative behaviours need to be repetitive to be considered bullying. For example, they proposed that a single incident of cyberbullying may be particularly hurtful if the images remain in the public domain for a long time. This may be seen in men's professional football where performance is often openly evaluated, leading to isolated hurtful comments or actions by a coach or fellow teammate which may be seen as bullying. Nonetheless the extent to which an act needs to be repetitive, remains a challenge for those seeking to conceptualise bullying. More specifically in workplace environments such as football, there is a lack of research considering this, suggesting that exploring bullying would be of benefit contextually and conceptually.

In terms of intentionality (or goal-directedness), Volk and colleagues (2014) argued that this is still a key component of a bullying definition based on both a psychological and evolutionary framework. The psychological argument proposes that instrumental aggression is a key aspect to goal-directedness, which they claim is one of the key characteristics of bullying, whereas more accidental forms of aggression by definition are non-intentional and lack the clear goal-directedness which is associated with

this concept. Furthermore researchers have suggested that instrumental aggression mirrors bullying in that it is unprovoked and pre-meditated (Olewus, 1993; Sutton, Smith, & Swettenham, 1999; Volk et al., 2014). This could be seen in a contact sport such as football, where a player could physically foul another team member in training, with the goal of harming that individual physically and/or emotionally. However, it is unknown whether this is the case, as definitions of bullying have not been contextualised to this environment.

The evolutionary argument also supports this goal-directed notion, as bullying is required to assert social dominance, to claim resources and to aid reproduction. In football social dominance may be reflected in some individuals' desire to be leaders of the group or dressing room cliques. With respect to claiming resources, Volk and colleagues pointed to the example in professional schools (e.g. medicine) where more dominant students may bully weaker individuals through sabotaging their reputation, claiming resources such as scholarships and future jobs. This may parallel professional football, where it has been suggested that within its predominantly authoritarian male working class setting, bullying is often celebrated as demonstration of masculine power (Collinson & Hearn, 1994; A. Parker, 2006). Hypothetically a dominant player may bully a teammate to claim resources such as financial contracts or a transfer to another team. Once more these propositions remain under explored, so it would appear that further exploration of the psychological components of bullying, within the sociocultural context of professional football may aid understanding of this concept.

To further support Olewus' (1993) definition of bullying, Volk and colleagues (2014) suggested a power imbalance is required. Nevertheless, they highlighted that the generalised view of bullying is that power is typically viewed in a physical, rather than verbal sense. To add sophistication to the redefinition of an imbalance of power they suggested that cognitive, social-cognitive and social dimensions need to be included. Volk and colleagues framed the cognitive component as a situation where some bullies have greater verbal fluency to attack their victims. On a social-cognitive level these bullies have the power to target certain victims and engage peers in socially excluding these victims. Finally on a social level, they discussed

the strong parallels between peer nominations of popularity and leadership (Vaillancourt, Hymel, & McDougall, 2003) resulting in bullies being able to recruit peers to target vulnerable victims. In a sporting sense the cognitive component, set out by Volk and colleagues might include bullies using mental disintegration techniques (e.g. those carried out by the Australian Cricket Team of the 1990s-2000s) to insult or verbally intimidate opposition players (Bertrand, 2013). Within football, leaders such as coaches or captains may exclude players from training as in the case of Bastian Schweinsteiger being 'bullied' and forced to train alone at Manchester United (BBC, 2016). This often extends to the social-cognitive level where other players join in with this excessive form of 'banter' (A. Parker, 2006). From a psychosocial perspective it might suggest an interaction occurs, where the psychological adoption of these behaviours allows players to achieve the more broad masculine identity professional football craves (A. Parker, 2006).

The final component Volk and colleagues (2014) covered in their redefinition of bullying was harm. At its core these authors suggested that harm is still a key component in the definition of bullying but it needed to be detached from the notion of repetition, as one act of bullying can lead to negative outcomes and experiences. For example, Parker (2012) found that one act of cyberbullying alone led to suicide. Therefore Volk and colleagues (2014) proposed a model which considered bullying as a multiple of the frequency and intensity of bullying behaviours. This more behavioural explanation of bullying in football could take place at a frequent but low intensity level (e.g. persistent banter) or alternatively at a high intensity in a single game (e.g. serious name calling abuse) between two teams.

In conclusion, Volk and colleagues' (2014) theoretical redefinition of bullying provided an important update on Olewus' (1993) definition, although it also possessed a number of its own limitations, which suggests that future research to understand bullying is warranted. Firstly, given this was a review article it lacked an individual's direct reporting of bullying (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013). This led to several questions about the quality of the data collection in the original studies, uncertainty around potential bias in the reporting of findings by Volk and colleagues and the

currency of the information used in their study. Secondly, the literature reviewed was still focused towards the school context, as well as children and adolescents, so the applicability of this redefinition to other domains requires further scrutiny. Whether these findings relate to adults within workplace contexts such as football requires exploration. Thirdly, the overlap to other terms such as teasing only received a small amount of attention, despite Volk and colleagues acknowledging that teasing may also happen where there are power imbalances. Whether these concepts are the same is unknown. Finally, their review did not set out to specify who the bullies are, what bullying acts are, or where it takes place and when. Therefore, a more holistic understanding of these components may lead to a more detailed definition of bullying. In order to reconcile the first two problems, primary research which attempts to conceptualise and contextualise bullying outside of schools is required. In the case of the third problem conceptual uncertainties remain and require further exploration. In the case of the last point, research again has partially addressed these questions but has often failed to unearth answers outside of educational contexts.

Research within the school environment has partially covered the issue of who bullies, when, and where they do it (Fekkes et al., 2005; Frisen et al., 2007). Males were reported to be more likely to bully, though it is worth noting that males and females were equally victims of this behaviour (Fekkes et al., 2005). This bullying behaviour was also gendered and limited to peers of the same age. Bullying behaviour across the two studies constituted name calling, spreading rumours, ignoring behaviours and a focus on appearance (Fekkes et al., 2005; Frisen et al., 2007). Bullying itself tended to occur in key sites for interaction, such as the playground or classroom though alarmingly adults reported they were often unaware it took place (Fekkes, et al., 2005; Frisen, et al., 2007). The lack of awareness of adults combined with the findings that bullying most commonly occurred during middle childhood, raises two interesting questions that subsequent research needs to address. Firstly, why were adults unable to detect this behaviour and secondly can adults actually detect this behaviour in both themselves and others? These unresolved questions suggest that further research should explore another participant group in another domain, in order to add to the conceptual understanding of

bullying within specific contexts. Moreover, the reliance of bullying research (e.g. Swain, 1998) on self-report questionnaires implied that an alternative methodological approach may gain greater depth of data. As Volk and colleagues (2014) acknowledged self-report questionnaires have led to conceptual and methodological limitations in defining bullying, which more in-depth methods may resolve. Furthermore, given there is conceptual confusion around bullying, a universal understanding may be required to ensure more valid self-report measures (Frisen et al., 2007; Swain, 1998).

2.2 Conceptualising bullying and teasing

Within the bullying literature, there remains tension and uncertainty as to whether or not and to what extent bullying and teasing overlap (Olewus, 1993; Volk et al., 2014). Some authors have highlighted the serious implications with the prevailing dogma portrayed by the media that bullying and teasing are synonymous terms (Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009). Through several media accounts of homicides and massacres Bishop-Mills and Muckleroy-Carwile showed how flaws with collapsing teasing and bullying into the same term can be highly problematic. For example, the reporting of a victim of 'teasing' murdering his school principal (Fox News, 2006), obscured the bullying this individual received and the inappropriate use of the term teasing.

In an attempt to separate these terms, Swain's (1998) article questioned 'What does bullying really mean?' by stating that a major definitional problem exists around where teasing ends and bullying begins. Drawing on the research of Pearce (1991) he proposed that teasing is an often acceptable behaviour but the presence of intimidation and distress moves away from this into bullying. Other studies have illustrated the danger of viewing these terms synonymously, contesting the negative connotation of teasing (Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009; Keltner, Capps, Kring, Young, & Heerey, 2001). Bishop-Mills and Muckleroy-Carwile in particular, stressed inaccuracies with the negative focus on teasing by showing that when isolated from bullying, teasing can be a functional and positive act of communication. Indeed, research has revealed that teasing can facilitate socially acceptable behaviour, affection and intimacy and enhance cohesion and group membership (Eder, 1991; Eder, Evans, & Parker, 1995; Eisenberg, 1986; Weger & Truch, 1996). To some extent Keltner and

colleagues (2001) supported this notion by emphasising both the pro-social side of this behaviour, delineating it from bullying. However, these authors did note a more anti-social side to this behaviour. For Keltner and colleagues (2001, p.232) teasing covered a broad spectrum of behaviours ranging from: "offer withdrawal games between parents and their young children, bullying on the playground, the flirtatious pinching and eye covering amongst adolescents, and in ritualised insults, adult banter, and romantic nicknames." These behaviours demonstrate that bullying and teasing are certainly interrelated but also distinct acts (Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009).

Bishop-Mills and Muckleroy-Carwile's (2009, p.278) review provided some useful clarity on the difference between bullying and teasing, through what these authors deemed as "inter-related but not interchangeable behaviours." Consistent with both Olewus (1993) and Volk and colleagues (2014), Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile characterised bullying as a negative, harm inducing act, based on a power differential inclusive of physical, relational and verbal components. They depicted in its cruel form, that teasing can be seen as a verbal bullying strategy that when done repeatedly is in the same category as physical assault. While not referring to sport directly they highlighted how this could impact on related issues such as body image, suggesting the potential value of exploring teasing in this context. At this level they stated how teasing appears a damaging activity, but this obscures the positive, pro-social side of this behaviour which facilitates relational closeness. For example, the pro-social side of this behaviour has been found to extend a sense of group cohesion, which may be particularly valuable to a football team if it impacts on performance (Eder, 1991; Eder et al., 1995). At this point though, it is unknown whether male professional footballers view teasing in this way and if the social context of professional shifts their understanding of bullying and teasing as psychological concepts.

A negative hallmark of bullying is the psychological component of aggression but this was found to be far more inconsistent in teasing (Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009). As Keltner and colleagues (2001) also argued aggression may be present in some instances of teasing but is not a prerequisite of it. Therefore, this provides one potential

dividing line between bullying and teasing. As Bishop-Mills and Muckleroy-Carwile (2009) stated the intentionality as to whether an act is aggressive needs to be understood, given this is key to bullying. Finally, it was interesting that they provided the example of male sports banter over a missed basketball free throw, as a place where non-aggressive teasing can take place yet bullying could also be perceived. It suggests that a sporting context such as football is a useful place to explore conceptualisations of bullying and teasing, especially from the participants' perspectives. Moreover the vagaries around the divide between the concepts of bullying and teasing, were perhaps reflective of the varied perceptions of what constitutes bullying found in a limited number of studies to date (Cuadrado-Gordillo, 2011, 2012; Mehta, Cornell, & Fan, 2013). Interestingly despite these individual differences, perceptual elements of concepts such as bullying and teasing has only received a very limited focus, implying that there is a need for more research focused from the participants' perspectives on these terms (Thornberg, Rosenqvist, & Johansson, 2012).

Another contrasting feature between bullying and teasing illustrated by Bishop-Mills and Muckleroy-Carwile is that of humour. Whilst they stated that aggression is a non-essential component of teasing but essential component of bullying, humour is a solely essential feature of teasing. It must be noted that they framed humour as non-serious form of joking. If definitions of teasing do not present humour they invariably present play which positively balances any irritant as parts of the teasing act (Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009). This was seen as a clear fault-line between teasing and bullying, as in bullying the target would have no invitation to join in with this sense of enjoyment (Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009). This play in teasing is often accompanied by what Keltner and colleagues (2001) described as off-record markers. They may include playful physical contact, subtle compliments to balance the teasing act and coy glances such as smiling when delivering direct, honest comments which might be perceived negatively even if they were not intended this way. These behaviours were seen as quite distinct from bullying. Nonetheless in men's professional football specifically, these assumptions regarding humour are potentially dangerous, as humour has been deployed in a disciplinary fashion to maintain social order for those who dare to challenge this and as a means to mask racial abuse within the game

(Edwards & Jones, 2018; Hylton, 2018). Thus, caution must be exercised in the assumption that humour represents the positive side of teasing in the football context. Moreover, the interpretation around whether something is humourful or not if often driven by the instigator of this act, which masks a potentially dangerous issue, where the victim may perceive it differently. This issue is exacerbated in men's professional football where players have been to have to withstand an increased severity of humour, to conform to the masculine ideals the sport promotes (A. Parker, 2006). Ultimately, this may mean that the conceptual distinctiveness of bullying, teasing and banter may not be as pronounced in contexts where hyper-masculinity is a prominent feature.

The final delineating factor discussed by Bishop-Mills and Muckleroy-Carwile (2009) between bullying and teasing is ambiguity. They discussed how ambiguity links to one of the core elements at the heart of definitions of bullying which is the notion of intentionality. On this theme a highlighted issue is that humans are impeded and inaccurate at deciphering intentionality, until they have applied their own interpretation of what the message means to them (Epley, Keysar, Van Boven, & Gilovich, 2004; Piaget, 1932). To balance a message being taken at face value and out of context, ambiguity is used through exaggerated winks, laughs and other forms of expression (Eisenberg, 1986). This playful, jocular form of interaction is seen to be in direct contrast to the deliberate, hurtful acts of bullying (Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009). As briefly exemplified in these authors' review, these types of interactions may be at the centre of positive interactions within a football team or group. This facilitates the need to scrutinise teasing behaviour to as multiple interpretations of the behaviour are possible (Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009). However, one point not covered by this review on the delineating notion of ambiguity, especially as humans mis-interpret behaviours consistently, is it potentiates the risk of a clearly intended pro-social teasing act being interpreted as bullying. Moreover as less hostile intentions were reported by team captains as part of their experiences of bullying in sport, it would suggest the prevalence of a blurred line between bullying and teasing exists in this context (Carrera et al., 2011; Kerr et al., 2016). This coupled with further conceptual confusion in the research literature, given terms such as cruel teasing and non-malign bullying share common elements, suggests more

research is required to understand the perceptual elements of bullying and teasing from a participant's stance (Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009; Carrera et al., 2011; Rigby, 2007). This is in contrast to the focus on children's definitions of these terms and measurement via self-report questionnaires which underpins bullying research.

The research separating bullying and teasing by Bishop-Mills and Muckleroy-Carwile (2009) and Keltner and colleagues (2001) also suffered familiar limitations to both Olewus' (1993) and Volk and colleagues' (2014) attempts to define bullying. Firstly, these teasing reviews were still heavily influenced by school-based studies, though Keltner and colleagues (2001) stated the term teasing covers a broad range of behaviours across a broad range of contexts, which results in many varying definitions. As reviews these studies also did not directly tap an individual's conceptualisation of bullying or teasing. Equally, the mainly school-based focus, gives no assurance that this delineation of bullying and teasing, is applicable to other contexts such as football. This is in light of the already cited point that variations in definitions of bullying and teasing exist within already researched contexts such as school.

Despite these acknowledged limitations, it is important to consider how teasing may differ between groups. One clear dividing line exists between males and females, with teasing being more ingrained into males' socialisation, whereas for females teasing is a less common and more volatile act (Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009; Eder, 1991). A range of research reveals that females are more sensitive than males to teasing, due to its appearance related content; for males teasing is encouraged and considered culturally normal, but this is not the case for females (Kruger, Gordon, & Kuban, 2006; Mooney, Creeser, & Blatchford, 1991; Scambler, Harris, & Milich, 1998). These sex differences in teasing are important for any study of bullying and teasing to consider, as for males what might appear as a dysfunctional act in teasing, actually fulfils a pro-social role in their relationships; whereas for females teasing could be seen as a painful act, more akin to definitions of bullying mentioned previously (Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009). Alternatively, this may indicate that males may have internalised the ideals promoted by contexts such as professional

football where they have to take teasing, as a means of demonstrating their masculine worth (A. Parker, 2006).

Another key demographic factor which merits consideration within the bullying and teasing literature is that of age. As Swain (1998) found there are vast differences in perceptions of bullying from 8 to 11½ year old students, with a 100 per cent of the former viewing fighting as bullying compared to 16 per cent of the latter. It was apparent that younger children had a far more extensive definition of bullying which went beyond the repetitive act mentioned previously. The uncertainty around what bullying is from a developmental perspective is further compounded by research into teasing. Mooney and colleagues' (1991) study found that two-thirds of 7 year olds felt angry or sad after being teased and therefore saw this as a predominantly negative act. This was supported by Scrambler and colleagues (1998) who found with young children that teasing involved causing upset, while acts such as name calling were more akin to bullying. However, as Bishop-Mills and Muckleroy-Carwile (2009) reported children as young as 10 view teasing both positively and negatively. For college age participants teasing is viewed as a positive relational strategy suggesting that cognitive abilities, amongst other factors such as environmental influences and socialisation processes, affect the interpretation of this act. A key point to note is that developmental research on both bullying and teasing to date, focuses primarily on children and adolescents up to college age. Whilst it is encouraging that these groups have been covered, research on bullying and teasing has generally omitted a significant part of the adult population. From a moral perspective, adults who theoretically are at an autonomous stage of development, may have to go through even more complex processes to disentangle intentionality regarding bullying and teasing, given they are aware that their perspective on these behaviours may differ from another person. This may be further complicated by environments where certain socialisation processes determine that hurtful acts are acceptable (e.g., dressing room banter in football). Therefore, it seems a study of bullying and teasing in adults outside of the school context, with a focus on both the psychological and sociological essences of these concepts, has the potential to make a unique contribution to this body of research.

2.3 Conceptualising bullying in sport

Research within the sporting literature exemplifies the equivocal picture around the distinctiveness of the terms bullying, banter, teasing and victimisation (Jankauskiene, Kardelis, Sukys, & Kardeliene, 2008; Peguero & Williams, 2013; Peterson, Puhl, & Luedicke, 2012; Puhl, Peterson, & Luedicke, 2013; Sweeting & West, 2001). The only area of conceptual clarity is that bullying is an area of abuse, however doubts around its main characteristics reinforces the need to study it within this context. In line with the broader developmental psychology literature, there is uncertainty around whether bullying and teasing are distinct or the same phenomena in sport, given that practices such as sledging may fit in either category (BBC, 2014b). On one level sledging may involve the light-hearted, jocular characteristics of teasing around sporting performance (Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009), while on another it may involve a goal-directed intent to harm an individual verbally, which underpins bullying (Volk et al., 2014). Sweeting and West (2001) illustrated the degree of inconsistency with these terms by viewing bullying as a physical behaviour (e.g. intimidation on the sports field) whereas teasing was seen as verbal acts of name calling. However, as strong correlations between bullying and teasing were found, these were collapsed into the same construct, which presented a potentially problematic issue for those sporting participants who might value the pro-social aspect of teasing (Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009; Sweeting & West, 2001). In addition, this may also create issues for coach education programmes which are designed to discriminate between bullying and teasing.

Jankauskiene and colleagues (2008) took an alternative view, describing how bullying and teasing are influenced by semantic differences in different countries, implying that further research needs to clarify these concepts. For example, it is uncertain whether repeated teasing about a misplaced pass in football constitutes bullying or just teasing in isolation. As Sweeting and West (2001, p.238) noted the comparison between bullying and teasing rates was difficult given the "disparities in the definition of the term bullying." Not only this, these authors stated that the lack of a definition of bullying in sport can lead to this concept being discussed concurrently with a "degree of acceptable teasing" (Sweeting & West, 2001, p.238). This may mean that one-off jokes about aspects such as physical appearance may

16

be construed as bullying, when actually they lack the goal-directedness and repetition of a bullying act. As such, this provides further evidence the sporting context highlighting issues with the conceptual confusion between bullying and teasing.

The sporting research literature into bullying is not only limited by confusion between the terms bullying and teasing. Through measuring a range of psychosocial factors, ranging from self-worth and misbehaviour through to family socioeconomic status (SES), various authors demonstrated confusion between the terms bullying and victimisation (Peguero & Williams, 2013; Peterson et al., 2012; Piek et al., 2005). Some have viewed bullying as conceptually different to victimisation (Peguero & Williams, 2013), others as a subordinate category of victimisation (Peterson et al. 2012), whereas others have considered bullying and victimisation to be synonymous terms (Piek et al., 2005). This reveals a range of conceptual questions as to what might be bullying and what might be victimisation. In Peguero and Williams' (2013) case, a sporting participant may feel they are being victimised if they receive negative attention from their peers after a misplaced pass in football (e.g. through increased scrutiny of their performance) but not necessarily bullied if they do not receive any verbal or personal abuse. Whereas, using Peterson and colleagues' (2012) study as a guide, they may feel they are being bullied as part of this process of being singled out by their peers. However, based on Piek and colleagues' (2005) study the very process of being victimised means they are being bullied. Such confusion within sporting research exacerbates the issue with the lack of clarity around the term bullying. Moreover, it suggests that before sporting research on bullying can be meaningfully expanded, there needs to be more conceptual clarity around this term. With this confusion in mind, a clearer understanding of football participants' conceptualisation of these terms may add significantly to the current findings in this area.

Furthermore, there is practical utility in providing further understanding of the term bullying in sport, in order to educate coaches, participants and other key sporting figures to recognise this behaviour. Previous psychological literature has highlighted a range of practical issues whereby teachers and sports coaches fail to intervene, are associated in bullying behaviour through ignoring and not acting on it and are less close to the

perpetrators of this behaviour (Evans, Adler, MacDonald, & Cote, 2016; Li & Rukavina, 2012; O'Connor & Graber, 2014). For example, the "KP Genius" parody Twitter account showed how England cricketer Kevin Pietersen felt that ignoring this behaviour and a lack of intervention by coaches and senior figures led to relational bullying (BBC, 2014b). As Kirby and Wintrup (2002) highlighted these potentially abusive hazing practices which might be deemed as acceptable, can overlap into discriminatory bullying behaviours adding further to this conceptual confusion. Likewise, hazing can be seen as a harmful behaviour, which may be similar to bullying, however both concepts lack a clear definition in sport (Diamond, Callahan, Chain, & Solomon, 2016). These authors stated that bullying research largely focused within education, leaves coaches unaware of what constitutes hazing in sport. Nevertheless, these findings reveal that bullying behaviour is alive within the sporting environment and negatively impacts sporting performers. As such it seems that research providing further conceptualisation of this term, could afford benefits for figures such as coaches on when to intervene, whilst allowing them to ascertain both appropriate and inappropriate behaviours in sport.

At this point, the conceptual understanding of bullying has revolved around a set of characteristics and behaviours rather than a concept which has been defined. At one end, bullying has been characterised as an act of homophobic abuse which can be explained sociologically through the prevalence of hyper-masculinity in sport (Brackenridge, Rivers, Gough, & LLewellyn, 2007; Mattey, McCloughan, & Hanrahan, 2014). While elsewhere, researchers have illustrated bullying (and teasing to some extent) as an act which is focused more around the psychological aspects of weight, body size and appearance (Li & Rukavina, 2012; O'Connor & Graber, 2014). O'Connor and Graber in particular chose to ground their work in a social ecological framework of bullying in Physical Education (PE), with a particular emphasis on the psychological aspects of individual, family and peer group factors. However, this study was limited by less of a focus on the broader impact of what was framed as community and societal influence on bullying. Therefore, it would appear that grounding findings within a broader psychosocial framework of theory and research, which considers individual and relational factors regarding bullying within the culture and context of professional football, may address these concerns.

Taken overall, while these studies provide some useful illustration of bullying behaviours, they still do not resolve the differences between bullying and behaviours such as teasing. To address this limitation men's professional football seems the optimal context to explore whether the characteristics and behaviours found in research to date are consistent with players' conceptualisation of bullying, especially given players tend to focus heavily on aspects such as physical appearance (A. Parker, 2006)

2.4 The Nature and Outcomes of Bullying in Football

Research alluding to bullying in football has tended to view it as part of the various forms of abuse within coach-athlete and other relationships (Brackenridge, Bringer, & Bishopp, 2005; Brackenridge et al., 2004; Pitchford et al., 2004). The prevalence of abuse in this environment is reinforced by the perceived need to display emotional toughness and a culture of resilience, to fulfil the ideal character this environment promotes (Brackenridge et al., 2005; A. Parker & Manley, 2016). These cultural norms and values, which are ingrained in the early stages of players' careers, may explain why players are reluctant to discuss bullying behaviour and may lead to the outcomes of players suppressing feelings of victimisation and avoiding reporting this behaviour (A. Parker & Manley, 2016).

Within football several authors have highlighted verbal, emotional and psychological abuse as issues which are consistent with broader definitions of bullying (S. Kelly & Waddington, 2006; A. Parker, 2006; Pitchford et al., 2004; Williams & Guerra, 2007). Pitchford and colleagues' (2004) findings described an openly critical, whilst at other times subtly discriminatory, set of behaviours adopted by coaches and spectators, which led to a pressurising environment for the players. Within trainees, it has been seen that English professional football breeds an environment of largely implicit behavioural codes to which players must accept and be subservient to, into their adult careers (A. Parker, 1996, 2001). Within much of this body of research (see A. Parker, 1996) this apprenticeship was discussed in relation to the concepts of 'situated learning' and 'communities of practice'. These ideas might describe how bullying is learned as a function of the context and culture of professional football. For Parker, this learning is

embedded into established communities of practice which might explain how young male footballers learn behaviours such as bullying and banter, almost as 'skills' of social interaction from older professionals. However, in relation to these concepts these ideas have not been fully explored and the psychological aspect of learning has not been considered.

Closely aligned to the ideas of 'situated learning' and 'communities of practice' is players' learned deference to the various forms of physical and verbal abuse, displayed by managers and coaches which are designed to preserve managerial control and are often celebrated as a means of identifying stronger from weaker players and delivering results (S. Kelly & Waddington, 2006; A. Parker, 1996, 2000a, 2000b, 2001, 2006). These forms of personal castigation and scornful humour, have been found to manifest themselves in aggressive forms of banter and criticism which players are expected to raise their tolerance to, as part of their 'learning curve' as a professional (S. Kelly & Waddington, 2006; A. Parker, 2006). The unanimous tendency within a professional footballer's discourse to favourably view banter even though it might otherwise be termed as bullying (Savage, 2014), reinforces the notion that football might be an ideal environment to study negative abusive practices in sport. Furthermore the embedding of cultural norms from a young age to view behaviours which verge on bullying as banter, may mean that players reveal new light on the conceptualisation of the term bullying (Savage, 2014). Equally, the potentially raised tolerance levels players have may mean that their line between behaviours such as banter and teasing to bullying may also have shifted. Despite this apparent need to understand these concepts better, current research falls short of exploring the bullying that goes on in sport (Evans et al., 2016).

Recent research into bullying experiences has typically been more psychological in nature, showing it to be a negative relationship feature, which can lead to poor self-esteem, depression, burnout and various other mental health issues (Evans et al., 2016; Mattey et al., 2014; Yildiz, 2015). This is at a time when a range of research has found mental health problems to be prevalent amongst professional footballers (Gouttebarge, Backx, Aoki, & Kerkhoffs, 2015; Gouttebarge, Frings-Dressen, & Sluter, 2015; van Ramele, Aoki, & Kerkhoffs, 2017), although whether these are

directly connected to bullying is unknown. On a relational level, Evans et al. (2016) highlighted the aspect of peers and how they can damage sporting experiences through gossip, violence and teasing. Other young athletes have reported that these negative behaviours can be based on gender and ethnicity (MacDonald, Cote, Eys, & Deakin, 2012; Stirling, 2009).

Another area of isolation in football which research on bullying has focused on surrounds sexuality (Brackenridge et al., 2007). Consistent with more recent research in sport (e.g. Mattey et al., 2014) these authors depicted football as a site of heterosexism and a place of suppression and inherent masculinity. For male players they were subjected to homophobic language and hyper-heterosexuality, whereby gay males remained suppressed and were forced to stay silent around their sexual life (Brackenridge et al., 2007). To this end, it suggests the men's professional football is patterned around the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity', which reinforces heterosexism and reinforces a sense of authority and power within players (Connell, 2008). This has led to the situation where there is only one openly gay footballer in England (White, 2017). These findings are concerning given that 93% of fans revealed there is no place for homophobia in football, suggesting that football's governors, clubs and agents are to blame (Cashmore & Cleland, 2012). It also suggests further research is warranted particularly within football, to understand more about how key concepts such as bullying link to homophobia (Brackenridge et al., 2007).

While the previous research provides a sociological explanation for bullying in football research in sport psychology offers an alternative view of this concept. Bullying in other forms appears to exist and initial findings suggest coaches may be an implicit if not direct part of this process. Baar and Wubbels (2011) found that bullying and peer aggression within sport occurs more frequently in sport clubs, than in schools, with males reported higher levels of these behaviours suggesting this was an 'at risk' group worth researching further. It was suggested this may be due to elementary schools paying far greater attention to peer aggression and victimisation, which led to teachers being better prepared to deal with it (Baar & Wubbels, 2013). This suggestion gathered support from their interviews with sports coaches, which demonstrated that they were unaware of what the construct of peer aggression is and were unable to estimate the actual extent of peer

aggression and victimisation at their clubs (Shannon, 2013). Equally, coaches overestimated their own impact, control and effectiveness in handling the issue, although they were aware it linked significantly to motivation and dropout. Seemingly, coaches do not fully understand the concept of bullying in sport or how to deal with it, which coupled with professional football coaches' roles as instigators of this behaviour (see S. Kelly & Waddington, 2006; Parker, 2006), has implications for whether they recognise bullying behaviour in both themselves and their participants.

Other research has also highlighted that bullying exists in sport but has also emphasised that there is a lack of understanding regarding this concept and why it occurs (Peguero, 2008; Shannon, 2013). These studies revealed that this behaviour is prevalent across a variety of sporting contexts from more competitive environments to recreational intramural sporting contexts. What was unclear from these studies was how much this bullying behaviour was driven by relational features, from key figures such as peers and coaches. The main findings instead revealed that victims were bullied because participating in extracurricular sport meant that they were in school more often and in the case of the latter study, competitive recreational sporting environments are less supervised than schools (Peguero, 2008; Shannon, 2013). While Shannon's (2013) approach of aligning to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) social-ecological framework was useful in identifying some of the dimensions of bullying behaviour, a broader framework of psychosocial theory and research may provide a more detailed conceptual understanding of bullying which is better matched to the participants data, within particular contexts such as professional football. For example the segregated environment of professional football, where players spend vast amounts of time together in a place often free from surveillance (Gearing, 1999; A. Parker, 1996; A. Parker & Manley, 2016), may foster a different view of bullying compared to other contexts. Equally from a psychological perspective, it is uncertain whether bullying in football is driven by certain relationships (e.g. peers/coaches) or other factors such as individual differences amongst players. This highlights that while research evidences that bullying occurs in this environment, there is a lack of conceptual understanding of it. This lack of clarity about how football participants conceptualise this term is problematic, in the sense that it makes designing effective player and coach education around bullying very

difficult. Thus neither players nor coaches may be cognisant when observing this behaviour, which appears to necessitate further inquiry into this term in football.

2.5 Research methods used to study bullying in sport

The lack of understanding around bullying within sport psychology research may be a result of the research approaches employed to study this concept. To date, some of the research into abuse more broadly has been conducted via either review based studies or a mixed methods approach (see Brackenridge & Fasting, 2002; Brackenridge et al., 2004; Pitchford et al., 2004). In the case of victimisation there has been some initial exploration using interviews (e.g. Baar & Wubbels, 2013), while the general trend within bullying research for authors to favour a quantitative approach, often using questionnaires, to correlate bullying with various psychologically focused outcomes such as body image, sedentary behaviour, self-esteem and self-confidence (Slater & Tiggemann, 2011; Tilindienè & Gailianienë, 2013; Tilindienė, Rastauskienė, Gaižauskienė, & Stupuris, 2012). The potential issue with the use of this approach is that instrumentation has been developed and used to measure bullying, without firstly understanding the concept in sport.

The potential issues with measurement might explain why research using quantitative approaches has revealed a range of contradictory findings (Scarpa, Carraro, & Gobbi, 2012; Tilindienė et al., 2012). These authors in particular revealed potentially surprising findings: firstly athletes with higher rather than lower levels of self-esteem were more likely to experience bullying, secondly non-significant relationships were found between bullying and self-confidence when a negative correlation might be expected and finally the bullies were those participants who were typically lower in self-esteem rather than higher in it. In line with this Scarpa and colleagues (2012) found that the incidence of peer victimisation, which subsumed the term bullying, did not predict enjoyment in physical activity. By contrast Tilindienè and Gailianienë (2013) reported in a study of athletes and non-athletes, that those with higher self-confidence demonstrated being bullied less often. Non-sport participants demonstrated higher self-confidence and lower incidences of bullying than sport participants. In addition, Demissie and colleagues (2014) found bullying was associated with lower physical

activity in a male population and higher sedentary behaviour in females. However, the reasons for these links were not fully explored, which reflects a general criticism of quantitative research in sport psychology in that it typically adheres to a positivist view of reality and its methods are overly reductionist (Krane & Baird, 2005). Therefore it remains uncertain as to what types of individuals bullying occurs to, as well how it affects enjoyment and physical activity.

This range of findings demonstrates that bullying in sport appears to be occurring but there is lack of certainty over what it impacts, how it does it and why. The preference for bullying research in sport psychology to favour correlational approaches, means that information around the antecedents of bullying is not provided. Even studies which have had more of a focus on whether its incidence is higher in sport or schools or within certain relationships, have been limited to a questionnaire based approach (Evans et al., 2016). The use of questionnaires raises further concern regarding how well bullying has been operationalised, due to the already acknowledged, inconsistency of findings using this approach.

To remedy these limitations an alternative, qualitative approach can be beneficial to build on the embryonic body of research of this type surrounding bullying in sport and education. Of those studies which have favoured this approach, a combination of semi-structured interviews and focus groups were utilised to examine the impact of teasing in PE, to provide some conceptual understanding of bullying in PE, to understand why participants cease participation in sport and to address what teachers think bullying is in schools (Li & Rukavina, 2012; O'Connor & Graber, 2014; Slater & Tiggemann, 2010; H. Smith et al., 2009). The focus on the conceptual understanding of bullying in PE, as well as what teachers think bullying is in schools, acted as a springboard to explore bullying in football (O'Connor & Graber, 2014; H. Smith et al., 2009). These previous studies provided a useful insight into the characteristics of bullying behaviour and what might prevent this behaviour being reported, as well as how bullying may be differentiated from teasing but they did not seek to conceptualise this behaviour within the sporting context (O'Connor & Graber, 2014; H. Smith et al., 2009). This may also be as a result of qualitative research of this type still appearing to embrace a post-positivist stance based on

traditional evaluation criteria (Krane & Baird, 2005). Whilst it is encouraging to see that studies have attempted to provide some conceptual clarity on bullying in PE and the benefits of using qualitative approaches to do this, it suggests there is further opportunity to utilise this methodology within professional football. Here far less research of this type in relation to bullying is evident. Researchers such as Jowett and Pocwardowski (2007) have suggested that there may be even greater scope to understand these dysfunctional relational concepts through phenomenological, interpretive research designs. Phenomenological approaches have enjoyed renewed interest within psychology, as they offer the opportunity to return participants' perspectives and experiences to the forefront of these studies (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). Given the lack of a clear conceptual understanding of bullying within sport, as well as the particular relational context of men's professional football, such designs have the scope to provide rich descriptions that are sensitive to the participants' voice.

Finally, the scope certain approaches such as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) offers, supports the adoption of a broader psychosocial framework of theory and research to interpret bullying with professional football, by recognising the value of investigating the person in context (Larkin et al., 2006). In particular this methodological approach only uses theoretical material when relevant, focusing on those that maintain the idiographic commitment of the analysis, rather than being guided by theory imported from outside the text (Shinebourne, 2011; J. A. Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Therefore, psychological or sociological theory and research can be employed, depending on the degree to which the findings are focused on individual factors or the nature of the context.

2.6 The Football Environment and Bullying

This review has alluded to the potential value of unearthing bullying behaviours in the context of professional football. In particular the unique features of this sport and its predominant culture, provide key reasons to necessitate further exploration of bullying within this context. Within professional football, its inherent competition precipitates evaluation both internally and externally around who is part of the starting team (Yildiz, 2015). Moreover demonstrating excellence at this level can lead to improved financial rewards, increased global recognition and the chance to

further careers with better teams (Yildiz, 2015). Whilst these features are not issues in themselves, they have been found to set the scene for an environment in which bullying occurs (Yildiz, 2015). In this regard understanding the essences of bullying within a professional environment such as football, may add significantly to the conceptualisation of bullying research by moving beyond a developmental, educational focus to organisational and sporting contexts. This offers the opportunity to explore whether aspects such as career progression and competition may be salient features of this behaviour.

The unique culture of professional football also provides potentially rich territory for contextualising the concept of bullying. Professional football is underpinned by a hegemonic, masculine culture which leads to an expectation that young players buy into a set of masculine codes which are promoted within working-class locales, which lead to 'shop-floor' language and interaction (A. Parker, 1996; A. Parker & Manley, 2016). This leads not only to the desire to embody hyper-masculine practices such as driving fast cars, designer clothes, financial affluence, social indulgence and sexual promiscuity but also speculative 'banter' such as questioning players' sexuality when they have admitted injury (A. Parker & Manley, 2016; Roderick, Waddington, & Parker, 2000). The concept of banter is particularly noteworthy, as though the general tendency within professional team sports including football, is to view this concept positively in terms of performance, cohesion and bonding, other findings have suggested that this process can mask homophobic and racist behaviour (Gearing, 1999; Hylton, 2018; Krane, 2016; Nesti, 2010; Wagstaff, Martin, & Thelwell, 2017). Given the range and severity of what might be considered banter, it raises important questions about whether bullying behaviours are more extreme in the football context compared to other environments or whether banter is at the essence of bullying.

It is important to note that within professional football banter has been described as a highlight to a player's career, where pranks and 'in-jokes' foster a strong sense of togetherness (Gearing, 1999; Nelson, 1995). Yet on another level the degree to which players are autonomous in partaking in this behaviour is questionable, given the institutional expectation that players will engage in this behaviour in an attempt to prove their masculine

worth and attain peer group credibility (A. Parker, 2000a, 2001, 2006). This coupled with the feeling from players that to attain this credibility they need to both take and give these 'verbal wind ups' to the point their teammates snap, suggested that banter may not necessarily be the positive concept it is often be depicted as (A. Parker, 2000a, 2001, 2006). Moreover, as Parker (2006) highlighted players accept the need to raise their tolerance to these verbal forms of chastisement, in order to demonstrate their ability to withstand the derogation they will receive as a professional footballer. It would appear from these findings that professional football permits a culture of behaviours under the label of banter, which might otherwise illustrate bullying. However, the degree to which players characterise these behaviours as bullying is unknown. Furthermore, research exploring banter as a concept in professional sport is even more limited than bullying, suggesting that this is an ideal context to explore these concepts. Unearthing these concepts within the potentially extreme environment of professional football may provide important understanding around the popularisation of the term banter, given it is such a key component of this environment.

Whilst the potentially close conceptual distance of banter and bullying is one of the key reasons to explore these terms in professional football, exploring the organisational culture of this sport may also provide greater contextual understanding of bullying. Football clubs have been described as authoritarian workplaces, where managers exercise their control via abuse, intimidation and violence, where these harsh behaviours are seen as preparing young players for the rigours of the game, whilst ensuring an acceptance of subordination on behalf of the players (Cushion & Jones, 2006; Cushion & Jones, 2014; S. Kelly & Waddington, 2006). Despite these findings not explicitly stating bullying as a coach behaviour, the abusive, intimidatory and violent characteristics of coaches' actions, coupled with the worrying acts of subordination displayed by professional footballers, necessitates a study of this concept within football. Equally the culture of silence whereby players might not voice their fears, in case of the impact it might have on their career progression and the hierarchical structure which promotes this subservient culture in football, mirrors the aspect of power imbalances found within definitions of bullying (Olewus, 1993; Volk et al., 2014). Given the parallels between the football context and these

conceptual elements of bullying it would suggest that this provides the ideal environment to explore the classic aspects of bullying definitions in practice. If this environment precipitates these behaviours it implies that many players may have experienced bullying and be well placed to help conceptualise this phenomenon. This might provide an important step in developing policy and education in this sport, while also highlighting broader messages about workplace environments which might inform organisational psychological literature.

Whilst a significant body of research and policy has been developed around Child Protection in football, it has often added to the confusion around concepts such as bullying, banter and teasing rather than clarifying their differences (Brackenridge, 2010; Brackenridge et al., 2005; Brackenridge et al., 2004; Brackenridge et al., 2007). Given this is a reflection of issues with the broader bullying literature and the largely unanswered call from Brackenridge (2010) nearly ten years ago that more needs to be done in football to understand bullying and to build policy, it provided further justification for exploring bullying within this environment. These points are compounded by football carrying inherent risks of masculinity, homophobia and alienating experiences which might drive bullying (Brackenridge et al., 2004; Brackenridge et al., 2007; Pitchford et al., 2004). In addition, policies addressing bullying in football have remained focused on the perceptions and experiences of children at the grassroots level, despite several high profile cases of bullying within the men's professional game (BBC, 2019; The FA, 2019). Whilst these policies have shown that this issue is recognised, they still place onus on individual clubs to draft their own anti-bullying policy when they may not possess the expertise to do so. This raises significant questions around whether these policies are even developed or applied to adult professional footballers.

Studying bullying within an adult population, may be particularly important as this group offers quite different perspectives on concepts such as bullying, banter and teasing compared to children, which is emphasised by evidence which shows children view bullying and teasing as the same thing, yet after 12 to 13 the pro-social aspect of teasing becomes apparent (Keltner et al. 2001; Williams & Guerra, 2007). Using adults as a participant group is advantageous as they are seen as being beyond the peak phase

of being bullied, which means they can offer more precise definitions of this concept (Sourander et al., 2007; Swain, 1998). This group of participants can also provide an important contribution to the contextual nature of bullying, particularly within football, as Mattey and colleagues' (2014) have shown that acceptable behaviour in team sports is often driven by a team's values and norms with young adults. This group may therefore provide an alternative version of bullying (where more extreme forms of behaviour are legitimised as banter) that is driven by the implicit values and norms within professional football (A. Parker & Manley, 2016). Alternatively, they may reflect others contexts (e.g. workplace chefs), where the participants did not view bullying as necessarily a negative act and instead viewed it as a legitimate approach to facilitate cohesion (Alexander, MacLaren, O'Gorman, & Taheri, 2011). By focusing on adults as an alternative developmental group it appears that they offer a potentially unique contribution to the bullying literature both inside and out of sport, which may further to serve to inform policy and education in this area. In a similar fashion to the grassroots game, while authorities have sought to raise awareness around mental health issues and bullying, there is a lack of a specific bullying policy for professional football (The PFA, 2019). This may stem from this bullying not being contextualised to this environment, which necessitates a study exploring this with male professional footballers.

2.7 Summary

It is evident from across the literature, further research is required to develop on the conceptual understanding of bullying in men's professional football. Within sport and more particularly football, there is evidence that this phenomenon occurs but, our conceptual understanding of bullying is limited. With these points in mind, the preceding literature review has highlighted the following issues, which this research seeks to address:

- It is not known whether key features highlighted within current definitions of bullying (such as goal-directedness or intentionality, power imbalances and harm) are part of male professional footballers' conceptualisation of bullying or whether other characteristics underpin this concept. This is a result of this participant group not being researched for their perspectives on this behaviour.

- There is a current lack of conceptual clarity around whether bullying, banter, teasing, victimisation are distinct terms across different domains. In sport and football particularly, there were a range of inconsistent findings which have led to worrying findings that key figures such as coaches, either do not recognise or are implicit in this behaviour.

- Research seeking to conceptually understand bullying across different contexts including sport, has generally been over-reliant on self-report questionnaires, with only a limited focus on using more in-depth qualitative methods. These self-report questionnaires have not provided depth of information from the participants' stance to conceptually clarify the concept of bullying and have also revealed issues with adults' understanding of this term. A qualitative approach has been found to provide useful evidence around the causes of bullying in sport and allows the participants more scope to voluntarily divulge information (Shannon, 2013; Stanley, Boshoff, & Dollman, 2012).

- Within men's professional football there is an inherent culture of authoritarianism and subservience, which might promote bullying behaviours. This culture is prevalent and accepted, revealing a worrying set of values and norms within the game. This offers an important opportunity to conceptualise bullying with a group who may recognise it within the sporting context.

- Conceptualising bullying from adult male professional footballers' perspectives makes an important contribution to bullying research by building a deeper perspective of adults' perception of this term; informing the degree to which bullying, banter, teasing and victimisation are seen as similar or different and providing clarity on this behaviour at the professional level of sport, whilst offering the potential to inform coach education and sporting policies to address this behaviour.

The central aim of this thesis is to explore how adult male footballers conceptualise bullying, through their perceptions of what this is within the sporting context. It does not seek to establish a single definition of bullying at this exploratory stage but instead aims to unearth themes regarding how

adult male footballers define this term. The specific research questions for this thesis are what do male professional footballers perceive bullying to be and to what extent does bullying in football differ from teasing, victimisation and banter? To address these questions, as well as some of the methodological shortcomings of previous research into bullying, a qualitative approach will be adopted to allow for an in-depth focus on these concepts.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

The purpose of this research was to provide an initial investigation into bullying within football, where the central aim was to explore how adult male professional footballers conceptualise bullying within their context. This research also sought to understand whether professional footballers perceived bullying to be different from teasing, victimisation and banter. The specific research questions were what do professional footballers perceive bullying to be and to what extent does bullying in football differ from teasing, victimisation and banter? To explore the main research questions, a more naturalistic approach from the individual's perspective was adopted. This enabled the researcher to share the participant's "frame of reference" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013, p.15). This research was consistent with the interpretative paradigm which is characterised by concern for the individual (Cohen et al., 2013).

The benefit of using a more naturalistic approach was that it retained the integrity of the phenomena investigated, which was viewed as advantageous for understanding how the participants perceive and define bullying (Cohen et al., 2013). This also allowed for any similarities and differences between bullying and the other key terms within this study (teasing, victimisation and banter) to be explored, in an attempt to establish greater conceptual understanding of bullying. Another advantage of this approach suggested by Cohen and colleagues was that it allowed for an understanding of the participant from within. This was particularly important as the current study sought to explore perceptions of bullying and the other key terms from the participants' viewpoint. Situating this research within the interpretative paradigm, allowed the study to meaningfully expand on research which has taken a naturalistic approach to address both the concept of bullying and the context of sport (De Wet, 2010; Dionigi, 2006; Krane & Baird, 2005; Markula & Friend, 2005; Rivituso, 2014). This approach afforded the current study further benefits, such as being able to more deeply explore multiple and contradictory experiences on conflicting discourses as well as understanding people's definitions and understanding

of situations (Dionigi, 2006; De Wet, 2010). This study also built on a limitation of sport psychology studies which tend to be positivistic/post-positivistic, whereby overgeneralisation occurs and different people's experiences of their social circumstances and behaviours are omitted (Krane & Baird, 2005). Thus previous bullying research within sport may not have explored the unique perceptions of this phenomenon by participants or may have quantitatively categorised some of the data within qualitative research (Krane & Baird, 2005).

3.1.1 Phenomenology

More specifically the research adopted a phenomenological methodology. Phenomenology is defined as "the study of phenomena; things as they present themselves" (Allen-Collinson, 2016). 'Modern Phenomenology' arose as Husserl's (2002) response to the inadequacies of the objective view of existence (Allen-Collinson, 2016). This led to one of the multiple strands on what might now be viewed as phenomenology, transcendental or descriptive phenomenology (Allen-Collinson, 2016). However, other existential phenomenologists such as Merleau-Ponty (2001) and Nesti (2004) have identified other variations on phenomenology, revealing unanswered questions as to what phenomenology actually is. Although as Allen-Collinson (2016) noted, this leaves phenomenology as a contested, nuanced philosophy it also is one with huge scope and potential when applied to sport and exercise psychology.

To date three key forms (or tendencies) have been applied to the psychology of sport and exercise (Allen-Collinson, 2016). Firstly, transcendental or descriptive phenomenology which is rooted in Husserl's (2002) notion that phenomenology is "a rigorous human science that aimed to generate detailed descriptions of phenomena," gives rise to its descriptive label (Allen-Collinson, 2016, p.12). In the context of the present study this was consistent with the study's aim to explore what participants conceptualise bullying to be. In addition, the transcendental element of this branch of phenomenology was also reflected in the present study's purpose to transcend the tacit definition of bullying in sport adopted by previous research, into something which is evidenced by the participants themselves (Allen-Collinson, 2016; Cohen et al., 2013). By contrast, existential phenomenology draws upon existentialism to question the nature of our

being and existence, with a strong focus on understanding the meaning of everyday life (Allen-Collinson, 2016; Cohen et al., 2013; Nesti, 2004). This form of phenomenology focuses on individuals' lived experiences and how their everyday knowledge is shaped by other people's behaviour and that these experiences vary from situation to situation (Cohen et al., 2013; Nesti, 2004). With this form of phenomenology, effort is directed at avoiding psychological labels and terms and the researcher is required to avoid imposing (i.e. use bracketing) their own beliefs and perceptions about the phenomena under investigation. The situational element of this type of phenomenology fitted to some extent with the present study, as its focus was to explore the definition of the term bullying within the specific context of football. The final form of phenomenology, empirical phenomenology, moves beyond the strong grounding in the philosophical tradition of transcendental/descriptive and existential phenomenology (Allen-Collinson, 2016; Martínková & Parry, 2013). These authors describe a branch of phenomenology which sets about using the philosophical tradition of phenomenology to study an empirical field such as sports psychology. In particular, this type of phenomenology moves beyond a pure description of subjective everyday experiences and taken for granted ways of thinking (Allen-Collinson, 2016). This also paralleled the present study in its desire to move beyond taken for granted ways of thinking about bullying in sport generally and football more specifically. Although the present study drew on some of these key strands of phenomenology, it is important to state that in line with Allen-Collinson's (2016) chapter, it instead operated a phenomenological inspired method and analysis, as opposed to being directly rooted in a particular form of phenomenology.

It must be noted that the 'phenomenological method' is not the same as a research technique such as qualitative semi-structured interviews (Allen-Collinson, 2016). To this end, the phenomenological method is much more about embracing a whole way of thinking and being which is characterised by openness and curiosity (Allen-Collinson, 2016). However, as Nesti (2004) stated psychological research which might be viewed as descriptive and qualitative can be based on an underpinning philosophy such as phenomenology. Consistent with the philosophical element of phenomenology, this study was interested in participants' thinking of bullying as a concept, describing structures of common experience from a

first-person viewpoint, rather than a focus on participants' behaviours and actions (Allen-Collinson, 2016; Martínková & Parry, 2013; Nesti, 2004). This was with the goal of "questioning and bracketing (as far as possible from the researcher's perspective) existing assumptions and presuppositions regarding bullying, in order to approach it 'fresh', and to identify its essential characteristics" (Allen-Collinson, 2016, p.15). It must be noted that these points surrounding phenomenology as a philosophy place great importance on being focused purely on the participants' experience (e.g. Nesti, 2004). Given that this study did not assume that the participants have experienced bullying and rather was focused on the participants' perceptions of bullying (Patton, 2002); it did not claim to be purely phenomenological and instead was viewed as inspired by the phenomenological perspective (Allen-Collinson, 2016). This aligned more appropriately with empirical phenomenologists' beliefs that other methods have the potential to produce rich, in-depth descriptions of participants' own experiences to which phenomenological inspired analysis can be applied (Allen-Collinson, 2016). In addition, given the problems highlighted by Martínková and Parry (2013) regarding whether the empirical variant is a 'phenomenology', this research reconciled this problem by using phenomenological inspired approaches without claiming to be a phenomenology. This approach was suited to the proposed study as the aim was to address the participants' perspectives on bullying as well as what it meant to them (Schwandt, 2000).

Moreover this research expanded on some of the emergent phenomenological research which has been conducted into perceptions of bullying within the educational field (Hutchinson, 2012; Lester & Maldonado, 2014). In particular, there was concern for what the participants perceived bullying to be within the wider social mechanisms of teasing and victimisation (Hutchinson, 2012). Despite not being a purely phenomenological study some of the cornerstones of phenomenological research proposed by Allen-Collinson (2016) were employed. For example, authors have suggested that it may be impossible for those undertaking a phenomenological study to detach themselves, their prejudgements, meanings and experiences from both their data collection methods and analysis (Cresswell, 2012; Husserl, 1970). In response to this, the core phenomenological element of epoché was employed to challenge taken for

granted, everyday assumptions around the concept of bullying. This was with the aim of arriving at the essential characteristics of this phenomenon in football and involved some participants checking the researcher's interpretation of their data (Nesti, 2004). The second cornerstone regarded a focus on rich description (Allen-Collinson, 2016; Nesti, 2004), which was particularly relevant to the present study's aim of understanding footballers' conceptualisation of bullying. To address this, a focus on the essential characteristics of bullying was driven by a more naturalistic style of questioning, which was more open ended (Nesti, 2004).

In order to develop the participants' rich descriptions of bullying into a more interpretative account, which contextualised their claims within the culture of men's professional football (Larkin et al., 2006), the present study was guided by the principles of IPA (J. A. Smith, 1996). IPA offered the present study the opportunity to make sense of the interdependent relationship between the 'person' (i.e. professional footballers' view of bullying) and the 'world' (the football context), while being informed by three key areas of philosophy phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Larkin et al., 2006; Shinebourne, 2011; J. A. Smith et al., 2009). This allowed the present study's findings to be interpreted within a psychosocial framework, while reinforcing phenomenological psychology's approach of being influenced by the divergent range of phenomenology perspectives (Larkin et al., 2006; Shinebourne, 2011). As authors have highlighted previously (Shinebourne, 2011; J. A. Smith et al., 2009), the use of IPA allowed the present study to conduct psychological research which is consistent with and combines elements of the distinctive strands of descriptive, existential and empirical phenomenology. This led the study to adopt a position which was consistent with the 'contextualist' position of IPA, while also allowing for the adoption of a broadly social constructionist stance (Larkin et al., 2006; Shinebourne, 2011). The focus on the context of professional football in shaping conceptualisations of bullying and the interpretative range and flexibility offered by IPA (Larkin et al., 2006), also allowed the present study to be informed by sociological as well as psychological concepts and theory when analysing and interpreting the findings.

3.1.2 Qualitative Research

Although the present study was guided by a phenomenological approach, given IPA's rising prominence as a qualitative methodology (J. A. Smith, 2016), it was important to summarise this type of research. Qualitative research aims to capture meanings or qualities that are not quantifiable such as thoughts, feelings and experiences and is intertwined with the interpretative approach (Jones, 2014). This research uses data which cannot be easily reflected in numbers, thus the data are typically expressed in words and the researcher's interpretation is key (Jones, 2014). The goal of this research is to discover and develop new theories and ideas rather than to test them (Flick, 2009). In the context of the present study this was particularly important, as it was concerned with the participants' view of the term bullying and what it meant from their perspective (Willig, 2008). Indeed, to use preconceived variables around the term bullying would have meant that the researcher had imposed their own viewpoint, contrary to the study's aim for the participants to make sense of this phenomenon (Willig, 2008). Furthermore, qualitative research has the unique capability to address the whole phenomenon of bullying, without reducing it to a set of discrete variables (Brinkmann, 2015). This re-emphasised the preference for a qualitative rather than quantitative study, in order to explore the footballers' perceptions of bullying. Moreover, as Willig (2008) noted if the researcher holds an empiricist epistemological position, then qualitative research can be driven by phenomenologically inspired techniques such as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), reemphasising that qualitative methodologies can fit within a broad phenomenological approach. The benefit of using a qualitative approach to address phenomenological aspects, is that there is reason to believe psychological reality cannot be reduced to people's experiences of it (Brinkmann, 2015). Therefore, this approach was selected in order to gain a depth of understanding of an undefined concept from the participants' perspective.

3.2 Participants and Sampling

3.2.1 Sampling

In addition to the important decisions regarding taking a qualitative approach and using an interview as a method, another key consideration was the suitability of the sampling strategy adopted, given this impacts the quality of a piece of research (Cohen et al., 2013). With this in mind, Cohen

and colleagues (2013) identified five key factors which influenced the selection of the sample for the present study: the sample size; the representativeness of the sample; access to the sample; the sampling strategy to be used; and the type of research being undertaken. Typically there is a relationship between the sampling strategy and the type of research, such that probability samples are tied to quantitative research and non-probability samples are tied to qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2013). Probability samples draw randomly from the wider population as a whole as the researcher seeks to make generalisations about the population and seeks to represent them as widely as possible (Cohen et al., 2013). Non-probability samples offer an alternative approach by deliberately avoiding representing the wider population and instead seeking to only represent a particular named part of the population (Cohen et al., 2013). Given the present study's focus was to represent a particular group (male professional footballers) a non-probability sample was preferred (Cohen et al., 2013). In addition, the sample also needed to be selected with the use of IPA in mind, given that this approach calls for a fairly homogenous group of participants (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2006). Within the non-probability sampling strategy a range of specific sampling types are possible, which include: convenience; quota; purposive; dimensional; snowball and theoretical sampling (Cohen et al., 2013). In the current study purposive sampling was the selected type to recruit participants.

Purposive sampling involves the careful selection of participants based on their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought (Cohen et al., 2013; Flick, 2009). This type of sampling can involve the selection of critical cases where opinions from experts in the field are sought (Flick, 2009), which in this research's case was professional footballers' opinions of bullying. It is important to state that in order to be defined as professional footballers, the players needed to be paid to play football, to potentially see payment as a necessity for their involvement in the game and to be part of an Under 23 Academy Squad or First Team (Dixon, 2016a). Purposive sampling was viewed as providing more representativeness for these participants than other forms of non-probability sampling, as it can be used to access more knowledgeable others by virtue of their current professional role, expertise and experience (Ball, 1990). As the present study's focus was specifically on professional

footballers, this style of sampling was seen as far more beneficial than random sampling, as the wider population are potentially unaware of the characteristics of bullying in football and may be unable to comment on what this looks like in key sites of interest such as dressing rooms, training grounds or match-day venues (Cohen et al., 2013). Moreover, the primary concern of this sampling method was consistent with the study's aim to acquire in-depth information (Cohen et al., 2013).

This sampling type was selected over the other non-probability approaches for additional reasons. With convenience sampling, the researcher selects from those individuals they have access to, without seeking to represent any group apart from the sample itself (Cohen et al., 2013). In the present study the researcher did not have immediate access to the participant group, so this sampling type was not seen to be as beneficial as purposive. Both quota and dimensional sampling look to represent percentages of certain demographic groups from the population and may then look to refine the sample based on further areas of interest within that population (Cohen et al., 2013; Robson & McCartan, 2016). As this study was not seeking to look at different footballing populations (e.g. male and female players), the purposive type was preferred to quota and dimensional sampling. Snowball sampling was rejected as this sampling method can be prone to bias depending on who the initial contact is from the participant base (Heckathorn, 2002). The initial contact is utilised to recruit more participants and this sampling type is purely limited to those who volunteer through this gatekeeper (Heckathorn, 2002). In some cases, participant gatekeepers may also "hide" potential participants in an effort to protect them and therefore create hard to reach populations that this method is designed to mitigate against (Cohen et al., 2013). Purposive sampling was selected over theoretical sampling as with the latter, there is no precise guidance on the number of participants to be sampled whereas IPA studies tend to offer a typical number (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Hutchinson, 2012; Lester & Maldonado, 2014). With theoretical sampling, the lack of precision regarding sampling size and the uncertainty around when theoretical saturation might be reached can also be problematic for the researcher, if they only have limited access to participants or the number they can recruit is fixed by the number of participants within an organisation (Cohen et al., 2013).

3.2.2 Multiple Site Sampling

Within the present study multiple sites were used to recruit participants as this can offer several benefits compared to using a single-site design (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Robson & McCartan, 2016). Using multiple sites offered the opportunity to develop a richer conceptual understanding of bullying from across sites, rather than being limited to a single one (Cohen et al., 2013). The adoption of a similar approach has been used in case study research to address issues of generalisability common to single case research (Benedichte-Meyer, 2001; Yin, 2009; Woodside, 2010). Furthermore as Leonard-Barton (1990, p.290) stated "there is less chance of misjudging the representativeness of a single event" through this approach. Thus, this approach was used to increase the present study's external validity and to guard against observer bias (Leonard-Barton, 1990)

3.2.3. Site and Participant Samples

18 male professional footballers were interviewed for between 35-70 minutes ($MDuration = 44.11$, $SD = 10.81$) by the researcher across both the 2016-17 and 2017-18 seasons. Given the sensitivity of the topic, three English professional football clubs were selected to take part in the study based on those who were willing to take part. The football clubs were selected based on a purposive sample, as it was important for the research to recruit elite level footballers who had knowledge of how the terms bullying, banter, teasing and victimisation represent themselves in their sport. Moreover the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) advocates the use of a relatively small, purposive, homogenous sample in terms of common variables such as age, gender and level of experience (J. A. Smith, 2016). The number of participants was similar to previous phenomenological research of this type (McDonough, Sabiston, & Ullrich-French, 2011). The participants were all male in line with the study's aims and were aged from 18 to 31 years of age ($Mage = 19.83$, $SD = 2.96$). The players' experience as professional footballers ranged from 2 to 14 years. Although not formally recorded the players' ethnicity was primarily white. Interviews were conducted at the home stadium or training ground of the participant, to mirror the context of the study.

The players were selected for interviews in negotiation firstly with the gatekeeper for the study and then the players themselves. Player interviews were conducted based on both the player's and researcher's availability, with there being no set days for each interview. The gatekeeper provided a group of interested players and they were spoken to as a group by the researcher. A briefing meeting was then arranged at the club's stadium where the researcher outlined the nature of the project, the requirements of the participants and ethical guidelines for the study. Interested participants were then given an information sheet (see Appendix A), which had been outlined by the researcher and consent form to review before agreeing to take part in the study. Those who agreed to participate returned signed forms to the researcher before the commencement of the study.

3.3 Methods of Data Collection

One of the key principles of qualitative research highlighted by Flick (2009) is the correct choice of an appropriate method or set of methods. In the first instance, it was important to consider whether the phenomena under investigation can be explained in isolation and therefore studied via empirical quantitative methods (Flick, 2009). Within this research the semantic issues within the inconsistency around the conceptualisation of bullying, teasing and victimisation meant that this was not possible. Due to this complexity, it was deemed that a qualitative approach was more suitable. Equally, as the goal of this research was not to test what is known and more to discover footballers' perceptions of the term bullying, a qualitative approach was the preferred research method. It must be noted that "there is no single blueprint" for qualitative research and thus there are many methods which can be used (Cohen et al., 2013, p.115). Of these methods the most common in sports research is the interview (Jones, 2014; Sparkes & Smith, 2016). It was important to acknowledge that although interviews are the most popular data collection method within qualitative research in sport and exercise sciences; this did not necessitate their selection as a method (Sparkes & Smith, 2016). However, when seeking participants' viewpoints, it was regarded that interviews were one of the best methods for doing this (Flick, 2009). In support of this, the interview technique in this study, moved away from one of the criticisms of qualitative research in sports psychology, in that it is post-positivistic in its

stance whereby traditional evaluation criteria and quantification of data is still used (Krane & Baird, 2005). Instead it mirrored the phenomenological inspired approach to interviewing, which has been used for participants to define bullying other contexts such as the workplace (De Wet, 2010). This approach allowed for a greater depth in exploring footballers' understanding of the concept of bullying and related terms such as teasing, victimisation and banter.

In relation to Flick's original point regarding choosing the correct method or methods for qualitative research, interviews were selected as a single approach. From an analytical perspective this method best shares the principles and practices of IPA and allows the researcher more of an opportunity to establish a rapport with the participant, as well as the opportunity to probe interesting areas that arise (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2006; Willig, 2008). Importantly as research on the concept of bullying is limited within sport, this method allowed the researcher to enter the participant's world and gave the participant more opportunity to share in the direction of the interview and to take it in novel directions (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2006). Finally the choice of an interview as a single method was driven by the research question. As Willig (2008, p.24) noted in the case of semi-structured interviews, "the interviewer's research question alone often drives" this method. As the present study's focus was on perception it was felt that this method allowed the participant the best opportunity to describe and explain the phenomena under investigation, whilst giving the researcher some balance in maintaining control of the direction of the study (Hutchinson, 2012; J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2006). In addition, other methods which are often used in combination with interviews such as observations can rely on detecting actions or behaviours in concrete situations (Flick, 2009), which was not the aim of the present study's research questions and moreover cannot be guaranteed in the sense that bullying may not be happening in the football context.

3.3.1 Interviews
Interviews are often regarded as collecting qualitative data focused on a phenomenon from the participants' perspective (Jones, 2014). This can be extended into seeing an interview as a social activity, where two or more persons engage in a conversation about themselves and the social world

where they interact with each other over time, using different senses (Sparkes & Smith, 2016). The purpose of this method in qualitative research is to create a conversation which allows the participants to tell their stories, accounts and descriptions about their perspectives and experiences in relation to the research question (Sparkes & Smith, 2016). Importantly an interview cannot be regarded as a neutral, objective tool and will always be shaped by personal and social factors such as the researcher's and participant's motivations, memories, emotions, histories, age, gender, how they see each other and their non-verbal reactions within the interview (Randall & Phoenix, 2009). Therefore within the current study, implications such as how the participants and researcher responded to the truth and social dynamics were considered, as well as conducting the required number of interviews and verifying findings to avoid inaccuracy and bias (Cohen et al., 2013; Sparkes & Smith, 2016). Within the literature researchers have sought to categorise the interview method in various ways (see Cohen et al., 2013; Flick, 2009; Patton, 2002; Sparkes & Smith, 2016). The categorisation of interviews differs in terms of the number of participants and the structure (Sparkes & Smith, 2016). With regard to structure interviews can be classified in the following ways according to Jones (2014): the structured interview, the semi-structured interview, the unstructured interview, the narrative interview and the focus group. The given structure can then dictate whether the interview is based on an individual or group (Sparkes & Smith, 2016).

As in Hutchinson's (2012) research the present study utilised individual semi-structured interviews. More specifically these interviews consisted of pre-determined questions relating to the general theme of conceptually understanding bullying in football, with a threefold aim: firstly to move from more descriptive narrative responses to more evaluative and tentatively explanatory elements; secondly to allow for prompts to help participants expand on their answers and finally for a rapport to be developed between the researcher and interviewee (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Hutchinson, 2012; Kvale, 1996). A semi-structured interview also offered the benefit of the researcher hearing the participant talk about a particular aspect of their life or experience, whilst also allowing the participant to guide the discussion with the possibility of providing relevant information previously undetected by the researcher (Krane & Baird, 2005; Willig, 2008). It offered

some of the benefits of the standardised process to asking some questions used in a structured interview, whilst not making the respondents fit their experiences and feelings into categories which may have limited their response choices and distort what they meant (Cohen et al., 2013; Jones, 2014; Sparkes & Smith, 2016). Equally the semi-structured interview allowed the participant to develop large parts of the interview from their perspective, in a similar way to an unstructured interview (Jones, 2014). However, the use of the semi-structured approach counteracted the potential risk of the unstructured approach, in that the interviewee could become dominant and lead the interview from a focus on the key concepts under exploration such as bullying (Jones, 2014).

The use of a semi-structured interview was also seen as advantageous compared to other techniques such as the narrative interview, as this approach also has the risk that the participant steers the interview into areas deemed irrelevant to the research question and focuses on the participant's life history (Jones, 2014). This life history may not have applied to participants in this study as there was not a requirement that they had been bullied in football. A semi-structured interview was preferred over a focus group as this approach can lead to participants who either monopolise the discussion or who are marginalised within it, meaning that a range of different footballers' perceptions of bullying may not have been represented (Cohen et al., 2013) . Also there is the risk of serious conflict within the focus group, which given the ethically sensitive nature of the study meant this method was not selected (Cohen et al., 2013).

Finally, the semi-structured interview was compatible with both the phenomenological approach of the study, as well as its use of IPA and has been found to be useful in eliciting information regarding bullying and teasing behaviours (Allen-Collinson, 2016; Stanley et al., 2012; Willig, 2008). In essence this method was still driven by the research question which was particularly important to the aim of understanding participants' perceptions of bullying, yet there was space for the participants to generate novel insights into this phenomenon within the football and potentially wider sporting context (Willig, 2008). Therefore, this method allowed the central research question and aims to be addressed, whilst also allowing the

participants the chance to conceptualise the key terms under inquiry of bullying, teasing, banter and victimisation.

3.4 Interview Procedures

3.4.1 Interview Guide

Prior to the commencement of the study an interview guide (see Appendix B) was developed to elicit information regarding perceptions of bullying and followed an approach of specifying the topics covered but without stipulating their sequencing (Munroe, Giaccobi Jr, Hall, & Weinberg, 2000; Patton, 2002). Using an interview guide has been successfully implemented across research into perceptions, factors related to, and the factors which underpin bullying using both one to one interview and focus group research (Bibou-Nakou, Tsiantis, Assimopoulos, Chatzilambou, & Giannakouplou, 2012; Mishna, Saini, & Solomon, 2009; Wolke, Woods, Bloomfield, & Karstadt, 2000). Therefore the questions were developed with a focus on what the participants perceived bullying to be as well as teasing, victimisation and banter. These questions were asked with a very similar structure, for example "Could you tell me what bullying in football or more generally in sport means to you?" with the substitution of concepts such as teasing, victimisation and banter for bullying. The participants were encouraged to think about their perceptions in football specifically but could discuss sport more broadly, if they wished to. These questions allowed for open ended answers and also for the addition or elimination of questions, as well as the introduction of new ideas as the interview progressed (Munroe et al., 2000). Alongside this, probing techniques were used to better understand the participants' understanding of bullying (Patton, 2002). Examples of probing questions included "What makes something bullying in football?" and "When is it not bullying in football?"

The initial interview guide was piloted with the first three participants and then the interviews were fully transcribed and analysed via IPA. The structure of the interview guide was retained as the answers were appropriately linked to the overall research question and aims. Nonetheless some slight revisions were made by the researcher in their interview technique in the remaining interviews, to avoid any potentially closed questions such as "And the relational side would be freezing them out?" and to ensure more open ended probing questions were used, for example

"can you tell me more about this bullying?" This was consistent with the non-directive phenomenological approach taken by the study. Additionally, the researcher also avoided asking too many questions of the participants at one time, for example, "What kind of things or ways or how would a manager bully a player? What approaches would they use? We've acknowledged they pick on a player. What behaviours would they do?"

3.4.2 Data Collection

At the beginning of each interview the participants received introductory comments around the study's rationale, the use of data, issues of confidentiality, and the reasons for recording the interview (Munroe et al., 2000). The researcher started the interview with a range of rapport building questions based on demographic information about the participants and their sporting experience. This followed on to questions regarding the main aims and purpose of the study. At the end of the interview the participants were debriefed regarding their data and process for withdrawal from the study, if they decided to do this. Each interview was fully audio-recorded and transcribed to enable a full analysis of the data, given that most qualitative methods of analysis and more specifically IPA requires transcription verbatim (Willig, 2008). This approach was preferred over alternatives such as note-taking, which can act as a distraction to both the participant and researcher and can negatively impact the development of a rapport within the interview (Willig, 2008). To make the participants feel as comfortable as possible the researcher explained to the participants why the recording was made and they were offered a copy of the transcript (Willig, 2008). In order to ensure accuracy of analysis and transcription, all interviews were recorded using an audio-recording device. This was placed on a table between the participant and researcher, so that the researcher could check the recorder was taping the interview and to ensure the recording was of a good quality, whereby accurate transcription could take place (Willig, 2008).

3.5. Data Analysis
3.5.1. Transcription

The process for data collection in the present study involved the recording of all interviews. After this process of recording, transcription is described as a "necessary step" en route to interpretation and analysis (Flick, 2009,

p.299). These transcriptions provide important details of the interview and a verbatim record, however, it should be noted that they do omit non-verbal aspects and some of the contextual features which surround the interview (Cohen et al., 2013). Cohen and colleagues offered some general guidelines for the process of transcription which include: using pseudonyms, recording hesitations and breaks in speech, being consistent in spelling and ensuring wide margins are used, all of which were adopted by the present study. An important consideration for the present study was that the researcher must also consider that transcriptions are especially time consuming, for example an hour interview may take five to six hours to transcribe (Cohen et al., 2013). This leaves a decision around how much of the interview to transcribe (Willig, 2008). With these factors in mind, some qualitative researchers have deemed it reasonable that the researcher only transcribe as much and only what is required by the research question, to allow scope for time and energy to be directed towards interpretation and analysis (Flick, 2009; Strauss, 1987). Nonetheless, within the present study the decision was made to transcribe the whole interview, including the interviewer's questions, to maintain consistency with Smith and Osborn's (2006) recommendations for IPA. Therefore the level of transcription was at the semantic level, with all spoken words including false starts, significant pauses, laughs and other features being recorded (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2006). However, as IPA does not need to record prosodic features of speech common to other qualitative analyses, aspects such as the tune and rhythm of speech were excluded (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2006).

3.5.2 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

The data for this study was analysed via IPA which emerged from Health Psychology to Educational Psychology and was applied to Sport Psychology (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Hutchinson, 2012). The main aim of this analysis is to explore how participants make sense of their personal and social world, which in this study concentrated on the footballers' perceptions of the terms bullying, teasing, victimisation and banter, rather than any attempt to define these by the researcher (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2006). Within this study the main aim of understanding these perceptions was in accordance with one of the main principles of IPA surrounding the meaning particular events or experiences hold for the participants (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2006). In addition the utilisation of IPA, offered a detailed

examination of each participant's lifeworld and was concerned with an individual's personal perception of an object (e.g. bullying), as opposed to an attempt to provide an objective statement of this (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2006). Smith and Eatough (2007) added that IPA is particularly well suited to topics where there is a need to discern how people perceive certain events in their lives. This approach has been described as phenomenological commitment to 'meaning making' within qualitative data which has clear idiographic elements (Coyle, 2007).

The data collection process in this study, followed IPA's emphasis that research should be a dynamic process with an active role for the researcher in the process (J. A. Smith & Eatough, 2007; J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2006). This situation required the researcher to try and get close to each participant's personal world without achieving a direct insider's perspective, however in the meantime this interpretation of the participant's personal world was complicated by the researcher's own conceptions of the topic (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2006). This leads to a two stage process which was applied to the present study called a double hermeneutic (J. A. Smith & Eatough, 2007; J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2006), whereby both the researcher and participant were trying to make sense of the participant's world. This study drew on the key influences of the philosophical movement of phenomenology and hermeneutics to employ empathic hermeneutics to try to understand bullying from the participants' side and critical hermeneutics to ask questions of what the participants have said such as: "Do I have a sense of what is going on here, that the participants are less aware of?" (J. A. Smith & Eatough, 2007; J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2006). Within this study the use of both forms of hermeneutics within IPA, maintained consistency with sustained qualitative inquiry more broadly and this led to a richer analysis of the totality of each footballer as a person (J. A. Smith & Eatough, 2007; J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2006).

This study analysed data based on an amalgam of the ideas proposed by Smith and colleagues (2009) and Hutchinson (2012). Firstly this included looking for themes which involved repeated listening and reading of each audio recording and its transcript, in order to become as familiar as possible with the account (Hutchinson, 2012; J. A. Smith et al., 2009; J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2006). There was no requirement in this study to divide

the text into meaning units and assign a comment for each; within IPA there are no rules about what is commented upon, as some parts of the interview will be richer than others, therefore warranting more commentary (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2006). The left margin was used to make notes on anything which appeared to be significant or of interest and with each reading the researcher became more immersed in the data (J. A. Smith & Eatough, 2007). This process was with the aim of generating initial "exploratory comments" (Hutchinson, 2012; J.A. Smith et al., 2009).

The next step involved returning to the transcripts and using the other margin to document emerging theme titles to capture the essential qualities found in the text and involved the use of psychological concepts (Hutchinson, 2012; J. A. Smith & Eatough, 2007; J. A. Smith et al., 2009; J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2006). The use of psychological concepts (such as introversion and extroversion from Eysenck's (1966) theory of personality), aimed to capture the psychological quality inherent within the initial exploratory comments and in the participant's own words, whilst also making conceptual connections between these comments and words to bullying research (J. A. Smith & Eatough, 2007; J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2006). At the same time, caution was employed so that connection between what the participant said and the researcher's interpretation was not lost. Therefore, no attempt was made to omit or select certain passages of data (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2006).

Following this, the analytical process involved some clustering of related emergent themes into more overarching 'superordinate themes' and their constituent 'subordinate themes' (Hutchinson, 2012; J. A. Smith, et al., 2009; J. A. Smith & Eatough, 2007). Initially this process involved writing emergent themes on a sheet of paper and looking for connections between them (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2006). These were written chronologically (see Appendix C) before an analytical reordering (see Appendix D) took place (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2006). Some themes clustered together naturally, through a process which Smith and Osborn (2006) described as a magnet of themes whereby some themes pull others in. An example of this would be the subordinate themes power and repetition clustering together to form the superordinate theme of 'The Bullying Act', given existing definitions of this concept (Olewus, 1993; Volk et al., 2014). This was an iterative

process, involving a close interaction with the text and a series of checking what the participant said (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2006). In support of this, QSR NVIVO 11 was used to assist with storage of the participants' quotes and the emerging themes as well as to continue the process of coding text into themes with common meanings (McDonough et al., 2011).

After the themes were categorised into superordinate and subordinate themes a coherently ordered table of themes (see Appendix E) was produced (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2006). This involved the clusters of themes most strongly reflecting the participant's concerns for the topic, being given a descriptive label to represent superordinate themes (J. A. Smith & Eatough, 2007; J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2006). This table listed the themes and their relevant superordinate theme, with a directory of quotes kept within the QSR NVIVO 11 file (J. A. Smith & Osborn 2006; McDonough et al., 2011). This process was repeated for each participant (Hutchinson, 2012; J. A. Smith et al., 2009). Though a single participant's transcript can be written up as a case study, this analysis used the process of incorporating interviews with a number of different individuals (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2006). In this study, the themes from the first participant helped orient the subsequent analysis with a careful approach to discerning the convergences and divergences in the participants' data (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2006). This process involved critical reading to establish how each theme differed and where appropriate further clustering took place to illustrate the common or opposing features of each theme (Hill, Carvell, Matthews, Weston, & Thelwell, 2017).

Once each transcript was analysed a master final table, which linked all participants, was created (see Table 1). Typically these themes must be sufficiently recurrent to be considered superordinate themes (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). In most cases this meant that the subordinate themes were mentioned by half or more of the participants, with all participants contributing to the superordinate themes (Hartie & Smith, 2016). Nonetheless in some cases they were not selected purely on their prevalence in the data and instead passages were inspected for their richness of data in relation to these themes (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2006). An example of this would be the theme of 'Education and Welfare' as part of 'The Football Environment'. As this process developed it became

more interpretative and reliant on the researcher's mental set of psychological concepts to make sense of the data, however careful attention was paid to maintain the personal account of the participant and any use of psychological theory was only employed after being triggered by this account (J. A. Smith & Eatough, 2007). Additionally, similar psychological labels were only used when the emergent themes demonstrated comparability with previous literature (McDonough et al., 2011). This was with the aim of ensuring that themes were reflective of both the participants individually and as a group (Hutchinson, 2012) and as such even though the analysis was provided on a number of participants, the idiographic commitment of IPA was maintained by conveying the individual perceptions of the participants (J. A. Smith & Eatough, 2007).

Table 1: Master Table of Themes Identified from the Interviews

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
The Football Environment	Uniqueness of Football
	Identity of a footballer
	Institutionalised
	Forced Integration
	Competition
	Education and Welfare
The Bullying Act	Repetitive
	Power
	Emotional Effect
	Abuse and Intimidation
	Single Victim
	Whistleblowing
	The Location of Bullying
The Bully and Victim	Weakness
	Nonconformity
	Introverted
	Extroverted
	Anyone
The Dividing Line	Perception
	Detection (Line)
	Bantering
	Intentionality
	Masculinity
	Discrimination
	Continuum

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Given this research focused on a potentially sensitive area in bullying, a number of ethical considerations were outlined prior to the commencement of the study. As this study also employed a qualitative approach it was important to consider a series of points regarding using this methodology. Whilst qualitative interviewing offers rich potential to tap thoughts and feelings, it also poses unique ethical issues for researchers (Mishna, Antle, & Regehr, 2004). One especially relevant aspect to the study was the challenge regarding anticipation of risks, particularly as interviews can often build a relationship between the researcher and participant (Mishna et al., 2004). It is worth noting that in areas such as bullying though considerable efforts go into balancing this relationship, research conducted by someone on behalf of a university, can give the researcher a status that participants find hard to challenge. This can create issues such as a therapeutic alliance between the participant and researcher, in which information is disclosed which otherwise would not be shared. With these concerns in mind the present study utilised Mishna and colleagues' (2004) research on bullying with children as a guide, for the key principles in managing the risks associated with this topic area. Despite the focus on an adult population, it was felt that the important considerations of informed consent and minimising discomforts and harm to the participants through confidentiality and anonymity were still relevant to the present study.

3.6.1 Informed Consent

One of the primary ethical issues raised for concern in bullying studies is informed consent (Mishna et al., 2004; Pellegrini, 1998). In order to address this several key recommendations were followed (Mishna et al., 2004). The participants were briefed in a similar way to Mishna and colleagues' study by directing them to the risks regarding the privacy and confidentiality of their information, in both information letters and when they were met as a group. This provided clear guidance as to when confidentiality cannot be upheld. In this case, they were made aware of which welfare services would be contacted. Finally, non-obligations regarding consent were also transparent to the participant (Mishna et al., 2004). For the purpose of this study consent was achieved through the following mechanism. Ethical approval for the research was sought and granted by the School of Education and Lifelong Learning's Research Ethics Committee at UEA. The

gatekeeper of the club was contacted by email about the proposed nature of the study and was briefed about its aims. Once consent was given by the gatekeeper the researcher met the teams concerned and provided both verbal and written information about the proposed study. At this point consent forms were given to the participants. The researcher then returned when the interviews were scheduled to take place and conducted this process with those willing to participate.

3.6.2 Confidentiality

The issue of sensitive information being raised in qualitative research and its impact on confidentiality warranted further discussion, as this needed to be balanced against the potential advantage that this style of research offers for understanding a complex and often misunderstood social phenomena and/or experience such as bullying (Mishna et al., 2004). In this study if issues were raised about a culture of bullying by the football participants, it highlighted concerns around whether this information would need to be revealed, balanced against the participant's right to confidentiality (Mishna et al., 2004). Research of this type around sensitive matters such as bullying often involves disclosure of information beyond the anticipation of both the participant and researcher, which creates an ethical dilemma such that if information is revealed around the right to confidentiality. However if this is not addressed then it leads to potential mistrust on behalf of the participant as their wellbeing may not be handled appropriately (Mishna et al., 2004). Other authors have stated how this has led to much wider implications, whereby Universities Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) have refused studies of this nature (Skelton, 2008).

To address this, a series of steps regarding confidentiality for the potential research were considered and grounded within Mishna and colleagues' (2004) research. In the first instance, the participants were invited to discuss whether they were happy for information to be released in the event they revealed information which is damaging to them. Treating each ethical situation separately was also employed as an approach (Eder & Corsaro, 1999; Mishna et al., 2004). For example, it may not be appropriate to intervene if the bully is identified as a peer to the participant and they do not desire help (Mishna et al., 2004). Nevertheless, in another situation Mishna and colleagues (2004) reported a case where a young person

revealed they had been bullied and even though the perpetrator was only two years older than the victim, they felt obliged to intervene. In keeping with beneficence and non-maleficence they decided the participant had not been able to ask for help. Therefore in summary the decision to intervene or not if bullying was revealed, was driven on a participant by participant basis. For the purpose of the present study the participants were advised that all of their information would be kept anonymous and confidential, unless there was a reason to breach their confidentiality. In this case, the participants were advised that they may be put in contact with a supporting organisation such as MIND's Sport, Physical Activity and Mental Health Service if they had been bullied or be referred to the club's internal code of conduct if they were bullying other individuals within their club. They were also informed that coaches and other key gatekeepers would be made aware of the bullying, although details of what individuals said would not be shared personally. Finally, pseudonyms were used to replace the participants' names for the purpose of data analysis and the discussion.

3.6.3 Anonymity

Due to the sensitive nature of the data revealed in this study and the potential for interviews to elicit such sensitive matters, retaining the participants' anonymity was an important consideration (Cohen et al., 2013). This study attempted to ensure the respondents were entirely untraceable but was challenged by the issue of deductive disclosure (Cohen et al., 2013; Kaiser, 2009). In this study, particularly given the profile of professional footballers, certain details of the participants were not revealed in an attempt to avoid any reconstruction or combination of the data which might allow for their identification (Cohen et al., 2013; Kaiser, 2009). Details which could enable for the identification of the players or club were not disclosed such as the tier of English Professional Football they were at, the geographical location of the data collection and the precise ethnicity of the players. This was in an attempt to prevent readers reassembling the details of the participants (Cohen et al., 2013). In addition, when disseminating the data the use of pseudonyms protected the individuals themselves, the research participants were only contacted if they indicated they were happy to do so about the results of their own individual accounts and all findings were reported at group rather than individual level (Cohen et al., 2013). In relation to the data collection itself,

recruitment was conducted privately rather than during briefing meetings when several players were present and players were assured that details about who participated in the study would not be revealed. Players were also reminded that they did not have to tell anyone that they were part of the study. Whilst it was possible players might have spoken to each other about their participation in the study or they may have been identified as being part of the study if they were connected with the researcher on the day of collection, further steps were taken to preserve their anonymity such as interviews being conducted in private rooms. Equally these possible limitations needed to be balanced against the potential advantages of conducting research at their club, such as the safety and comfort it might offer when discussing a sensitive topic matter.

3.7 Aspects of Trustworthiness

It is important to note that qualitative research tends to view the principles of validity much differently to positivism and quantitative research (Cohen et al., 2013). As a summary these principles include:

- the natural setting being the principal source of data collection;
- context boundedness and 'thick description';
- the researcher is part of the researched world and is the primary tool in the data collection;
- double hermeneutics are required to understand others' understanding;
- data are analysed inductively rather than using prior categories;
- data are presented in the respondent's terms;
- respondent validation is important;
- catching meaning is essential.

(Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Cohen et al., 2013).

As Willig (2008) noted even though validity can be a problematic concept to qualitative researchers, engaging in the steps above can ensure validity in a number of ways. For example, if respondent validation is employed and the participants feedback that they understand the findings, there is an argument there must be some validity (Willig, 2008). In order to assure this level of trustworthiness and authenticity two of the participants within the present study reviewed their transcripts and the analysis of their findings (B. Smith & McGannon, 2018). These participants provided both their

member reflections and acted as critical friends regarding the analysis. As qualitative data collection takes place in real-life settings (as in this study) there is a far higher potential for ecological validity (Willig, 2008). In accordance with this, the data collection took place at the footballers' home stadium or training ground venues. This was designed to maintain an authenticity in the data collection and to ensure that the data collection context mirrored the area under investigation. Finally the process of reflexivity afforded the opportunity for the research process to be scrutinised throughout by the researcher and avoids them imposing their own meanings on the research (Willig, 2008). Throughout both the interview and analysis process, the first researcher used bracketing to ensure a non-judgmental stance was adopted which was free from their preconceptions (Sandardos & Chambers, 2019). The use of a reflexive approach allowed the first author to monitor their personal views and assumptions about the football context. This decision was taken on the basis of the primary author's limited experience within professional football, their preconceived notions informed by prior research and media coverage about the culture of the sport and their personal experiences of bullying. This was with the aim of maintaining objectivity within the research (Sandardos & Chambers, 2019).

An alternative view of validity in qualitative research is the term credibility (Bryman, 2008; Cohen et al., 2013). This includes the triangulation of the findings potentially involving different investigators or theories and a process of peer debriefing in which a disinterested peer cross examines the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This process potentially eliminates bias and adds weight to the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Within the present study the interview schedule was developed broadly in line with existing research into bullying using IPA (see Hutchinson, 2012), permitting triangulation with existing research within this area. The transcription and analysis of the interviews was checked by a member of the supervisory team, who acted as a critical friend to aid with the development of themes (Brown et al., 2019). It should be noted that this process was not driven by the need to agree; rather it provided a critical dialogue to challenge and develop the primary author's interpretations (B. Smith & McGannon, 2018). Finally, the interview guide was independently reviewed and checked for its clarity and impartiality (Patton, 2002).

Another important component of research is reliability. Whereas, quantitative researchers are more concerned with reliability yielding the same results from participants on different occasions, qualitative researchers are less concerned with this and prefer to replace the term with dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Willig, 2008). As qualitative research explores a topic in great detail and depth and eschews aspects such as control and manipulation, it reemphasises the lack of preference for reliability (Cohen et al., 2013; Willig, 2008). Given the potentially uniqueness of the phenomenon under investigation dependability can be maintained via an audit trail approach (Cohen et al., 2013; Flick, 2009). This process involves many of the steps involved in maintaining credibility e.g. respondent validation, whilst maintaining records around raw data, data reduction and synthesis and data analysis decisions (Cohen et al., 2013; Flick, 2009). In the present study, several steps were taken to ensure this dependability: all the interview data was transcribed in full to maintain consistency with the data analysis method employed in this study and to maintain an audit trail; respondent validation was carried out with the participants; all original individual transcriptions and analyses are available; the emergent themes list from interview one (see Appendix C) and the superordinate and subordinate themes list from interview one (see Appendix D) are also provided as an example of the data reduction and analysis decisions. Finally, email conversations were retained between the supervisory team to document discussions regarding this analysis. This process has been highlighted as particularly valuable against the accusation that qualitative researchers only take certain parts of their data into consideration (Cohen et al., 2013).

The final issue associated with qualitative data collection which needed consideration was representativeness or generalisability (Willig, 2008). Whereas quantitative research relies on representative samples to ensure findings generalise to the wider population, qualitative researchers tend to work with relatively small numbers of participants, due its more time consuming data collection and analysis (Willig, 2008). This can be argued to be an issue if the phenomenon under investigation (e.g. bullying in this case), is relevant to more people than are in the study and researchers want to move beyond the data, to define this term more broadly for the

sporting population (Willig, 2008). To reconcile these issues of generalisability (or transferability as it is framed in qualitative research) several considerations were employed by the present study. The researcher attempted to ensure that there was a similarity in context between where the research was conducted and the wider contexts to which it was wished to be applied (Cohen et al., 2013), by collecting data either at match-day stadium or training ground of the players. Importantly here, the researcher did not judge whether the wider contexts were known and instead allowed outside readers or users of the research to make these judgements (Bryman, 2008; Cohen et al., 2013). To aid this the researcher attempted to provide enough 'thick description' for the audience to come to an informed decision around generalisability (Larsson, 2009).

Chapter 4

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Overview of the themes

The analysis and discussion chapter is structured around four key superordinate themes which addressed the main research questions for this study: 'The Football Environment' (which set the context for the overall findings); 'The Bullying Act'; 'The Bully and Victim' and 'The Dividing Line'. A further superordinate theme which emerged from the data that was related but not central to the research questions 'Banter and Teasing' is presented in Appendix F. The analysis of these superordinate themes was further subdivided by their underlying subordinate themes, which reflected both convergence and divergence in the participants' accounts. Within each subordinate theme the results are discussed in relation to published literature. The key subordinate themes within each superordinate theme are presented within this chapter, in line with these research questions with the remaining themes presented in Appendix F.

The in-depth, semi-structured interviews used by this study revealed consensus within some themes in relation to bullying, banter, teasing and victimisation, as well as individually nuanced accounts of these concepts within the professional football environment. Although the themes were developed and presented using general trends across the data, important differences in perceptions across the participants are also discussed. Given the importance of viewing the 'person in context' within IPA research (Larkin et al., 2006) data is initially presented around the contextual theme of 'The Football Environment'. The structure for the remainder of analysis and discussion chapter is grounded in the research aims and research questions which guided this study. Firstly, themes are outlined in relation to bullying specifically ('The Bullying Act' and 'The Bully and Victim'), finally the theme which linked to the areas of similarity and differences regarding the main study terms is presented ('The Dividing Line').

The first superordinate theme of 'The Football Environment' theme serves as a potential explanation of the reasons why bullying, banter, teasing and victimisation take place in football, as well as providing understanding of

how the players conceptualise these terms within this context. A large number of players articulated the uniqueness of the football environment including its diversity, how it differs to other workplaces and the range of pressures on footballers. This unique environment creates an identity in which players must conform to a range of institutionalised behaviours which are largely accepted. Equally the football environment is a place where individuals are forced to integrate, in a fashion that contrasts other workplaces or aspects of life. For many of the players this creates a sense of enjoyment and builds friendships. The environment also contains a level of competition which can test these relationships, creates conflict and potentially trigger bullying, banter, teasing or victimisation. Finally, a small number of players also alluded to issues with the education and welfare systems within the game, suggesting that these aspects may also impact on the extent to which bullying takes place in football.

Secondly data are presented in relation to 'The Bullying Act'. Throughout the interviews, participants referred to an act which was largely repetitive, involved a power differential, with clear emotional and personal effects, on mainly a single victim. Within this theme a range of contrasting accounts were revealed around the types of abusive and intimidatory behaviours that constitute bullying and the football specific locations in which they occurred. The participants illustrated worrying findings in relation to the victims of bullying in football disengaging within the environment and in some cases, even greater concern that these behaviours cannot be reported. Most alarmingly of all, participants described a situation whereby often bullying behaviour can go undetected in football.

Thirdly, alongside their focus on the act of bullying, the participants also provided a narrative of the types of individuals who may be susceptible to both being a bully and victim in football. At the heart of their accounts, they revealed the requirements on footballers to avoid showing any form of insecurity or weakness, with the risk that if they did, they would be bullied. Similarly, those who did not conform to the expectations of what constitutes a footballer were also likely to be victims of bullying. The narratives on the link between personality and bullying were more mixed. In general, there was a tendency for extroverted characters to be seen as potential bullies and introverted individuals to be seen as victims, but contradictory accounts

61

were revealed here. The participants' accounts became more varied when referring to the individuals could be involved in the bullying behaviour, with the range spreading from players and coaches to fans.

Lastly, one of the key superordinate themes to emerge from the participants' accounts was 'The Dividing Line'. This was characteristic of the range of concepts under exploration in this study: bullying, banter, teasing and victimisation and moreover revealed the importance of individual perception when identifying these behaviours. Likewise, it also revealed aspects which underpinned and linked to the area of perception such as players' personality and individual differences, as well as the ways in which footballers detect when 'the line' has been crossed from banter and teasing into bullying. This theme was representative of some of the processes which drive behaviour stretching from banter and teasing to bullying and victimisation, namely footballers' characterisation of the process of bantering. This process was discussed in inherently masculine terms, was sometimes driven by discriminatory content and emphasised the importance of players understanding each other. In addition, this theme raised questions about the significance given to intentionality within some of the most established definitions of bullying (e.g. Olewus, 1993; Volk et al., 2014) and linked to important outcomes in football such as performance. Finally, it provided an outline of how the players place the behaviours of bullying, banter, teasing and victimisation on a continuum, which may be of benefit to those working within positions of authority within the game.

4.2 The Football Environment

4.2.1 Uniqueness of Football

One of the key justifications for the present study was the potentially unique contribution of unearthing bullying, banter, teasing and victimisation in the professional football context. The participants' accounts of the uniqueness of football provides an important validation of this decision, as it sets apart a range of factors which differentiates football from contexts previously used to explore bullying. In particular professional football was seen as more diverse than other contexts, with important messages about how this diversity can actually trigger bullying behaviour. Worryingly, for some players professional football was viewed as being set apart from the

standard controls and safeguards of typical workplace institutions, which highlights the dangers of this environment providing a lack of protection against bullying behaviour. Findings within this superordinate theme also make an important contribution to the bullying literature, by illustrating the impact that a highly pressurised and media scrutinised environment can have on bullying behaviour.

The notion of diversity was seen as vital to underpinning how 'The Football Environment' is unique. For some players such as James this presented problems in that players might not be able to communicate with each other:

> And within that you get every type of individual, you get different races, different nationalities, different people even people can be different from Scotland than from Liverpool…it's strange you can walk into a changing room and not have a clue who you're gonna be sat next to. I've sat next to a lad who doesn't speak a word of English to Africans to whatever. With football more than life.

More alarmingly for Oli these cultural differences were seen as a catalyst for issues amongst players. It was indicative of an assumption held amongst players that these differences almost certainly lead to issues.

> When I was at XXX…about 20 players and about 10 different nationalities…from all over the world and there's obviously people are gonna have problems with other people not just 'cos they're foreign. Just different habits and what they say.

This view is perhaps unsurprising given the tendency within professional football to see those of minority ethnic descent as inferior in social standing (A. Parker, 2001), yet it extends upon previous research by showing how footballers tacitly accept this issue by inferring that in football there are naturally going to be problems. This was a point which Mickey expanded on:

> Like for instance…in a school if I was xxx and I was going to an xxx and someone said like oh you're a pikey or something like that, I think if a teacher caught you, you'd be done. Whereas here…, you know if you said that you'd be like he's only being like taking the, taking the, he's having a craic. So it can be, I've seen it myself, …you can get away with a lot more around the place in football you can kind of sometimes go cross the line without people noticing like.

This extract was particularly revealing of the sense amongst players that the football environment permits and almost excuses discriminatory behaviours not seen in other contexts. The reference to this behaviour being seen as a 'bit of craic' is reflective of how humour or banter can act as the 'velvet glove' of racism, where unpalatable comments are deemed to be acceptable (Clarke, 1998; Hylton, 2018). Mickey's language revealed an alarming sense of how football may stand apart from other contexts, in that authority figures such as coaches may not provide the same sanctions for the behaviour as teachers. For players this may model a climate where this behaviour is seen as acceptable, as it is not challenged by authority figures.

The liberation the football environment provides to behave differently was illustrated by James, whose anecdote verified the extent to which use of the term banter was far more extreme than in other contexts. This provided a graphic account of where players were aware of their potentially bullying behaviour but carry on regardless:

> 'Cos we have a joke, we've got a lad here from … Tunisia and he's a muslim and when all these things were going off in Syria and that this lad walked in with his football bag and everyone said to get down 'cos he's got a bomb in his bag. But could you imagine doing that on the street?

James' reference to not getting away with this behaviour "on the street" was indicative of professional football providing a sanctuary to permit a different view of what might be banter. As such the verbal derogation of ethnic minorities remains commonplace (A. Parker, 2001). Football may be unique from other institutions such as school or the workplace, in perpetuating an environment where these forms of banter are excused as acceptable and the subordination of minorities is maintained.

A number of the participants further illustrated the sense that football is a unique workplace compared to others. Players seemingly can behave differently to other areas of society and the degree of acceptability around terms such as bullying and banter shifts.

> I talked about this PFA thing and there's all these words you can say about race, religion and all that you can't…you wouldn't…you'd never because you're not allowed to say anything like that outside, you'd get arrested. (James).

This account further re-emphasised that players are allowed to get away with discriminatory behaviours not permitted in other contexts under the guise of banter as opposed to bullying. This reinforces Hylton's (2018) findings that racial epithets amongst predominantly white company are deemed to be acceptable in professional football and even those who might find this unacceptable can be unlikely to challenge this behaviour. Use of the term "outside" suggests that the participants perceive a sense of imprisonment which might fuel their beliefs around the extent to which bullying occurs and how this might differ to other occupations. On a separate note, concern was raised that bullying behaviours were more common in this environment compared to other industries and that little was done to educate players around appropriate behaviours.

> ….In sport obviously bullying's a big thing, so it's dotted everywhere. In other industries I don't think it's as much. I don't think it's for an individual. In our industry you come together you're a team. In other industries you're on your own and sitting a desk so it's just you. There's nothing done to educate, they just expect you to know and you won't have anyone to speak to as well. (Dave).

Dave indicated a sense of learned helplessness (Seligman & Maier, 1967) amongst footballers, where the context of football drives bullying behaviours which might be outside of their control. This may be as a result of football clubs being semi-enclosed environments where players have to accept a formally managed way of life (Gearing, 1999), whereby they abdicate responsibility of what is right and wrong behaviour. An alternative explanation though may be that this environment provides a platform for players to excuse these behaviours and they are not motivated to learn about what is appropriate.

For James the lack of adherence to standard workplace conventions and practices in professional football was evident. This provided a unique insight into this behaviour:

> (Bullying) would never go on in a workplace. Because there's, is it HR? Or there's things that can be done about it, if people are talking badly to you or you think you're being bullied in a workplace you can say something.

This account was especially damning of the lack of formalised workplace policies and practices available to players or the belief amongst them that

these support services do not exist. On this basis the prevalence of bullying and negative forms of banter may not be surprising. Equally the present study's findings extend research literature in this area, by highlighting how the lack of accepted workplace protocols and monitoring, might show why curbing abusive behaviours and introducing codes of conduct have been unsuccessful (Brackenridge et al., 2004; A. Parker & Manley, 2016). Equally it would appear that professional football clubs still operate outside of the practices of appropriately functioning organisations.

Another reason for the difference in perception around what constitutes bullying, banter, teasing and victimisation in the football industry compared to other workplaces, is the belief that football is an immature environment within which players can behave in an unprofessional manner:

> Yeah it's when you come here, it's like you're a kid again. My missus always says you're going to youth club every day. You get up and you go to youth club. You piss about with your mates at the youth club. (James).

Within football there appears to be a pervasive culture of immaturity, which may provoke an excess of pranks which either underpin banter and teasing or can lead to bullying. This has been found to be part of the profession's meta-narrative which defines its members as truly professional and that, borrowing on the words of Paul Gascoigne, permits players to act like babies (Gearing, 1999). Interestingly James contradicted many other parts of their account by suggesting the environment is not entirely unique:

> I'd say it's pretty similar (to other environments) on some like, my old man's in the building trade and you get apprentices on the building sites that often have to do initiations or they get the crap jobs basically.

Interestingly, professional football was compared to another male dominated industry. Rather than this environment being completely unique, it fits with more extreme conceptualisations of bullying and banter in certain professions that are underpinned by a hegemonic masculine culture. For professional footballers taking part of in these acts of dominance follows a pattern of masculinity which guarantees power and authority as well as the material reward of being a male footballer (Connell, 2008). Moreover professional football provides the ideal site for defining masculinity at the level of interpersonal interaction through peer groups (Connell, 2008),

supporting the psychological component of Gender Order Theory. The present findings reveal important messages about bullying behaviours in male-dominated industries.

The pressures placed on professional footballers acts as an important differentiating factor in why behaviours such as bullying, banter, teasing and victimisation may be conceptualised differently within this environment. For Greg this rationalised an increase of bullying behaviours, due to the pressures on players to deliver performances:

> Cos if you work…in Asda stacking shelves…and you put it on the wrong shelf, that's not the end of the world but here it's a business but if you don't put the ball in the, if you don't win on the pitch it affects the club. People can lose their jobs and stuff like that and there's a lot more to it than a normal job, where you do something wrong it's fixable. (Greg).

The language used by Greg was indicative of an internalisation of the stress placed on performance and the belief that they are responsible for all the employees at the club. For others they depicted a strong belief that players must fit in to a specific way of being as an individual to maintain their part of a group which is different other parts of society.

> Yeah being in the group, you feel like eyes are on you all the time and expect you to react in the same way, if you react in another way; they're going to look at you like you're different. Um they might not wanna socialise with you again and stuff like that, so you act differently to fit in. So massively in football and in groups you at times, I suppose people act differently to who they are, actually who they are…But like I said it's difficult in football like I've said because they put on this front and it's different to in every other walk of life because when you can put on this front and you almost have to. But in other walks of life, it's different, because there isn't this perception of what you have to be like. But it's different in football because you can bottle it up, bottle it up and there's more of a reaction compared to somebody who's in a different walk of life. (Lenny).

Both Greg's and Lenny's extracts demonstrated the complex range of pressures placed on professional footballers ranging from a forceful competitive spirit which is underpinned by a need to win, an acceptance of institutional subservience, an ability to conform to workplace standards and

procedures and an unswerving commitment to professional solidarity and cohesion (A. Parker, 2006). Lenny's account in particular showed how deeply ingrained these values are in footballers and illustrated the importance of understanding behaviours such as bullying in this context, given the extent to which players are expected to "bottle these behaviours up."

In contrast this aspect of pressure may illustrate how values and beliefs which players have internalised may be used to excuse negative behaviours, such as bullying or excessive banter. Mickey showed how this aspect may not even be seen as a negative factor:

> So for me to do it is quite nice but obviously now you get a bit stressed and you feel a bit of the pressure cos it's all about winning and getting your next contract and all this. But it's all good it's a thrill really…You'd play to win but it was more for fun and enjoyment part and like a bit of a development and things like that. But now especially when you go up the ages, especially 18s and 23s and especially when you go out on loan and then first team it's all about winning and it's about getting them 3 points on a Saturday and that's where football is ideally at. So, getting your head around football is all about 3 points and doing all you've gotta do to win, it's quite challenging but it's a nice challenge as you get to like grow up and mature a bit and understand what you need to. Cos' at the end of the day you go in the first team, you're playing for paying for your families and it's about if you win your money, so, so it's quite nice to enjoy seeing, seeing what you have to do. (Mickey).

Whether this is truly the case might be questioned given players must be seen to respond to aspects such as authoritarianism from coaches to deliver results, as a means by which they can identify their strengths as a team member (A. Parker, 2006). Nonetheless this alternative view of pressure in professional football might demonstrate how players use this as a safeguard to legitimise bullying in football.

The final main element which the players discussed in relation to the uniqueness of the football context is that of media scrutiny. This sets this research apart from the traditional focus of bullying research in schools. For players in this study the media was seen as an influential factor in

determining what is conceptualised as bullying, banter, teasing and victimisation. Lenny's account exposed a suspicion of the media, in that it may serve to define behaviours as potentially bullying, when the players feel this is not the case:

> I think that would make it harder. Cos' you're in the spotlight all the time and with the press being so blown up in football and there's a lot of spotlight on it and if someone comes out with something and someone gets the wrong end of the stick, then it can be blown out of proportion massively and it can only make things worse. So, in football there can be a massive spotlight and it just makes not everything cos sometimes the media is good for football. (Lenny).

On the one hand this suggests that the media are to blame for shaping the view of what bullying is in professional football. On the other it might suggest that it plays a key role in highlighting bullying and other negative behaviours within professional football which players would rather keep concealed. Although football clubs are discussed as 'prison-like' institutions, they afford players the protection to develop their preferred sense of identity which the media may be seen to threaten (A. Parker & Manley, 2016). As such the air of discreteness and avoidance of surveillance may be protective for footballers to maintain their existing practices of bullying, banter, teasing and victimisation, rather than to challenge the totality of a football club as an institution (Goffman, 1961; A. Parker & Manley, 2016). The media aspect provided an interesting perspective on whether they serve an important role in highlighting unacceptable practices at football clubs which players are unwilling to accept or provide additional pressure which can drive these behaviours.

4.2.2 Identity of a footballer

Alongside some of the perceived unique pressures of the football environment, was a strong sense from all of the players to need to maintain a particular identity. Firstly, for a number of them, this was built around core beliefs around career progression and professionalism. Secondly, in other cases the emphasis was on avoiding displays of mental fragility. Finally, within some accounts there was also the belief that players must conform to immature behaviours. For those who emphasised the career progression and professionalism aspects, they were keen to stress that being involved

in professional football was not about making friends (for an additional discussion on this see Appendix F):

> Yeah it is just a profession. When you were younger maybe it was different. You can try to make friends and all that. It's just a job now and you just try and do what you have to do…Yeah definitely when I went from scholar to pro, it changed from being a hobby to a job. You come in and it's not a hobby anymore, it pays the bills like so. (Grant).

Seemingly the nature of professional football gives rise to a set of beliefs amongst players that adhering to professional values and developing as players is paramount and more important than developing friendship and camaraderie. As such the players apparently digested the message from coaches, that a good attitude is spawned by an unquestioning work ethic focused on self-improvement, rather than the wellbeing of their teammates (A. Parker & Manley, 2016). For these players they are now fully established members of what A. Parker (2006) described as a community of practice. They have socially learned that bullying or more excessive banter may be necessitated over friendship and this provides the foundation for them to 'perform' their role as a male professional footballer (Butler, 1988).

To a certain degree the players' accounts were at odds with other parts of their narratives which stressed the importance of banter and teasing for cohesion (see Appendix F), revealing an interesting dichotomy in thinking. It also gave rise to a belligerence in the players' thinking, within which Kevin reaffirmed that bullying might be prioritised over the wellbeing of others.

> Football you are here, basically on what you can do, how good you are. You're here to get better in the academy. So, it's more like you're not really worried about them as a person.

Whilst the players did not state this directly, this may reflect A. Parker's (2006) finding that personal and occupational threats, fear and aggression are rationalised as effective strategies to guarantee success. Indeed these cultural forms of authoritarianism and verbal aggression may well have permeated themselves into players' daily working lives and peer group relationships (A. Parker, 2006).

The disregard for players' feelings suggested within some accounts, may also explain another crucial aspect of the players' identity, which surrounded the need for players to avoid any signs of mental fragility. These findings extend bullying research to date by illustrating the issues within workplaces which stress a certain type of character:

> You have to be a certain mentality, you have to (have) a certain attitude, otherwise you won't last here 5 minutes because it's different. I've been here 5 years and I must've played with over 100 players in that time…So you have to be very, very thick skinned, very you have to know that, I don't think that it's ever personal, you just have to say is not meant, you just have to deal with it and accept it. (James).

Of particular interest here was the stress placed on the need for players to be 'thick skinned' and accept whatever has been said to them. This was a further reflection of players needing to accept the culture of authoritarianism and may explain why banter is conceptualised far more liberally amongst footballers. In particular the ability to receive bullying defined as banter is almost celebrated as a criterion by which players can be judged and seek to differentiate themselves from weaker individuals (Collinson & Hearn, 1994). In football specifically, these players may have integrated this aspect of football's natural selection into themselves, as a means to demonstrate such strength. The players might now be demonstrating key tenets of self-presentation theory which are impression motivation and construction (Leary, 1992; Schlenker & Leary, 1982). On the one hand, players are highly motivated to show they are not weak, while on the other they want to construct this image to show they are worthy of their place. Equally it might illustrate a learned process adopted from coaches that is being passed onto players, whereby they must be subordinate to any abuse that they receive and any sign of weakness here is the fault of the victim (S. Kelly & Waddington, 2006). As such it showed further concern that a level of bullying may be tolerated within football and potentially even encouraged. This emphasis on the players having to deal with this behaviour was highlighted by Oli: "so you've gotta be quite like strong, strong with stuff, yeah I think you've just gotta be strong about it to be honest." For footballers dealing with abusive behaviours framed here as bullying or banter, is apparently regarded as an important part of their process of maturation (Gearing, 1999; S. Kelly & Waddington, 2006; A. Parker, 2006).

The stress placed on players needing to mature, was in contrast to immaturity being seen as a key component of a footballer's identity. The childish mentality depicted by Charlie, might explain why the banter culture is necessitated in this environment:

> Um..,. I think footballers are a lot more childish than like… the normal adult. I think cos you're in a football environment from the ages of 15, 16…Everything's done for you, the academy looks after you regarding accommodation, everything…Then you kind of never grow out of that childish mood. Then you're always gonna be an adult but you still have that childish mentality as well. So, I think that's why that sort of thing happens in football. (Charlie).

This childish mentality seems to produce regimented ways in players, which spread beyond the actual playing of the game and might explain why all players feel they need to participate in banter. It may also explain why the conceptual lines between bullying and banter are blurred, as Ricky described "same stuff as what people get bullied (for)... It's just fairly childish stuff." Ricky's loose changing in language from discussing banter to bullying demonstrates a key difference with the present findings to bullying literature to date, in that it almost gave a sense that bullying is not treated as a serious issue in professional football. The closeted way in which football might drive this belief was provided by Rob:

> I think a problem with footballers is, they spend their whole lives in the changing room with other boys, so you get a lot of footballers, who are in there in their 20s and 30 but they're still kids cos they've played football their whole life…They've had all the money they want, they don't ever grow up as a person because they've never had to, they've spent…Just messing about, having a laugh and that. So the way they act is, the way a kid in secondary school would and they think that's like acceptable but they're like a 28 year old man. Because they've just lived in that football bubble.

This account was a vivid depiction of the life a footballer and may explain the cultural acceptance of excessive banter within the sport as a workplace. It may also explain why players come to normalise bullying behaviours, as they have never had to challenge the workplace practices of the sport or matured through other environments where their behaviour might be deemed as unacceptable. To this end the players are somewhat

institutionalised into the environment and may naively accept, inappropriate behaviours.

4.2.3. Institutionalised

One of the key themes to emerge from the players' interviews around the football environment was its institutionalised nature. For a number of players, the football environment is all that they have known, which creates potential issues with an acceptance of behaviours from coaches and fellow professionals, which might be deemed as bullying. Some players described an environment where players have a lot of idle time which could act as a significant trigger for potential bullying behaviours. Overall these findings make an important contribution to both the bullying and organisational psychology literature by illustrating the issues with workplaces that are all consuming. The broad institutionalised nature of the environment was best depicted by James:

> Um that's quite a broad topic. It's all I've ever known and all I've ever wanted. I've never known anything other than playing football, so you're whole life is just basically around your football on the Saturday. Since I left school at 16 it was straight into full-time football. So basically my whole life has been football, football, football…So it's very institutionalised, very different, so how things happen in football is very different to outside… football as a dressing room is all about banter.

This account served as one of the clearest examples of professional football acting as a total institution around the players, with the use of life on the outside being comparable to prison like conditions (Gearing, 1999; Goffman, 1961; A. Parker & Manley, 2016). As such this enclosed environment defines banter as one of its norms and values (Goffman, 1961; A. Parker, 2006). Of greater concern though is the potential social restriction which football clubs are keen to place on their players (A. Parker & Manley, 2016). This may not allow players appropriate opportunities to develop their perspectives about inappropriate behaviour as James alluded to later, when discussing a scenario when players were asked to consider discriminatory behaviours: "not one of them put them as bullying. But that's the mind-set of footballers you can just say anything to any of them and it's classed as banter." This account explicitly depicted the potential encompassing tendencies of football (Goffman, 1961), where behaviours

73

that are entirely inappropriate are legitimised as banter. From Goffman's perspective it still highlighted that football is still relatively low in terms of totality as an institution, as James' language hinted at an awareness that these discriminatory behaviours were inappropriate. Yet it also indicates that professional football provides enough segregation to adopt these institutional features, such that the concept of bullying is far more extreme than in other parts of society.

This cultural demand extended to the expectations of young footballers to accept possible bullying behaviours which would not be seen in other contexts:

> But the way we talk to each other on the football pitch probably wouldn't be right in another job but we know that in the football environment it's just talking because they want the best for the team and each other to do well. (Greg)

Concurrent with previous research to date, professional football is an environment which legitimises a certain amount of bullying, as a vehicle for delivering performance and player development and this is an accepted, unquestioned protocol as part of a footballer's traineeship (S. Kelly & Waddington, 2006; A. Parker, 2006). This unquestioning ethic was added to by Charlie, "you have to get used to taking a bollocking and if you can't take a bollocking then." As such this emphasised that abusive behaviours are expected and accepted, potentially explaining the greater prevalence of this in football. To some degree both Greg and Charlie's accounts were indicative of what Foucault (1977) articulated as disciplinary power. While Charlie's mention of a 'bollocking' represented a more indiscreet representation of this power both Greg and his accounts, suggested that players must expect to take these behaviours because it is for a player's 'own good'. Therefore it would appear that this power is functioning on more discreet lines (Foucault, 1977) and bullying is potentially happening in silence.

Interestingly Charlie highlighted a key divide in the players' values, in that if the abuse from coaches is not deemed as personal, it is almost seen as acceptable:

> It's more sort of academy level coaches, so it hasn't been too bad, there's been one or two bollockings that I've been involved in. But it never really gets too personal really.

Whilst the sense was that the level of abuse faced from coaches was not too severe it may also be a reflection an unambiguous message which players internalise, that no matter how abusive or violent a manager's behaviour may be, so long as it is not deemed personal, it is not to be questioned (S. Kelly & Waddington, 2006). Indeed, as these authors point out, this may also be a reflection that young players enter a workplace where managerial authority has long been established, within which abuse, intimidation and violence have long been part of a manager's repertoire. It illustrates that young and even established players learn through socialisation that these behaviours are part of the cores value and attitudes of the game and they must adhere to them (S. Kelly & Waddington, 2006).

The institutionalised demand placed on players also extends to hazing practices. Specifically to football, Rob provided a vivid depiction of the requirements on professional footballers to conform to accepted practices, with severe penalties for those who do not adhere:

> Well an example (it) could be like in the young kids, if you go into the first team you have to sing. If you go into an office or a workplace, if you make someone sing, you'd probably be sacked the next day, cos it's not right it's not appropriate to put someone in that situation. But in football, that's just part of the job, you have to do it…Or otherwise I've heard stories where like players are like I'm not gonna sing and the manager's said well I'm not gonna play you then and they've had to leave the club because they won't become part of the team.

Rob's account further illustrates the sense in football that workplace rules found in other organisations can freely be violated, as well as the pressure for players to conform to bullying behaviour. It demonstrates the nature of the football environment overall, as players are not allowed their right to refuse what they might perceive as bullying behaviour. This was consistent with previous findings that a lack of adherence to implicit club rules can lead to punishment and sanctions that can include ostracism from the team (Gearing, 1999; A. Parker, 2006). As Kelly and Waddington (2006) stated it would be hard to imagine any other modern western industry where this

75

level of managerial control would be legitimised. Yet the participants' accounts show that the relatively closed social world of professional football maintains this hierarchy (S. Kelly & Waddington, 2006), despite their awareness that this would be inappropriate elsewhere.

For some participants they even acknowledged that forcing players to fit in this way could even be regarded as bullying. Yet as James furthered "but I suppose if you want to be part of the gang or you want to fit in then that's an unwritten rule that you have to do." In a contrasting fashion this participant showed the deeply ingrained institutionalised attitude of footballers when expected behaviours are not undertaken:

> And now the young players are not allowed to do the things that they used to, they're not allowed to clean boots, they're not allowed to do jobs, they're treated as equals to the professional.

This account exposed the sense in football that mundane processes such as cleaning boots and servicing equipment are still seen as reflective of a good professional attitude (A. Parker, 2000a). It may also indicate that this hierarchy needs maintaining and equality must be rejected. From Foucault's (1977) perspective these hierarchies of power remain stratified within professional football whereby senior players may be seen as specialised personnel who maintain discipline, through deploying what might be deemed as demeaning acts in other professions.

The sense that players have difficulty adapting to less authoritarian, less intimidatory and more democratic types of management (S. Kelly & Waddington, 2006) still prevails with the current findings. To some extent this may explain why bullying takes place in this environment, as an expected part of a player's development. This acceptance of subordination was best illustrated by Oli:

> I've been in their shoes but I didn't sort of think it was bullying, I just thought that's what you've gotta do when you're a young lad you've just gotta clean the boots, clean the cones, get the balls, all of that.

This ritualistic aspect of the football environment may also explain another contributory factor around the prevalence of bullying, banter, teasing and victimisation in professional football, which is boredom. It raises concern

that within the mundane working environment of football (A. Parker, 2000a) boredom can almost be seen to legislate for bullying behaviour:

> I think it's quite strongly around the different groups. Lads who are around each other a lot of the time, with each other a lot of the time. Who go straight from training to each other's house and mess about. Um, I think they're the ones who might bully people quite a bit because there's not much else to speak about if you're with each other 24/7. Gotta do something to entertain themselves. (Ricky).

This potentially demonstrates an important societal issue in that there may be a belief amongst young males in particular, that if there is not a lot to do that bullying can be used to fill that time. More worryingly is that this behaviour is seen as a form of entertainment.

Perhaps the clearest summary of the institutionalised nature of football and its acceptance of bullying and banter practices was found from Phil. This extract demonstrated a subliminal cultural belief amongst footballers that different expectations regarding respect are required, as a reflection of the sport's working class roots and that players simply have to accept this:

> When you see a rugby player bit more respect because rugby's a gentleman's game. When you see football, working man's game. It's working class from Hackney Marshes from all that. All that hard work, to go and work and play football. Working class game. It's not a middle-upper class; it's for the working class. And for that reason, because of that in the past going through each generation, each few years.

Phil provided a worrying cultural assessment of professional football where players rationalise behaving differently to other sports, based on flawed beliefs about the working class underpinning of the game. Here players have accepted the teachings of their established community of practice around working class male ideals, as part of their apprenticeship into the game (A. Parker, 2006). It provides a provided a worrying cultural assessment of the game and as well as potentially other working class (primarily male) occupational settings, where authoritarian behaviours which often include bullying are viewed as tantamount to the effective workings of club life (A. Parker, 2006).

4.2.4 Forced Integration

Part of what makes the football environment unique compared to other contexts and drives behaviours such as bullying and banter is the extent to which players are forced to integrate. The participants discussed a situation where they were forced to integrate with a number of individuals who they might not always choose to interact with. For some the arrival of new players might drive the use of banter to integrate the individual into the team. If that individual displayed behaviours which were not liked by the rest of the group bullying was possible. More specifically, a number of players described the scenario where they were forced to be together with a number of individuals for a length of time.

Worryingly for some, they suggested a certain amount of discomfort with this suggestion, which might be underpinned by where players are from:

> You probably won't find it anywhere else, like the people I've met I'd never think I'd meet anyone like that or from there. They just throw you in a bloody changing room. They just throw you in a changing room for 2 hours. (Oli).

James was far more explicit in stating that the segregated nature of professional football separates this environment from other contexts and might serve to create groups along a racial divide.

> Sometimes you think in normal society you'd never be in that situation, where you're sat next to someone every single day and you wouldn't you probably wouldn't. You probably wouldn't and it's not a racist thing but you probably wouldn't choose to socialise or you wouldn't meet people like that if it makes sense? (James).

James' statement was concurrent with previous findings that footballers do not feel they are racist (A. Parker, 2001), yet they hint this undertone exists and might drive bullying behaviours. Taken overall these accounts indicate that football clubs remain a segregated, enclosed atmosphere where players effectively like in-mates, have to spend vast amounts of time with one another in a way they otherwise would not (Gearing, 1999; A. Parker, 1996; A. Parker & Manley, 2016).

For Rob, the issues of diversity was less of a concern within the football environment but having to interact with people they do not like, ultimately could lead to bullying. This account was a further reflection on the beliefs of

some that friendship (see Appendix F) is redundant within professional football:

> But you're in a team with them. When you're not in that environment you don't think about them, you don't care about them. You're with your friends; you're with your family you're doing what you like but then when you come to football and you see that person and you don't get along with them, that's when you could take it on them, cos you're thinking oh I'm with this person.

In addition, part of what sets professional football apart compared to other contexts used to study bullying, is the arrival of new players. Ricky's account outlined the risk this poses risks for bullying behaviours if they do not conform to the group:

> I think first impressions are big. I think if someone new comes in and gets on with everyone straight away it's good. But if they come in and it's hard if some people in their position feel threatened and might not take to them straight away but if they're a bit arrogant and stuff and the boys don't like them, it's very hard to make a friendship from that between a lot of them. It's quite hard to mix with everyone and then that's when you get groups in the changing room.

This placed a lot of stress on the new player to fit the expectations of the existing group, yet it also revealed the precariousness of professional football and how its inherent competition may lead to bullying. Rob's account demonstrated how the strong need for conformity within professional clubs was extended to new recruits, continuing the sense that they must demonstrate an unquestioning acceptance of subordination to the group's norms, to legitimise themselves to their peers (Cushion & Jones, 2014). In Rob's eyes failure to do this appeared to heighten the chance of bullying. One explanation for this is that it threatens the important components of professional solidarity and cohesion, that footballers have digested as essential to their workplace identity (A. Parker, 2006).

The effect of this institutional subservience (see A. Parker, 2006) can be so strong that players are willing to trade their personal identity, to conform to these informal workplace standards in an attempt to avoid being bullied:

> Maybe just to fit in if the group of lads are going out, um…drinking or something like that and that's not for them…They'd want to fit in and they're gonna start acting differently to try and fit in…I think

> when you're in a big group, maybe if it's not direct maybe not like 'why are you not coming out?' that kind of stuff…Yeah definitely, I think peer pressure can be a form of bullying.

Even with the more positively viewed banter, Phil's narrative was particularly enlightening about the challenges faced by players in using this as a process to integrate new players into the team:

> So you've got to try and get them. If they don't speak English you've got to try and get them to understand, so it's really, you've gotta really understand how to communicate your banter with different people.

The value ascribed to banter was slightly alarming in this case, as Phil seemed to stress the importance of players having to understand this. This raises an interesting question about whether all players are willing participants in this and whether it merges into bullying. Later on Phil described banter as a positive developmental part of their football career: "100% cos you can see that person grow and integrate into your team. And once they grow into themselves you benefit, you benefit a lot, benefit really a lot." Whilst at a surface level this seems to be a much more positive picture of using banter, it may just reflect players accepting a culture where verbal and physical insults as an essential part of their 'learning curve' (S. Kelly & Waddington, 2006). Therefore, caution must be taken that this is not a mere acceptance of this form of abuse. Nevertheless, taken on face value of the players' accounts though the forced nature of being in a football club can lead to negative behaviour such as bullying, it may also allow for the construction of long-lasting relationships.

4.2.5. Competition

Another unique thread of the football environment compared to contexts previously used to unearth bullying is competition. For some the requirement of professional football to be competitive in order to gain or maintain a place on the team was a key driver of their need to bully other players. In other cases, players articulated a feeling of jealousy or insecurity which might be sparked within this context. The direct impact of competition on bullying was illustrated by the following extract:

> But like, if say someone's coming to watch maybe a team. If they've got scouts, players who are playing well, they might bully him, get his confidence down. So, they've got more chance to get scouted or

> the manager looking at them and thinking "he's a good player", things like that. (Ed).

Ed's account depicted bullying as a strategic approach which is triggered by competition. This may in part be explained by professional footballers' appetite for a forceful competitive spirit, coupled with an aggressive win at all costs mentality (A. Parker, 2006) which they might feel legitimises bullying. Concurrent with previous bullying literature in sport, the fight over a limited number of starting spots creates interpersonal tension and legitimises forms of bullying in order for players to differentiate themselves from their teammates (Kerr et al., 2016). In Ed's case this was seen as offering a competitive advantage in the eyes of managers.

Conversely though for some players this direct competition was seen more positively. Phil portrayed a different perception of the competitive environment, which fostered a more positive use of banter to improve performance or act as a motivational tool:

> Like maybe on the pitch, maybe up against someone and you absolutely rip them and you destroy them, 'you can't defend me, you can't get past me'. Them words will light a fire in someone's belly. You know its common nature and if you, if you say that you either want them to improve or you're saying cos you know. And I think that's when it's good. I think it's all positive 100% of the time. (Phil).

The intimacy of the professional football environment appears to create an environment where players use competitive banter as a means to elevate performance. All of this is with the aim of developing a sense of cohesion and to ultimately collaborate for the team's success (Kerr et al., 2016; A. Parker, 2006). Though as A. Parker (2006) pointed out the players may be enthusiastic, purely as a result of their belief that adherence to these values boosts their progression as an individual within the sport.

Despite the potential for competition to be viewed positively the prevailing sense was that this aspect of football carried negative outcomes. As Phil put it professional football is "very competitive, insecurities and competitiveness" and for some this fostered jealousy:

> Sometimes bullies just, it's just jealousy. It could be anything it just depends on what they're like a well. (Bullying is) trying to make someone feel worthless, cos maybe they're not feeling great cos

81

> they're feeling jealous, they're just trying to bring someone down to
> their levels really. (Dave).

Seemingly the football environment remains at risk of provoking a sense of jealousy and resentment (A. Parker, 1996), which players feel promotes the use of bullying. In particular this environment possesses the traits of other competitive workplaces which offer career progression and thus clubs may need to be aware that direct competition between players can spark bullying or banter behaviours, as Oli emphasised:

> Say in you're just at a normal job, say an office job and some guy's
> with you and he's doing better than you, he's getting the promotion
> or whatever, you're gonna sort be like he's a bit of a… you might
> banter him or just start bullying him straight off the bat. (Oli).

Something which sets the professional football environment apart to other workplaces however, is the continual need to survival. Jamal described the daily fight for employment players sense, which might exacerbate the need to use extreme behaviours as form of protection:

> Cos' in football it's all, it's every day you're playing to keep. It is a job
> and your job is to play and like, if people come in and someone
> might feel someone is coming for their position.

This is concurrent with the professional football environment being seen as highly precarious for players, to the extent they feel there is little they can exchange their physical capital for in terms of other professions (McGillivray, Fearn, & McIntosh, 2005). Players appear to digest a belief that the present is of paramount importance (McGillivray et al., 2005), and believe that bullying or banter behaviours are required to maintain their status. It is worth noting that for many players they have not known a life outside of the sport (McGillivray et al., 2005), which may further drive their need to engage in these negative behaviours.

4.2.6. Education and Welfare

The final theme connected to the football environment concerned the area of education and welfare. In the past 15 years there have been notable attempts to educate players, introduce codes of conduct and boost player welfare, particularly within academy settings, though the reception to these approaches has been mixed (Brackenridge et al., 2004; A. Parker, 2000b; A. Parker & Manley, 2016; Pitchford et al., 2004). Whilst only mentioned by a few participants (4 out of 18) it was notable how the players reflected a

similar variety in feelings about the success of these processes. For some they felt that the support on offer has been beneficial. For others, they were less certain about the efficacy of the delivery of these approaches and in one case were highly damning of them. For those who were more positive, this sense was best reflected in the extract below:

> There's a lot more awareness of what you can and can't say, religions and races cos there's so many people from different countries, so you just have to be fair to different people. People do come in from the Premier League and give speeches and presentations on what is bullying, and what is banter and what is racism and stuff like that. (Mickey).

From Mickey's perspectives it was clear that effort has been put in to considering player welfare and there is some sort of education about appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. Equally player awareness has been developed through such initiatives, with engagement from key stakeholders such as the Premier League. As Dave furthered, this has spread into important information being distributed to the players to safeguard them within the sport:

> We've got a, we've a got a website xxx. You can go on and read and go and check. You can go and speak to the safeguarding officer and she can give us leaflets…There's leaflets dotted about the classroom, signs everywhere about bullying and that and yeah.

Nonetheless, despite the willingness expressed by the Premier League and other organisations to come and deliver presentations there was scepticism about their efficacy. This raised concerns about the appropriateness of the education on offer and the quality of the delivery:

> Some are engaging, some aren't. I think you've gotta engage the group. If you don't engage the group, I don't think you'll benefit. The team won't benefit and you won't benefit, cos what you're trying to implement won't be implemented. So you've got to entice the group into your session and make them come out thinking. You want the session to be that memorable and some of them are. 'Do you remember this' da da da a few months ago. (Phil).

A range of different explanations may be on offer to examine this participant's perspective. Taken on face value these points may be reflective of previous findings within educational provision, where staff often

viewed teaching footballers as a process of survival and crisis management to avoid personal breakdown (A. Parker, 2000b). Previously staff have shown a lack of willingness to spend time looking for enthusiasm from the players (A. Parker, 2000b) and thus it is unsurprising their focus may not be on engaging them. Alternatively, these findings may be indicative of a much larger cultural problem within the sport. Professional football clubs and their staff have often been seen to treat educational attainment with suspicion and personal attacks, with the priority being on the present of playing games (McGillivray et al., 2005; A. Parker, 2000b). Any interest in partaking in these activities is often treated with ridicule and a questioning of that player's professional commitment to football (A. Parker, 2000b; A. Parker & Manley, 2016). These factors appear to lead players to treat these programmes with cynicism. Therefore they might purely offer the opportunity to get away from the rigours and confines of the professional football environment (A. Parker, 2000b).

Perhaps more worryingly was the reflection that what is delivered might not even be implemented. Kevin delivered a far more damning assessment of the potential inadequacies within the delivery of these programmes. This makes a powerful contribution to the organisational literature around bullying in terms of the explicit and implicit messages educational programmes promote:

> (The PFA) give presentations and they'll be asking the whole team. What person is going to put their hand up to say something in front of the whole team? When subconsciously they're going to hold back because what I say everyone's gonna hear it and what reaction are they going to have? They're gonna have reaction do you know what I mean? You're not gonna say something you really wanna say, as much as you might put your hand up and say something. What you really wanna say, you're not gonna say cos you're around the team environment. Cos' football's a team environment, you need to do everything as a team.

Kevin's quote raised serious concern that the delivery of these programmes also reinforces the culture of organisational silence around professional football (D. Kelly & Jones, 2013). This might mean that players are even more reluctant to speak out about inappropriate behaviour. It reemphasised that the culture of authoritarianism is so strong that professional footballers

may accept feelings of anxiety, isolation and occupational uncertainty, as they are unwilling to voice their concerns around behaviour for fear of the impact it might have on their career (A. Parker, 2006; A. Parker & Manley, 2016).

Kevin delivered a further set of indictments around the education and welfare on offer to players:

> We could have a meeting this week, have a presentation this week, next week you don't remember anything we've talked about and next week nothing's changed. You just talk about things or raising awareness about something but you'll have forgotten about it next week…Like racism, Kick it Out in football we have these presentations, one week, one day everyone's really aware to it and like yeah there's nothing racist happening in the environment and then like next week we're back to normal.

This was a worrying assessment on a couple of levels. Firstly, these programmes do not maintain long term engagement and behavioural change. This extends upon previous findings that suggest broader educational provision is not viewed seriously by other clubs or players (A. Parker, 2000b). Over time Kevin suggested players learn to disregard or play down the value of education, in order to maintain their status as a player on the team. Secondly, on a more sinister level despite this education, it suggests racist bullying remains commonplace. This would suggest that the trend towards racist behaviour, particularly when players are 'off the job' and outside of the club's formal surveillance in educational settings prevails (A. Parker, 2006). The return to racist bullying behaviour may also be as a result of those in coach educator roles displaying these behaviours (Hylton, 2018). From this it would imply that this cultural acceptance for this type of bullying has spread down to the players.

The apathetic feeling amongst footballers to these sessions was illustrated by Kevin stating that "people just daydream through them do you know what I mean?" This reinforced the feeling from players that educational opportunities are merely just a chance for some time off and are largely a waste of time, regardless of the severity of the content (A. Parker, 2000b). Perhaps most alarmingly of all was Kevin's overall assessment that:

> There's nothing really set up where if you are being bullied in football that there's no form of solution to it. It's more like it's in control of the people being bullied or the people doing the bullying… I think the club like to think they employ people, not many people; they like to think they employ people to help with that kind of stuff. But a coach is not there to stop you getting bullied, or that's what I think.

This reflected a strong belief that players have nowhere to turn to when they are being bullied. Evidently despite attempts within professional football to address problematic behaviour, the players do not view these services as accessible or visible. It further indicates a lack of agency afforded to professional footballers, in creating appropriate support for their needs. It would appear those in the football hierarchy behave in a similar fashion by making assumptions about the psychological needs of the players with respect to bullying, banter, teasing and victimisation that are misplaced, problematic and untested (Pitchford et al., 2004). Equally it would appear that the clubs do not have a true conviction for addressing these behaviours and they are simply going through the motions to tackle these behaviours. This apathy and at times ridicule of education and welfare particularly on behalf of important figures such as other players and coaches may provide some explanation why only a small number of players even recognised aspects of education and welfare in relation to bullying, banter, teasing and victimisation. The reasons for this apathy are multi-layered. On the one hand professional football has not tackled education and welfare appropriately due to a largely incompetent unstructured and non-standardised approach, which has paid lip service to it. On a more severe level it has sought to both implicitly and explicitly encourage players away from valuing these aspects (A. Parker, 2000b). A cultural milieu therefore exists where players are disengaged from vital aspects of their education and welfare around bullying, banter, teasing and victimisation suggesting that football, as well as potentially other institutions, have a long way to go in terms of both engaging with their members and devising appropriate policies to educate and address these behaviours.

4.3 The Bullying Act

4.3.1 Repetitive

One of the most dominant themes emerging from all the participants, was that bullying was seen as a repetitive act. Broadly this was in line with existing conceptualisations of bullying (e.g. Olewus, 1993). In an extension of the bullying and teasing literature this repetitive element delineated these concepts. The present study highlights some of the shortcomings of these definitions by showing that there is significant variability on what might be deemed repetitive. Some players identified an alternative conceptualisation on what is repetitive, in that one off instances from different people can combine to fulfil this component of bullying.

James' extract demonstrated the salience of an act being carried out on multiple occasions in professional football, to constitute bullying. This player appeared to convey a dangerous assumption that the act of bullying is free from being carried out once or on one day.

> I'd say it'd be the same person every day, if it was the same person getting it every single day, then I would say it was bullying. If it was just one day it was him, then one day the joke was on someone else, then it was more general and it is more banter so to speak.

This sense was later reinforced by this player, when they articulated that moving beyond one-off acts of abuse moves a behaviour into bullying "I think that would be too far and that would obviously be bullying because that's not a one-off." This appears to suggest that there is a misguided view amongst professional footballers about the impact of one-off forms of abuse, which may set football apart from other contexts which have sought to educate people about bullying behaviour. It also illustrates the issues players alluded to with education programmes in football, as players are seemingly unaware of the impact of cyberbullying, where bullying material can be posted once but yet be damaging over a long period of time (Volk et al., 2014). Given the profile of professional footballers on social media platforms this presents a worrying lack of awareness of where they might be bullied.

The stress placed on the importance of repetition was in contrast to more recent parts of the bullying literature which have questioned whether the repetitive aspect highlighted by Olewus (1993) is appropriate (Vaillancourt

et al., 2008; Volk et al., 2014). For players this was vital in separating bullying from the other key study terms, such as banter and teasing:

> Yeah I think if you do something once, that just could be banter or it could be something said on the pitch. Cos you're wanting to do well, getting more out of someone, so that's definitely not bullying. Um but if it was sort of…you…shouted at by coaches every day but sort of more than one session or another but if it was done 10, 15 times each session and every day, then it would be. (Greg)

Kevin reaffirmed this view, giving further credence to the belief that players almost have to accept that a one-off occasion only constitutes teasing.

> I think very similar, I think when teasing happens too often, it can become a form of bullying. But people who get teased, everyone can get teased on a one-off occasion. The coach can get teased but I think again, I'm touching back on that repetitive form of teasing that could become bullying or a form of banter that someone doesn't like. (Kevin).

What was particularly noteworthy about Kevin's account is what constitutes "too much" remains unclear. In contrast, Dave clearly distinguished the amount of teasing required to move an act into bullying, "you could tease, you could say it once or twice it's teasing but then if gets more repetitive it's classed as bullying." This gives a sense that there is an amount of behaviour which can be quantified in order to determine it as bullying compared to teasing.

Whilst the players began to offer some sense around the quantification of the repetitive element of bullying, further exploration of their accounts revealed that there were sizeable differences in what the precise numbers of behaviour needed to identify this concept. For some such as Ricky, it was marked out by a daily occurrence:

> I think bullying means um….it's continuous it's every day and like it becomes past the point of banter. Cos sometimes you have banter it get mentioned every now and then…I think if someone's not happy with stuff that's being said to them and it's just being said to them every day or every second day and they think they can't get away from it. (Ricky)

For other players like Dave these timescales varied, "um yeah it could be but bullying's always, always bringing it up again. That's the way it is whether it's a month down the line, next week." These accounts were a nice illustration of how bullying can be seen to vary from a daily occurrence, through to something more sporadic and unpredictable in nature. This diversity in accounts regarding timing was also reflected in the amount of occasions behaviour had to be undertaken to constitute bullying:

> That's kind of a no-go area really. I think maybe a couple of throw away comments here or there can be all ok but then once it goes any further. Then that's when it crosses the line. (Charlie)

Charlie seemed to imply that anything beyond a couple of comments could be enough whereas for Greg the frequency of the behaviour needed to be higher.

> Yeah as I said you do talk to people differently on the pitch but you don't do that repetitively 5,6,7 times that would be going too…far. I think that would be going too far. (Greg)

Overall these accounts reflected a vague view of the amount of times behaviour is needed to constitute bullying. This is of huge significance to the bullying literature as it specifically illustrates findings from previous literature, that perspectives of bullying can vary significantly from research driven definitions (Sawyer et al., 2008; Vaillancourt et al., 2008; Volk et al., 2014). The present study's findings also highlight issues with preliminary investigations into bullying behaviours amongst young adult sport participants which have eschewed the repetitive element of bullying, in favour of a focus on power differentials and harm (Kerr et al., 2016). A potential explanation for this contrast is that the present study's findings were obtained in the footballers' workplace, whereas for Kerr and colleagues their participants were still in an educational environment. Indeed within the workplace where bullying is typically viewed as happening consistently and repeatedly over time (Georgakopoulos, Wilkin, & Kent, 2011). This raises an interesting point around individuals in workplace environments being too willing to accept that repetition is essential to making an act bullying, rather than considering the impact of severe isolated actions.

Whilst agreement was largely found that bullying in football is a repetitive act, some occasional minor contradictions were expressed in the

89

participants' accounts. For Oli one-off acts alone could be powerful enough to constitute bullying:

> Obviously bullying can be a one-off where you say something but I think that's gotta be…straight personal. But I think when it's over time it could be like a little thing like ah you're fat…You think "oh shut up, it's a laugh innit" then you keep saying it and then you're like "hang on a minute" you look in a mirror and think "am I fat?"

Lenny extended this, as well as views of the repetitive element found within the bullying literature, by highlighting an interesting alternative sense of this component:

> I dunno it's difficult because at times if you do it once, one person could see it as a laugh, whereas the person who it's affecting but if it happens just once to them but it's happening once from other people and somebody else, they can see it as bullying. But from that other person just the once they can see it as just a laugh, so it can be difficult at the end of the day you don't know what's actually happening to them when you're not there. So it can be a difficult one.

This case provided a nice illustration of the tension of the view from perpetrators that they are just seeing their behaviour as a one-off, whereas for the victim they are being exposed to multiple 'one-off' behaviours from different sources, which fuse together into a repetitive form of bullying. As such this supports Volk and colleagues' (2014) theoretical redefinition of bullying by revealing the importance of one-off instances to bullying, yet extends this redefinition by showing that these behaviours are actually not a one-off and are frequent in their occurrence.

4.3.2 Power

Consistent with existing definitions of bullying, the participants' reported the importance of power dynamics within their conceptualisation of bullying (Olewus, 1993; Volk et al., 2014). What set their discussion apart though was that their accounts revealed the different layers by which power can be represented. In some cases, football promotes a pure hierarchy based on age. For other this included other factors unique to the football environment such as their status within the group, masculinity, financial prowess and competition. The simple hierarchy which drives the component of power was highlighted by James:

> Yeah it's a hierarchy isn't it? It's when you're, in my experience, you come in as a first year, you get bullied by the second year, you get bullied by the third year and then the pros are a level above that. Then when you're a first year, you move up to the second year and then the majority of things move to the first years. So it's like a level that you move up every year that you're there.

James' extract reflected how the institutionalised nature of the football environment creates a hierarchy where young players must almost expect bullying. Within this context this may be explained by young players' acceptance of unquestioning acts of subordination (Cushion & Jones, 2014) but more broadly from a Foucauldian perspective it demonstrates power functions in football not only from top to bottom (i.e. more senior players bully less experienced players) but also from bottom to top (Foucault, 1977). Here younger, less experienced players do not challenge bullying as a disciplinary mechanism to maintain power and instead they adopt the role of what Foucault might regard as the 'supervisors' or instigators of this act, as they transition into second year players. Kevin's account was consistent with these ideas and also revealed the importance of this hierarchy for the footballer's progression, as well as some of the ramifications of this for the team:

> I think the plain reason for bullying in football is the hierarchy. People try and get themselves, higher up the hierarchy in the team to make themselves feel better…I think plainly that hierarchy causes bullying. I think the teams that don't have that hierarchy, everyone's the same from the best person to the worst person, they don't have that bullying.

These comments regarding dominant behaviours, may be explained by the perception that maintaining hierarchical levels of power is one of the values to uphold, for an individual to progress as player and the club to perform as a cohesive organisation (A. Parker & Manley, 2016).

A key area of agreement amongst the participants was that boosting their status in the team was an important factor in driving bullying behaviour and within this there was a drive towards being the dominant figure within the team:

> But the status of being a first team player is different. So because you've got a status, you feel like you can belittle the people below

>   you and that's where this bullying thing will start creeping in but
>   yeah but it's really difficult. It's really hard to understand….Say just
>   because you want to be top dog, you try and belittle people. I'd say
>   that's the only reason bullying would come round. (Phil).

It could be argued from Phil's account that bullying is rooted in the tents of social comparison theory, whereby professional footballers compare themselves to players of similar standing, yet they utilise downward social comparisons to make themselves feel better (Festinger, 1954; Wills, 1981). Some players utilise bullying as a means of active derogation to boost their status and potentially mask their own negative affect. Other participants' accounts were consistent with this, with a particular emphasis being placed on this drive for supremacy being reflected in evolutionary, gendered terms:

>   Yeah cos it could even be little things like trying to impress the
>   group and boost yourself up as this alpha male in the team.
>   Especially with men as footballers they're trying to compete with
>   each other to like who's the best at this, who's trying to do the most
>   at that. (Rob).

Rob in particular highlighted that footballers perform behaviours that are almost analogous to alpha males within pack animals. In part this would suggest that the unique institutionalised values and the importance placed on identity which the players identified as part of the football environment, provide a foundation for bullying. It also shows the value placed on performing the role of a male (Butler, 1988), where players embody a hyper-masculine, superstar status, in order to fit in with the behavioural norms of this environment (A. Parker, 2000a). This reinforces that within men's professional football bullying serves as a psychological mechanism for players to demonstrate their power within the concept of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2008).

Professional football has a very particular view on masculinity which is exacerbated by financial affluence, represented through a healthy cash flow, designer clothing and fast cars (A. Parker, 2000a, 2001). This provides an interesting extension on the bullying literature to date which has generally focused on contexts where this is less of a factor. Importantly for workplace organisations more broadly it also suggests that money may act as a driver of bullying behaviour:

> Not like your general loud footballers, 'cos they're your main ones. If you go to a club there's always a group of main ones, the big hitters or 'big dogs' as we call them, like the ones who get the paid the most money. (James).

James' quote sets an interesting tone, in that the 'big dogs' and therefore potentially the bullies are those who are paid the most. It almost gave a sense too that these figures must not be threatened. Similarly Kevin, reinforced this notion by focusing on the opposite end of the financial hierarchy, "you aren't gonna bully someone if for example you're someone who's earning £10 a week. You aren't gonna bully someone who's earning a grand a week." This potentially reaffirms findings from A. Parker (2001) that peer group acceptance is underpinned by being able to fulfil various financial pressures and obligations and thus for lower earning players they lack the power to bully. For male players, it also illustrates within the institution of football money acts as one of the features which embodies hegemonic masculinity and drives bullying. It is worth noting, that players in the present study contradicted themselves when it came to finance.

> I wouldn't say it'd be the finance, I'd say most clubs have the ring leader, most clubs have the main person who's been here the longest, the biggest name and people will try and impress. (James)

Therefore other aspects such as longevity may create this hierarchical component and establish power, popularity and leadership credentials which have been found to trigger bullying behaviours in other populations such as adolescents and student-athletes (Kerr et al., 2016; Vaillancourt et al., 2003). Interestingly what remained absent was a focus on ability, which other tentative explorations of bullying in sport have revealed (Kerr et al., 2016). Supported by their conceptualisation of the identity of a footballer, which also gave no reference to ability, this would imply that professional football might confer its own unique view of the determinants of bullying behaviour which are quite different to other sports.

Finally for some, the power aspect of bullying was also described as being underpinned by personal factors, which linked to previously mentioned aspects of masculinity and also the importance of competition.

> I think it gives the players confidence in themselves. It shows the coach they're more, more like dominant and I think coaches like, that…people…have…character. People who are said to have more

character up the hierarchy, so I think it goes better for you in terms of the coach. (Kevin).

I think they might do it, to sort of earn… to get a response from players in the team, so people might think "we can't say owt to him, cos obviously he's a bully, he says things so." So it might be for that, to try and show your superiority and stuff. Translate it to the pitch, they might not, say they want the ball or something, they might not say it and stuff, cos they might shout at them or something like that or things like that. It all comes down to things like that people who bully. (Ed).

Ed and Kevin's quotes in particular showed two potentially significant impacts of the power aspects of bullying on performance. Firstly in this context bullying can almost be viewed positively amongst other players and by coaches, as a sense of recognition for the individual and their potential and secondly, it could lead to detrimental effects on the team's functioning whereby better suited players on the pitch may not demand the ball for fear of retribution. To this end, it further embodied the element of competition players highlighted, was central to the football environment. On one level players need to work together, whilst on another they are direct rivals to differentiate themselves as individuals in order to gain a starting place (Kerr et al., 2016). As Kerr and colleagues elaborated sport provides a unique environment for potential bullying behaviours to be normalised, which may be exacerbated by the physical demands on its participants. This context is unique in that the pairing of companionship, intimacy and negative competitiveness is salient in sport friendships whereas it is not in others (Kerr et al., 2016; Weiss et al., 1996). In football this makes the dynamic more complex creating space for bullying to occur. The participants' data reflects the sense that players form close bonds based on the considerable amount of time they spend together and yet they compete against each other for playing positions and other performance variables. Thus the players reflected the notion that tensions might emerge amongst footballers as on the one hand, they must collaborate together for their team's success and yet they must differentiate themselves individually to display and be rewarded for their skills. This might drive the need for players to bully others in order to elevate themselves within this competitive hierarchy.

4.3.3 Emotional Effect

A common feature of previous definitions of bullying is the reference to harm (see Olewus, 1993; Volk et al., 2014). The present findings add significantly to the conceptual understanding of the bullying act, by moving beyond the general outcomes associated with harm (e.g. suicide, depression, low self-esteem) to focus on the specific emotional effects individuals may experience when they are bullied. Some players implied that this may pave the way for identification of this behaviour through victims' responses, for others they pointed to a concerning trend that these effects are less observable. There was also variety in the extent to whether players felt this behaviour impacts personal or performance outcomes. Lenny provided an initial example of the assumption held by a number of the players, that this emotional effect would be a determining factor in the bullying act:

> I think you can tell by their initial reaction 'cos if you do it the first time and they find it funny and they're having a laugh and enjoying it. Whereas if you do it third or fourth time and their reaction's different to the first time then you know that it's gone a step too far and they're not enjoying it or something like that.

An additional layer of concern was represented in Kevin's account, in that displaying these emotional effects represents an issue for the victim being unable to take banter, rather than a problem with the perpetrators of bullying.

> Usually tempers are raised, you can tell it bothers someone, so you can see a change in their emotion like they'll get angrier you know what I mean or they can stop talking or might get more aggressive. Usually you can tell when somebody is annoyed it's blatant. Usually it's a build up as well. You can see the build-up, I've seen people erupt and you can see it coming and it's not a surprise do you know what I mean. If someone reacts to banter in the wrong way and it's surprising and you usually think what's wrong with that person, is there something going on with that person you don't know about. But normally you can see it coming and there's an eruption.

Kevin's account suggests a persistence of authoritarianism whereby players must be prepared to raise their tolerance of verbal derogation and accept banter from fellow players, despite the emotional effect it might have on them (S. Kelly & Waddington, 2006; A. Parker, 2006). Interestingly these

beliefs contrast other domains (e.g. education) where if bullying takes place it is framed more in terms of an issue with the bully rather than the victim (Frisen et al., 2007). The present study also enhances the bullying literature in this regard by focusing on adults, who generally offer different perspectives on the roles of perpetrators and victims of closely related behaviour such as teasing (Kowalski, 2000). If Kevin speaks for professional footballers it implies they take the perpetrator's perspective by minimising the negative aspects of their banter (reemphasised in the theme of Banter and Teasing in Appendix F). Whilst this provides understanding for their perspective, it reveals worrying emotional outcomes for the victims of humiliation and rejection.

In a similar fashion, players often described a situation where the emotional identification of the bullying act was observable. For Jamal, this was especially vivid:

> Yeah for someone to find out, it would've had to be a breakdown physically or crying, or it could be anger, start screaming sort of thing and then like it's a way for everyone have to know.

This findings provides an important contrast on recent conceptualisations of the bullying act by shifting the focus from behaviours demonstrated by the perpetrator (e.g. punching, kicking or social exclusion) to the types of behaviours experienced by the victim (Volk et al., 2014). For some players, this *emotional effect* was much less observable, which led to contradictions in some of the participants' accounts. Earlier Lenny had talked about how the reaction of a victim would change when behaviour became bullying, whereas here he indicated the emotional effect would be more hidden.

> You can put a front on. So you're not too sure when they could feel like they're being bullied, so it's hard to help them…So it's difficult to understand when somebody's being bullied at a club because they can put a front on.

This extract highlighted the pressure on footballers to not show the emotional impact of being bullied, consistent with the assumption that young players in particular are unlikely to express their discomfort with such practices, due to their lack of credibility and stature within a football club (A. Parker & Manley, 2016). Drawing on theories of emotional regulation, it would appear players adopt the strategy of expressive suppression to support their goal directed pursuits (Koole, 2009; Larsen et al., 2012),

which is shaped by the professional football context. Despite evidence to the contrary (e.g. Larsen et al., 2012) players believe that the positives of expressively suppressing the negative emotional effects of bullying outweigh the physiological, social and cognitive cons of this strategy. Whilst Lenny described this expressive suppression as a coping mechanism, these findings potentially explain the link between bullying and burnout in professional football, as well why players ultimately fail to cope with this pressure of the banter within their group and snap (A. Parker, 2001, 2006; Yildiz, 2015).

The effect on emotions as a result of the bullying act was shown to have far reaching consequences both personally and in terms of performance. James described a personal experience where he "saw him (a staff member) crying." This vast personal impact (see Appendix F for a further discussion) was extended by Rob:

> I think the results of bullying, it can affect, it's not just at football, it can become part of your life. You can be sitting at home thinking what's so and so going be saying to me today. You can be like, are they gonna get on to me again, are they gonna, so like it comes away from football and it becomes like any bullying is. It becomes part of everyday life to the person who's being bullied.

In the case of these players the emotional effects of bullying were profound for the victim's personal wellbeing and reflect the general trends within the sports literature, whereby associations have been formed between psychosocial health and bullying (Jankauskiene et al., 2008; Tilindienè & Gailianienë, 2013; Tilindienė et al., 2012). For some the impact may well be felt in their personal relationships as James' account showed, whereas others revealed potentially depressive outcomes "even their emotions away from football, leaving the environment and you're still feeling down. (It) probably would play on your mind if you're being bullied like" (Mickey). They build on existing research to demonstrate how the incidence of bullying may explain the association between a lack of social support and psychological distress, as well as career dissatisfaction and depression recorded within professional footballers (Gouttebarge, Backx, et al., 2015; Gouttebarge, Frings-Dressen, et al., 2015).

In a similar vein, though reflecting a slightly contrasting outcome, other players highlighted how the emotional aspect of bullying ultimately impacted upon performance:

> Obviously, it can have a massive effect on your football, if you're constantly getting picked on, being bullied. It can have (an) effect on your career then can have an effect on your playing side, you won't be confident, you won't believe in yourself and you won't trust your teammates as well. (Dave).

> But if it's every day and it's affecting the person and it's affecting the performance or um…they can't really trust anyone and it's separates them from the group then that's bullying. (Ricky).

These comments still acknowledged personal and relational issues borne out of the emotional component of bullying in football but additionally showed consistency with the negative impact of bullying on players' performance and long term career progression (Yildiz, 2015). This was unsurprising given conceptual models of organisational stress within sport psychology, have highlighted that a negative feeling state occurs when emotional responses are interpreted as debilitative to performance (Fletcher, Hanton, & Mellalieu, 2006). Significantly though bullying has not been identified as a potential antecedent of these emotional responses, suggesting these findings have the potential to make an important contribution to this body of research.

4.3.4 Abuse and Intimidation

The most commonly expressed theme of the bullying act, across all of the participants, was abuse and intimidation. This theme was in accordance with Olewus' (1993) classic definition of bullying but provides a greater range on the myriad of different abusive behaviours within which participants at times reflected consistent and contrasting accounts. One of the main areas of consensus was verbal abuse, as Charlie commented:

> I think in football it would be mainly verbal kind of stuff. I can't really think of much kind of mental kind of stuff or physical. I think mainly it would be verbal… Sometimes he can be on your case, if you're looking overweight, he can be "listen you're too fat, you need to lose weight."

The verbal aspect of Charlie's account was confirmed by various participants, including most explicitly and categorically by James, "Oh

everything you 'shithouse'... 'Weak as piss', 'fatty' all the words as yeah bullying words." Interestingly this contrasts bullying research in sport with older, intercollegiate participants (see Kerr et al., 2016). On the other hand it is consistent with research focusing on younger age participants (Mattey et al., 2014), whereby players reported a significant verbal element to this abuse. Football's culture of verbal chastisement, which the participants may have accepted since being young players, may explain this as well as wider workplace findings which stated that verbal bullying is often legitimised in highly masculine team environments (Alexander et al., 2011; A. Parker, 2006). The body image element of this verbal abuse was comparable with previous research within both PE and participant level sports domains, suggesting that this may be something which may identify the bullying act (Mattey et al., 2014; Peterson et al., 2012). Yet the points raised by Charlie on a lack of mental and physical abuse were more divergent at times with other participants.

For other players the mental abuse element was more significant. This may be a reflection of findings from similarly aged participants both inside and outside of sport (Kerr et al., 2016; P. K. Smith, 2016):

> I think a lot of bullying is like in football, could be mentally breaking someone down, so constantly shouting at them or constantly criticising. But like I'm not sure if there's a, like a physical sort of bullying from what I think cos there's not much like fighting with teammates, not much people getting hurt, it's more just constantly sort of breaking people down. (Rob).

Interestingly, in the case of mental abuse this was heavily contextualised to the football environment as Ed added, "so I think a lot of it is, the mental side of football, that's what bullying's aimed at, trying to get in people's heads." Perhaps most significantly of all these contextual statements, was the reason why this mental abuse operates in football:

> 'Cos I think mental bullies, people can get away. 'Cos like if you went into the changing room and knocked people down, straight away you'd get in trouble but if you constantly chipped away at your teammate, constantly said things that's like...football you should deal with that criticism. (Rob).

The salient point from this account was that the football context permits this type of bullying, compared to physical types of abuse. This was similar to

findings with coaches in grassroots football, where emotional abuse and bullying were reported as some of the most prevalent forms of overall abuse (Brackenridge et al., 2005). In contrast to this the perpetrators in the present study were often seen as fellow players, corroborating findings about the institutionalised nature of the professional football environment. These particular accounts contrast classic definitions of bullying, as physical abuse is not seen to be a factor in the football context.

The physical aspect of abuse exposed a great degree of diversification in the participants' views. Some players were consistent with the belief this was not a significant element of the bullying act within football and the context may in part explain this:

> Maybe related to being at a football club, it's banter going too far, there's no real physical bullying and stuff like that compared to other walks of life cos you know you're in the spotlight. So, it's mainly just banter going too far. (Lenny).

Lenny's account was interesting on two levels. Firstly, the language used about "banter going too far" symbolised the institutional celebration of this process in football, yet revealed some of the negative aspects of this behaviour discussed in the 'Banter and Teasing' theme (see Appendix F). Secondly the ability expressed by Lenny, for players to modify their behaviour to avoid physical abuse on the one hand sounded essentially positive. On the other, it suggested a darker self-regulatory set of behaviours, where players confine these actions to the institutionalised closed, segregated environment offered by the professional football club, which is free from the media's attention, to conduct other forms of bullying (Gearing, 1999; A. Parker & Manley, 2016). In contrast to the views expressed on mental abuse, these requirements of the football environment served as a barrier to prevent physical bullying. This differentiated these participants from Olewus' (1993) classic view on bullying, as well as parts of the literature in sport, which stressed the importance of physical actions making up part of bullying behaviour (Brackenridge, 2010; Brackenridge et al., 2005; Pitchford et al., 2004). It should be noted that this previous research has been focused more towards children and therefore the sense from the participants that the physical nature of bullying is lessened, may be reflective of the shift away from physical bullying found with adolescents (P. K. Smith, 2016). More specifically the confusion that young children

have between bullying and aggression, as well as the preference towards more indirect and relational bullying in adolescence, may explain why adult footballers do not conceptualise physical abuse as a key factor in bullying.

It is noteworthy that other players recorded quite conflicting and at times vivid views on physical abuse being a part of bullying. This may be explained by differences in generational influences as James recalled from his time as a young first team player, "And I mean like boot polish, beat up, stuff thrown at, 'what the fuck are you doing in here you little, you're not meant to be in here'." Later on the interview he furthered:

> If they were bored (with) nothing to do, they would go and kidnap one of the younger lads from the changing room and I don't know tape them up, boot polish him, stick him in a wheelie bin, for their amusement. Because they thought it was funny.

As the oldest participant, James mirrored the passive acceptance of physical punishment which was seen as part of players' apprenticeship (A. Parker, 2006; Pitchford et al., 2004). Equally this account may be reflective of the cultural acceptance of these behaviours, where acceptance of these authoritarian practices is essential to display a good professional's attitude (A. Parker, 1996, 2000b; A. Parker & Manley, 2016). For George who was a younger player within the study these issues remain but represent themselves less graphically:

> "Yeah, maybe you've got the older bigger lad, then a little youth team player coming in the changing room every day. (They) probably would get a bit intimidated than if he was bullying he would push him around every day."

George added that the nature of this physical abuse would be concentrated to on-field behaviour rather than away from the field of play, "people'd go through the back of you, people would put a bad tackle in." This was not an isolated view as Ricky, expressed that a bully in football would "put their authority out there and they'll do whatever it takes and sometimes it goes too far and puts in a bad challenge on purpose and stuff like that." It would thus seem that physical bullying may be legitimised by some within professional football. This is unsurprising as an aggressive will to win is often craved in the players by managers and coaches (A. Parker, 2006) and therefore players may wish to display this through physical dominance.

The overall range of contrasting views on whether physical abuse is part of bullying in football, resulted in a certain amount of ambiguity around whether this is the case. Whether this is reflective of a change in attitudes is not completely clear: "but nowadays of course the youth team players don't have to do anything, so it's completely changed. But that was bullying a 100% bullying" (James). This account reflected the notion that even if signing up to some form of initiation may be seen as part of a 'voluntary' hazing practice in football, the effects are as harmful as bullying (Diamond et al., 2016). It also suggests that hazing and bullying may not be independent of each other and instead hazing practices may make up bullying behaviours in football (Kirby & Wintrup, 2002). Ultimately whilst hazing practices are seen as acceptable practices within the forced integrated and institutionalised nature of the football environment, players must take part in these ceremonies to avoid relational bullying.

An aspect of abuse and intimidation much more consistently reported amongst the participants was a relational form of ostracism, which was in line with the overall conceptualisation of bullying (Cook et al., 2010; Olewus, 1993; Williams & Guerra, 2007):

> I've seen one case I've seen him make him stand in the shower, wouldn't let him into the changing room, wouldn't let him listen to the team talk because he wanted to outcast him. So he made him stand in the shower. A grown man stood in the shower not allowed to stand in the changing room to listen." (James).

> Making them feel like they're not wanted not cared about…Just not involving them in your banter or in activities you're doing away from the club and stuff like that and if they're being victimised (Lenny).

In the case of these extracts they involved deliberate attempts from staff or players to exclude or isolate individuals and in the case of the latter, a reluctance on behalf of the victim to not expose them self to bullying behaviours. They also add depth to the relational aspect of bullying by highlighting examples of how this occurs. Similar to grassroots football (Brackenridge et al., 2005) this form of bullying carries a mentally abusive element. However, in contrast to this previous research, the perpetrators were often seen as fellow players rather than coaches, suggesting that this group may need more monitoring in the professional game.

Though the verbal, mental, physical and relational aspects of bullying received far more discussion, it is noteworthy to point to worrying comments revealed by a select group of participants (5 of 18) around racial abuse:

> Like racism, Kick it Out in football we have these presentations, one week, one day everyone's really aware to it and like yeah there's nothing racist happening in the environment and then like next week we're back to normal. (Kevin).

In many ways this quote was the most concerning of all, in that it revealed educational policies around this type of bullying only had short-lived effects and it implied that racially abusive bullying for some was "normal." George's assertion added to this, "Like we said before religion wise or anything, your race. Just anything, they'd be the stereotypical what you'd be bullied for." As did Peter's, "I think you're picking someone out as a victim, maybe the way they look, their appearance, where they've come from. Their nationality, their skin colour." Whilst not explicitly mentioned by the players, these findings may be explained by the predominance of white players on teams (A. Parker, 1996). This can result in non-white players being perceived as a potential masculine threat to the majority of young footballers, which adds to the troubling picture of sport being a site where racial stereotypes need to be upheld (A. Parker, 2006; Peguero & Williams, 2013). Overall these comments from players of different ethnicities, black in the case of Kevin and white in the case George and Peter, highlight that racist abuse potentially makes up part of bullying in football and it is not a view isolated to different groups. Seemingly, despite high profile educational programmes such as 'Kick It Out' (2016), there is still a prevalence of this behaviour within the game.

4.3.5 Single Victim

Another consistently reported theme within the bullying act was a focus on a single victim. Interestingly as the players developed this theme it became apparent that this single victim was not always one person but instead could be a group. Importantly from a conceptual standpoint, the players alluded to how victimisation was subsumed into bullying within this theme. For most players this single victim focus was seen as a key differentiating factor between bullying and other concepts such as banter:

103

> I'd say it'd be the same person every day, if it was the same person getting it every single day, then I would say it was bullying. If it was just one day it was him, then one day the joke was on someone else, then it was more general and it is more banter so to speak. (James).

> It's all very well having banter but…once you're not stuck on an individual once you're giving out to everyone, just a bit of craic really. But once you're stuck on a particular individual 24/7 and you're not giving someone a break you've definitely got bullying. (Mickey).

Both extracts gave specific reference to a focus on a single victim identifying an act out as bullying. These references added to other definitions of bullying which have not focused specifically on a single individual (Cook et al., 2010; Olewus, 1993; Volk et al., 2014; Williams & Guerra, 2007). In contrast to Kerr and colleagues' (2016) research in sport, the present findings demonstrate that bullying is viewed as an act involving a single perpetrator and victim. This was contested by other players though:

> When (you) say more than one, it could even be more than one person. Just constantly goes at a person each time, I'd say. Whether it's on the pitch or in the changing room. Just constantly at that person, trying to belittle them and that. I'd say that's bullying in football…Bullying in football to me would be, someone or a group of people just going at the same one or maybe a couple of people constantly over weeks and a month period. (Phil).

These assertions validate Kerr and colleagues' (2016) view that it would be dangerous to focus on bullying as an act purely focused on one participant alone and that there is potential for more than one person or even a peer group to be marginalised in football. It would seem that the competitive environment of professional football breeds dominant individuals or groups, who exert their authority over players who do not meet their personal or performance standards. Paul, corroborated this "it could be, you could bully, someone could bully not one person, someone could bully a group of people even if they're all together."

Significantly both for the main research questions for the present study and the conceptual understanding of the terms of bullying and victimisation, the

participants returned to a single victim focus when discussing victimisation. As such victimisation collapsed into their conceptualisation of the bullying act and became a subordinate term of bullying in the participants' discussions (see Appendix F). This was best reflected by Alfie:

> Um I think victimisation is…I dunno when I think about it, I think of this being one person who's scared or worried, sort of won't say anything back or worried to give a reaction or anything back. Sort of like that, that's what a victim in my head looks like. So there's always a bully if victimisation, so I always think there's a bully saying stuff to them and it hurts them, hurts them to take it, I don't like it.

This comment suggested in essence that bullying and victimisation overlap, as the player described the necessity for a bully in order for there to be victimisation. Other players such as Lenny and Rob reinforced this in their discussion of victimisation as it was viewed as a form of bullying (Appendix F). This essence was also supported by Dave, "Singling someone out, individually not as a group, just constantly at a single person. So yeah that's victimisation." From these participants' perspectives bullying and victimisation were highly intertwined if not the same conceptually. Overall, this provides a vital message for bullying literature which has often had difficulty in conceptually separating these terms. For professional footballers bullying is a far more prominent term and victimisation is viewed as a part of it, rather than the other way round.

4.3.6 Whistleblowing

One of the richest themes of convergence and divergence in the participants' accounts was '*whistleblowing'.* This was mentioned across 17 of the 18 participants, reflecting significant tensions both across and within participants around whether the bullying act can be reported. It highlights issues with education and welfare, which a selected group of players discussed in 'The Football Environment' theme. Whilst Kevin used the word banter to answer a question in relation to bullying, it illustrated how for some, reporting bullying in football is seen as forbidden:

> You'd never go and tell someone or go and complain to the coach about someone getting banter. I've seen people getting banter to the point where I feel sorry for them and they still won't go and say anything just because of the football culture you won't, you can't, it's a really hard thing…within a team because like you're selling out

> your teammates in a way, you can't it's meant to be a team thing
> and in the same way you can't sell them out. You can't get them in
> trouble when really you're meant to be able to take it, so really
> you've got to find a way to combat it without going to the coach. If
> you speak to most lads they won't think of going to the coach to deal
> with banter or tell him or anyone at home do you know what I
> mean? (Kevin).

The unease in Kevin's account where he drifted between "you won't, you can't, it's a really hard thing" illuminates a sense of imprisonment for victims of this behaviour and shows how some players believed reporting bullying to be a 'no-go' area. This could be explained by a culture of organisational silence in football, where the perception of the sport tradition to stay silent remains (D. Kelly & Jones, 2013; Kerr et al., 2016). The players' discussion of the institutionalised nature of football where breaking ranks and whistleblowing would be seen contrary to the view of a professional reinforces this. As such professional football's desire for a particular identity where you cannot show weakness and must accept any kind of behaviour as 'banter', which the players alluded to in their discussion of the football environment, prevails over reporting bullying.

One of the significant aspects of Kevin's narrative, confirmed by the other participants, was that reporting a bullying act would be seen as an act of treachery by the team. This notion was clearly supported by other players:

> Obviously 'cos you're a team and you're with each other every day.
> Cos you're with each other, relying on each other. So if someone's
> getting bullied, even though it shouldn't happen and they go and tell
> someone, they might see it as someone going against the group
> and stuff like that and feel like, they shouldn't be part of their team
> and stuff like that. (Ed)

For this participant the football environment was portrayed as one in which breaking from the group and reporting bullying would leave the player disowned from their team. Language such as "snitching" used by Kevin exposed an underlying perception amongst footballers that reporting bullying would leave the whistleblower as an outcast, with the negative connotation that this would break from the group's order. These findings were consistent with whistleblowing research to date, where language such as 'snitching' revealed a stigma associated with reporting bullying

behaviour (Bjørkelo & Macko, 2012; D. Kelly & Jones, 2013). This could lead to further rejection and isolation from other players and coaches.

On a wider and perhaps even more alarming level, some participants illustrated that despite knowledge of different potential supporting organisations, reporting bullying to these would be avoided at all costs:

> We have the professional footballers' association (PFA) don't you and you have a phone number you can ring but how many people have the balls to admit they're being bullied because if that ever got out you'd get bullied even more. (James).
>
> Do you know like even if you were to ring up the PFA to say someone's bullying me, you wouldn't actually get someone in to come in and actually do something about it cos we're all men. People laugh and all that and be like 'he's not being bullied.' You know what people are like 'we're only having a laugh, we're just having banter'. That's when people sweep it under the carpet, they try and hide it under the banter carpet. (Kevin).

These findings were worrying in various ways. Firstly, in the sense that reporting the bullying act in football could trigger more bullying of that individual. This reluctance, in accordance with reviews on workplace bullying (Bjørkelo, 2013), demonstrates the sophisticated impact of this behaviour. Players have to show mental fortitude to tolerate this behaviour and perhaps even greater levels of this should they want to report it. Secondly, Kevin's perception that organisations such as the PFA would not send in representatives to address this behaviour was highly concerning, despite pervious efforts to educate players about bullying (Brackenridge, et al., 2004). This reinforces the issue with the quality of education on offer, which players often viewed with skepticism as well as their willingness to engage with it. Caution should be noted here that this may mirror broader trends in the professional football literature, where education is devalued by coaches and players alike (A. Parker, 2000b; A. Parker & Manley, 2016). Equally as the players discussed previously it might highlight issues with the disegaging delivery of these programmes. This might be explained by the facilitators of these sessions seeing working with footballers as an act of survival (A. Parker, 2000b). Finally, the inherent masculine culture in football would mean that those reporting this behaviour may be laughed at, with their masculinity questioned. This is comparable to other highly

masculine sports such as the NFL, where revelations of bullying were seen as potentially dangerous because of the risk of media intrusion and negative publicity, reinforcing a culture of organisational silence (D. Kelly & Jones, 2013; Schmittel & Hull, 2015). This alongside recent revelations of clubs paying siginificant amounts of money to cover up historic abuse in professional football (BBC, 2018), would seem to corroborate the view that there is a strong desire for players to remain silent around bullying behaviours. Whilst it is understandable that players accept this burden, in the hope of furthering their career it makes both the club and them complicit in tolerating bullying.

At a local level some players felt that speaking out about bullying within a club would also lead to negative responses from either the coaching staff or other players. Charlie told a potentially negative story of coaches being dismissive of this behaviour or that players may further victimise an individual, if the coaching staff sought to protect them:

> Nah I don't think so. I think a coach, if a coach say stepped in to defend a player who is being bullied or bantered maybe. I think that could make the situation worse…'Cos the person who's doing the bullying or banter could stick on them saying "why's the manager sticking up for you?" Is like his pet of whatever.

This reinforced the implication from James that, "in football you can't say something, everything has to be kept inside because there's nobody for you to speak to about it." This sentiment also extended to if the issue was confronted with other players directly as Mickey put it "you know that guy could turn the shoulder on him and you know, maybe fall out with him." Overall these perspectives gave the sense that the unique environment of football and potentially sport, normalises bullying behaviours. This was reflected in some of the participants' language in that they cannot be seen to "sell out their teammates," they are "meant to take" bullying and they cannot "go against the group." It also furthers the feeling that the responsibility to deal with bullying was firmly the victim's, by subscribing to this that a culture of bullying is passively supported and that a lot of work is required to change these set of beliefs.

Other players such as Ed portrayed a more nuanced, contradictory account of the aspect of whistleblowing:

> The coaches do come and have a lot of talks with us, and say obviously there should be no bullying but if you do have a problem, comes talk to us or the head of welfare and stuff like that.

In this case it evidences the perception of what has been phrased within organisational psychology literature as a 'shorter' structure, whereby players have more contact with coaches and a belief that their negative feedback would be treated more favourably (Henriksen & Dayton, 2006; D. Kelly & Jones, 2013; Morrison & Milken, 2000). At other times though Ed found it difficult to reconcile whether bullying could be disclosed or not:

> But some people find it hard to talk to their parents and stuff, cos they feel they might be letting them down and stuff. So um…feel like they go tell them, the parents may be like 'you're getting soft, get on with it'…But obviously it's hard for people to talk about it cos, it's all to do with pressures, cos if you're telling on someone it's snitching and stuff like that. But if you do tell something can be done about it.

This provided a detailed example of the dilemmas some players faced with exposing this behaviour and reemphasised some of the pressures to stay quiet.

For others the ability to speak out was felt more strongly:

> Obviously it's not a nice thing. It needs to be stopped um…but that's why it's a safe environment and you can go and speak to someone. The safeguarding officer and say I'm not really comfortable. (Dave).

In the first instance this would imply that the introduction of education and welfare officers within academy settings has been a success in managing abusive behaviours. Interestingly, further into their account this participant showed there is still a lingering doubt of speaking out, potentially reflecting previous findings around a lack of agency in the players (Pitchford et al., 2004):

> Some footballers probably don't report as much as they should because say if someone finds out, that's another thing for someone to say why are you snitching kind of thing… (Dave).

This reaffirms the equivocal findings about the quality of education and welfare in football compared to other environments (Appendix F), which might serve to explain why high profile cases of bullying in sport still exist. Even within some quite categorical statements around the options of who to talk to, there was a reminder about the risk of being seen as a 'snitch':

In complete contrast to those who felt this behaviour could not be discussed amongst teammates or the perception of being seen as a 'snitch', Alfie stated:

> I think in our changing room we've got a lot of bonding from the younger lads and older lads, so I think if there was a problem they'd say to me or one of the older lads, I think it would be resolved.

This participant articulated a different version of bullying in football, one in which players can resolve this issue and a culture of openness whereby this issue could be raised. A potential explanation for this may rest within the players' personalities given high extroversion, low agreeableness and high dominance and social settings have been found to predict proactive whistleblowing behaviour (Bjørkelo, Einarsen, & Matthiesen, 2010). This ability to whistleblow by players was extended upon by Phil, who described a situation where whistleblowing was possible and moreover was the responsibility of the whole team not just the victim of the behaviour.

> Because as a team you need to know when it's all banter and then you need to understand when someone's fully overstepped the mark. 'Cos then as a team if you understand what boundaries some like you can push and what you can't, and you can all clamp it out together it's much better, well it's much easier, 'cos you can't let one person get away with it..

Some players may feel an obligation to avoid organisational bystanding and instead engage with the process of altruistic bystanding whereby they act from a compassionate subjective state, to prevent harm to the victim of bullying in football (Linstead, 2013). It still highlights a potential issue in that the problem of bullying is only addressed once it has happened, rather than in the process leading up to it, suggesting that the education programmes on offer to players may not effectively prevent this behaviour. This sense of a reactive approach to bullying appears to reflect the approach the PFA (as well as the clubs themselves), who despite dedicating services focused towards wellbeing, lack a defined policy to address bullying behaviour (The PFA, 2019).

The localised belief that this behaviour is being addressed was reasserted by Ricky, "a lot of it's confidential, they won't say anything but if it is a problem, as a team, as a club we'd rather sort it, than leave it to carry on."

This added further weight to the belief that the bullying act could be dealt with by players as part of the necessary ingredient of conflict within football (see Appendix F). However, this was not a view held by James, "but even if you feel sorry for people it's hard because if you are seen to be sticking up for them, then you're in danger of getting the brunt of it as well." This highlighted a much less positive outlook, where those whistleblowers could end up being victims of bullying and reinforces a subordinating resignation on behalf of the players, to the dominance of professional football's established culture.

This juxtaposition in the players' accounts across was hard to infer from their accounts. Potential reasons for the different perceptions of whistleblowing amongst players could not be classified by factors across the participants such as time as a professional or clubs the players were at. Other reasons could act as barriers to revealing negative behaviours such as the uniqueness of the football environment:

> Not easy because football's very stereotyped, so I wouldn't think it would be very easy to go and talk to someone about how you're feeling because like when I said about seeing someone as weak. If you go and say to the manager, 'oh like they're picking on me I can't deal with it', even if he's on your side, he might be thinking oh I can't, maybe he is, he is and I can't play him. (Rob).

The institutionalised nature of football further reinforces the belief held by some that this environment would not be permitting of players discussing issues such as bullying. Equally, similar to other high-profile sports such as American Football (see Schmittel & Hull, 2015) external pressures on professional footballers, such as media and the perception of their scrutiny may also influence how much players feel they can report this behaviour. Dave reflected how clubs could reinforce these external barriers and how players might internalise this:

> Yeah they do try and stop bullying but if you tell someone, the club will worry. They're gonna worry more than you cos they don't want it getting out in the press, so they'll want it squashed as soon as possible.

Alternatively, this could be seen by players as a way of legitimising not speaking out over this behaviour, to preserve them within the organisation. In summary, the ambiguity in the participants' accounts with respect to

whistleblowing suggested that a variety of individual, perceptual, relational and wider social factors within the football environment may determine the degree to which players report this act.

4.3.7 The Location of Bullying

The football environment was also a dominant factor in where and when the bullying act took place. In line with Parker and Manley's (2016) portrayal of football's closed institutional settings all the players reported that bullying is isolated to their workplace. Despite this generic area of convergence within the participants' narratives, underlying this was a range of divergences around whether the act is isolated to physical locations such as changing rooms or training venues or whether it spread to matchdays and social media spaces. These findings make an important contribution to organisational psychology by highlighting that the modern view of the workplace is very flexible, which carries an important implication about monitoring these spaces. The most frequently reported theme revolved around the changing room as the principal location for this behaviour to occur. Some players such as Alfie were categorical that bullying occurs in this location:

> Out of anywhere you'd probably say in the changing rooms rather than out on the pitch, 'cos if you're out on the pitch you're probably training, you're in your positions. You're not really, well compared to others' positions but you don't really speak to each other in training, so I'd say it's in the changing room or somewhere like that. (Alfie).

For other players the changing room was still perceived as the main site for bullying but the mechanism for why this location was at risk of bullying behaviours was explained in a contrasting fashion:

> Don't know 'cos maybe in the dressing room, you're all together nobody is with you, (the) manager isn't there. Sometimes when you're on your own (the) manager isn't there, coaches aren't…there; you can end up like scrutinising what you do. And you can end up all the lads are in one room all together and it can take something very little to spark everybody. And just mostly because it's just the perceived, prestige or whatever a tag the dressing room it's full of banter. So bullying would be mostly associated with players 'cos they're in the dressing room together. (Mickey).

This account portrayed the changing room as a protected, potentially risky environment with a prestige attached where players' behaviours are unfettered. Previous research in recreational sport found a situation consistent with this, where the unstructured time provided by this environment provided fertile territory for bullying incidents or those incidents which could develop into bullying to occur (Shannon, 2013). Similarly outside of sport, playground environments at schools have been found to be potentially risky locations with regards to bullying, as individuals have the most time to interact with each other and surveillance is often limited (Fekkes et al., 2005). The present findings highlight an important feature of the bullying act in that unsupervised spaces are potentially vulnerable to this behaviour and need monitoring.

In continuation of this theme the football location was characterised as a 'melting pot' of different males, with high scrutiny, yet it suffers from a lack of supervision by coaches and managers:

> I think for privacy. I think the coaches like to give the players, their little time to be together. And I think that's what causes it; the coaches won't be in the changing room with the players ever in England. It would just be the boys in that room, so it becomes more like a separate place in the football environment to on the pitch. So on the pitch you won't banter someone as much, cos you're playing the game.

Perhaps of even greater concern was the connotation for some players that the changing room served as the primary location to guard against whistleblowing in respect to bullying behaviour. As James simply stated, " 'what happens in the changing room, stays in the changing room' because you know that you can't take it into the outside world." This quote best exemplified the changing room as a place of potentially institutionalised bullying behaviours.

However other players highlighted contrasting, vague views around where bullying takes place:

> No could happen anywhere. Pitch, changing room, dinner. Meeting. Maybe away games on the bus. Changing room, home changing rooms, away changing rooms. Watching a game, watching a first team game or going to the stadium. Could happen anywhere. I think

> it's so widespread, I don't think you can fit now or a put a finger point on a certain point it could happen, it could happen anywhere. (Phil).

Phil's views were more emblematic of football clubs serving as total institutions, wherein for the players the cultural norms and acceptance of bullying in sport, permeate all parts of this environment (Goffman, 1961; Kerr et al., 2016; A. Parker & Manley, 2016). As James commented, the life of a footballer may be the primary driver for this:

> Yeah because football you don't mix with people outside of it really. It's only in the training ground when everyone's together because once training is over, everyone is back in their cars and driving to where they live.

This extract told the story of football clubs offering relative seclusion to the player and an environment of closure from the outside world free from the public and media gaze (A. Parker & Manley, 2016; Tomlinson, 1983). This potentially sets the context of football apart to others where bullying research has been conducted. Schools for example and other workplaces are subject to scrutiny from external bodies and organisations (e.g. OFSTED) who have a responsibility to consider behaviour. For footballers bullying behaviours appear to be normalised compared to what they would be on the outside (Kerr et al., 2016). Therefore the insularity of football provides an institution in itself, where a different code of behaviours about what is allowed and acceptable in relation to bullying has been implicitly defined.

Whilst the participants' account largely told a story of bullying in football occurring away from the matchday environment, George's view contrasted this:

> But I think maybe matchday as well. If you've got someone who's on your case, then it's quite easy for a manager or something to stand on the side-line and direct everything at you. If you're right in front of him and the coach is right in front of you. It's possible for him to be in your ear quite a lot.

This depicted a different version of where bullying takes place, in which other figures in the football environment beyond the players may be involved as well. This was a worrying extension of findings from previous research within professional football, where these displays of authoritarianism have been seen to be less vehement on match days (A.

114

Parker, 1996). In addition to this, the same participant revealed a more contemporary view on how a football location is viewed in relation to bullying:

> It could be anywhere, it could be WhatsApp groups or social media but that's unlikely 'cos you are in spotlight of Twitter or whatever so you'd be stupid to do that.

Interestingly there appeared to be some dichotomy between the closed nature of the encrypted WhatsApp group and public forum of Twitter, which could be interpreted as a modern reflection of James' statement, "what happens in the changing room, stays in the changing room." In support of the potential for encrypted discussion forums to be a potential risk of bullying and the general notion that bullying can happen anywhere within the geographical and cyber football location, Lenny summarised:

> I don't think there's a place at the club or you can't pin at the club or the group chats we have, so we can have it anywhere, there's no real place it can happen, can happen anywhere.

Therefore seemingly the totality of the institution also spreads to social media platforms, as these encrypted messaging services provide another site where players are virtually 'together', offering the air of discreteness, residential isolation and protection from the intrusion of the public and authority figures within football (A. Parker & Manley, 2016; Tomlinson, 1983). These encrypted WhatsApp groups operate as a virtual changing room by offering similar characteristics to its physical location such as being private, hidden from surveillance and challenging spaces to report bullying behaviours (Best, Manktelow, & Taylor, 2014; O'Reilly et al., 2018).

4.4 The Bully and Victim

4.4.1 Weakness

The predominant theme in relation to the conceptualisation of a bully and victim in football was weakness. For all the participants they referred to this as a theme which either explained the bully, victim or both. In particular the players referred to some of the unique characteristics which drive the football environment and how this underpins a sense that weakness cannot be demonstrated as part of a player's identity. Significantly though the players highlighted how the specific circumstances of professional football (e.g. players moving away from home at a young age) can create a feeling of weakness within players, which might ultimately end up in them being

115

bullied. This theme also reflected variety in the participants' accounts wherein for some weakness was at the heart of why players were bullied, as James described: "I would say it would be a group of people picking on a weakness of somebody who is…different to the rest of the changing room." Kevin furthered:

> And then it comes to, if they sniff that insecurity and people often do, then it comes down to you then and how you are with your insecurity. 'Cos some people know they have an insecurity and they're comfortable with them and some people are not and that's when it can become bad for you as a person. I think…obviously everyone has their insecurities but if you don't know how to deal with them that's when it becomes a fault in the games, that's when it becomes a problem in the football game.

The latter part of Kevin's account was particularly revealing of the issue of weakness being a problem for victims of bullying in football. For Grant this was reflected to the extent that players cannot show any insecurity:

> If I'm having banter with someone and they show a sign of weakness, you can't really show a sign of weakness, cos they're gonna be at you every single day. But if they like breeze it off, like pretend nothing's happened, you think like leave it off like. Not gonna affect him, 'cos you're looking for a little bite off someone to get banter like…Eh you can't, you can't it's hard to explain cos you can't show it cos they're gonna be at you. If they show a sign of weakness they'll be at you every day, just to get a little. I dunno why, it's just the way it is. If you show a sign of weakness, it's not bullying, it's just hard to explain.

This extract was consistent with players' description of the uniqueness of the football environment where they would rather be bullied than show any form of weakness; as if they did, they would receive more targeting. These findings are somewhat explained by school-based bullying literature where a perception of vulnerability leaves people prone to being targeted by potential offenders (Peguero, 2008). However, there is a much clearer sense within footballers' data that weakness is seen as a significant issue compared to this previous research. The problem with showing an insecurity in football is consistent with the concept of 'sensitive' students, whereby revealing an insecurity can lead to greater exposure to aggressive acts and greater perceptions of bullying on behalf of these victims,

116

perpetuating a vicious cycle wherein perceived bullying leads to greater actual bullying (Schuster, 1999). Perhaps more worryingly Grant suggested how deliberate targeting of this weakness was not even seen as bullying, contrary to the sense from other players that this exploitation was bullying behaviour. Whilst this participant did not elaborate on why this deliberate targeting is not seen as bullying, it may be a reflection of footballers' passive acceptance of the ruthless, hyper-masculine practices of the sport, as well as the belief that dealing with these behaviours are part of a necessary learning curve within the game (S. Kelly & Waddington, 2006; A. Parker, 1996). Furthermore in traditionally all-male working class settings such as professional football, bullying is a brutal celebration of masculinity which differentiates groups into those with more prowess and those who are weak (Collinson & Hearn, 1994; A. Parker, 2006). From a theoretical stance, it reaffirms the existence of hegemonic masculine construction (Connell, 2008) of a professional footballer within which bullying is somewhat legitimised as a means to guarantee power and authority. In the present study it suggests this culture is still active, given Grant's account and overall it provides a valuable and disturbing extension of the bullying literature regarding the normalisation of bullying in the context of football.

Other players were consistent with the belief that weakness was not only a trigger for bullying behaviours but must not be shown at all costs in football. The following quote reinforces the players' depiction of the identity of a footballer whereby footballers must show a 'thick skin'.

> If you think you're a victim from…teasing, I'd have to say you've (got) to become more thick-skinned. You've got to become more thick-skinned cos it's all banter. Like it's all fun. The bullying you can definitely be victimised from that. (Phil).

Interestingly Phil's language captured an interesting essence of the terms banter and teasing. Whilst the view of these were largely pro-social in this study (see Appendix F), it demonstrates that footballers carry an assumption that the victim must accept that a behaviour is banter and teasing, regardless of how they feel. Equally if the perpetrator does not think they are bullying, then that has to be accepted. This carries an undertone that male footballers need to conform to a broader masculine ideal, where showing emotions is a sign of weakness and may further

explain why they engage in negative emotional regulation strategies such as expressive suppression.

For Rob, the issue with weakness was slightly different in the sense that targeting it via whatever means, is legitimate if players feel that it will lead to poorer performance:

> Yeah cos if your teammates see you as weak, then they can try and out you and prove you're what they think you are…Cos I think like a lot of football teams, someone might not see someone as being good enough for being in their football team or perform in these situations for them. So, they might say like look we need to or they might think it subconsciously, that he's not up to the standard so we need to show he's not, make him feel like he's not up to the standard.

This is an important extension of Cushion and Jones' (2006) findings in that players seem to replicate the harsh, authoritarian and often belligerent coaching practices they would have received as young players. For some engaging in these acts of belligerence, even if it meant bullying, is necessary for a footballer's identity. This may also explain why players go on to accept a role of subordination, legitimising these behaviours from peers, coaches and managers, rather than revealing their weaknesses (Cushion & Jones, 2014). It must be noted though that this cultural belief may be beginning to be challenged by successful managers within the upper echelons of professional football, as Mauricio Pochettino highlighted in his biography:

> Certain things are perceived badly in the world of football and it makes me laugh. Weakness is apparently one of them…I prefer to be open in all areas, otherwise it comes back to bite you. (Balague, 2017, p.183).

This raises an interesting question as to whether the aggressive targeting of weaknesses, described by some players in the present study, is necessary within professional football. The players' belief may be the reflection of a legacy of negative behaviours, which some clubs are unwilling to change in order to maintain why unacceptable behaviours can be excused. Alternatively, these clubs may not have been educated on more progressive ways of thinking and the potential benefits it offers.

This focus on weakness was particularly concerning, given how the unique nature of professional football can leave players feeling vulnerable. In contrast to the typical focus of bullying research in schools or other workplaces, professional footballers are at potentially even greater risk of bullying, as they are forced to be away from their home at a young age or can frequently be in a new environment. Mickey's account highlighted these pressures:

> And I was sharing a room with one of the players as well, so we, we were just cramped into this room. So I was kind of homesick as well, you miss your family, miss your friends, you know. Ah there were a couple of shaky moments early on (Mickey).

Furthermore this could happen at a time when players are already under developmental strain as the cultural and occupational processes of football, already makes their transition to full adulthood more complex (Gearing, 1999). For new players they are also at risk of bullying behaviours as Phil's account implied:

> Especially cos you're coming to an environment where you might not know anybody and the team's like 'hang on a sec, who's this guy? Are you coming to take my spot?' And they might try and integrate you but then integrate you and try and maybe have that bullying aspect in. I think that's the toughest for the player if you're going to come into a new environment. (Phil).

While Phil's account was framed in terms of bullying being the issue of the victim, his language in relation to the perpetrator being concerned for their place, suggested a deeper insecurity where weakness may underlie the bully in football, rather than the victim. Several players commented on insecurities being at the heart of these individuals in football:

> I just think it's an excuse and shows people are weak minded and they just do it to make others feel bad and to try and makes themselves feel a lot better and about themselves. But obviously they're insecure, not happy about themselves…I just think it must be about the environment. They're insecure about the environment they're in, so they try and to create like, to suit them. (Ed).
>
> Maybe, maybe they've been bullied before and they feel like if they don't do it, it will happen. So they need that bit of not so much authority but to feel like they can't be bullied, so they can't be

bullied. Personal experiences, kind of related to that but I'm not too sure why they do it. (Lenny).

These accounts demonstrate the precarious nature of the football context which is based on uncertainty, tension, as well as an overriding preoccupation with winning and success (Gearing, 1999). Moreover they were also framed from various psychological lenses. Firstly, this was a further representation of social comparison theory in action, where players concerned about their place bully others, as a means to feel better about themselves. As Wills (1981) articulated this process may be representative of players utilising this strategy when actually they are low in self-esteem. Secondly, in line with these ideas it mirrored what Volk and colleagues (2014) described as the power paradox of evolutionary signalling theory. Within professional football the insecurity mentioned by players such as Ed, fuels bullying as these individuals do not possess the natural dominance highlighted within evolutionary signalling theory and instead feel the need to send a signal to their peer group about their dominance. Indeed these players may have previously been bullied themselves and bully as a protective mechanism. As such some players may reflect the term bully-victim (Dane-Staples, Lieberman, Ratciff, & Rounds, 2013; Perren & Alsaker, 2006; Sekol & Farrington, 2010). In addition these findings also reveal an interesting layer about the extent to which the football club environment might serve to protect and even mollycoddle footballers (Gearing, 1999). Ed in particularly used language that hints the environment may be to blame for players becoming bullies. Potentially football perpetuates the belief in players that it is to blame for their bullying, rather than the players reflecting on their own actions and beliefs. This is in contrast to research carried out with adolescent participants in other contexts such as school, where the participants stated that the reasons why individuals bully is as a result of their own problems (Frisen et al., 2007).

However, other players were cognisant that this weakness has a much deeper developmental and social psychological basis and that it cannot be assumed to just be the issue of the football environment. For Paul this was much more connected to life outside football:

> For what I've known and been taught through what bullying is why they do, why bullies bully, they may use it as a way to relieve pain in their social life or at their home life, um it may be the way they

> portray their anger or sadness…Um, so you know it's a case of you
> know why they're doing it. If it's for stress because something's
> going on and they can't deal with it or because if it's because that's
> what they want to do and they want that enjoyment out of it because
> of something else.

This articulates a potentially wider issue with bullying, in that although it can be contextualised to football, this behaviour reflects a multiple risk profile of academic, social, developmental and other difficulties rather than one source of distress (Dane-Staples et al., 2013; Farmer, Petrin, & Sprott-Brooks, 2012). The wider significance of this theme of weakness was neatly summarised by Kevin, "vulnerability man, like obviously in life, I think people like, they see vulnerability they more than likely try and capitalise on it."

4.4.2 Nonconformity

In a similar vein to the theme of weakness, the participants highlighted the significance of nonconformity as central to why some players are victims and others bully within football. In a particular there was a key focus around aspects such as appearance. It was felt this made a key contribution to the bullying literature, by outlining the issues with physically evaluative environments which place demands on the need for a particular identity. Furthermore this theme conveys important messages for wider society around the issues of nonconformity to social conventions. These findings represented a recurrent theme that being different in any way for a footballer is a problem and this leads to how they pathologise victims:

> Then you get people who are maybe a bit different, if somebody is
> quiet or somebody doesn't have the same, doesn't dress the same,
> dresses different, something that can be picked on…Something
> different basically, then football will find it. (James).
> They just have this image of what footballers should like, what he
> should drive, what he should wear or what wash bag he should
> have I dunno. And…if there are any differences it can kind of again
> give him a bit of stick, just for being different. (Mickey).

These set of extracts told the narrative of a very specific set of requirements on footballers in terms of their image, drawing back on the importance they place on identity within this sport's environment. Whilst the present study's findings were consistent with O'Connor and Graber's (2014)

in that general appearance is a key trigger for bullying, Mickey's extract in particular was more reflective of the need to conform to the material aspect of being a footballer. Thus these findings may be better explained by the need for footballers to conform to the 'hyper-masculine practices' of their superstar status reflected through aspects such as driving fast cars, wearing designer clothes and demonstrating financial affluence (A. Parker, 2000a; A. Parker & Manley, 2016). This was a further iteration of how the hegemonic masculine culture of professional football, may drive or combine with psychological processes such as downward comparison when players do not conform to these ideals.

Lenny's account maintained the need for conformity but identified the importance of adherence to the wider beliefs of the group, whereby any violation of this, gives rise to bullying behaviours.

> If they say something that goes against what everyone else is thinking and looks at him and says they're different and say they're not somebody I'd associate myself with and stuff like that. And it just makes it difficult for them, that person, so it's definitely more difficult in football. (Lenny).

The emphasis Lenny placed on this being "more difficult in football" reiterates the pressures players feel within this environment and implies that players feel the need to think and behave differently, even to their own values. Thus it would suggest that players' behaviour is typically underpinned by theories of self-presentation in sport, where there is a strong protective motivation to avoid making an undesired impression through being different (Hill et al., 2017; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Additionally these findings provide an important extension on this research, by showing that not achieving the impression of conformity can result in profound consequences such as bullying.

4.4.3 Introverted

For a majority of the participants whether players were regarded a bullies or victims was rooted in personality traits highlighted within Eysenck's theory of personality (H J. Eysenck, 1966). In line with this theory, attributes associated with the personality factor of introversion characterised victims of bullying in football. Similarly to previous literature (e.g. (Mynard & Joseph, 1997) the possession of this trait made those victims susceptible to

this behaviour. Interestingly though the present findings highlight a gap in the bullying literature, in that introversion is seen as an outcome of this behaviour. Rob provided a nice illustration of the players' sense that an introverted personality is not ideal in football:

> So if you know that like your teammate, you know that your teammate is quiet and shy and not really, is quite…introverted if you focus on shouting at them, getting into them on the pitch you know that you, that, that could break them down. (Rob).

Consistent with previous literature being seen as more quiet could leave an individual more vulnerable to being affected by bullying (Mynard & Joseph, 1997; Slee & Rigby, 1993). This vulnerability may be explained by this individual's greater physiological sensitivity to arousal leading them to attempt to avoid the additional stimulation of the social environment of football, resulting in a preference for their own company and them standing out from the crowd (H J Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975; Slee & Rigby, 1993). From a trait view of personality (H J. Eysenck, 1966) this quietness may signify not just introversion but also an emotional instability, which results in the outcome of bullying behaviour. However, the pressure of young footballers to conform to group norms (A. Parker & Manley, 2016; Slee & Rigby, 1993) within professional football may afford an alternative richer interactional view of personality where the social context is key in driving psychological processes.

Other players took a situational view of personality, in that bullying was an antecedent of introversion, rather than being governed by this personality trait:

> I think somebody could be more quiet maybe. Not kind of if there's a debate in the changing room, maybe there's a conversation in the changing room, they wouldn't give their opinion so much in fear of maybe being shot down or whatever. (Charlie).

Ricky reinforced this view, saying "some people will go into their shell and won't speak to anyone and keep themselves to themselves." In these cases the victims of bullying could be identified as being more introverted in their behaviour, which could be explained by these players' susceptibility to shame internalisation (Pontzer, 2010). In this case players may avoid debate because they feel a sense of alienation or are in constant fear of rejection by the wider group of their teammates (Pontzer, 2010). For others

the personality factor of introversion might make this identification of bullying in football more difficult, as Phil added:

> And be wary what you say to someone who's quite shy, cos you don't know how they might take it, cos they might go home and might cry. So you've gotta be very mindful with the words you pick, the people you might banter with.

This view was reinforced by Grant, who provided a reminder on the importance of not doing "anything to show any weakness". Overall, despite this dichotomy around whether introversion results in bullying or bullying leads to introversion, this combination of extracts revealed that bullying may be monitored by observing players with introverted traits or by viewing introversion as an outcome.

4.4.4 Extroverted

As a contrast to their views that introversion typically results in being a victim, a number of the players reported that extroversion was more likely to be a feature of those who bully. Interestingly though some players struck a cautionary note, that this personality trait could lead to an individual being a victim of bullying. This was exemplified by Rob:

> But a lot of players like to live up to being, like a big ego or being a big personality…Especially like some big teams, like Wimbledon back in the day, to get in the team you had to be that ruthless tough hard man. So like if you weren't, you'd get picked out as we don't want that sort of person in the team, so players got bullied badly for it. (Rob).

It appears that football still conveys a strong essence of the ideal character, which players assimilate into their own identity to protect against bullying or to even administer it. From a trait theory perspective, the big ego or character Rob alluded to, is consistent with characteristics such as leadership (H J. Eysenck, 1966). While in accordance with bullying literature extroversion was also associated with bullying behaviour (Mitsopoulou & Giovazolias, 2015; Slee & Rigby, 1993). Yet the present findings imply a limitation to this theoretical view, as the professional football context appears to shape the view that this personality type and resultant bullying behaviour is a prerequisite for leadership in football, rather than those characteristics already being in place within the individual: "Obviously in football, you've got people who are leaders and stuff; they

can do it through bullying to make themselves seem like a leader" (Ed). Footballers seemingly perceive that extroversion and dominance of this kind are key character traits they need, to establish a long-term career in the sport (Cashmore & Parker, 2003) and adopting this personality type through bullying gains recognition from coaches and managers. The desire to evidence these characteristics justifies studying bullying within the football context, as it may take on an even more severe characterisation in this environment.

In line with their discussion of extroversion, the theme of arrogance reflected an interesting divergence in who might be a bully or victim in football. For some arrogance was the hallmark of extroversion in bullies:

> It would probably be the more confident ones about the team. Probably the more confident ones, the cocky, arrogant ones who think they're better than everyone else. (Peter).

However, this was not a unanimous view reflected by all of the players:

> Over-confidence can put your teammates off you 100%, I think if you come in over-confident, arrogant, people will be like 'who's this guy, you're trying to come into our team and act like that, it's not how it goes'. (Phil).

Furthermore, this may actually lead to these individuals being victims of bullying themselves as George put it, "If you're a bit arrogant you might get back in your place." Thus while the present study generally shows that extroversion is predictive of bullying, it extends the equivocal evidence linking personality trait to this behaviour (Mynard & Joseph, 1997). Whilst these findings extend the workplace bullying research by considering extroversion as a personality factor, they are also consistent with research in this area which has shown that bullies and victims share common personality traits (Linton & Power, 2013), exposing limitations with this trait based view of personality. It is particularly noteworthy that extroverted individuals can be characterised as showing low social acceptance, with a disregard for social rules and conventions, which would to be at odds with the institutionalised requirements of the football environment (Gearing, 1999; Linton & Power, 2013; Mynard & Joseph, 1997; A. Parker & Manley, 2016). Therefore these findings raise interesting questions around whether the desire for 'big characters', actually leaves these individuals vulnerable to being victims of bullying.

4.4.5 Anyone

An alternative theme the participants articulated surrounded the figures who may be involved as bullies and victims in football. It highlights an important essence of bullying which has not been captured in research to date, regarding the sheer range of people that could fulfil these roles. This moves beyond a focus on certain individuals, their personality types and their place within the hierarchy of an organisation or social group, to the unique elements of the football environment such as fans. Indeed the primary view was that anyone within the football environment or wider supporter base could be bullies:

> So I think it could be like a coach. He could…think the player's not good enough he could…personally dislike them. So he could constantly just say stuff and get onto them. Or even a member of staff say like a sport scientist or if a player, I think players can sometimes…, especially like first team like players can mess about a bit cos they know the club's paying them and they're earning a lot of money. So they feel like they have the right to treat people like how they want to. (Rob).

For Rob the focus was on individuals connected with the club such as coaches, sport scientists and players. These findings demonstrate that the role these individuals play in perpetrating abuse, intimidatory, victimising and hazing practices (Diamond et al., 2016; S. Kelly & Waddington, 2006) results in what players view as bullying. This may also occur more indirectly, by inadvertently sponsoring these acts through a lack of awareness for what constitutes bullying behaviours (Baar & Wubbels, 2013). Rob's view also reemphasises that there appears to be greater perpetration of bullying behaviours in sports such as professional football when teams are coached by males (Evans et al., 2016). Likewise the perception of players as key protagonists also mirrors previous literature, which has found team environments to be a site for stigmatisation where player behaviour can be driven by social norms such as bullying, with a greater prevalence for this in elite football (Brackenridge et al., 2007; Evans et al., 2016; Mattey et al., 2014; Yildiz, 2015). However the identification of sport science staff extends the literature on the perpetrators of this act away from direct superiors such as coaches, suggesting football clubs need to be aware of bullying behaviour from all members of their hierarchy.

Interestingly sports science staff are not the only unique perpetrators of this act in the football environment. Phil described the potential for fans to drive bullying:

> Cos bullying doesn't have to be within a team, it can be from fans, opposition fans. It could be anything, online, pure hate, pure victimisation on Twitter, on Instagram, any Social Media you could get pure hate.

Phil's extract therefore demonstrates that an unintended consequence of this seemingly desirable approach to connect fans and players is bullying. It is particularly notable for professional football clubs, as in recent years they have provided access to players through channels such as Twitter, which has allowed for anonymous communication of racist language and hate speech (Cleland, 2016; Dixon, 2016b). This reinforces the situation of social media acting as a virtual changing room, which players discussed in the 'The Location of Bullying' subordinate theme of 'The Bullying Act'.

Later on Phil seemed to backtrack asserting that there was no particular figure that could be identified as a bully. This extract highlighted vagueness in the participants' accounts around the perpetrators of this behaviour, yet on another level shows the potential breadth of this issue in identifying at risk individuals:

> Coach can bully a player; a player can bully a player. Anyone can bully anyone it's no, I don't think there's no, there's no, if someone told me a sketch can you sketch a bully in football, I couldn't do it the sketch (it) would be blank.

For other players they were more specific about individuals who are involved as potential bullies. The following accounts tell the story of the managerial hierarchy being at the risk of being bullies and the implicit acceptance in football that these behaviours may be seen as a necessity to improve performance.

> I can see it's hard if the coach is constantly at you…at you "you're not good enough." I know the coach usually…has the players' best interests at heart, he wants them to improve, he wants them to get better. He has to be careful if he's giving them a bit too much stick. (Mickey).

> Or in cases I've seen where an actual assistant manager was bullying the younger lads and he actually rang up the PFA and got

an investigation on and that's another way of sort of securing it in a way. (Oli).

These quotes are unsurprising given authority figures in football have been found to deliver physical attacks on players with cricket bats as well as ostracising players for expressing their opinions. It would suggest that professional football has not moved beyond its Victorian origin, as the requirement for authoritarianism and control remains and is often celebrated (Collinson & Hearn, 1994; S. Kelly & Waddington, 2006; A. Parker, 2006).

Later in his account Mickey contradicted himself by highlighting that bullying is not specific to coaches and could involve other individuals such as players. This adds to the sense that no one individual group could be identified as bullies in football:

> But it's usually if just the players really in the dressing room, the dressing room has this perception of being this hostile place and you have to (have) this thick skin to be in there. But I'd say it's mostly down to the players.

Others remained fairly consistent with the view of the players being the main protagonists, although other figures at the club were alluded to:

> Anyone, players, staff. I don't think anyone else is that close to the players or team, to be on their case that much…Probably the players, cos you've got 25, 30 players to the likelihood of getting it from then rather 3 or 4 staff is probably higher. (George).

This heightened the view that players bully as a result of the expected and accepted behaviours within professional football such as banter, mickey-taking and verbal chastisement (Gearing, 1999; A. Parker, 1996; A. Parker & Manley, 2016). For these players, this may also be underpinned by the hierarchical culture and subservient nature of professional football (A. Parker, 1996; A. Parker & Manley, 2016). Overall though the participants highlighted an ambiguous position around the key figures involved in the bullying process, which intimates football clubs need to be aware that all members of its personnel could be part of this process.

An alternative perspective was offered by some of the players that anyone could be bully or victim regardless of personality. Contrary to other players'

accounts, these extracts told the story of a view that personality was not a particular determinant of bullying.

> But then you could have one of the lesser characters in the group, they get in to one lad saying certain things to them about his game or off the pitch and stuff like that. So it can be from anywhere, a lad who's a not so loud or a lad who's the loudest in the group. So it can go either way really, you couldn't look at a lad and say he's gonna be a bully. (Lenny).

This reaffirms research evidence that personality traits such as extroversion are not necessarily predictive of bullying behaviours and that bullies and victims may actually share similar characteristics (Linton & Power, 2013; Mynard & Joseph, 1997). Interestingly though Phil's account provided an important development on the limitation of research within PE and education which has typically viewed bullying as a physical behaviour (O'Connor & Graber, 2014; Sweeting & West, 2001):

> I don't think, so like in school you would know or a bully would be someone bigger than everyone else and just try and over tower everyone but in football cos everyone runs a similar build and similar statures and ok you might have some people quite small…But everyone's kind of the same, so everyone can bully everyone. Especially in football because basically you're bullying someone the same level as you…But because in football everyone is the same ability and around the same ability…you can never say a bully is a certain someone. (Phil).

This account further demonstrates the necessity to conceptualise and contextualise bullying, as Phil showed how caricature of a bully is in contrast to other physically evaluative environments such as PE. It explains the limitations players highlighted in education and welfare, as it is overly focused on certain types of individuals, rather than players as a whole, adding weight to the belief that anti-vilification need be appropriately tailored to the sporting context and participants (Mattey et al., 2014). In conclusion perhaps the best example of the ambiguity about who might be the bullies and victims in football was best expressed by Jamal, who reasserted the need for anti-bullying programmes to be individualistic in their design:

> Anyone…I dunno like, you can't, you can't look at someone and be like they'll get bullied cos it just doesn't work like that. In any walk of

life people can be ridiculed for anything so, to say that um someone getting bullied looks the same is just wrong.

4.5 The Dividing Line

4.5.1 Perception

Perception was at the heart of the individual players' perspectives regarding whether behaviour was seen as bullying, banter, teasing or victimisation. This was an important finding given the sparsity of research focusing on perceptions of bullying, as well as the benefits this could offer in terms of understanding bullying and developing appropriate prevention and intervention programmes. Perception was a key driver in developing a sense of the players' perspectives around how they understand, interpret and attribute bullying as well as the other behaviours under exploration. These findings had potentially wider benefits for football in terms of understanding how players manage their behaviours when bullying takes place. In a lot of cases footballers discussed perception from the victim's perspective but they also highlighted how the protagonist's perception of their intentions is vital. In the case of victims a number of extracts revealed that perception drives whether behaviours are seen as bullying:

> The big thing for me is I just think its individual perception what some people class as banter, some people class as bullying. What some people find funny, other people don't find funny. (James).

This account highlighted the importance of an individual's perception of their line, yet showed how the placement of this varies. Consistent with previous research, the participants described crossing the divide into bullying as being driven from whether the victim perceives some form of hurt from this behaviour (Cuadrado-Gordillo, 2011, 2012). James also expressed a limited understanding of the dangers of banter within football, which fitted with players' conceptualisation of 'Banter and Teasing' as a jocular behaviour (see Appendix F). The limitation of this view is that the humorous behaviours might actually cause the emotional effects in victims articulated in 'The Bullying Act' superordinate theme. Perhaps misguidedly, players were of the belief that if the perpetrator did not intend any harm as part of their humour (Kowalski, 2000), then this had to be seen as the more desirable banter. This furthered the sense of a passive acceptance of bullying behaviours.

In contrast Greg's view was more layered and in tune with the individualistic views of bullying expressed by teenage and older teenage participants (Thornberg & Knutsen, 2011; Thornberg et al., 2012).

> Oh…. I dunno….it's hard…I find it difficult to describe unless you gave me different scenarios, situations and then I can probably say yeah I think that's bullying or no that's not. But I think it's hard for me to say it because you don't know. People deal with things in different ways and there'll be some people who'll be happier with things being done to them or said than others. So it's a hard one to say. (Greg).

This portrayed a certain anguish and complexity with identifying these behaviours and was consistent with the notion that bullying prevention needs to be targeted at understanding individual conceptions of bullying, to fully understand the range of acceptable behaviours in football. On this basis, it is perhaps understandable why questions have been raised about the efficacy of codes of conduct for player behaviour (A. Parker & Manley, 2016), because it is very difficult to target these at every individual.

At other times the participants discussed that the perception of the dividing line between bullying, banter, teasing and victimisation is driven more by the differences between the victim and bully. The extracts were revealing of the important dynamic in the relationship between the victim and potential bully. Bullying behaviour in particular, may result out of differences in perception around what is humorous and therefore banter.

> Cos they may feel like I'm being picked on and when they speak to (the) person, they say "oh no it's not that it's only banter" he's taken it way too far. So because they've not been in the situation they might not be able to make a judgement. (Ed).

> Um…it's tough to say. I think you've, you've got to be the person who's saying it to understand what they say. So you could be sitting in the changing room and hear something come flat out of someone's mouth and you might think to yourself 'well hang on a minute I don't think that's banter'. But to the person saying it, 'I'm only joking'. I think you can only really understand whether its banter or not from the person who's saying, as whatever you say, you mean. So if you mean it in a certain way, you will put it across as I'm saying it that way. But you've really gotta understand, understand

> the person and the tone of voice and then understand well are they
> that type of person to say in a spiteful way and to understand
> whether it's banter or not. (Phil).

Phil's extract in particular was especially problematic for the victim as 'humour' in football could actually be seen as bullying. Yet it revealed players' belief that they have to accept the perpetrator's lens that if the behaviour is seen as having fun, then that is what it is. This conveys an important message for society more broadly about the phrase 'I'm only joking', as Phil hinted at the dangers as to whether this merely covers bullying behaviour and legitimises an upsetting form of banter. From a moral development perspective (e.g. Piaget, 1932) footballers appear to function at the low level of heteronomous morality when it comes to banter, where victims of this behaviour must follow the rules in relation to the perpetrator's view of their actions. The football context reinforces that deliberateness remains crucial in shaping views of whether behaviours are deemed as bullying or banter. This is consistent with findings that suggest the importance of intent to hurt, as a key component in perceptions of bullying (Cuadrado-Gordillo, 2011, 2012). Phil's account also highlighted the assumption that players and perhaps people more broadly are motivated to understand each other (this was further discussed in the Understanding theme, see Appendix F). The emphasis Phil, placed on players clarifying these perceptions ironically may be at odds with the subservient nature of professional football, where verbal chastisement is an expected part of the game (Gearing, 1999; A. Parker, 2006; A. Parker & Manley, 2016).

Given the variety of players' perceptions, it was unsurprising that perceptual differences occur around concepts such as bullying, banter, teasing and victimisation. Through a slightly contradictory account the main reasons for this were proposed by Lenny. These individual perceptions may be explained by the participants being in the phase of Early Adulthood (which covers anywhere from 17 to 33 years for young males), wherein some players are still making the transition from leaving the adolescent world into adulthood (Gearing, 1999; Levinson, 1978).

> But at a young age it can be difficult in a changing room as some
> lads are at different stages and some lads are more chilled out. But
> it is difficult to get the balance and recognising when to stop and

> when to have a laugh and when to be serious and focus on your
> football so it can be difficult…I think it's just not so much mature, it's
> how they see it in their heads. As some lads are still having a laugh
> during training, when they're starting to be more serious. So it just
> depends on their attitudes and how they see things.

An interesting alternative view was expressed by Oli, who suggested that
this perception may actually be driven by inside or outside perspectives to
football:

> I think on social media it would be banter but I think people from the
> outside, if they've seen that. If they've seen that, they might think it's
> bullying and so on.

The way in which Oli alluded to banter being seen differently from people
outside of football, implies that players know that their behaviour may not
actually be appropriate, yet this context permits them to carry on behaving
as they wish. It also emphasises that bullying may take on a more extreme
form in this context compared to others. Nonetheless the total institution of
professional football (Gearing, 1999), as well as the relative seclusion it
offers, may be the driving factor in defining what acceptable behaviour is,
rather than other factors such as age.

The final key point to note on this theme of perception is that frequency
may underpin the division between behaviours such as bullying and banter.
This reinforced the ambiguous notion of repetition highlighted within
participants' conceptualisations of 'The Bullying Act':

> I think there's a lot of that in the game. But like I said the first couple
> of times, the first time it can be funny, say somebody's shoes get put
> in the shower, it can be funny the first time. But depending on how
> the person takes it, depends on how funny it is. (Charlie).

> If that person thinks it's bullying, if that person has a threshold
> where you've said a certain amount of stuff and they think that's um,
> really hurtful. Then it is what is. (Jamal).

Importantly the players highlighted something quite problematic in that
bullying in football is only viewed through the lens of whether the outcome
has affected the victim (for example whether they found the act humorous
or not). This is in preference to focusing on the nature of the behaviours
which lead to this. As already noted, this is problematic in the sense that
footballers believe what is seen as light-hearted banter is in the

133

perpetrator's hands (Appendix F). However consistent with Volk and colleagues (2014) the players did suggest there is a potential interaction between the frequency and intensity of behaviour, which may determine when it crosses the line into bullying. Despite the prominence given to frequency, the present study reinforces equivocal findings regarding the element of repetition (Cuadrado-Gordillo, 2011; Hopkins, Taylor, Bowen, & Wood, 2013). Whilst Cuadrado-Gordillo (2011) found the repetitive aspect to not be an important criterion for defining bullying, Hopkins and colleagues (2013) suggested this was a differentiating factor in conceptualising bullying, which the current findings support. One potential reason for this may be that Cuadrado-Gordillo favoured the use of a questionnaire instrument where participants were forced to rate how much they gave or received different types of abuse, whereas Hopkins and colleagues utilised a qualitative focus groups to define this behaviour which may have better tapped individual perceptions. Significantly the present study conveys an important message that there needs to be less of a focus on defining the precise numbers of behaviours to constitute bullying and rather the focus should be on recognising that individuals' levels of tolerance will vary.

4.5.2 Detection (Line)

An important perceptual element of what separated banter, teasing and bullying was the participants highlighting of the line between these behaviours. The majority of participants highlighted how this line is crucial in discriminating between these behaviours. Yet the concept of the 'line' revealed a range of perspectives on its precise identification and whether it can even be located. This tension makes a profound contribution to the bullying research base more broadly, by emphasising that despite the volume of literature on this concept, it is still difficult to identify. Kevin concurred:

> But I think there's a line with banter. And some people don't know the line, some people's lines are further away and some people's lines are very close…You can overstep and that's when you can see confrontations in football in the changing room.

This account was symbolic of the importance placed on a hypothetical line between banter and bullying but this line lacks quantification. Therefore it was indicative of the individualistic nature of participants' perception of

bullying and potentially banter too (Thornberg & Knutsen, 2011; Thornberg et al., 2012). Despite this a crucial aspect of this line was that it is perceived as being very precise, as Paul added "but once it goes to that line, that line, there's not a lot of width in it and it could quickly transfer to other side." The line was also revealing of the permitting nature of sport whereby behaviours described as 'casual racism' are disguised as humourful banter to ease racial tensions (Cleland, 2016; Hylton, 2018). Within Mickey's account there was a worrying hint of a passive acceptance of this racism if a player did not draw a line under this behaviour. Mickey stated "(if someone said) pikey or something like that, another person could be like that's racist, that's the line for him, so that's where you draw the line for him." As the 'uniqueness of football' subordinate theme outlined, professional football's diversity almost acts as an excuse for bullying behaviour of this type to be disguised as banter, preserving the view that individuals from ethnic minorities are lower in social standing and are deserving of verbal derogation (A. Parker, 2001). This further perpetuated the sense of hegemonic masculine construction of footballers, which is underpinned by racist forms of banter or bullying.

The lack of quantification of the line between behaviours led to some divergence around detection. Some were categorical that this was possible:

> If you noticed someone constantly picking on the same person you could realise that maybe they're taking it a step too far and if they're outright criticising them in front of someone then you could, you could notice it. (Rob).

> Cos if you're in someone's head and you're continuing to, um you know give banter to them then they are kind of reacting negative way, their heads are down or whatever, that's definitely crossed the line. (Mickey).

These views reemphasised the importance of repetition and psychological harm in establishing an act as bullying as opposed to banter, suggesting that these definitions have a place in professional sport (Olewus, 1993; Volk et al., 2014). In addition to this, Dave proposed that coaches may detect the line being crossed: "Coaches would know really well by your body language, whether you're interested or not. Whether you're not having a good time or if you've got loads of confidence". This contrasts recent literature which has suggested the coaches may not be effective at

135

identifying these behaviours (Baar & Wubbels, 2013; Diamond et al., 2016), uncovering a worrying assumption on behalf of the players' expectations of coaches' abilities to address bullying. This flaw could be further compounded by coaches being the instigators of abusive, bullying behaviours who establish a culture of acceptance for these actions (S. Kelly & Waddington, 2006; A. Parker, 2001, 2006).

Others emphasised the importance of this line but were less convinced about how easy it was to detect:

> Some people's lines they don't make clear to people. And sometimes people… laugh back and really they're not happy with the fact of what someone said but they're laughing to try and cover their insecurity. And that's when people think that guy's line's not here and they take it a bit further and it gets to a point where if too much like, something said, that's too much and then everyone sees it in the room. (Kevin).

This was congruent with this participant's view that showing any weakness and whistleblowing is difficult in football, yet it revealed that if players do not do this, behaviours can develop into bullying. From an emotional regulation stance, the dangers of the strategy of expressive suppression were evident as this can lead to increased bullying. It served as a further reminder that this is symptomatic of the bullying act, while at the same time in football, it placed the onus on the victim to flag inappropriate acts.

The consensus amongst the players was the detection of this line was critical in determining when behaviours moved from banter and teasing to bullying:

> I think bullying, well I think teasing can have its, it can be like banter, like some of it is banter. Whereas bullying, people when they bully, they just say it's banter but it's not. People know it's not but they're just taking it too far and people take it personal. (Ed).

For some banter and teasing were viewed as conceptually similar, particularly when both were viewed as largely pro-social behaviours built on in-jokes, jocular behaviour and equality (Appendix F). Yet the findings also provide some clarity on why reviews have highlighted conceptual confusion occurs between terms such as teasing and bullying (Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009; Keltner et al., 2001). On one level Ed

136

interchangeably used the words bullying and teasing, displaying this confusion and outlining the thin perceptual differences between these terms. This was reemphasised by Grant, yet this participant described teasing as a concept which could span both banter and bullying "well it depends what they're teasing about, teasing it's that thing again it's over the line between banter and bullying, so it's hard to say that instance." Overall this raises a key distinguishing factor in the conceptualisations of bullying, banter, teasing and victimisation in that a line separated bullying from banter and often teasing in the participant's view. However, the reference point for this line could not be specified raising further doubt about the distinctiveness of these concepts in football and potentially other contexts.

4.5.3 Bantering

Through their discussions around the themes of perception and the detection of the line, the players discussed the necessary yet debatable element of humour. Thus a unanimous theme across all participants in relation to the dividing line was bantering. This was characteristic of the humour deployed by players, which was largely seen as facilitative to the players' cohesion as a group and performance as individuals, despite it occasionally crossing the dividing line into bullying. In the main, bantering was articulated in relation to banter and teasing:

> Funny stuff, that everyone finds funny. That's when it's banter like if somebody said something to me and I found it funny about me. Say if someone was bantering me and I found it funny, like fair enough like, that's banter. (Charlie).

> I dunno it's like…. hmmm… I dunno we. Everyone's it's like, there's always banter, there's always jokes being made. But then here it's like, everyone's kind of cool with everyone kind of thing. (Jamal).

Overall these perspectives encapsulated the view that for most participants bantering was a humorous, light-hearted interaction which was facilitative for cohesion and bonding (Gearing, 1999; Wagstaff et al., 2017). This process at times was grounded in the behavioural norms expected of footballers (A. Parker, 2001), such as their dress sense and physical appearance:

> Someone would be can you breathe in that? Are you ok breathing or um…? You know just wouldn't you know, the clothes they're

wearing or they messed up in training or you know anything as small as that like you know. (Mickey).

Thus in general this process of bantering remained consistent with the players' conceptualisation of banter and teasing as largely pro-social acts, based on content such as physical appearance (Appendix F).

Nonetheless despite the positive essence of this bantering process, some felt it needed to be treated cautiously:

> To try and bond with the team to try and get team cohesion about, even though that might be at one person's expense. I think it gels the team more banter, it can be positive and healthy, it is important. But I've see it can cos it's a very fine, fine line; it can easily be pushed too far. So it can be a very delicate subject. (Kevin).
>
> Whereas banter is, can be light, it can obviously cross the line to bullying. But I think it's when you're just trying to have a laugh with someone, you're trying to just be friendly with them, you're just trying to talk with them really. (Oli).

Despite the overwhelmingly positive view of bantering within professional football, these accounts demonstrated the potential for it to inflict the harm, which associates it with definitions of bullying (McCormack & Anderson, 2010; Volk et al., 2014). This was verified in James' view of humour being not entirely pro-social in the theme of 'Banter and Teasing' (Appendix F). Indeed footballers' often unquestioning acceptance to these behaviours and the value they attribute to banter (Gearing, 1999; Nelson, 1995; A. Parker & Manley, 2016) can be especially worrying as Kevin furthered:

> People laugh and all that and be like 'he's not being bullied.' You know what people are like 'we're only having a laugh, we're just having banter'. That's when people sweep in under the carpet. They try and hide it under the banter carpet and that's where I think rules need to be set as a team, by someone about the banter. Cos it can become bullying easily (they) don't realise. But equally like you don't want to put too many restrictions on it, cos you don't want a changing room where people cannot say something to anyone or no-one can have a laugh and joke. You know what I mean so it's about finding the right balance and I think the problem comes in when it becomes imbalanced.

Most alarmingly of all was the game's potential to suppress those who view this humour as bullying, adding further to the sense this was the victim's problem and there is a lack of a code of conduct regarding these behaviours. This was not especially surprising given professional football's culture of managerial authoritarianism and control, which leads to unquestioning subordination from the players and often related personal issues (Cushion & Jones, 2006; Cushion & Jones, 2014; S. Kelly & Waddington, 2006; A. Parker & Manley, 2016; Pitchford et al., 2004). Alarmingly despite the expectation within professional football that players learn to increase their tolerance levels to verbal banter (A. Parker, 2006), Kevin highlighted that the pressure to define an appropriate code of conduct rests on the same players. If the players have raised their levels of tolerance accordingly, it implies that setting appropriate behavioural codes amongst players is almost impossible to achieve. Likewise players will have likely had little agency in setting up these codes of conducts in the past and therefore may not carry the necessary experience to do this effectively (A. Parker & Manley, 2016; Pitchford et al., 2004). This is an important demonstration of the importance of the present findings, as it highlights how football may be more of an at risk environment from those where bullying has previously been studied (e.g. schools). In football bullying is defined and policed by those who are potentially uneducated or driving the behaviour, rather than something being which individuals are educated on.

The potential for bantering to cross the dividing line into bullying was also expressed in others ways:

> (The) word "fatty" is associated with somebody, they would never show that is affecting them because if they did then they would get it more because its classed as funny…It would be having a joke at their expense, to make them look better in front of everybody and not really caring about the effect it had on the individual. (James).

This bantering process in professional football mirrored wider issues within the research literature, whereby players must conform to certain ideals, disciplinary use of humour can be deployed when players are not reaching the standards expected of them and bullying can often be focused on physical appearance (Edwards & Jones, 2018; Frisen et al., 2007; O'Connor & Graber, 2014; A. Parker & Manley, 2016). To this end, the theme of bantering demonstrated how a psychosocial framework for

conceptualising bullying within the context of football is particularly useful. Bullying could be framed psychologically as players 'banter' as result of downward social comparison and self-presentational concerns about how a football should look (Leary, 1992; Wills, 1981), while they may have learned that humour is a means of maintaining discipline and governance within this environment (Foucault, 1977; A. Parker, 2006). The notion of bantering may also serve to explain teasing's fluidity on the dividing line between banter and bullying, given the propensity for appearance and body image to predict this concept in sport (Slater & Tiggemann, 2010). These quotes also raised interesting questions about the importance of intent to harm, stressed within bullying definitions and research focused on young adult sporting performers (Kerr et al., 2016; Olewus, 1993; Volk et al., 2014). Overall the findings from professional footballers provide a significant test for the sport, to optimise the largely facilitative elements of the bantering process whilst avoiding this behaviour being construed as bullying.

4.5.4 Intentionality

One of the most significant perceptual markers of the dividing line between bullying, banter and teasing was intentionality. For a number of professional footballers this fits in line with existing conceptualisations of bullying, around the importance of intent to harm. However a number of contradictions were found within and between their accounts, whereby acts of bullying could be seen as accidental in nature. Furthermore, the notion of intentionality was also linked to other behaviours such as banter and teasing. This was illustrative of something important, that it is very difficult to separate these concepts and the dividing line between them is very blurred. Nonetheless for some of the players their language categorically reflected that the bullying act was intentional:

> When you know it's affecting them. Cos if you don't know it's affecting them then, you're still in the wrong either way but it's difficult for you to then know, he's not enjoying this banter and it needs to stop. But when if you know it's affecting him and you do something about it by stopping then that's fine. But it you keep doing it and you know it's affecting him, then that's not right and it shouldn't happen. (Lenny).

> But obviously that's a thing you would look out for, if you were trying to define bullying in football, if somebody is repeatedly going after the same person, I think that'd be a red flag. (Charlie).

Consistent with existing definitions of bullying, as well as recent literature in sport, these accounts married the notion of repetition with a knowing attempt to target the same individual when they are harmed (Kerr et al., 2016; Olewus, 1993; Volk et al., 2014). Moreover this intent to harm was framed from the bully's perspective, consistent with recent findings that perpetrators perceive this intent as bullying (Cuadrado-Gordillo, 2011, 2012). This did reinforce a troublesome view in football that the perpetrators decide whether behaviour is regarded as the more socially appropriate banter or teasing. The strong sense of importance placed on the combination of targeted and repetitive behaviours underpinning bullying was also evidenced by Kevin, "I think it's consciously targeting that person…I think doing on them several, more than several times it becomes bullying."

The characterisation of bullying as an intentional act was not common to all the players within the study. For Mickey there were contradictions in his account of bullying, which ranged from a constant targeted attempt to an accidental act of ignorance:

> Once you're stuck on a particular individual 24/7 and you're not giving someone a break you've definitely got bullying…I think if there was bullying going on at a club it would be just out of ignorance I think, cos I think that person's just like that guy's obviously a bit like whatever like that. (Mickey).

Mickey's ignorance may not seem as severe as a targeted bullying attempt, yet it does imply that there may be a passive acceptance of bullying acts in football. A similar contradiction was illustrated by Grant:

> Obviously they know then they're gonna go deep. So I think they know, maybe, maybe they don't know but I think most people know when they go over the line and they hold their hands up… They don't mean to do it like. There's no wake up in the morning and thinking I'm going to bully this player, it's just the way they are.

From a moral developmental perspective (Piaget, 1932), Grant's language reiterated that players may still be in a very early stage of heteronomous morality where if they do not mean the behaviour then it is almost

acceptable. The totality of professional football as an institution (Goffman, 1961) where 'everything is done' for the players (Gearing, 1999), may underpin this and ultimately thwart individual moral development. This again demonstrates the importance of the interaction of psychosocial factors. As Grant revealed, there is vagueness around footballers' perceptions of whether behaviours that even cross the dividing line, are deemed as bullying.

Rob was even more uncertain about how much of a conscious targeted process bullying is. This continues a subtle shift in the bullying research literature. Generally the literature has favoured Olewus' (1993) definition that bullying involves an often hostile intent to harm another individual (Cuadrado-Gordillo, 2011, 2012; Volk et al., 2014). Others have questioned this aspect in sport (Kerr et al., 2016). For Rob this was a much more unconscious process, where the link to perception was crucial on behalf of the bully regarding their actions and personality:

> But it's not like you're doing it on purpose sometimes, but you're not realising you're doing it… It might not even be intentional, it might just be how you act to that person but you don't realise how they are feeling… But I think sometimes you don't even realise you're bullying someone, cos everyone, everyone treats other people on the scale of how they can be treated. (Rob).

Here there may be grounds to support Kerr and colleagues' (2016) findings that regardless of the hostility of intent, bullying is occurring anyway. Importantly this emphasises that players might be misguided in their views (see Appendix F) that the content of banter and teasing is impersonal, despite the perpetrator's beliefs and that actually these behaviours are bullying if this is the victim's perception. The current bias towards the perpetrator's viewpoint is especially problematic if they claim they did not intend to cause harm and reflects a potentially flawed low level of moral reasoning with professional footballers. It also suggests that there may be a cultural issue in professional football in determining what an appropriate level of banter and teasing is:

> Um…and just not involving them in your banter or in activities you're doing away from the club and stuff like that and if they're being victimised they're gonna try and be somebody that they're not. Like I've said numerous times, it's difficult to know when to stop the

> banter and the teasing and when you can have it and when you
> can't. (Lenny).

This revealed one of the most problematic issues with intentionality being a central component in definitions of bullying, in that no potential bully can ever be fully aware of their own intentionality to harm another person (Carrera et al., 2011; Ortega, del-Rey, & Mora-Merchán, 2001; Swain, 1998). Furthermore the confusion expressed between banter, teasing and bullying is reflective of the overall difficultly with determining intentionality, whereby it is hard to see where the joke ends and the abuse begins (Swain, 1998; Carrera, et al., 2011). Research to date in sport has reflected these blurred lines between teasing and bullying, which may say something about the permitting nature of this context, wherein jokes which cause significant distress are commonly accepted (Kerr et al., 2016). As such these behaviours may reflect the under-represented but still serious concept within the literature base of non-malign bullying, where this act is characterised by play and teasing (Rigby, 2007). Given this persistent conceptual confusion it might explain doubts over the codes of conducts introduced in academy settings, as there is a systematic lack of understanding of these concepts.

The issue with confusion between terms such as bullying, banter and teasing regarding intentionality was also articulated in some of the participants' accounts:

> I'd say the negatives would be, the negative would be just hurting,
> going out to intentionally hurt someone. Cos if your banter is doing it
> in spite of someone or to try and get to someone, then that's a really
> bad thing. (Phil).

Although players often viewed banter in a pro-social way (Appendix F) this was indicative of contrary findings in sport where banter has been found to cause harm (Hylton, 2018; Krane, 2016; McCormack & Anderson, 2010). Others described that this targeted process underlies bullying and banter as Peter added, "um…you're picking someone out and you're going out of your way to bully them or banter them in some kind of way." The mixing of the words bully and banter implied some conceptual confusion on behalf of the players, which was supported by Oli, "probably crosses (the line) but I think like bullying, you can accidentally bullying someone, 'cos obviously the banter." Despite attempting to define bullying this participant showed

how it can be an accidental process which is intertwined with banter, reaffirming the non-malign aspect of bullying (Carrera et al., 2011; Kerr et al., 2016; Rigby, 2007). As such this theme revealed some uncertainty around whether the bullying act is intentional within the football context and casts further doubt over the necessity of this component within definitions of this term. Moreover it suggests a darker side to the general positive view of banter in football, evidencing conceptual confusion around where the dividing line between bullying, banter and teasing falls.

4.5.5 Masculinity

Congruent with previous research in professional football, a number of the participants in the study revealed how an inherent masculinity underpins this context (A. Parker, 1996, 2000a). However, this previous research has not considered the importance that masculinity has in powering 'The Dividing Line' between bullying, banter and teasing behaviours, in the way the players did here. Furthermore, the present findings extend previous literature by showing the potentially toxic effect masculinity has in crossing the dividing line of banter into bullying. Perhaps naively for many players such as Mickey, banter was articulated as an inherently masculine process, which is to be expected by professional players:

> You know you have a group of how many lads would you have in dressing room? 15 or 20 lads in the dressing room, you're bound to have bit like craic, a bit of devilment going on. You know like I went to an all-boys school when I was younger and we got up to all sorts like mischief and everything so, I was kind of used to it there.

More specifically these male referenced terms were used to define banter by James, "because it's a group of lads together who find it funny to have a joke at somebody else's expense I suppose and that's why it's classed as banter." This provided evidence for the assertion that razor sharp wit and hyper-masculine behaviours were part of the enactment of everyday life for footballers (A. Parker, 2000a, 2006). An alternative explanation for this is that banter is part of performing their gender for footballers, which is instituted through a stylised repetition of acts (Butler, 1988). The use of banter may extend beyond Butler's stylisation of the body, to a stylisation of interaction for footballers where players carry out various enactments to maintain their illusion of their gendered self. This is potentially concerning in male-dominated workplaces such as professional football, as players could

144

be enacting severe forms of pranks and derogation to each, under the guise of 'male banter', when really this is permitting bullying.

Some participants revealed that this culture of subservience and subordination permeates football, whereby players must accept banter as a result of the inherent masculinity within football, regardless of whether it crosses into bullying.

> That's just unnecessary. We're all men, you're seen, you're meant to be or you're thought to be able to handle things as men. You're not meant to be seen to go to the coach or the bloody owner or whatever. (Kevin).

Kevin's extract revealed the pressure on footballers to maintain a culture of organisational silence (D. Kelly & Jones, 2013), even if this protects bullying behaviour, which is excused on the basis of a caricature of masculinity. Therefore lines of hierarchical control, authority and status are preserved, allowing that individual the chance to safely negotiate their own masculine progress in order to assimilate themselves amongst their club's culture (A. Parker, 2001; A. Parker & Manley, 2016). This was furthered by Rob who showed how violating these behavioural norms of masculinity, results in players being seen as weak:

> Or like a man giving another man stick whereas, there's no really seen as victim cos like you're a grown man you can give it back and life if you can't give it back you're weak, you just take it.

This reveals categorical thinking about gender within professional football, where there is one fixed pathway that males should follow and any deviation from this is seen as breaking from the norm (Connell, 2008). As such it preserves the sense across the participants' accounts that men's professional football is underpinned by a hegemonic form of masculinity, where weakness if the fault of the victims and banter even in the form of bullying must be tolerated. It shows that those deemed weak are expected to just to "take" bullying behaviour, suggesting a troublesome assumption in football.

Unsurprisingly given the acceptance by players for this prototype of masculinity, it served to explain how behaviours moved from banter to bullying in football:

Yeah it's um….it's very male dominant and I think when people wanna, put their authority out there and they'll do whatever it takes. And sometimes it goes too far and puts in a bad challenge on purpose and stuff like that. (Ricky).

So I'm not too sure why it happens but you do understand because if you're round a group of lads growing up you do want to be looked at as somebody who's respected and uh…people like to be around and stuff like that. So if you want to be around the other lads and want to have a laugh at times, you will take it a step too far. It's just recognising when to do it and when to not. So it's hard. (Lenny).

The language used by players around male dominance and authority were consistent with Connell's (2008) concept of hegemonic masculinity, while they extended these ideas to explain why players would move beyond the dividing line from banter to bullying. An explanation for this may reside in the comparable environment of New Zealand rugby (Pringle & Markula, 2005). Through the adolescent years (as with professional football), rugby is played by an increasingly select group of males who become positioned as 'men' with more superior status. This already gives players a greater sense of power and for certain males, means that they will not reveal their true identity for fear of being threatened (Pringle & Markula, 2005). For some this may mean that they avoid displaying any behaviour which might be deemed as feminine and could then be bullied. Of concern was Lenny's view that this bullying was a necessary process, which can be legitimised if the time is seen as right. This is a further indication that players have learned the authoritarian code of administering verbal chastisement to each other (A. Parker, 2006). The effect may be exacerbated by professional footballers having to fight for playing positions, resulting in an excess of physical or verbal intimidation.

The inherent culture of masculinity in football not only legitimised dominant behaviours but also inappropriate forms of humour. At the most extreme end, Phil revealed that the expectations around masculinity could move behaviour far beyond the line between banter and bullying, into a form of homophobic bullying:

Masculinity, pride, every person thinks they're a man. Football's a man's sport at the end of the day and I feel like they, they'd be like gay like, not meant to be. It's just that masculinity pride in a man's

146

> game where…They'll probably get 'you're not a man' shouted at
> them. And football's a man's, football's a man's sport and not being
> funny, if you're gay you're not really being seen as a full man.

This confirmed the persistence of a worrying characterisation of the
requirements of males to conform to a hyper-masculine identity within
football whereby they must engage in heteronormative behaviours
(McCormack & Anderson, 2010; A. Parker, 2000a; A. Parker & Manley,
2016). More broadly it suggests football reinforces wider social values
which ascribe higher cultural capital to a particular version of masculinity,
where players negotiate particular rituals such as banter and how they
dress to become a fully-fledged member (Wellard, 2002). It is noteworthy
that Phil's account was inconsistent with the view that this version of
masculinity is available to gay men as well as heterosexual (Wellard, 2002),
painting a worrying picture of discriminatory bullying within football. It also
challenges the view in literature that fans would reject homophobic chanting
(Cashmore & Cleland, 2012) and instead they would use this as a means to
bully individual players. Moreover it revealed a belief that fans would expect
players to conform to hyper-masculine ideal set out by Parker (2000a).
Thus it seems that professional football as an organisation serves as a
scene of constraint rather than opportunity, where players need to perform
a particular version of masculinity as part of the routine of the sport (Butler,
1988; Pullen & Knights, 2007).

4.5.6 Discrimination

Despite the efforts of high profile campaigns such as Kick it Out (2016) and
the priorities around tackling inclusion and discrimination (The FA, 2016), a
key theme to emerge from the players was how discrimination crossed the
divide from banter into bullying. This theme provided a pertinent and
alarming extension to bullying literature by showing the severity of this act
within heavily gendered workplaces such as football. Most worryingly
discrimination was often seen as an act of banter:

> We had to do this little thing, of a word you came across in football
> and then there was a big scale on the wall banter and at the other
> end bullying and you had to put on the scale where you think these
> words were: homophobic words, racist words and every single one
> of them put them as banter…It's like …I talked about this PFA thing
> and there's all these words you can say about race, religion and all

that you can't…you wouldn't…you'd never because you're not allowed to say anything like that outside, you'd get arrested. (James).

So it could be as, could be from, varied from just the way you dress, to the way you look or if you're homosexual or not. The things that where some people would be like no. (Phil).

Consistent with a range of research findings (Cashmore & Cleland, 2012; Hylton, 2018; Krane, 2016; McCormack & Anderson, 2010) these quotes illustrated that discriminatory behaviours such as homophobia and racism are still commonplace within sport and professional football. This has at times led to minority groups within professional football using humour to disguise the hurt caused by these behaviours and to navigate a racist sport (Hylton, 2018). It also serves to reinforce a sense of a 'traditional orthodox masculinity' prevailing in professional football, where players have to be conscious of how they present themselves and they have to utilise a particular habitus in relation to how they live out masculinity, in order to avoid bullying (Steinfeldt et al., 2011; Wellard, 2002). Overall this signified a dissonance within the participants' accounts given that such emotional effects were critical in determining bullying. These quotes also emphasise the sport tradition towards normalisation of discriminatory behaviours which are deemed unacceptable in other contexts through banter (Kerr et al., 2016). The findings in relation to homophobia in particular, demonstrated that despite the FA's (2018) endorsement of campaigns such as 'Football v Homphobia', as well as codes of conducts for academy footballers (Brackenridge et al., 2004), attempts to address this issue have largely failed as it is still viewed as banter. Perhaps most worryingly was the revelation from players that they were fully aware that behaviours such as homophobia would be inappropriate on the 'outside' of football'. The use of the term 'outside' implies that the total institution of professional football provides the protection for players to behave in inappropriate fashion and further reinforce sports traditions that bullying behaviours are acceptable (Gearing, 1999; Kerr et al., 2016; A. Parker, 1996; A. Parker & Manley, 2016). To a large extent players verified these views in their characterisation of football as a unique institutionalised environment within the theme of 'The Football Environment'. As such these may also be important findings for other institutionalised or private environments.

For other players, they inferred a potential passive culture of racism which though seen as banter may actually indicate bullying:

> Two of them and one he was called Xxx and he came down and he was good and that and he was one of the lads and he had the banter and that. But we his name we called him black Xxx…Just black Xxx and he took it…You obviously never know what someone was thinking deep down but he would just laugh and go and take it because he knew he was the only black person in the team. (George).

One participant made a stronger link in this regard:

> I think football's so diverse, there's so many different backgrounds and everyone's from everywhere and I think that this creates some differences and the differences sometimes turn into banter then so on. Then sometimes turns into bullying. (Oli).

These quotes reinforced the tendency towards 'casual racism' in football, where in the first instance these differences would be viewed as humourful banter rather than bullying (Cleland, 2016; Hylton, 2018). Finally for Peter, this link was made even more strongly, "I think you're picking someone out as a victim, maybe the way they look, their appearance, where they've come from. Their nationality, their skin colour." The shift between participants' perspectives gave a sense that some footballers are willing to follow developments in other areas of workplace bullying literature, where this form of discrimination has been conceptualised racial or ethnic bullying (Fox & Stallworth, 2005). One potential explanation for this and something which provided a sense that educational campaigns and strategic priorities may eventually work, came from Mickey:

> I think cos there are so many players from all over the world playing in England. Whereas in the 80s or even the 90s…there were the foreign players but there certainly wasn't as much as there is now. You grow up in it now, players come from all over you know, the world, different continents, different races, different religions. And I think there's more awareness now cos of past things that have happened, you know like players who have gotten racially abuse, who you know have come out as homosexual or whatever you know there's a lot more awareness, cos they've actually reported it you know.

This perception demonstrated the importance in continuing to promote awareness in players through campaigns such as 'Kick it Out' and 'Football v Homophobia' and suggested that codes of conducts may be beginning to work at academy level given this player was performing at that standard at the time of interview. Nonetheless the fact that this participant did not highlight any particular educational programmes they had received, may illustrate why the players reported equivocal findings on the efficacy of the education and welfare on offer to them within the 'The Football Environment' superordinate theme.

4.5.7 Continuum

The final theme referred to the continuum of bullying, banter, teasing and victimisation, depicting the overall challenge with identifying these behaviours expressed through *'The Dividing Line'* superordinate theme. Some players revealed an opaque picture of where the divide between these concepts falls. Given these findings summarise the overall confusion within the bullying literature, they make a vital contribution to the need to understand bullying from an individual rather than a general perspective. For players like Jamal the continuum of behaviours around the dividing line was clearer:

> I think that's kind of on the spectrum, so if you say like the spectrum, bullying is there, banter is there, teasing is probably somewhere in the middle….To say teasing's bullying, I feel like that's an overreaction.

An interesting feature of Jamal's viewpoint was that teasing fitted in between banter and bullying. This serves as a partial rejection of previous research which has conceptualised teasing and bullying as separate terms by means of emphasising the pro-social aspects of teasing for individuals over 11-13 years of age (Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009; Keltner et al., 2001). However these findings were comparable to those with adult sporting participants, which have highlighted the blurred boundaries between teasing and bullying (Kerr et al., 2016). Keltner and colleagues' (2001) teasing review identifies potential reasons why this may have been the case in the present study, such as the participants being all male as well as being high status individuals. In this case, these individuals are less concerned about 'face saving' and are therefore more likely to engage in

hostile, aggressive forms of teasing which could be perceived as bullying. This was verified in other participants' accounts:

> If someone was teasing me, it depends what someone was teasing about, if it was just banter like and they were teasing me about something and they were teasing me about something that affects. It's like banter and bullying, depends what it is. (Grant).

The constant merging of teasing, banter and bullying in Grant's discourse demonstrated a disturbing essence that some players do not have any idea what these terms really are. This serves to further illustrate the inappropriate education on offer to players within the football environment.

Despite the confusion amongst some participants, others such as Charlie were more categorical about the divide between bullying and teasing to banter:

> Um I think maybe it's the same as bullying maybe. Banter's more balanced really, you give a bit, you get a bit back but I think bullying's more, bullying and teasing fall more along the lines of… (Charlie).

This suggests the overwhelmingly positive view of banter within professional football prevails. As such there is a tendency to minimise the negative aspects of this behaviour and sees it as a mutual activity (Nelson, 1995; Gearing, 1999; Nesti, 2010; Wagstaff, et al., 2017) whereas the potentially hostile elements of teasing and a non-malign view of bullying apprear to form one overall concept (Carrera et al., 2011; Rigby, 2007; Swain, 1998). However Mickey's quote points to a general conceptual confusion of these terms in football:

> I think it's the same, very similar, I think it's hard to see oh that's banter, oh that's teasing, it's hard to say which is which, they're all tied in to be fair. (Mickey).

This may be a result indvidual difference and cultural factors within football, which players illustrated in the 'Banter and Teasing' theme (see Appendix F). The 'Banter and Teasing' theme demonstrated that when participants conceptualised these terms, they generally came up with similar findings in terms of provocative, jocular acts, with similar content which serve to boost cohesion. With this in mind it is perhaps unsurprising that clear definitions of these terms in sport are unavailable and why undesirable behaviours may be prevalent.

Overall a genuine diversity in perceptions was expressed from teasing being seen as a form of bullying to being more closely aligned with banter. The factor which seemingly decided this was the combination of frequency and intensity of the behaviour (Volk et al., 2014):

> I suppose that links into banter if you're teasing somebody and you're having a laugh then that I suppose, if that goes too far then that can be classed as bullying whereas to another person it's not. (Lenny).

Teasing was described as a process for banter or bullying behaviours rather than a concept in its own regard, with a general tendency towards humour (Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009; Keltner et al., 2001), unless the behaviour exceeds an acceptable level of tolerance. As Oli confirmed, "Yeah 'cos you sort of banter, some of tease them have a laugh but obviously if you tease them a lot then its bullying." Specifically, the repetitive aspect of bullying was reemphasised here, which in combination with views on when teasing exceeds acceptable levels, suggested there was some merit in viewing bullying as a product of a combination of the frequency of an act being multiplied by its intensity (Volk et al., 2014). When asked to place these behaviours on a continuum it was interesting to note that teasing was largely viewed as this middle ground between banter and bullying, which contradicted the participants' conceptualisation of banter and teasing (see Appendix F). One explanation is that teasing may operate more as a process to drive banter or bullying, rather than being seen as a distinctive concept.

An alternative view was that ultimately these concepts were hard to separate and they may have shared characteristics, as Lenny expressed, "I don't think there's a difference; I think it just links in together because banter can lead onto a form of bullying." This mixed view was reinforced by Ed:

> You do, when you do talk about it, you realise they all kind of relate in a way and it's you're saying about banter and it can be pushed beyond a certain point and that's when victimisation and teasing and bullying can have its negative side.

This may be a reflection of the conceptual confusion surrounding the dividing line in football, whereby it becomes difficult for players to define

these terms. This is reflected in a range of research findings which have highlighted negative aspects of banter as a less malicious strand of bullying and the blurring of lines with teasing behaviours which has left an opaque picture (Carrera et al., 2011; Hylton, 2018; Kerr et al., 2016; Krane, 2016; McCormack & Anderson, 2010; Rigby, 2007). As such it suggests players (as well as people in more society more broadly) need to be educated about the blurred lines between these concepts and that no one single definition of bullying will apply to every individual. Equally more is needed to challenge the institutionalised acceptance of negative behaviours within workplaces such as professional football and to understand why players continue to engage in acts which they know would unacceptable in other environments.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 The Research

This research provided an in-depth exploration of how male footballers conceptualise bullying within professional football. Specifically the thesis sought to address two main research questions what do professional footballers perceive bullying to be and to what extent does bullying in football differ from teasing, victimisation and banter? To address these questions a qualitative approach was employed utilising in-depth interviews with adult male, professional footballers to unearth the essences of these concepts.

5.2 Summary and Overall Contribution

5.2.1 The conceptualisation of bullying

The primary research question explored participants' conceptualisation of the term bullying in football. Consistent with the study's approach male professional footballers' conceptualisation of bullying was explained using a variety of psychological and sociological concepts, theory and research, Interestingly players largely described a concept which was consistent with Olewus' (1993) classic definition whereby bullying is an intentional, harm-doing act, carried out repeatedly which is characterised by relationships with an imbalance of power. This is in contrast to research within the sport and wider developmental domain which has questioned components such as intentionality and repetition (Kerr et al., 2016; Volk et al., 2014). Nevertheless the players' focus on repetition potentially masks a dangerous undertone in football (as well as other workplaces), whereby isolated serious harm-doing acts might get passed away as banter. Despite repetition being a key theme it was noteworthy that these adult participants had varying views on the frequency required to define an act as bullying. This mirrored developmental literature largely focused on children and adolescents (Sawyer et al., 2008; Vaillancourt et al., 2008; Volk et al., 2014).

Consistent with previous research (e.g. Olewus, 1993; Volk et al., 2014) footballers highlighted the necessary ingredients of power, various forms of

abuse and harm-doing through emotional effects on the victim. It would appear that Foucauldian perspectives on power and discipline provide a useful framework for understanding bullying in professional football, as bullying maintains a form of discipline which preserves the hierarchy of both managers and players alike (Foucault, 1977). Importantly within professional football and for organisations more broadly, the present findings revealed that there is no single aspect which drives this power element and instead it is multifaceted. Nevertheless it was evident that institutionalised, authoritarian practices still prevail, which are underpinned by stylised expectations of players regarding conforming to masculine ideals, while in the meantime players compete for the various rewards the professional games offers (S. Kelly & Waddington, 2006; Kerr et al., 2016; A. Parker, 2000a, 2006; A. Parker & Manley, 2016). This inherent authoritarianism permeates various forms of abuse which constitute bullying. Players articulated how the physical element, found elsewhere in bullying research (Brackenridge, 2010; Olewus, 1993), was not only buffered by the media scrutiny on football but may also be less relevant with adult populations (Gearing, 1999; P. K. Smith, 2016). Instead the present study shows how a hegemonic form of masculinity prevails in professional football, which legitimises verbal, mental and relational forms of abuse often under the guise of banter and where physical abuse is more a feature of 'necessary' initiation ceremonies (Alexander et al., 2011; Diamond et al., 2016; A. Parker, 2006). Thus, while aspects of Olewus' (1993) description of the acts which constitute bullying holds true with adults, this study shows how there may need to be more of a focus on certain elements of these aspects with adults, as well as the contextual nature of football.

In a similar vein the present study made a meaningful addition to the conceptualisation of harm within the act of bullying (Olewus, 1993; Volk et al., 2014), through identifying the specific emotional effects of this behaviour. These ranged from obvious displays of crying and anger, to negative impacts on performance and players suffering in isolation on their own. For professional football the latter outcome was most concerning as a culture persists whereby players are expected to raise their tolerance to verbal derogation and interactional banter, rather than revealing their discomfort at this behaviour (Gearing, 1999; A. Parker, 2006; A. Parker &

155

Manley, 2016). Here the interaction between the context and individuals' psychological strategies was highlighted, as professional football necessitates the use of emotional regulation strategies which have been found to have negative consequences (Larsen et al., 2012), such as expressive suppression. This was supported by players' view that displaying the emotional effects of bullying reflects an issue with the victim not the perpetrator, reinforcing a general dangerous perception with adults around bullying behaviour (Kowalski, 2000).

5.2.2 Whistleblowing

Whilst the previous findings demonstrates how this study extended bullying research, vital new insight was also shed on how this term is conceptualised within a workplace environment such as football. In particular, through themes such as whistleblowing this research demonstrates that bullying stretches beyond a repetitive, abusive act based on power, to something more culturally nuanced. For some the development of education programmes (see Brackenridge et al., 2004) has been seen to be successful in allowing players to report these behaviours, whereas for others, football has not moved on from a sense of disregard for education and still reinforces a lack of agency for players (A. Parker, 2000b; Pitchford et al., 2004). Most worryingly of all the perception of some players of a lack of support from their club or from bodies such as the PFA, conveys a crucial message around a culture of organisational silence (D. Kelly & Jones, 2013) in football and perhaps workplaces and society in general around reporting bullying behaviours. It is apparent that despite knowledge around reporting bullying behaviour, its sophisticated nature prevents this happening with adult footballers (Bjørkelo, 2013). This was perhaps unsurprising given players added to the conceptualisation of bullying by describing it as an act largely confined to the football environment.

There were important wider messages from this research around the potential for bullying to occur within segregated, secluded environments, whilst in sport and the danger of unsupervised environments such as changing rooms was evident (A. Parker & Manley, 2016; Shannon, 2013; Tomlinson, 1983). Contemporary societal issues were raised around the dangers of closed, encrypted social networks affording a similar protection

from surveillance and an extension of where bullying might occur. With these factors in mind it was not unexpected that one of the most noteworthy findings from the present study was that bullying is a largely undetectable act. Whilst authors such as Olewus (1993) and Volk and colleagues (2014) have sought to describe identifiable features of this behaviour, the present study identified that this focus may be fruitless, if bullied individuals are expected to put on 'brave face' and utilise strategies like expressive suppression to conceal this behaviour (Bjørkelo & Macko, 2012). Similarly authority figures (such as coaches in football) may behave surreptitiously to prevent this behaviour and their potentially abusive practices being exposed. Thus, whilst bullying in football appears to maintain many of the original features of classic definitions of this term, this study has broadened its conceptualisation and made important contributions to sport, sociological, developmental and organisational psychological literature.

5.2.3. The importance of conformity and personality

The present study's contribution to the psychological understanding of bullying extends to the constitution of a bully and victim in professional football. While sociological explanations of the hegemonic form of masculinity provide a contextual explanation as to why perceived weakness and nonconformity to the masculine ideals are not tolerated and bullying is celebrated in football (Collinson & Hearn, 1994; A. Parker, 2006), they do not fully explain the psychological processes which drive this behaviour. As such bullying behaviour may be explained by theories of social comparison, where players who may actually be insecure about their places in the team and use bullying as form of downward social comparison (Wills, 1981). This may fuel a troublesome undertone that pathologises bullying as the victim's problem rather than the perpetrator's. These findings provide a key message for organisations and society more broadly, in that weakness is seen as an issue for those individuals, whereas ruthlessly targeting of these weaknesses can at times be rewarded as a success in terms of status, power or career progression.

Further to the themes of weakness and nonconformity, the present study also demonstrates a trait based view of personality (H J. Eysenck, 1966) in relation to bullies and victims. Within football there is a general sense that introversion may lead to susceptibility of bullying or be a result this

157

behaviour, whereas extroversion may drive bullying. This reaffirms a sense in the psychological literature, which has associated extroversion with bullying behaviour (Mitsopoulou & Giovazolias, 2015; Slee & Rigby, 1993) Again though these views were underpinned by an interaction with contextual beliefs within professional football, that having a certain character is representative of a will to win, whereas failure to display these characteristics and conform to group norms is an issue (Cashmore & Parker, 2003; S. Kelly & Waddington, 2006; A. Parker & Manley, 2016). Nonetheless divergences within the participants' data that personality traits such as extroversion, are not necessarily predictive of bullying behaviours and that bullies and victims may actually share similar characteristics, provides an important addition to bullying literature. Instead there needs to be a much wider consideration of the figures present within an organisational context (e.g. in football players, managers, sports science staff), the particular context itself and its hierarchical nature.

5.2.4 The fine line between bullying, banter, teasing and victimisation
Beyond seeking to conceptualise bullying within professional football the other main research question sought to explore the distinction between bullying, banter, teasing and victimisation in this environment. 'The Dividing Line' illustrates significant information to address the conceptual confusion which exists between these terms. The present study meaningfully expands bullying literature to date (Cuadrado-Gordillo, 2011; Thornberg & Knutsen, 2011; Thornberg et al., 2012) by highlighting the importance of perception in determining whether a behaviour is regarded as bullying or not. This is a key finding, given the extent to which participants stressed this component and the limited focus it has received in previous bullying literature. Equally it also highlights why behavioural codes of conduct in football have questionable efficacy, as they are not targeted at individual perceptions of bullying.

In line with this perceptual theme, important conceptual understanding of the similarities and differences between bullying, banter, teasing and victimisation was provided through themes such as bantering and intentionality. The theme of bantering demonstrated that the conceptual distance between bullying to banter and teasing is short. In line with sports research to date humour was regarded as facilitating banter (Gearing,

1999; Wagstaff et al., 2017) yet crucially it has the capacity to carry the harm inflicting element of bullying (McCormack & Anderson, 2010; Volk et al., 2014). This relays an important message for football and other workplaces about having an unquestioning acceptance of banter, given it can be closely related to bullying. Perhaps most significantly for the bullying research literature overall there was a general feeling that an intent to harm marks out bullying from other behaviours. However, other players suggested a potential risk in applying this finding, as they felt bullying happens regardless of intent. Allied with this players discussed how banter had the capacity to carry an intentional harm-doing element. As such the present study highlights a pertinent issue within psychological literature that there is significant overlap in terms such as bullying, banter and teasing, which have become increasingly blurred by concepts such as cruel teasing and non-malign bullying (Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009; Rigby, 2007). Therefore it is unclear as to whether bullying, banter and teasing truly are different concepts.

This study highlights that the nature of the context may play a significant role in the degree to which bullying, banter and teasing are different phenomena. Players essentially revealed that football adopts a caricature of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2008) which drives a more extreme version of banter, that has to be accepted even if it crosses the line into bullying. For others bullying was even legitimised as part of necessary shows of male dominance. The most significant part of these revelations is that discrimination was often viewed as part of the concept of banter, rather than bullying. As such it demonstrates that banter was seen much more broadly in professional football and gave credence for the view that essentially it is the same concept as bullying. Furthermore there were salient points about professional football permitting a culture of racism and homophobia, with players safeguarding themselves with the belief that being on the 'inside' of this environment permits different behaviours to daily society (Cashmore & Cleland, 2012; Gearing, 1999; Hylton, 2018; Krane, 2016; McCormack & Anderson, 2010). These findings reinforced the sense that viewing bullying within a psychosocial framework is particularly useful. In this case the hegemonic masculinity of men's professional football liberates players to knowingly behave at an earlier moral development stage which is heteronomous morality (Piaget, 1932).

To conclude the present study illustrates a potentially key issue with the conceptual confusion between bullying, banter and teasing. For many these were separated by a hypothetical line underpinned by discriminatory content, an excess of banter or teasing and a sense that the line had been crossed. Despite this a passive acceptance of banter was revealed where casual racism was considered 'humourful' and an excess of teasing was not defined, consistent with research within and outside of sport, indicating why conceptual confusion remains (Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009; Cleland, 2016; Hylton, 2018; Keltner et al., 2001).

5.3 Implications

The present study's findings highlight a number of key implications regarding the identification of the bullying act, as well as the potential for it to be confused with the concepts of banter, teasing and victimisation. Firstly within adult working environments such as professional football, it is evident that figures such as coaches and players need to mindful of some of the key features of Olewus' (1993) definition of bullying. In particular, the repetitive and intentional targeting of an individual based on a variety of factors which might constitute power (e.g. money, seniority on the team, longevity at the club), were viewed as the key elements which allow for the identification of bullying. Moreover despite football's preference for so called 'big' characters (A. Parker & Manley, 2016), extroverted individuals need to monitored. In line with mainstream psychological research these players were often seen as the protagonists of bullying behaviour (Mitsopoulou & Giovazolias, 2015). Despite this recommendation professional football as an institution (and society more broadly), needs to be mindful of the sense from players that anyone can bully irrespective of their role or personality. Equally, a passive view persists that those individuals displaying weakness or nonconformity to group ideals are the problem and make themselves susceptible to being bullied, suggesting further intervention is needed to challenge this culture within the sport. Coaches in particular need to monitor their behaviour, as their sometimes authoritarian practices or lack of awareness around bullying can be seen to fuel this belief (Cushion & Jones, 2006; A. Parker, 2006).

The most significant aspect of organisational culture which needs challenging in football surrounds whistleblowing. Despite clear attempts to address education, welfare and mental health, for a number of players the provision on offer was regarded as inappropriate and a culture of organisational silence persists, where bullying behaviours cannot be reported (Brackenridge et al., 2004; D. Kelly & Jones, 2013; The PFA, 2019). For organisations in general there needs to be far more acknowledgement of the individualistic, layered nature of bullying, which calls for bespoke interventions rather than a top-down approach. Football clubs in particular, need to do more to address a cultural subservience to bullying behaviour, to provide more supportive channels to report this behaviour and to provide greater assurances that doing so will not negatively impact the victim (A. Parker, 2006; A. Parker & Manley, 2016). Whilst a culture of surveillance is not recommended to address bullying, football as a workplace needs to be mindful of where bullying takes place. Players in the current study stressed that this behaviour was mainly located in football, with particular reference to the changing room. Given the changing room is often free from coaches, more education of the players is required so they can challenge the existing culture to monitor for bullying behaviour and to empower them to challenge and report these acts. This should also allow for a more proactive approach to bullying, rather than a reactive focus when players have already experienced particular emotional effects. Moreover for society more broadly, greater focus needs to go into monitoring encrypted social media spaces, such as WhatsApp groups, which can virtually extend the workplace.

Developing more tailored education services to the players may also facilitate understanding around bullying, banter and teasing. The equivocal findings around the differentiation of these terms (Jankauskiene et al., 2008; Peguero & Williams, 2013; Peterson et al., 2012; Puhl et al., 2013; Sweeting & West, 2001), was mirrored in the present study. To this end education programmes need to inform players around the importance of individual perception driving the extent to which a behaviour is seen as bullying or banter and to challenge the predominant view that the appropriateness of behaviour is determined by the perpetrator rather than victim (Kowalski, 2000). Behavioural codes of conduct and governing body policies need to reflect that behaviour must be deemed as bullying rather

than banter, even if there is no intent to harm. Interventions may also seek to realign the conceptualisation of banter and teasing within football clubs, so that their more facilitative impact on performance can be felt.

Finally within segregated working environments such as football (see Gearing, 1999), greater attempts are needed to address discriminatory acts being passively accepted as banter rather than bullying. Findings from the present study reaffirm professional footballers' view that they need to possess a hyper-masculine identity and fulfil heteronormative behaviours to successfully navigate the demands of the game (McCormack & Anderson, 2010; A. Parker, 2000a). Unfortunately performing this gendered role can result in players engaging in racial or homophobic bullying which masquerades as banter, despite the attempts from football organisations to address this. The worrying revelation that players are conscious that this behaviour would not be tolerated on the 'outside' of football and yet the context permits it, suggest a systemic failure within football to address discrimination and challenge ideals regarding masculinity. As such an extension of organisational cultural interventions to focus on bullying in sport may be required, to optimise wellbeing and performance (Wagstaff, Hanton, & Fletcher, 2013).

5.4 Limitations and Future Research Directions

In line with common issues regarding qualitative research some limitations were evident within the present study. One issue was the 'definition of the situation' whereby participants are described as 'falsely conscious' and therefore unaware of the real situation when it comes to articulating their views (Cohen et al., 2013). This was highly pertinent to the present study where the focus was on participants conceptualising bullying and related terms such as banter, teasing and victimisation. As such the persistence of a confused conceptual picture of these terms may in part be due to the participants being unaware of their true constituents. Similarly, there is also the risk that by interviewing participants within their environment of professional football that their familiarity with the situation becomes problematic, as they often neglect tacit aspects of what is being researched (Cohen et al., 2013). This may have led the participants to ignore certain elements of the bullying process or to consider the real implications of banter and teasing. Moreover by conducting interviews at the players' clubs

it may have led players to be more guarded in some of their responses around bullying, for fear of scrutiny by that organisation. However, this concern would appear to be counteracted by the richness of the whistleblowing theme, where a number of the players discussed negative practices at their club. To remedy these limitations more broadly, future research could consider a variety of options such as studying in other cultures (i.e. other workplaces) or other situations which might have a bearing on the situation in hand (i.e. other elite sports) to see if similar but different organisations yield the same findings (Delamont, 1981). An alternative approach may involve conducting ethnographic research. Unfortunately due to the time constraints of full-time occupation on behalf of the researcher and the difficulty in accessing professional football clubs, this was not possible in this instance. Nonetheless this may provide a useful avenue of future research into bullying and banter, to extend findings utilising this approach on the culture with professional football clubs (e.g. A. Parker, 2006), by using additional methods such as observation.

Similar to recently published IPA studies within sport and exercise psychology a further limitation of the present study revolved around the interview procedures employed (Brown, Webb, Robinson, & Cotgreave, 2018; Sandardos & Chambers, 2019). The present study was also limited to the use of a single interview focused on males which concentrated on a difficult topic (Brown et al., 2018; Sandardos & Chambers, 2019). The single interview may have presented issues with building a rapport to discuss potentially difficult experiences and the focus on males may limit the generalisability of the findings (Brown et al., 2018; Sandardos & Chambers, 2019). Pertinently males have been found to be unwilling to discuss mental health concerns due to a perceived loss of power, masculinity, and cultural norms around disclosure of such issues and when interviewed by other males, they have been seen to regulate their behaviours to avoid displaying these worries (Brown et al., 2018; Emslie, Ridge, Ziebland, & Hunt, 2006; Ridge, Emslie, & White, 2011). This coupled with the general apathetic attitude of professional footballers to anything seen as educational (A. Parker, 2000b), may in some cases explain why some interviews were comparatively short in relation to recent IPA studies within the sports domain (Brown et al., 2018). Despite this the overall mean length of the interviews were comparable to other recently

published studies using IPA in sport (Sandardos & Chambers, 2019) and was longer than other IPA studies focusing on bullying with young participants (Hutchinson, 2012). Overall this suggests that the data recruited were robust against the criteria set out for IPA studies within the sporting context (see J. A. Smith, 2016).

To address these potential limitations, future research could consider options such as studying females and other elite sports to add to bullying research within this context and to engage in a more prolonged period of data collection in order to build rapport and gain richer, deeper accounts from the participants (Brown et al., 2018; Brown, Webb, Robinson, & Cotgreave, 2019). It must be noted though that given the researcher had no experience or network in professional football prior to the commencement of the study, that it was a significant achievement to gain access to this environment. This is in light of former professionals noting how hard it is for researchers to access this relatively closed world, the paucity of research in this context and the highly challenging subject matter under exploration (S. Kelly & Waddington, 2006).

In summary the limitations and future research directions presented above provide important recommendations for researchers to further the conceptual understanding of bullying, banter, teasing and victimisation in professional football and other occupations. It is felt that the present study provides an important step in identifying that simply categorising these concepts may not be appropriate and instead, research needs to reflect that they are readily confused with often similar and profound impacts for wellbeing and performance. Equally the concepts under exploration have been shown to be nuanced by individual perception and this notion is currently under-represented within the bullying literature. Thus to conclude, research and practice needs to be mindful to avoid a 'one size fits all' view of bullying, that there are inherent dangers with the generally positive views of banter and teasing and to effectively address bullying a bespoke approach is needed to the context and individuals within it. Only then will education programmes in football and other contexts have the potential to be successful in addressing this behaviour.

REFERENCES

Aalsma, M. C. (2008). What is bullying? *Journal of Adolescent Health, 43*, 101-102.

Alexander, M., MacLaren, A., O'Gorman, K., & Taheri, B. (2011). "He just didn't seem to understand the banter": Bullying or simply establishing social cohesion? *Tourism Management, 48*, 1-11.

Allen-Collinson, J. (2016). Breathing in life: Phenomenological perspectives on sport and exercise. In A. C. Sparkes & B. Smith (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise* (pp. 11-23). London: Taylor and Francis.

Baar, P., & Wubbels, T. (2011). Machiavellianism in children in Dutch elementary schools and sports clubs: Prevalence and stability according to context, sport type, and gender. *The Sport Psychologist, 25*(4), 444-464.

Baar, P., & Wubbels, T. (2013). Peer aggression and victimization: Dutch sports coaches' views and practices. *The Sport Psychologist, 27*, 380-389.

Balague, G. (2017). *Brave new world: Inside Pochettino's Spurs*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson.

Ball, S. J. (1990). *Politics and policy making in education*. London: Routledge.

BBC. (2014a). BBC Radio 5 Live Sportsweek. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01scn6x

BBC. (2014b). Kevin Pietersen claims 'bullying culture' in England dressing room. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/0/cricket/29500839

BBC. (2016). SPORT Football. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/36975545

BBC. (2018). Chelsea FC 'paid me £50,000 over abuse'. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38179882

BBC. (2019). Peter Beardsley: Football Association to investigate ex-Newcastle coach. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/47535578

Benedichte Meyer, C. (2001). A case in case study methodology. *Field Methods, 13*(4), 329–352.

Berger, K. S. (2007). Update on bullying at school: Science forgotten? *Developmental Review, 27*, 90–126.

Bertrand, J. (2013). Cricket. Retrieved from http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/sport/cricket/in-this-extract-from-his-new-book-steve-waugh-explains-his-strategy-of-mental-disintegration/story-fni2fnmo-1226772056266

Best, P., Manktelow, R., & Taylor, B. (2014). Online communication, social media and adolescent wellbeing: A systematic narrative review. *Children and Youth Services Review, 41*, 27-36.

Bibou-Nakou, I., Tsiantis, J., Assimopoulos, H., Chatzilambou, P., & Giannakouplou, D. (2012). School factors related to bullying: A qualitative study of early adolescent students. *Social Psychology of Education, 15*, 125-145.

Bishop-Mills, C., & Muckleroy-Carwile, A. (2009). The good, the bad, and the borderline: Separating teasing from bullying. *Communication Education, 58*(2), 276-301.

Bjørkelo, B. (2013). Workplace bullying after whistleblowing: Future research and implications. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 28*(3), 306-323.

Bjørkelo, B., Einarsen, S., & Matthiesen, S. B. (2010). Predicting proactive behaviour at work: Exploring the role of personality as an antecedent of whistleblowing behaviour. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 83*, 371-394.

Bjørkelo, B., & Macko, M. (2012). The stigma of reporting wrongdoing at work: When doing right is perceived as doing wrong. *Polish Psychological Bulletin, 43*(2), 70-75.

Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods*. Boston: Pearson.

Book, A. S., Volk, A. A., & Hosker, A. (2012). Adolescent bullying and personality: An adaptive approach. *Personality and Individual Differences, 52*, 218–223.

Brackenridge, C. H. (2010). Violence and abuse prevention in sport. In K. Kaufman (Ed.), *The prevention of sexual violence: A practitioners' sourcebook* (pp. 401-413). Holyoke: NEARI Press.

Brackenridge, C. H., Bringer, J. D., & Bishopp, D. (2005). Managing cases of abuse in sport. *Child Abuse Review, 14*, 1-16.

Brackenridge, C. H., Bringer, J. D., Cockburn, C., Nutt, G., Pitchford, A., Russell, K., & Pawlaczek, Z. (2004). The Football Association's Child Protection in Football Research Project 2002–2006: Rationale, design and first year results. *Managing Leisure, 9*, 30–46

Brackenridge, C. H., & Fasting, K. (2002). Sexual harassment and abuse in sport: The research context. *Journal of Sexual Aggression: An international, interdisciplinary forum for research, theory and practice, 8*(2), 3-15.

Brackenridge, C. H., Rivers, I., Gough, B., & LLewellyn, K. (2007). Driving down participation: Homophobic bullying as a deterrent to doing sport. In C. Carmichael Aitchison (Ed.), *Sport and Gender Identities: Masculinities, Femininities and Sexualities* (pp. 122-139). Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Brinkmann, S. (2015). Perils and potentials in qualitative psychology. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science, 49*, 162–173.

Brocki, J. J. M., & Wearden, A. (2006). A critical evaluation of the use of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) in health psychology. *Psychology and Health, 21*(1), 87 - 108.

Brown, C. J., Webb, T. L., Robinson, M. A., & Cotgreave, R. (2018). Athletes' experiences of social support during their transition out of elite sport: An interpretive phenomenological analysis. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 36*, 71-80. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2018.01.003

Brown, C. J., Webb, T. L., Robinson, M. A., & Cotgreave, R. (2019). Athletes' retirement from elite sport: A qualitative study of parents and partners' experiences. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 40*, 51-60. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2018.09.005

Bryman, A. (2008). *Social research methods.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Butler, J. (1988). Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory. *Theatre Journal, 40*(4), 519-531.

Carrera, M. V., DePalma, R., & Lameiras, M. (2011). Toward a more comprehensive understanding of bullying in school settings. *Educational Psychology Review, 23*, 479–499.

Carron, A. V., Colman, M. M., Wheeler, J., & Stevens, D. (2002). Cohesion and performance in sport: A meta analysis. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 24*(2), 168-188.

Carron, A. V., Eys, M. A., & Burke, S. (2006). Team cohesion: Nature, correlates, and development. In S. Jowett & D. Lavallee (Eds.), *Social Psychology in Sport* (pp. 91-102). Champaign: Human Kinetics.

Cashmore, E., & Cleland, J. (2012). Fans, homophobia and masculinities in association football: Evidence of a more inclusive environment. *The British Journal of Sociology, 63*(2), 370-387.

Cashmore, E., & Parker, A. (2003). One David Beckham? Celebrity, masculinity, and the soccerati. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 20*(3), 214-231.

Cimino, A. (2011). The evolution of hazing: Motivational mechanisms and the abuse of newcomers. *Journal of Cognition and Culture, 11*, 241-267. doi:10.1163/156853711X591242

Clarke, L. (1998). Commentary. *Journal of Psychiatry and Mental Health Nursing, 5*, 319-328.

Cleland, J. (2016). Racism. In E. Cashmore & K. Dixon (Eds.), *Studying Football* (pp. 64-80). Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2013). *Research methods in education.* Abingdon: Taylor Francis.

Collinson, D. L., & Hearn, J. (1994). Naming men as men: Implications for work, organization and management. *Gender, Work and Organization, 1*(1), 2-22.

Connell, R. (2008). Masculinity construction and sports in boys' education: A framework for thinking about the issue. *Sport, Education and Society, 13*(2), 131-145. doi:10.1080/13573320801957053

Cook, C. R., Williams, K. R., Guerra, N. G., Kim, T. E., & Sadek, S. (2010). Predictors of bullying and victimization in childhood and adolescence: A meta-analytic investigation. *School Psychology Quarterly, 25*(2), 65–83.

Coyle, A. (2007). Introduction to qualitative psychological research. In E. Lyons & A. Coyle (Eds.), *Analysing Qualitative Data in Psychology* (pp. 9-30). London: Sage.

Craig, W. M., & Pepler, D. J. (1997). Observations of bullying and victimization in the school yard. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology, 13*, 41–59.

Cresswell, J. W. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Crothers, L. M., & Levinson, E. M. (2004). Assessment of bullying: A review of methods and instruments. *Journal of Counselling and Development, 82*, 296–503.

Cuadrado-Gordillo, I. (2011). Divergence in aggressors' and victims' perceptions of bullying: A decisive factor for differential psychosocial intervention. *Children and Youth Services Review, 33*(9), 1608-1615.

Cuadrado-Gordillo, I. (2012). Repetition, power imbalance, and intentionality: do these criteria conform to teenagers' perception of bullying? A role-based analysis. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 27*(10), 1889-1910.

Cushion, C., & Jones, R. L. (2006). Power, discourse, and symbolic violence in professional youth soccer: The case of Albion football club. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 23*, 142–161.

Cushion, C., & Jones, R. L. (2014). A Bourdieusian analysis of cultural reproduction: Socialisation and the 'hidden curriculum' in professional football. *Sport, Education and Society, 19*, 276–219.

Dane-Staples, E., Lieberman, L., Ratciff, J., & Rounds, K. (2013). Bullying experiences of individuals with visual impairment: The mitigating role of sport participation. *Journal of Sport Behavior, 36*(4), 365-386.

De Wet, C. (2010). The reasons for and the impact of principal-on-teacher bullying on the victims' private and professional lives. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 26*, 1450-1459.

Delamont, S. (1981). All too familiar? A decade of classroom research. *Educational Analysis, 3*(1), 69-83.

Demissie, Z., Lowry, R., Eaton, D. K., Hertz, M. F., & Lee, S. M. (2014). Associations of school violence with physical activity among U.S. high school students. *Journal of Physical Activity and Health, 11*, 705-711.

Diamond, A. B., Callahan, T., Chain, K. F., & Solomon, G. S. (2016). Qualitative review of hazing in collegiate and school sports: Consequences from a lack of culture, knowledge and responsiveness. *British Journal of Sports Medicine, 50*, 149–153.

Dionigi, R. (2006). Competitive sport and aging: The need for qualitative sociological research. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity, 14*, 365-379.

Dixon, K. (2016a). Consumption. In E. Cashmore & K. Dixon (Eds.), *Studying Football* (pp. 154-179). Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Dixon, K. (2016b). Fandom. In E. Cashmore & K. Dixon (Eds.), *Studying Football* (pp. 44-63). Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Duncan, S. (2019). Sledging in sport—Playful banter, or mean-spirited insults? A study of sledging's place in play. *Sport,*

Ethics and Philosophy, 13(2), 183-197. doi:10.1080/17511321.2018.1432677

Eder, D. (1991). The role of teasing in adolescent peer group culture. *Sociological Studies of Child Development, 4*, 181-197.

Eder, D., & Corsaro, W. (1999). Ethnographic studies of children and youth: Theoretical and ethical issues. *Ethnographic Studies of Children and Youth, 28*(5), 520-531.

Eder, D., Evans, C., & Parker, S. (1995). *School talk: Gender and adolescent culture*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Edwards, C. N., & Jones, R. L. (2018). Humour in sports coaching: 'It's a funny old game'. *Sociological Research Online, 00*(0), 1-19.

Eisenberg, A. R. (1986). Teasing: Verbal play in two Mexican homes. In B. B. Schieffelin & E. Ochs (Eds.), *Language socialization across cultures* (pp. 182-198). New York: : Cambridge University.

Emslie, C., Ridge, D., Ziebland, S., & Hunt, K. (2006). Men's accounts of depression: Reconstructing or resisting hegemonic masculinity? *Social Science & Medicine, 62*(9), 2246-2257. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2005.10.017

Epley, N., Keysar, B., Van Boven, L., & Gilovich, T. (2004). Perspective taking as egocentric anchoring and adjustment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 87*, 327-339.

Evans, B., Adler, A., MacDonald, D., & Cote, J. (2016). Bullying victimization and perpetration among adolescent sport teammates. *Pediatric Exercise Science, 28*, 296-303.

Eysenck, H. J. (1966). Personality and experimental psychology. *Bulletin of the British Psychological Society, 19*(62), 1-28.

Eysenck, H. J., & Eysenck, S. B. G. (1975). *Manual of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (Junior and Adult)*. Kent, UK: Hodder & Stoughton.

Farmer, T. W., Petrin, R., & Sprott-Brooks, D. (2012). Bullying involvement and the school adjustment of rural students with and without disabilities. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 20*(1), 19-37.

Fekkes, M., Pijpers, F., & Verloove-Vanhorick, S. P. (2005). Bullying: who does what, when and where? Involvement of children, teachers and parents in bullying behavior. *Health Education Research, 20*(1), 81–91.

Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human Relations, 7*(2), 117-140. doi:10.1177/001872675400700202

Fletcher, D., Hanton, S., & Mellalieu, S. (2006). An organisational stress review: Conceptual and theoretical issues in competitive sport. In S. Hanton & S. Mellalieu (Eds.), *Literature Reviews in Sport Psychology* (pp. 321-374). Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science.

Flick, U. (2009). *An introduction to qualitative research*. London: Sage.

Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. New York: Vintage.

Fox News. (2006). Wis. teen who complained about being teased fatally shoots principal. Retrieved from http://www.foxnews.com/story/2006/09/30/wis-teen-who-complained-about-being-teased-fatally-shoots-principal.html

Fox, S., & Stallworth, L. E. (2005). Racial/ethnic bullying: Exploring links between bullying and racism in the US workplace. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 66*, 438–456.

Frisen, A., Jonsson, A.-K., & Persson, C. (2007). Adolescents' perception of bullying: Who is the victim? Who is the bully? What can be done to stop bullying? *Adolescence, 42*, 749-761.

Gearing, B. (1999). Narratives of identity among former professional footballers in the United Kingdom. *Journal of Aging Studies, 13*(1), 43-58.

Georgakopoulos, A., Wilkin, L., & Kent, B. (2011). Workplace bullying: A complex problem in contemporary organisations. *International Journal of Business and Social Science, 2*(3), 1-20.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aldine.

Goffman, E. (1961). *Asylums*. New York: Doubleday.

Gouttebarge, V., Backx, F. J. G., Aoki, H., & Kerkhoffs, G. M. M. J. (2015). Symptoms of common mental disorders in professional football (soccer) across five European countries. *Journal of Sports Science and Medicine, 14*, 811-818.

Gouttebarge, V., Frings-Dressen, M. H. W., & Sluiter, J. K. (2015). Mental and psychosocial health among current and former professional footballers. *Occupational Medicine, 65*, 190-196.

Hartie, K. J., & Smith, J. A. (2016). Five fathers' experience of an adult son sustaining a cervical spinal cord injury: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Spinal Cord Series and Cases, 2*, 1-8.

Heckathorn, D. D. (2002). Respondent-driven sampling II: Deriving population estimates from chain-referral samples of hidden populations. *Social Problems, 49*(1), 11-34.

Henriksen, K., & Dayton, E. (2006). Organizational silence and threats to public safety. *Health Services Research, 41*(4), 1539-1554.

Herbison, J. D., Benson, A. J., & Martin, L. J. (2017). Intricacies of the friendship-cohesion relationship in children's sport. *Sport & Exercise Psychology Review, 13*(1), 10-19.

Hill, D. M., Carvell, S., Matthews, N., Weston, N. J. V., & Thelwell, R. R. C. (2017). Exploring choking experiences in elite sport: The role of self-presentation. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 33*, 141-149. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2017.09.001

Hopkins, L., Taylor, L. M., Bowen, E., & Wood, C. (2013). A qualitative study investigating adolescents' understanding of aggression, bullying and violence. *Children and Youth Services Review, 35*(4), 685–693.

Husserl, E. (1970). *Logical investigation.* New York: Humanities Press.

Hutchinson, M. (2012). Exploring the impact of bullying on young bystanders. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 28*(4), 425-442.

Hylton, K. (2018). I'm not joking! The strategic use of humour in stories of racism. *Ethnicities, 18*(3), 327–343.

Hymel, S., Swearer, S., McDougall, P., Espelage, D., & Bradshaw, C. (2013). *Four decades of research on bullying: what have we learned and how can we move the field forward?*, Seattle.

Jankauskiene, R., Kardelis, K., Sukys, S., & Kardeliene, L. (2008). Associations between school bullying and psychosocial factors. *Social Behavior and Personality, 36*(2), 145-162.

Jones, I. (2014). *Research methods for sports studies.* London: Taylor and Francis.

Jowett, S. (2007). Interdependence analysis and the 3+1Cs in the Coach-Athlete Relationship. In S. Jowett & D. Lavallee (Eds.), *Social Psychology in Sport* (pp. 15-28). Champaign: Human Kinetics.

Jowett, S., & Poczwardowski, A. (2007). Understanding the Coach-Athlete Relationship. In S. Jowett (Ed.), *Social Psychology in Sport* (pp. 3-14). Champaign: Human Kinetics.

Kaiser, K. (2009). Protecting respondent confidentiality in qualitative research. *Qualitative Heatlh Research, 19*(11), 1632-1641.

Kelly, D., & Jones, A. (2013). When care is needed: The role of whistleblowing in promoting best standards from an individual and organizational perspective. *Quality in Ageing and Older Adults, 14*(3), 180-191.

Kelly, S., & Waddington, I. (2006). Abuse, intimidation and violence as aspects of managerial control in professional soccer in Britain and Ireland. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 41*(2), 147-164. doi:10.1177/1012690206075417

Keltner, D., Capps, L., Kring, A. M., Young, R. C., & Heerey, E. A. (2001). Just teasing: A conceptual analysis and empirical review. *Psychological Bulletin, 127*(2), 229-248.

Kerr, G., Jewett, R., Macpherson, E., & Stirling, A. (2016). Student athletes' experiences of bullying on intercollegiate teams. *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education, 10*(2), 132-149.

Kirby, S. L., & Wintrup, G. (2002). Running the gauntlet: An examination of initiation, hazing and sexual abuse in sport. *The Journal of Sexual Aggression, 8*(2), 49-68.

Koole, S. (2009). The psychology of emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Cognition & Emotion, 23*, 4-41. doi:10.1080/02699930802619031

Kowalski, R. M. (2000). "I was only kidding!": Victims' and perpetrators' perceptions of teasing. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 26*(2), 231-241.

Krane, V. (2016). Inclusion to exclusion: sport for LGBT athletes. In R. J. Schinke, K. R. McGannon, & B. Smith (Eds.), *Routledge International Handbook of Sport Psychology* (pp. 238-247). Abingdon, Oxon: Routledege.

Krane, V., & Baird, S. M. (2005). Using ethnography in applied sport psychology. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 17*, 87-107.

Kruger, J., Gordon, C., & Kuban, J. (2006). Intentions in teasing: When ''just kidding'' just isn't good enough. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 90*, 412-425.

Kumpulainen, K., Rasanen, E., & Henttonen, I. (1999). Children involved in bullying: Psychological disturbance and the persistence of the involvement. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 23*(12), 1253-1262.

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage.

Larkin, M., Watts, S., & Clifton, E. (2006). Giving voice and making sense in interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 102-120. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp062oa

Larsen, J., Vermulst, A., Eisinga, R., English, T., Gross, J., Hofman, E., . . . Engels, R. (2012). Social coping by masking? Parental support and peer victimization as mediators of the relationship between depressive symptoms and expressive suppression in adolescents. *Journal of Youth ans Adolescence, 41*(12), 1628-1642. doi:10.1007/s10964-012-9782-7

Larsson, L. (2009). A pluralist view of generalisation in qualitative research. *International Journal of Research and Method in Education, 32*(1), 25-38.

Leary, M. R. (1992). Self-presentational processes in exercise and sport. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 14*(4), 339-351.

Leary, M. R., & Kowalski, R. M. (1990). Impression management: A literature review and two-component model. *Psychological Bulletin, 107*(1), 34-47. doi:http://dx.doi.org.hallam.idm.oclc.org/10.1037/0033-2909.107.1.34

Leonard-Barton, D. (1990). A dual methodology for case studies: Synergistic use of a longitudinal single site with replicated multiple sites. *Organization Science, 1*(3), 248-266.

Lester, R., & Maldonado, N. (2014). *Perceptions of middle School teachers about an anti-bullying program*, Knoxville.

Levinson, B. (1978). *The seasons of a man's life*. New York: Knopf.

Li, W., & Rukavina, P. (2012). The nature, occurring contexts, and psychological implications of weight-related teasing in urban Physical Education programmes. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 83*(2), 308-317.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park: Sage.

Linstead, S. (2013). Organizational bystanding: Whistleblowing, watching the world go by or aiding and abetting? *M@n@gement, 16*(5), 680-696.

Linton, D. K., & Power, J. L. (2013). The personality traits of workplace bullies are often shared by their victims: Is there a dark side to victims? *Personality and Individual Differences, 54*(6), 738-743.

MacDonald, D. J., Cote, J., Eys, M., & Deakin, J. (2012). Psychometric properties of the youth experience survey with young athletes. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 13*, 332-340.

Magrath, R., Anderson, E., & Roberts, S. (2015). On the door-step of equality: Attitudes toward gay athletes among academy-level footballers. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 50*(7), 804-821. doi:10.1177/1012690213495747

Markula, P., & Friend, L. A. (2005). Remember when...Memory-work as an interpretive methodology for sport management. *Journal of Sport Management, 19*, 442-463.

Martínková, I., & Parry, J. (2013). Eichberg's 'phenomenology' of sport: A phenomenal confusion. *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy, 7*(3), 331-341.

Mattey, E., McCloughan, L. J., & Hanrahan, S. J. (2014). Anti-vilification programs in adolescent sport. *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action, 5*, 135–146.

McCormack, M., & Anderson, E. (2010). The re-production of homosexually themed themed discourse in educationally-based organised sport. *Culture, Health & Sexuality, 12*(8), 913-927.

McDonough, M. H., Sabiston, C. M., & Ullrich-French, S. (2011). The development of social relationships, social support, and posttraumatic growth in a dragon boating team for breast cancer survivors. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 33*, 627-648.

McGillivray, D., Fearn, R., & McIntosh, A. (2005). Caught up in and by the beautiful game: A case study of Scottish professional footballers. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 29*(1), 102-123.

Mehta, S. B., Cornell, D., & Fan, X. G., A. (2013). Bullying climate and school engagement in ninth-grade students. *Journal of School Health, 83*(1), 45-52.

Mishna, F., Antle, B. J., & Regehr, C. (2004). Tapping the perspectives of children: Emerging ethical issues in qualitative research. *Qualitative Social Work, 3*(4), 449-468.

Mishna, F., Saini, M., & Solomon, S. (2009). Ongoing and online: Children and youth's perceptions of cyber bullying. *Children and Youth Services Review, 31*, 1222-1228.

Mitsopoulou, E., & Giovazolias, T. (2015). Personality traits, empathy, and bullying behavior: A meta-analytic approach. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 21*, 61-72.

Mooney, A., Creeser, R., & Blatchford, P. (1991). Children's views on teasing and fighting in junior schools. *Educational Research, 33*, 103-112.

Morrison, E., & Milken, F. (2000). Organizational silence: A barrier to change and development in a pluralistic world *Academy of Management Review, 25*(4), 706-725.

Munroe, K. J., Giaccobi Jr, P. R., Hall, C., & Weinberg, R. (2000). The four ws of imagery use: Where, when, why, and what. *The Sport Psychologist, 14*, 119-137.

Mynard, H., & Joseph, S. (1997). Bully/victim problems and their association with Eysenck's personality dimensions in 8 to 13 year-olds. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 67*(1), 51-54.

Nelson, G. (1995). *Left foot forward: A year in the life of a journeyman footballer*. London: Headline.

Nesti, M. (2004). *Existential psychology and sport: Theory and application*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Nesti, M. (2010). *Psychology in football: Working with elite and professional players*. Oxon: Routledge.

NSPCC. (2013). The damage bullying causes – the facts. Retrieved from https://thecpsu.org.uk/help-advice/topics/anti-bullying/

O'Connor, J. A., & Graber, K. C. (2014). Sixth-grade Physical Education: An acculturation of bullying and fear. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 85*, 398-408.

O'Reilly, M., Dogra, N., Whiteman, N., Hughes, J., Eruyar, S., & Reilly, P. (2018). Is social media bad for mental health and wellbeing? Exploring the perspectives of adolescents. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 23*(4), 601-613.

Olewus, D. (1993). *Bullying at school: What we know and what we can do*. New York: Wiley-Blackwell.

Ortega, R., del-Rey, R., & Mora-Merchán, J. A. (2001). Violence among school children. Concepts and verbal labels that define the phenomenon of peer abuse. *Interuniversity Journal of Teacher Training, 41*, 95-113.

Oxford Dictionaries. (2019). English Oxford living dictionaries. Retrieved from https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/banter

Parker, A. (1996). *Chasing the 'Big Time': Football Apprenticeship in the 1990s. Unpublished PhD manuscript.* Department of Sociology, University of Warwick, Warwick. Retrieved from http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/36183/

Parker, A. (2000a). Masculinities and English professional football: youth traineeship, sub-cultural expectation and gender identity. In G. Walford & C. Hudson (Eds.), *Studies in Educational Ethnography (Genders and Sexualities in Educational Ethnography, Volume 3)* (pp. 41-65). Oxford: Emerald Publishing Group.

Parker, A. (2000b). Training for 'glory', schooling for 'failure'?: English professional football, traineeship and educational provision. *Journal of Education and Work, 13*(1), 61-76.

Parker, A. (2001). Soccer, servitude and sub-cultural identity: Football traineeship and masculine construction. *Soccer & Society, 2*, 59-80.

Parker, A. (2006). Lifelong learning to labour: Apprenticeship, masculinity and communities of practice. *British Educational Research Journal, 32*(5), 687-701.

Parker, A., & Manley, A. (2016). Identity. In E. Cashmore & K. Dixon (Eds.), *Studying Football* (pp. 97-112). Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Parker, I. (2012). The story of a suicide. Retrieved from http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/02/06/the-story-of-a-suicide

Partridge, J. A., Brustad, R. J., & Babkes Stellino, M. (2008). Advances in sport psychology. In T. S. Horn (Ed.), *Advances in Sport Psychology* (pp. 269-292). Champaign: Human Kinetics.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pearce, J. (1991). What can be done about the bully. In M. Elliot (Ed.), *Bullying: A Practical Guide to Coping for Schools*. Harlow: Longman.

Peguero, A. A. (2008). Bullying victimization and extracurricular activity. *Journal of School Violence, 7*(3), 71-85.

Peguero, A. A., & Williams, L. M. (2013). Racial and ethnic stereotypes and bullying victimization. *Youth Society, 45*, 545-564.

Pellegrini, A. D. (1998). Bullies and victims in school: A review and call for research. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 19*(2), 165-176.

Perren, S., & Alsaker, F. D. (2006). Social behavior and peer relationships of victims, bully-victims, and bullies in kindergarten. *The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 47*(1), 45-57.

Peterson, J. L., Puhl, R. M., & Luedicke, J. (2012). An experimental investigation of physical education teachers' and coaches' reactions to weight-based victimization in youth. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 13*, 177-185.

Piaget, J. (1932). *The moral judgment of the child*. New York: Harcourt Brace.

Piek, J. P., Barrett, N. C., Allen, L. S. R., Jones, A., & Louise, M. (2005). The relationship between bullying and self-worth in children with movement coordination problems. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 75*, 453-463.

Pitchford, A., Brackenridge, C., Bringer, J. D., Cockburn, C., Nutt, G., Pawlaczek, Z., & Russell, K. (2004). Children in football: Seen but not heard. *Soccer and Society, 5*(1), 43-60.

Pontzer, D. (2010). A theoretical test of bullying behavior: Parenting, personality, and the bully/victim relationship. *Journal of Family Violence, 25*(3), 259-273.

Pringle, R., & Markula, P. (2005). No pain is sane after all: A Foucauldian analysis of masculinities and men's rugby experiences of fear, pain, and pleasure. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 22*(4), 472-497. doi:10.1123/ssj.22.4.472

Puhl, R. M., Peterson, J. L., & Luedicke, J. (2013). Weight-based victimization: Bullying experiences of weight loss treatment-seeking youth. *Pediatrics, 131*(1), 1-9.

Pullen, A., & Knights, D. (2007). Editorial: Undoing gender: Organizing and disorganizing performance. *Gender, Work and Organization, 14*(6), 505-511. doi:doi:10.1111/j.1468-0432.2007.00368.x

Randall, W., & Phoenix, C. (2009). The problem with truth in qualitative interviews: Reflections from a narrative perspective. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 1*, 125–140.

Ridge, D., Emslie, C., & White, A. (2011). Understanding how men experience, express and cope with mental distress: where next? *Sociology of Health & Illness, 33*(1), 145-159. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9566.2010.01266.x

Rigby, K. (2007). *Bullying in schools and what to do about it*. Melbourne: The Australian Council for Educational Research.

Rivituso, J. (2014). Cyberbullying victimization among college students: An interpretive phenomenological analysis. *Journal of Information Systems Education, 25*(1), 71-75.

Robson, C., & McCartan, K. (2016). *Real world research: A resource for users of social research methods in applied settings*. Chichester: Jon Wiley and Sons.

Roderick, M., Waddington, I., & Parker, G. (2000). Playing hurt: Managing injuries in English professional football. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 35*, 165–135.

Sandardos, S. S., & Chambers, T. P. (2019). "It's not about sport, it's about you": An interpretative phenomenological analysis of mentoring elite athletes. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 43*, 144-154. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2019.02.003

Savage, R. (2014). Robbie Savage column: Bullying is a danger in every club's dressing room and a line must be drawn. Retrieved from https://www.mirror.co.uk/sport/football/news/robbie-savage-column-bullying-danger-4408285

Sawyer, A. L., Bradshaw, C. P., & O'Brennan, L. M. (2008). Examining ethnic, gender, and developmental differences in the way children report being a victim of "bullying" on self-report measures. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 43*, 106–114.

Scambler, D. J., Harris, M. J., & Milich, R. (1998). Sticks and stones: Evaluations of responses to childhood teasing. *Social Development, 7*, 234-249.

Scarpa, S., Carraro, A., & Gobbi, E. (2012). Peer victimization during Physical Education and enjoyment of physical activity. *Perceptual and Motor Skills, 11*(1), 319-324.

Schlenker, B. R., & Leary, M. R. (1982). Social anxiety and self-presentation: A conceptualization and model. *Psychological Bulletin, 92*(3), 641-669.

Schmittel, A., & Hull, K. (2015). "Shit got cray cray #MyBad" An examination of image-repair discourse of Richie Incognito during the Miami Dolphins' bullying scandal. *Journal of Sports Media, 10*(2), 115-137.

Schuster, B. (1999). Outsiders at school: The prevalence of bullying and its relation with social status. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations, 2*, 175-190.

Schwandt, T. A. (2000). Three epistemological stances for qualitative inquiry: Interpretivism, hermenutics, and social construction. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 189- 213). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sekol, I., & Farrington, D. P. (2010). The overlap between bullying and victimization in adolescent residential care: Are bully/victims a special category? *Children and Youth Services Review, 32*(12), 1758-1769.

Seligman, M. E., & Maier, S. F. (1967). Failure to escape traumatic shock. *Journal of Experimental Psychology, 74*(1), 1-9. doi:http://dx.doi.org.hallam.idm.oclc.org/10.1037/h0024514

Shannon, C. S. (2013). Bullying in recreation and sport settings: Exploring risk factors, prevention efforts, and intervention strategies. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration, 31*(1), 15-33.

Sheridan, D., Coffee, P., & Lavallee, D. (2014). A systematic review of social support in youth sport. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 7*(1), 198-228.

Shinebourne, P. (2011). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In N. Frost (Ed.), *Qualitative Research Methods in Psychology: Combining Core Approaches* (pp. 44-65). London: Open University.

Skelton, T. (2008). Research with children and young people: exploring the tensions between ethics, competence and participation. *Children's Geographies, 6*(1), 21-36.

Slater, A., & Tiggemann, M. (2010). "Uncool to do sport": A focus group study of adolescent girls' reasons for withdrawing from physical activity. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 11*, 619-626.

Slater, A., & Tiggemann, M. (2011). Gender differences in adolescent sport participation, teasing, self-objectification and body image concerns. *Journal of Adolescence, 34*, 455–463.

Slee, P. T., & Rigby, K. (1993). The relationship of Eysenck's personality factors and self-esteem to bully/victim behaviour in Australian school boys. *Personality and Individual Differences, 14*, 371-373.

Smith, A. L., Ullrich-French, S., Walker II, E., & Hurley, K. S. (2006). Peer relationship profiles and motivation in youth sport. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 28*, 362-382.

Smith, B., & McGannon, K. R. (2018). Developing rigor in qualitative research: Problems and opportunities within sport and exercise psychology. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 11*(1), 101-121. doi:10.1080/1750984X.2017.1317357

Smith, H., Varjas, K., Meyers, J., Marshall, M. L., Ruffner, C., & Graybill, E. C. (2009). Teachers' perceptions of teasing in schools. *Journal of School Violence, 9*(1), 2-22.

Smith, J. A. (2016). Interpretative phenomenological analysis in sport: Getting experience. In A. C. Sparkes & B. Smith (Eds.), *Routldege Handbook of Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise* (pp. 219-229). London: Taylor and Francis.

Smith, J. A., & Eatough, V. (2007). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In E. Lyons & A. Coyle (Eds.), *Analysing Qualitative Data in Psychology* (pp. 35-50). London: Sage.

Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research*. London: Sage.

Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2006). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods* (pp. 51-80). London: Sage.

Smith, P. K. (2016). Bullying: Definition, types, causes, consequences and intervention. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 10*(9), 519-532.

Sourander, A., Jensen, P., Ronning, J. A., Niemla, S., Helenius, H., Sillanmakl, L., . . . Almqvist, F. (2007). What Is the early outcome of boys who bully or are bullied in childhood? The Finnish "From a boy to a man" study. *Pediatrics, 120*(2), 397-404.

Sparkes, A. C., & Smith, B. (2016). Interviews: Qualtitative interviewing in the sport and exercise sciences. In A. C. Sparkes & B. Smith (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise* (pp. 103-123). London: Routledge.

Stanley, R. M., Boshoff, K., & Dollman, J. (2012). Voices in the playground: A qualitative exploration of the barriers and facilitators of lunchtime play. *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport, 15*(1), 44-51.

Steinfeldt, J. A., Foltz, B. D., Mungro, J., Speight, Q. L., Wong, Y. J., & Blumberg, J. (2011). Masculinity socialization in sports: Influence of college football coaches. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 12*(3), 247-259.

Stirling, A. E. (2009). Definition and constituents of maltreatment in sport: Establishing a conceptual framework for research practitioners. *British Journal of Sports Medicine, 43*, 1091–1099.

STOMP. (2016a). About STOMP Out Bullying. Retrieved from
http://www.stompoutbullying.org/index.php/about/

STOMP. (2016b). Bullying and Sports. Retrieved from
http://www.stompoutbullying.org/index.php/information-and-
resources/about-bullying-and-cyberbullying/bullying-and-
sports/

Strauss, A. L. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists.*
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sutton, J., Smith, P. K., & Swettenham, J. (1999). Bullying and
'Theory of Mind': A critique of the 'Social Skills Deficit' view of
anti-social behavior. *Social Development, 8*, 117-127.

Swain, J. (1998). What does bullying really mean? *Educational
Research, 40*(3), 358-364.

Sweeting, H., & West, P. (2001). Being different: Correlates of the
experience of teasing and bullying at age 11. *Research
Papers in Education, 16*(3), 225-246.

The FA. (2007). Welcome to Respect. *TheFA.com.* Retrieved from
http://www.thefa.com/leagues/respect

The FA. (2015). Take part in football. Retrieved from
http://www.thefa.com/news/my-football/2015/jan/football-
participation-on-rise

The FA. (2016). English Football's Inclusion & Anti-Discrimination
Action Plan: 2015-16 report and future priorities. Retrieved
from
https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=PFA+anti+discrimination&
oq=PFA+anti+discrimination&aqs=chrome..69i57.9660j0j4&so
urceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8

The FA. (2019). Safeguarding policy and procedures. Retrieved from
http://www.thefa.com/football-rules-
governance/safeguarding/policy-downloads

The PFA. (2019). Wellbeing. Retrieved from
https://www.thepfa.com/wellbeing

Thornberg, R., & Knutsen, S. (2011). Teenagers' explanations of
bullying. *Child and Youth Care Forum, 40*, 177-192.

Thornberg, R., Rosenqvist, R., & Johansson, P. (2012). Older
teenagers' explanations of bullying. *Child and Youth Care
Forum, 41*(4), 327-342.

Tilindienè, I., & Gailianienë, P. (2013). Relationship between self-
confidence and bullying among athletes and non-athletes.
Sportas, 89(2), 65-72.

Tilindienė, I., Rastauskienė, G. J., Gaižauskienė, A., & Stupuris, T.
(2012). Relationship between 12-16 year old athletes' self-
esteem, self-confidence and bullying. *Sportas, 85*(2), 76–82.

Tomlinson, A. (1983). Tuck up tight lads: Structures of control within
football culture In A. Tomlinson (Ed.), *Explorations in Football
Culture* (pp. 149-174). Eastbourne: Leisure Studies
Association Publications.

UK Government. (2010). *The Equality Act.* (2010 c. 15). Retrieved
from

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/pdfs/ukpga_201 00015_en.pdf.

Vaillancourt, T., Hymel, S., & McDougall, P. (2003). Bullying is power: Implications for school based intervention strategies. *Journal of Applied School Psychology, 19*(2), 157-176.

Vaillancourt, T., McDougall, P., Hymel, S., Krygsman, A., Miller, J., Stiver, K., & Davis, C. (2008). Bullying: Are researchers and children/youth talking about the same thing? *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 32*(6), 486–495.

van Ramele, S., Aoki, H., & Kerkhoffs, G. M. M. J. (2017). Mental health in retired professional football players: 12-month incidence, adverse life events and support. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 28*, 85-90.

Volk, A. A., Dane, A. V., & Marini, Z. A. (2014). What is bullying? A theoretical redefinition. *Developmental Review, 34*(4), 327-343. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dr.2014.09.001

Wagstaff, C. R. D., Hanton, S., & Fletcher, D. (2013). Developing emotion abilities and regulation strategies in a sport organization: An action research intervention. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 14*(4), 476-487. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2013.01.006

Wagstaff, C. R. D., Martin, L. J., & Thelwell, R. C. (2017). Subgroups and cliques in sport: A longitudinal case study of a rugby union team. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 30*, 164-172.

Weger, H., & Truch, N. (1996). *Teasing as a strategy for maintaining male friendships*, San Diego, CA.

Weiss, M. R., & Smith, A. L. (2002). Friendship quality in youth sport: Relationship to age, gender, and motivation variables. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 24*(4), 420-437.

Weiss, M. R., Smith, A. L., & Theeboom, M. (1996). "That's what friends are for": Children's and teenagers' perceptions of peer relationships in the sport domain. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 18*(4), 347-379.

Wellard, I. (2002). Men, sport, body performance and the maintenance of 'exclusive masculinity'. *Leisure Studies, 21*(3-4), 235-247. doi:10.1080/0261436022000030641

White, J. (2017). England's only openly gay footballer Liam Davis: 'I have not had one problem in football since I came out'. Retrieved from https://www.telegraph.co.uk/football/2017/12/18/openly-gay-footballer-liam-davis-have-not-had-one-problem-football/

Williams, K. R., & Guerra, N. G. (2007). Prevalence and predictors of internet bullying. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 41*, 14-21.

Willig, C. (2008). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Wills, T. A. (1981). Downward comparison principles in social psychology. *Psychological Bulletin, 90*(2), 245-271. doi:http://dx.doi.org.hallam.idm.oclc.org/10.1037/0033-2909.90.2.245

Wolke, D., Woods, S., Bloomfield, L., & Karstadt, L. (2000). The association between direct and relational bullying and behaviour problems among primary school children. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 41*(8), 989-1002.

Woodside, A. (2010). *Case study research: Theory, methods and practice*. Bradford: Emerald.

Yildiz, S. M. (2015). The relationship between bullying and burnout: An empirical investigation of Turkish professional football players. *Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal, 5*(1), 6-20.

Yin, R. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Participant Information and Consent Forms

James Newman
EdD Student
07.04.2017

Faculty of Social Sciences
School of Education and Lifelong Learning
University of East Anglia
Norwich Research Park
Norwich NR4 7TJ

A research study exploring what bullying in sport is.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT – Footballer

(1)   What is this study about?
You are invited to take part in a research study about what bullying in sport is. I am interested in what you believe this term to mean in football and whether it differs or not from other terms such as banter, teasing and victimisation. You have been invited to participate in this study because you currently participate in football at an appropriate level/standard of competition for this study. This Participant Information Statement tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the study. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about. Participation in this research study is voluntary. By giving consent to take part in this study you are telling us that you:
✓   Understand what you have read.
✓   Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below.
✓   Agree to the use of your personal information as described.

(2)   Who is running the study?
The study is being carried out by the following researchers: James Newman, EdD Student, Dr Victoria Warburton, Dr Kate Russell, School of Education and Lifelong Learning, University of East Anglia.

(3)   What will the study involve for me?
Your participation will involve having one hour long interview with me on either a match or training day. These will take place in a private room at a time that is convenient to you and the interview will be audio recorded. You will be asked questions relating to what you believe bullying to be and whether it differs from other terms such as banter, teasing and victimisation. It is important that you are aware that I am only interested in your perceptions of what these terms mean in sport, in no way are you required to talk about your own direct experiences unless you voluntarily wish to do so. Therefore I am more interested in how you would define these terms in sport and the amount to which you think they are similar or different. You will be able to review the transcript of your interview, if you wish, to ensure they are an accurate reflection of the discussion.

(4)   How much of my time will the study take?
It is expected that the interview will take one hour on one occasion.

(5)   Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I've started?

Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia. If you decide to take part in the study and then change your mind later, you are free to withdraw at any time. You can do this by letting me know by email (James.Newman@uea.ac.uk) or by phone (07515461303). You are free to stop the interview at any time. Unless you say that you want us to keep them, any recordings will be erased and the information you have provided will not be included in the study results. You may also refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer during the interview. If you decide at a later time to withdraw from the study your information will be removed from our records and will not be included in any results, up to the point data analysis has been completed.

(6)   Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?

Aside from giving up your time, the only potential costs could be psychological distress through talking about this sensitive topic. In this case information regarding a supporting organisation in sport is provided. MIND's Sport, Physical Activity and Mental Health Services includes the following telephone number 0300 123 3393 and text number 86463 in the event you have been bullied. You may also be referred to the FA who operate their own Mental Health Charter.

(7)   Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?

I would hope that by talking about your perceptions that it may allow you to reflect as a football participant on the range of behaviours within this sport. The study may also contribute to the effectiveness of designing coach education and other programmes to address bullying behaviour if it exists.

(8)   What will happen to information about me that is collected during the study?

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to us collecting personal information about you for the purposes of this research study. Your information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise. Data management will follow the 1998 Data Protection Act and the University of East Anglia Research Data Management Policy (2013). Your information will be stored securely and your identity/information will only be disclosed with your permission, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, but you will not be identified in these publications. In this instance, data will be stored for a period of 10 years and then destroyed.

If you reveal that you are a bully or have been bullied, you will be reminded that the club's own codes of conduct in the event players or officials engaging in or tolerating any form of bullying will be adhered to. The ramifications of this if you are bullying/being bullied are that any/all of the following actions may be taken by the club, league or The FA: a requirement to meet the club, league or welfare officer, monitoring by another coach, a requirement to attend an FA education course, suspension from attending matches, suspension or a fine, being required to leave or be sacked by the club. In all instances the issue of bullying will be reported to a club committee, including the Club Welfare Officer.

(9)   What if I would like further information about the study?

When you have read this information, James will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. You can contact her on James.Newman@uea.ac.uk or 07515461303.

(10) Will I be told the results of the study?
You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can tell me that you wish to receive feedback by providing a contact detail on the consent section of this information sheet. This feedback will be in the form of a one page lay summary of the findings. You will receive this feedback after the study is finished.

(11) What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?
The ethical aspects of this study have been approved under the regulations of the University of East Anglia's School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Committee.

If there is a problem please let me know. You can contact me via the University at the following address:
James Newman
School of Education and Lifelong Learning
University of East Anglia
NORWICH NR4 7TJ
James.Newman@uea.ac.uk

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact please contact the Head of the School of Education and Lifelong Learning, Professor Richard Andrews, at Richard.Andrews@uea.ac.uk.

(12) OK, I want to take part – what do I do next?
You need to fill in one copy of the consent form and give to James when he returns to your next training session or game. Please keep the letter, information sheet and the 2nd copy of the consent form for your information.

s information sheet is for you to keep

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (1ˢᵗ Copy to Researcher)

I, ... [PRINT NAME], agree to take part in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

✓   I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.

✓   I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.

✓   The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.

✓   I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia now or in the future.

✓   I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.

✓   I understand that I may stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don't wish to answer.

✓   I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.

✓   I understand that the results of this study may be published, but these publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.

I consent to:
- **Audio-recording**   YES   ☐
  NO   ☐
- **Reviewing transcripts**   YES   ☐
  NO   ☐
- **Would you like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study?**

                                                            YES   ☐
            NO   ☐

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your preferred form of feedback and address:

☐   Postal:

_____

_____

☐   Email:

_____

_

....

……………………………………………………   …………………………..

Signature   **PRINT name**
Date

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (2ⁿᵈ Copy to Participant)

I, ... [PRINT NAME], agree to take part in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

✓   I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.

✓   I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.

✓   The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.

✓   I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia now or in the future.

✓   I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.

✓ I understand that I may stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don't wish to answer.

✓   I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.

✓   I understand that the results of this study may be published, but these publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.

I consent to:
* **Audio-recording**   YES ☐
      NO   ☐
* **Reviewing transcripts**   YES ☐
      NO   ☐
* **Would you like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study?**
                                                          YES ☐
          NO   ☐

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your preferred form of feedback and address:

☐   Postal:

_____

_____

☐   Email:
_____

_

....

……………………………………………………….   ………………………..
Signature   **PRINT name**
Date

Appendix B

Sample Interview Questions (based on the approach of Hutchinson (2012))

Introductory Questions
How old are you?
How long have you been playing football?
How long have you been playing professionally?
Could you tell me about your football experience?
What's your thoughts on how players get on (e.g. relate to one another)?

Could you tell me what bullying in sport means to you?
- What makes something bullying in sport?
- When is it not bullying in sport?

Prompt: What comes to mind? What images?

Can you tell me what bullying in sport looks like?

Prompts:
- What might happen?
- Who might be involved?
- When might this happen?
- Where might this happen?
- Why might this happen?
- Does bullying look different in sport or not? If so, why?

Could you tell me what teasing in sport is?
- In your view is this positive or negative or both?
Prompt: Can you give an example?

- How do you recognise when it is teasing rather than bullying? Is this possible?
Prompt: Can you describe the differences/similarities?

Could you tell me what victimisation in sport is?
- How do you recognise when it is victimisation rather than bullying? Is this possible?

  Prompt: Can you describe the differences/similarities?

Could you tell me what banter in sport is?
- In your view is this positive or negative or both?
- Prompt: Can you give an example?

- How do you recognise when it is banter rather than bullying? Is this possible? Does it differ or not from teasing and victimisation too?

Prompt: Can you describe the differences/similarities?

Appendix C

Emergent Themes - Interview 1

Experienced professional player
Institutionalised
Uniqueness of football
Consistent environment
Diversity
Integration
Harmony
Forced integration
Results
Aggression
Conflict
Experience
Family
Lack of clarity
Banter
Perception
Discrimination (banter)
Undetectable
Abuse
Humour
Targeted
Emotional effect
Social Acceptability
Hierarchical abuse
Physical abuse
Verbal abuse
Fear
Hazing
Power
Survival
Specific site
Uniqueness of sport
Whistleblowing
Ignorance
Bullying
Introverted victims
Physical Appearance
Difference
Longevity
School
Ostracism
Damage
Disengagement
Sympathy
Morality
Actions
Weakness
Training ground
Changing room
The Location of Bullying
Socialising
Males

Humour (banter)
Females
Repetitive
Dress sense
Impersonal
Positive
Negative
Unhappiness
Personal impact
Provocative
Teasing
Jovial
Impersonal
Personal
Detection
Abuse
Youth club
Victimisation
Same as bullying
No hazing
Context
Appearance

Appendix D

Superordinate and Subordinate Themes - Interview 1

Superordinate Theme 1 - The Football Environment
Institutionalised
Uniqueness of football
Consistent environment
Diversity
Integration
Harmony
Forced integration
Results
Aggression
Conflict
Survival
Specific site
Uniqueness of sport
Sympathy
Morality
Abuse
Youth club
No hazing

Superordinate Theme 2 - Banter
Discrimination (banter)
Humour
Females
Dress sense
Impersonal
Positive

Superordinate Theme 3 - The Dividing Line
Lack of clarity
Perception

Superordinate Theme 4 - Bullying
Undetectable
Abuse
Emotional effect
Hierarchical abuse
Physical abuse
Verbal abuse
Fear
Hazing
Power
Whistleblowing
Ignorance
Introverted victims
Physical Appearance
Difference
Longevity
School
Ostracism

Damage
Disengagement
Weakness
Training ground
Changing room
The Location of Bullying
Repetitive
Unhappiness
Personal impact
Personal
Males

Superordinate Theme 5 - Teasing
Provocative
Jovial
Impersonal

Appendix E

Table 2: Master Table of Themes Participant 1

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
Bullying	Repetitive
	Power
	Longevity
	Emotional Effect
	Personal Impact
	Personal
	Unhappiness
	Damage
	Abuse and Intimidation
	Hazing
	Single Victim
	Victimisation
	Disengagement
	Whistleblowing
	Ignorance
	The Location of Bullying
	Changing Room
	Training Ground
	School
	Undetectable
	Weakness
	Difference
	Introverted Victims
	Males
	Physical Appearance
The Dividing Line	Perception
	Lack of Clarity
Banter	Positive
	Humour
	Impersonal
	Dress Sense
	Discrimination (banter)
	Females
Teasing	Provocative
	Jovial
	Impersonal
The Football Environment	Uniqueness of Football
	Uniqueness of Sport
	Consistent Environment
	Specific Site
	Youth Club
	Diversity
	Aggression
	Institutionalised

No Hazing
Survival
Forced Integration
Integration
Harmony
Results
Conflict
Sympathy
Morality
Abuse

No Hazing

Appendix F

Remaining Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

Banter and Teasing
The confusing conceptual picture around banter and teasing extended into the participants' perceptions of these terms. Whilst the general tendency within 'The Dividing Line' theme was to view teasing as a concept which nestles between banter and bullying, some of the conceptual ambiguity identified with this continuum of behaviours became more evident here. When asked to articulate these concepts, the participants unearthed largely comparable convergences and divergences in their accounts, suggesting that these terms may be broadly similar. Consistent with previous research (e.g. Keltner et al., 2001; Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009) banter and teasing were viewed as being exempt from some of the power based differentials cited within both the participants' accounts and bullying definitions (Olewus, 1993; Volk et al., 2014). Both were viewed as pro-social acts, with the capacity to carry an anti-social element and were undepinned by a degree of provocation. In the main this was seen as being jocular in nature. The provocation employed by players drew on a range of content ranging from physical appearance, football related humour and at times led to pranks. Ultimately this was believed to faciltiate a more cohesive team dynamic.

Equality
A primary difference of banter and teasing compared to bullying, was the notion of equality. Typically for most players, this equality centered around a healthy exchange of humour or the lack of a dominant individual. When characterising both concepts the participants either directly stated this equality or used language to its effect. Both the following accounts portrayed a conceptual divide between banter and teasing compared to bullying, which was consistent with the literature base to date (Gearing, 1999; Keltner et al., 2001; Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009).

> I think that can be too much like. Like usually in football, there's just never like kind of. Like in school or you see on a movie. There's a bully or a person who gets bullied. In football it's shared around, like everyone, like if I bantered someone, they bantered me back, it gets dished around. (Charlie).

Charlie's portrayal of a bully at school or in a movie evoked a sense of a dominant individual, higher in the social hierarchy, where one person may be targeted. The view that banter is different to this may be explained by the focus in the present study on adult footballers rather than children. Typically research focusing on younger participants has found that they report a vast view of bullying which may encapsulate teasing behaviours (Swain, 1998).

> Whereas I get someone, someone gets me, we have a laugh at the end of the day and no-one gets hurt, no-one feels and they feel like no-one's tried to go for someone. (Paul).

For Paul the view that banter and teasing were described as being free from some of the emotional effects of bullying also contrasts findings with younger participants, who report similar effects of teasing (Mooney et al., 1991; Scambler et al., 1998). The findings from the footballers in this study appear to fit more in line with the sense that from the age of around 11 or 12, individuals begin to appreciate the positive aspects of behaviours such as banter and teasing, which then becomes formalised around college age

197

(Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009). However these findings do need to be treated with a certain level of caution, as they are based on the assumption no-one has got hurt because of a communal laughter. Nonetheless the present findings would tend to support the notion that teasing can facilitate socially acceptable behaviour, affection and intimacy and enhance cohesion and group membership (Eder, 1991; Eder et al., 1995; Eisenberg, 1986; Weger & Truch, 1996). For professional footballers in particular this becomes an essential part of their existence.

The perception of humour being perceived positively as part of an exchange between individuals was one of the essences of their characterisation of banter and teasing, as Greg added "banter? Just having a laugh. It can be loads of different things. It could be absolutely anything. Um…ah…taking the mick out of each other backwards and forwards." For professional footballers the backwards and forwards motion of this exchange, portrays banter as an in built mutual activity reflective of the developmental process where players have grown up with "good lads and footballers" (Gearing, 1999, p.48). Despite a slight divergence in the players' accounts, where teasing was seen as in the middle of banter and bullying, this positive view of making fun of each other was echoed by Jamal:

> And then teasing's in the middle, cos teasing's you're making fun of someone but people can take it so like easily, they'll do it back, then it's a back and forth.

As Parker (2001) articulated in order for players to achieve any kind of peer group credibility and thus a sense of equality, they must not only receive 'piss taking' and 'ripping' but also be able to give as good as they got. As such the present findings represent a broad equality in banter and teasing behaviours although as Parker (2001) pointed to, this verbal provocation is often delivered until someone snaps. This emotional reaction would suggest that despite the sense of equality reflected by players around these behaviours, they are not wholly positive.

A couple of participants did strike a cautionary note about the importance of perception when conceptualising banter and teasing. The following extracts demonstrated the potential over-emphasis on the recipient's perspective, rather than the protagonists of teasing considering their own actions.

> I think it can be close because some people just don't get banter, some people don't really understand, some people don't enjoy it and some people are keen to banter other people but they can't take banter at all and they've just grown up as people who can't take someone getting onto them. (Rob).
> You might even have two people who go backward and forward to each other all the time. Which you call it banter between two people but it's hard to say unless you get a certain situation really. (Greg).

It appears that in some cases the presence of banter or teasing could create a sense of intimidation and distress in players, which leads to what previous research has found to be an unequal balance in relationships, that is more reflective of bullying (Pearce, 1991; Swain, 1998). Moreover, the need to examine a certain situation in order to determine whether banter is equally balanced is potentially alarming, as it suggests players either do not have a sense of what banter really is or they might use this to cover bullying behaviours. This might go some way to explain why behavioural codes of conduct and education around bullying, banter and teasing are

hard to implement in professional football, as a lot depends on individual perception.

Pro-social

A feature of banter and teasing across all the participants' accounts surrounded whether these acts are pro-social. In the main this was largely the case, however others alluded to a darker side of these concepts. This is an important finding within the sporting research base, with a key implication for practice about the misunderstanding of these terms. For some of the participants banter and teasing were vital for coping with the demands of the football environment:

> I think banter's a positive thing; some people use it to get through their day. It just keeps them going, cos obviously football it's really demanding, it's physically demanding, mentally demanding it can be a way out really. (Ed).
> Um…I think banter is a positive thing in football or both, I'd say…I think it's kind of, it doesn't make your day meticulous, everything the same every week, we train on this day, we have this day off, we play matches on this day. So I think it just kind of, gives the day a different kind of spin. (Charlie).

The language used by the players, such as getting them through their day and the necessity of banter, reiterated the positive aspect of this behaviour. Common with previous research findings, this behaviour serves an important function for footballers in maintaining their existence, preserving their identity and releasing them from the physical and mental rigours of the game (Gearing, 1999; A. Parker, 2000a, 2001; A. Parker & Manley, 2016). Likewise it fulfils an important function in escaping from the monotony of the football schedule. For the players this was viewed in a pro-social way, though the sense of relief and empowerment this provides players in resisting occupational values and the potential social distance it creates from the club an organisation may not be facilitative overall.

In common with the overall theme of 'Banter and Teasing' the teasing aspect serves a common purpose as Ricky described, "teasing about say you've had a bad session and stuff could motivate you as people are saying stuff about and you could think I could put that right." This highlighted an important link between teasing and performance. Importantly also, for Peter, this concept was seen as very different to bullying, "You're teasing someone to try and get like a positive reaction out of them and bullying is completely different to that." This reaffirms the assertion that this playful, jocular form of interaction is seen to be in direct contrast to the deliberate, hurtful acts of bullying (Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009). In addition it also evidences these authors' view that teasing is at the heart of positive interactions within a sports team or group.

In other accounts the generally pro-social view of banter and teasing was maintained but the sense that this may not always be the case was hinted to:

> I'd say a bit of both to be honest. It's like a friendship sort of thing. Shows you're comfortable round each, shows you know each other well or whatever but then there can be times where there like, someone in our changing room where they say something where I think it annoys me a little bit but then I think it's not worth a reaction sort of thing. Like it's fine, they probably won't say it again anyway. (Alfie).

In this instance the trend was still to view banter and teasing as pro-social behaviours which foster a sense of camaraderie and cohesion (Eder, 1991; Eder et al., 1995; Gearing, 1999). However, Alfie's language was reflective of a certain amount of irritation, whereby negative feelings can become suppressed. The suppression of these negative feelings may in part be explained by the subservient nature of footballers and the need for them to display deference to some of the scornful humour and personal castigation which may drive banter (A. Parker, 2006; A. Parker & Manley, 2016), even if it is negative for the bond and performance of the team. By contrast for Rob the variability in these concepts was much clearer:

> I think teasing can, can be fun if you want someone they might get angry and annoyed at you but afterwards like, you're still their mate. Whereas like you tease someone and you have a laugh about it but…I think teasing can become a form of bullying.

Whilst the pro-social aspect of humour was still evident, this extract reaffirmed the belief that teasing is an inter-related verbal component, which can take the form of bullying (see Keltner et al., 2001; Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009).

The development of the participants' accounts regarding the pro-social nature of banter and teasing were seen in some negative reflections of these acts. As James highlighted, "um if that turns into hostility and somebody is uncomfortable with that and it's obvious then I think that's a negative thing." Thus its humourous content can carry hostility which could further blur the boundary between bullying and teasing in sport. Lenny was more categorical about the merging of these behaviours with bullying:

> But if people aren't and people are feeling left out and isolated and bullied then to a certain extent, then it can have a negative effect on the team, so it can work both ways.

As with many other aspects of the participants' accounts ultimately the key differentiating factor may depend on the perception of the perpetrator and victim and the degree to whether the behaviour is repetitive, as Jamal described "But then again if you tease someone to a certain point where they feel like, I dunno you're picking on them all the time." This reiterated that the conceptual distance between banter and teasing to bullying may be comparatively short.

Provocative

In a similar fashion to 'The Bullying Act' the participants described some of the underlying processes which drive banter and teasing. This was another area which reflected an overall convergence in the variety of their views of these concepts, in that this provocation is necessary for banter and teasing. Yet there was also a slight divergence between the participants themselves which showed how a more negative side to these behaviours could be masked. In essence both banter and teasing were described as provocative acts designed to engineer a reaction out of the recipient:

> Teasing…..Is that just provoking somebody? Trying to get a reaction out of them? It does happen, when you get to know people, you know what buttons to press to get a reaction…And it's when you keep prodding them and keep saying stuff until you know they're gonna get to a point where they are going to snap…So you tease them, tease them, to try and get them 'cos when they do react, that's when its funny, that's when you get your laugh. (James).
> So in football like when people, you have this thing called 'getting a bite'. So say like if you're having a joke, people won't sometimes like

> laugh at the joke but they'll laugh if you bite back do you know what I mean? And I think if you bite back, more emotional people bite back, do you know what I mean and that's when it compounds and you start getting banter more. (Kevin).

Each case was reflective of a range of previous research which has established that both banter and teasing are underpinned by provocative behaviour aimed to produce a reaction out of the target (Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009; Keltner et al., 2001; A. Parker, 2001; A. Parker & Manley, 2016). More specifically the language used by the participants to reflect banter and teasing ranging from directly provoking someone, to getting under someone's skin or 'getting a bite' was consistent with previous definitions of teasing, where intentional forms of provocation were regarded as playful elements (Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009; Keltner et al., 2001). Within football, these findings may be explained by a cultural acceptance rooted in a working class shop floor tradition, where 'taking the piss' and administering 'verbal wind ups' to the point where the recipient ultimately fails to cope with these pressures and snaps, is seen as an essential part of the sport (A. Parker, 2001). As Parker (2001) pointed out these behaviours are typically passed off as a well-documented form of 'piss taking' or 'ripping', though as Kevin's account suggested, there is a potentially dangerous drift towards greater victimisation if the recipient reacts.

Whilst in the main, banter and teasing were viewed as pro-social behaviours within professional football, this provocative element hinted at darker side to these behaviours. This was despite Paul, highlighting that they were carried out to "just annoy people a little bit, just only out of, out of good intention though." For others such as Rob, the lack of reaction on behalf of the victim could mask an internal psychological distress:

> And it can get worse and worse because…they think you're not reacting so like its fine and that, he's laughing and that he doesn't care but obviously you don't know what that person is reacting on the inside.

For Kevin, the effect was more visible:

> And sometimes people…people laugh back and really they're not happy with the fact of what someone said but they're laughing to try and cover their insecurity. And that's when people think that guy's line's not here and they take it a bit further and it gets to a point where if too much like, something said, that's too much and then everyone sees it in the room. And then everyone looks to see how you're going to react and how that person's gonna react… Because they want to see that reaction for entertainment, do you know what I'm saying? I think people get a buzz; people get a buzz out of it. I think some people actually enjoy football for the banter as well, not just playing football… I think coming in having banter building people up to erupt, they find that hilarious. Whereas some people hate that and just like football.

In this case a much darker side to banter in football was unearthed, one in which some players' underlying motivation to get another to react was evident. As such professional footballers have the potential to engage in cruel teasing, where the aim is to intentionally deliver verbal insults that are as damaging as physical assaults and the result is a form of verbal bullying. Similarly to findings from previous research, footballers who perpetrate banter and teasing may explain their behaviour away under the guise of humour and having fun with the victim, even though for the victim this

behaviour can range from being annoying to emotionally hurtful (Kowalski, 2000). The potential for banter and teasing to possess this crueller element may not be surprising given that being able to deliver verbal insults which provoke an emotional reaction in the recipient are seen as a key element in players achieving credibility in their team and demonstrating their masculine worth (A. Parker, 2001). Therefore in summary this provocative theme provided further evidence to question the acceptance of banter and teasing as positive concepts amongst footballers.

Jocular
The darker side to some of the provocative acts revealed in relation to banter and teasing was largely at odds with these behaviours being seen as essentially jocular in nature (though some players alluded again to the important aspect of perception here). Moreover players were keen to point out that the content would be non-malicious in nature:

> You'd tease….it's hard to explain, say if somebody had some…abnormality or some difference you wouldn't tease them for that because you know it could be a sore area for them. (James).
> And you as I say, if you fall over and you see someone else do it you laugh, so if you don't you just have to laugh with them. So I think if it's all in that sense it's all good but I don't think you should do it to hurt someone intentionally. (Phil).

These accounts were indicative of the typical characterisation of teasing as a playful, jocular form of interaction which is seen to be in direct contrast to the deliberate, hurtful acts of bullying (see Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009). The players were keen to highlight that these types of behaviours did not set out to harm the victim. Nonetheless they may also be reflective of banter and teasing being framed from the perpetrator's lens where their belief is that the behaviour is humorous, with the aim of having fun (Kowalski, 2000). Adopting this lens is not especially surprising given that at the academy stage, footballers accept that partaking in interactional banter is essential to bolster a professional identity that is built around being able to being able to withstand and give increased levels of verbal chastisement than is otherwise tolerable (A. Parker, 2006). This adds further weight to the sense that there may have been acceptance amongst the players to these behaviours which may not always be indicative of their feelings. Overall this demonstrates the football environment may view the extremity of these behaviours quite differently to other contexts.

Nonetheless as with other facets of banter and teasing, some players were careful to point out that perception still plays an important role in determining whether these behaviours are viewed as light-hearted:

> Whereas banter, can be light, it can obviously cross the line to bullying. But I think it's when you're just trying to have a laugh with someone, you're trying to just be friendly with them, you're just trying to talk with them really. (Oli).
> Where I dunno banter is just… I dunno maybe you're just thinking of how they would react or you know they will over react so you just. Yeah I think banter's harmless obviously, but obviously I think people have different views on banter…But if the intentions are good or light hearted, there's obviously nothing wrong with it. (Jamal).

These extracts reemphasised the importance of individual differences in perception of banter and teasing, which dictate the degree to which victims find these behaviours funny or humiliating and rejecting (Kowalski, 2000).

They also reinforced the sense that in professional football, victims of these behaviours are expected to be subservient to the perpetrator's supposed positive intentions and a 'thick skin' must developed to tolerate the increased verbal derogation delivered by these informal means (A. Parker, 2006; A. Parker & Manley, 2016). Likewise they reemphasised that even if the intentions are good, as Jamal described there is still potential for the line to bullying to be crossed. This was summarised by Mickey, "once it's all light hearted, once it's all a bit of fun but again it's a very fine line if it's fun or in someone you know." Thus whilst the depictions of banter and teasing as jocular acts was consistent with positive representations from scholars such Bishop-Mills and Carwile (2009), they challenge this view by demonstrating the potential for these acts to cause harm to the victims. This sets the football context apart somewhat from others previously used to explore banter and teasing, implying that this site is of concern regarding these behaviours.

Content
In line with their general view that banter and teasing are light-hearted acts the participants illustrated a range of verbal content which constituted these behaviours. This linked to a focus on football related aspects and physical appearance. From a behavioural perspective the players described a range of pranks, congruent with previous research, which were mainly described as being impersonal in nature (Gearing, 1999; A. Parker, 2001, 2006). This impersonal nature was demonstrated in the following cases:

> I think that's a little bit more light hearted and you know to keep hammering and hammering them about them 'cos it's not really an important……I don't know maybe that's the thing for me personally, I don't think I'd be as personally offended if somebody was hammering the T-Shirt I was wearing, as over the size of my nose of my ears I don't see it as personal as that. (James).
> I dunno, banter would be like, saying something…, calling someone stiff or something like that…Cos you know that, you've seen them dance and they can't dance. Something like that…So like calling them stiff, like that would be like banter…Cos it's nothing like personal, cos we're not dancers, so saying someone can't dance is not really gonna hurt them in the football environment. (Jamal).

These comments were indicative of the players framing the content of banter and teasing from the perpetrator's perspective where they see their behaviours as more impersonal and benign in fashion, with the consequences of their behaviour being downplayed. Whilst the players clearly expressed a harmless view of banter and teasing in this sense, their lack of acknowledgement of the victim's perspective, may obscure the wider concern that for the victims, these behaviours can impact negatively on their self-esteem and lead to negative internalisation of their self (Kowalski, 2000). In professional football the perpetrators of these acts may seek to minimise the impact of their teasing, in an attempt to avoid the feelings of guilt and their own experiences of negative emotions which might come with instigating these behaviours. To some degree this point was reiterated by Ed:

> Not to the point where it's trying to affect them, it could be talking about their personal (life) it's not trying to take things too far. Whereas banter's like, there's nothing too personal, where it's gonna affect them and get them thinking about it.

For the players in the study this impersonal content was specifically represented through a focus on football related occurrences or physical appearance. This focus on physical appearance was unsurprising given it has been found to be an overwhelming feature of both perpetrators' and victims' narratives of banter and teasing and within professional football especially, the importance of players signing up to behavioural norms related to stylised forms of appearance is paramount (Kowalski, 2000; A. Parker, 2000a, 2001; A. Parker & Manley, 2016). This classification of appearance related content as being banter and teasing as opposed to bullying, was also congruent of previous findings with male participants outside of football (Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009; Kowalski, 2000). Whilst it highlights the significance placed on conformity to an ideal identity of a footballer in this context, it also may reflect broader societal messages that males are not permitted to views these behaviours as bullying. However, players such as Mickey also suggested a darker element to this teasing:

> Teasing…I'm not sure. Um, teasing, teasing, teasing, maybe yeah….again maybe what they wear or do you know a little comment on their appearance or whatever do you know where they're from.

Although the essence of this account was framed in a largely impersonal fashion, it did hint at some potential contradictions in this regard. In particular their focus on physical appearance, demonstrated the potential to drift into a focus on personal aspects such as where a player is from, hinting at a potentially discriminatory element. Again this is not unsurprising given that the shop floor nature of banter and teasing in football promotes a hierarchical masculine structure where alongside females, those of minority ethnic decent are vehemently regarded as inferior to the hegemonic ideals *in situ* (A. Parker, 2001).

Another impersonal aspect of the players' behaviour revolved around pranks. For professional footballers, this has been deemed as essential to their characterisation of banter and has typically been viewed in a positive light (Gearing, 1999). When framed as a generalised behaviour these positive conceptualisations remained and these pranks were still viewed as banter:

> If you get caught slipping for one second it's just gonna be like calamity your clothes are gonna be tied up everything. Your shoes are gonna be missed da, da, da, if you leave something out you might have your shower gel's gonna be gone, your shower gel gone missing, your shower gel squirted out all over the place. Cream all over stuff. It's crazy I've seen some mad stuff. (Kevin).

These findings were consistent with practical jokes being an essential feature of footballers' occupational and social setting where ransacking of beds, hiding personal possessions, dousing underwear in Ralgex and filling shoes with talcum powder is commonplace (A. Parker, 2001). Despite this, it may obscure the feelings on behalf of the victim, as there was nothing to categorically state that those on the receiving end of these pranks were happy with them. Indeed, the participants' language changed quite dramatically at times, revealing of both a divergence within their own accounts and across their accounts more broadly:

> Their clothes and if you end up messing up their clothes, like I've seen people cut people's clothes with scissors, I think that can be, I think that's pretty much bullying. You know um…so that, just

> thinking what else. Yeah that's the only thing I can think of you know, um, yeah and it's just what you say to a person. (Mickey).
> If you were do that to them non-stop and take it too far and start damaging people's things, that would probably would be taking things too far. If you done it to the same person all the time then that would be bullying. (Greg).

This contrasted the institutionalised acceptance of these behaviours revealed in previous research (A. Parker, 2001, 2006), in the sense that it highlighted a much more negative impact of these pranks. There is a potentially critical shift in the acceptance and tolerance of professional footballers to these behaviours underway, which is significant for both the research literature and practitioners in this area. It also reemphasised the importance of repetition and the intensity of the behaviours through damage of property highlighted in previous conceptualisations of bullying (Olewus, 1993; Volk et al., 2014).

James' account served as a poignant example of how a focus on physical appearance delivered through pranks could have a profound negative impact:

> It can be pretty brutal, we've had people come here and straight away, I remember one lad in particular and he came and he dressed very, like footballers all seem to dress the same, look the same, drive the same the cars, there's a way you have to be. Anyone who's different to that is a target, one lad here came very like student sort of looking, rather than his trainers being fresh white, he used to scruff them up, you know a student sort of look. I remember straight away he used to come in, we had a big Jamaican guy, he was loud and he used to say "you can't wear them, what the fuck have you come dressed as, you wear them again and I'll cut them up the next day." And we go out to training and we come in and he'd cut his jeans up and you could see that it really affected him, he didn't say anything to him, and I knew from day one he wasn't going to last very long and I think he only lasted two or three weeks because it just wasn't the place for him.

This reveals the culture of authoritarianism extends to the players, whereby a violation of the accepted contemporary dress sense which forms their masculine identity leads to sanctions in the form of excessive amounts of banter and teasing. The content of this banter and teasing morphs from the pro-social representation the players' earlier accounts to being more reflective of the harm inducing banter and cruel teasing, which other authors have suggested blurs the boundaries with bullying (Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009; Carrera et al., 2011; Kerr et al., 2016; McCormack & Anderson, 2010). It also challenges the view from the players and previous research, which suggests that appearance related teasing is viewed more impersonally by adult male victims, implying that in the heavily stylised context of professional football content of this type is a potential concern (Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009; Kowalski, 2000). Finally, this extract reinforced the importance of recognising that perpetrators and victims can have vastly different perceptions around the content of teasing, such that for victims it can be humiliating and damaging to self-esteem to the extent it ends their careers (Kowalski, 2000). Therefore whilst the participants conceptualised the content of banter and teasing as being quite different from bullying, these behaviours may not be too far apart.

Cohesion

Despite the participants suggesting some negative aspects in the content of banter and teasing, they described these concepts as being facilitative for team cohesion. Furthermore, they highlighted the value placed on these processes by coaches. Only occasionally was there reference to a potentially negative impact of these concepts. In line with previous research the players articulated banter as an essential element of their football experience which fosters a sense of camaraderie and cohesion (Eder, 1991; Eder et al., 1995; Gearing, 1999). It was also described as an important aspect of initiating new players and developing new bonds within a team. This is in common with research that has found that interactional banter is regarded as providing a key mechanism for young players in particular to socialise with senior professional players (A. Parker, 2006). The general positive trend was illustrated in the following extracts

> But usually we haven't had one this season, but usually we do a team bonding at the start of the season, so all the new lads can gel and usually when you get a few new lads, I think the best way to start off is give them a bit of banter, testing the water, see what they're like as people. And obviously usually you get a few who pipe back at you and it can be good like. (Charlie).
>
> I think it's positive, cos if you have a team that doesn't have any banter…then you haven't got a team that's close together or can enjoy themselves…I think over time you become more comfortable around people and you'd be able to speak to people and stuff. I think to have that edge to take a bit of banter and give a bit back, it would help you mix in with the lads. (Ricky).

The reference by Ricky to the need to give and take a bit of banter fits with the necessity to accept this exchange conveyed by players in previous studies (A. Parker, 2001, 2006). However what this masks is some of the initial discomfort these players reported, which may challenge some of the stereotypically positive views of these behaviours.

One such belief amongst the players was that banter and teasing would lead to increased performance:

> Yeah I think so, I think there are a lot of, like some coaches (who) really do think like team spirit and bonding really will help on the pitch…And I totally agree with that. If you're not bonding, you're not friends off the pitch, you're not going to show it on the pitch. (Oli).

This quote also demonstrated that the process of banter is seen as desirable from key authority figures such as coaches. It revealed similar findings to Parker's (2006) depiction of coach Terry Jackson and his colleagues who commonly engaged in the same type of all-male banter. Nonetheless, this encouragement from coaches may not always lead to positive outcomes as Kevin suggested:

> You do need it but at another team you don't need it, if it goes past a certain extent but the coach is still like, you need to have banter in your team. Team's gonna have no personality, no spirit, do you know what I mean? No like team cohesion, whether it's like good or bad everyone's interacting. But I think the worst thing's like no-one's interacting um.

This account revealed an interesting deviation from their previously positive view of banter. It also evidenced that coaches not only might engage in violent and abusive language, personal castigation, scornful humour and traditional all-male banter (A. Parker, 2006) but they also extend this expectation to the players with an ingrained belief that negative banter is

206

better than no banter at all. This was a point somewhat reemphasised by Phil:

> Um, I'd say be able to banter to each other. Obviously you could banter but don't go too far so it could cause a bit of friction. Or if you do have that friction be able to talk about it, squash it and then be able to get on with it and then keep going. But normally just be nice be fun around each other…But I'd say it's mainly positive with a few negatives but without it, I don't think a changing room would last cos everyone would sit in silence. So I think you need that bit of, bit of something that bit of banter. And if everyone knows how to take it, then football's a better, the changing room's a better place definitely.

Again a slightly contrary account was presented which espoused the belief that banter is essentially positive yet it has the potential to go too far, before ultimately settling on the notion that banter remains essential in professional football. Taken as an overall this summarises banter and teasing as largely positive concepts but also suggests a potential darker side to these behaviours, one which might be underpinned by the ingrained beliefs of the professional football environment.

The Football Environment

Enjoyment

Contrary to some of their accounts when discussing football as a place of forced integration, all but one of the participants described the environment as one which is largely enjoyable. It was notable that some participants were clear to point out that the presence of bullying shifted this sense of enjoyment. Nevertheless in the main the positive aspects of this environment were highlighted and banter was often a large part of what made it enjoyable:

> Just good, just good to be round the boys and the banter. Just a good place you wouldn't find anywhere else really. Just reminds of school, you're with your mates, you're having banter like, so that's good. (Grant).
> Just doing something you love every day makes you happy and then just being around your mates and just having a laugh and stuff like that. Taking the mick out of each other and playing pranks, it's a good laugh. (Lenny).

For these players the football environment fostered a sense of male friendship where banter was essential to their enjoyment. This was consistent with Gearing's (1999) findings that banter is an essential part of a footballer's existence and identity and becomes an in-built taken for granted aspect of their career.

However others were more cautious in pointing out that this essential ingredient of banter can go too far. For Phil, the feeling of the victim was essential in identifying that banter may not always be positive in football and may have negative outcomes in terms of players' enjoyment.

> Just a bit of happiness, a bit of good morale. Ok if you're the one getting banter, it's a bit, bit of a shame, bit of a shame on you but as long as you know that it's, it's all in the light-hearted of the team, the changing room and as long as it doesn't go out of the team environment.

As such the feelings for victims of banter in football may not be the typical positive view of banter. Furthermore, Phil added to the view that that these victims essentially must just accept these behaviours. This extract also

supported one of the most concerning aspects of what sets the football environment apart in relation to these behaviours, namely that they should be kept 'in house'. These findings were significant, in that they contrasted one of the few studies which have looked to assess peer victimisation and enjoyment in physically active domains (Scarpa et al., 2012). Previously peer victimisation was found to be a poor predictor of low enjoyment, which was in contrast to the present findings. It should be noted that this previous research was conducted within an education environment where intrinsic factors may be more salient predictors of enjoyment (see Scarpa et al, 2012) and the importance of camaraderie may not be as crucial to identity was within professional football (Gearing, 1999). On a slightly different theme the targeted nature of the banter discussed by Phil, was more akin to the participants' descriptions of bullying. Thus it would seem to add further weight to banter being a negative predictor of enjoyment.

Other players furthered that football may not be as enjoyable for its participants. Ed conveyed the sense that bullying is prevalent in the football environment and that it impacts performance and wellbeing.

> And I think when you are yourself you enjoy your football the most and perform the best. But when you have bullying happening, it can … just affect the mood completely.

This countered the belief amongst players, which is often mediated through coaches (S. Kelly & Waddington, 2006; A. Parker, 2006), that abusive behaviours bring out the best in their performance and vital forms of motivation. The impression that bullying was operating at some clubs and affecting players' wellbeing was corroborated by Dave. Interestingly though, they were keen to illustrate the more enjoyable facets of the game:

> The club that doesn't do it so well, there wouldn't be so much of a buzz around I don't think cos if it is it's not really an enjoyable environment cos if someone's getting bullied it's not really an enjoyable environment. At this club the players are constantly smiling. You can ask anyone the players are constantly buzzing really.

Certainly the latter part of this account reinforced the enduring trend that football was an enjoyable environment, yet it left a lingering feeling that bullying was accepted as part of the harsh, belligerent practices legitimised by coaches and peers alike (Cushion & Jones, 2006, 2014). This was best summarised by Oli: "Yeah definitely on the whole it's been a largely positive thing you do get the odd problem I'd say? But yeah it's really positive."

Friendship

Whilst the area of friendship was a strong element of players' enjoyment of football, as a theme it provoked significant diversity within their accounts. For some the football environment was characterised as a place where positive relationships are found, banter is expressed pro-socially and friendship acts as a buffer against bullying taking place. For others the environment was seen as a place where friendship is not important and competition is paramount. For those who believed football to be a place of friendship, its protective role in buffering against bullying and generating the positive aspects of banter and teasing was evident.

> Yeah, yeah it's probably silly. You could get bullied by your best mate couldn't you but it probably protects against it if you're good friends you're not gonna get bullied by them. (George).
>
> It would be more likely to use your friends cos you know the boundaries you can push with them and have a laugh or whatever,

> with people you don't know so much you're less likely to say something like teasing, like risky sort of thing. (Alfie).

Consistent with the wider research literature of teasing in males, friendship provided the relationship familiarity for the behaviour to take place and allowed footballers to affiliate and be attracted to one another (Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009; Keltner et al., 2001). Therefore it would seem that the development of these relationships in football is essential for players to learn appropriate boundaries to deliver the type of banter or teasing which aids performance and wellbeing, especially given the risk highlighted by Alfie if they are not in place. It is worth pointing out though that best friends could also be those who deliver bullying, which is not altogether surprising given that similar findings have been reported with adolescent populations in physically evaluative weight loss environments (Puhl et al., 2013). This coupled with the complexity of peer relationships in sport where both companionship and negative competitiveness are emphasised (Kerr et al., 2016) may serve to explain the link between friendship and bullying.

Other players believed football to be a much more distant environment where relationships are not as close. For Rob the lack of intimacy may partly explain why banter and teasing may not always be viewed positively.

> Obviously…with football there's that saying there's no friends in football. So even though you've got your mates, your teammates, no-one really knows each other personally, so you come to football, you talk about things whatever but when you leave the club, you're hardly likely to speak to some of those players again.

Part of the explanation for this might revolve around familiarity, as the lack of this amongst players may be contrary to affiliative and pleasurable aspects which come with teasing in more intimate relationships (Keltner et al., 2001). Thus footballers may be unable to identify when teasing has a playful intent, may lack understanding of when it is taking place and may not be able to ensure hurtful topics are avoided. At times this lack of friendship across the team can lead to cliques being formed as Ricky expressed "It's quite hard to mix with everyone and then that's when you get groups in the changing room." Whilst friendship may exist within these groups, it provides further evidence that football clubs act as an extension of the segregated nature of sport as a whole (Gearing, 1999; A. Parker, 1996). Part of the reason why this behaviour may develop in relation to the concept of friendship may be based around competition: "A lot of the guys I'd say like they're your friends but they're not your friends cos really like you're trying to take their shirt" (Kevin). Therefore the competitive aspect buried within a lack of genuine friendship may drive more negative behaviours in football.

Conflict

Whilst competition makes up one potentially negative area which might trigger bullying, banter, teasing or victimisation another is conflict. A large number of the participants described football as an environment where conflicts are commonplace. Whilst often these were regarded as being resolved successfully, there were parts of their accounts which suggested these conflicts were sparked by banter and potential bullying. A typical view on conflicts was covered in the following quotes:

> I think obviously like in any walk of life, there's people who don't like each other. Cos they don't like each other, like you would in an office. So you do get people who clash and don't like each other, but

> I think being a footballer is 'once you step on the pitch that's it, once you cross the line that's it everything goes behind you whatever'. Whatever problems you've got with people or yourself block that out for the 90 minutes and after that it can come back (Rob).
>
> Um obviously there's disagreements cos people have their own ideas. Like on the pitch there can be disagreements, heated moments but a lot of the time after it's happened, people cool off and get on with, you have to get on with it. (Alfie).

The overriding sense from the players was that conflict is commonplace within the professional football environment but that these problems are either resolved as part of the changing room discourse. The language used by participants seemed to reflect what Parker (1996) described as the ideological hallmark of player relations which is 'togetherness'. To this end the need to resolve these conflicts by both trainees and staff encapsulates official desires within football clubs towards professional solidarity (A. Parker, 1996). However ultimately the resolution of these conflicts may actually still be reflective of the players' need to conform, despite whatever resentment they hold towards their teammates (A. Parker, 1996).

It is worthwhile to note though that according to some, these conflicts arise purely as a result of banter. For Kevin banter was seen as a potentially negative mechanism which sparks conflicts between players, rejecting a wealth of findings to the contrary (Gearing, 1999; Nelson, 1995; Nesti, 2010; Wagstaff et al., 2017):

> And that's when it's not good. I've seen it get like that a couple of times, a very few times and it can get like that where people don't like each cos of banter and I've seen people come to blows but usually after having fights it's fine it's sorted out and people understand that like, it's obviously not gonna happen again. (Kevin).

This reflected an alternative view of players' positive conceptualisations of banter and interestingly demonstrated quite a low level of moral reasoning on behalf of the players, where they believed that resolving these disputes via physical means would resolve them. For footballers there seems to be a disturbing feeling that physical abuse, is an appropriate conflict resolution strategy rather than an underpinning aspect of bullying.

Interestingly though the notion of conflict was described as a vital process in confronting bullying behaviours. Within the football environment the players were of the belief that the bullying act could be resolved 'in house', as part of the dressing room environment.

> Yeah I think it probably is, as the typical playground bully is someone who is picking on you, pushing you around but in football it's sort of like that if someone was to start, then the other lads would step in, it wouldn't happen. (Alfie).

The potential mechanism for why this is the case was unclear. On one hand this may be the result of a drive for solidarity and togetherness within footballers to eradicate these behaviours (A. Parker, 1996, 2006). This may be the inverse result of the effect power differentials in sport. Previously this has been found to drive bullying (see Kerr et al., 2016) but in this case it may be utilised to quash this behaviour. Whether this is always the case is open to question, as Dave illustrated when confronting bullying behaviour "and then it would just get resolved after a while, though it depends whose doing it." The latter part of this quote implied that footballers may not always have it in their control to resolve this behaviour and reinforces that despite an idealised claim to the contrary, footballers are not all treated as

equals (A. Parker, 1996). It could be suggested that this behaviour may be forced underground for a while and power differentials could remain dependent on the seniority or personality of the perpetrator (Kerr et al., 2016). As such this raises questions about the extent to which players are institutionalised into believing that they can resolve this behaviour or misguided in how they have been educated around addressing bullying.

The Bullying Act

Personal Impact
Beyond the more specific emotional effects raised by the players, another consistently reported theme was around the personally targeted aspects of the bullying act. This ranged from some of the predictors of this personal impact such as comments about family, through to the results on performance. However, in accounts such as Charlie's this was discussed in a vague fashion, whereby the general theme of a personal impact was alluded to but this discomfort was not specified on either a behavioural, cognitive or emotional level:

> Mak(ing) someone uncomfortable in the changing room. Like making somebody feel uncomfortable in the changing room. And it's not a nice thing to see…if you see a bit of banter and somebody doesn't know how you feel and somebody doesn't feel very comfortable.

To some degree this account was reflective of previous definitions of bullying, as well as recent research with older sporting populations (Kerr et al., 2016; Olewus, 1993; Volk et al., 2014) as it focused on bullying as a process, for example the intent to harm or use of goal directed behaviours. However, it highlighted that the perception of this term is seen differently amongst professional footballers as the focus of this discourse was more on the personal impact on the victim, rather than the process of bullying adopted by the perpetrator. This reinforces a sense that bullying in football is regarded as the preoccupation of the victim. In a number of cases the definition of this personal impact was still rather vague as Ed added "and that's when bullying can take over as it gets personal." Similarly Grant stated "I dunno when they go like deep eh, you get me. It's hard to say, they go in deep and everyone knows that's a step too far." Once more what constituted "too far" was not clear here.

For other players, the personal impact contained a more notable element:

> Like for me like, my line's like family anything about family I don't joke. If they were to make a joke about any of my family members, then I would say like I take it personal. (Kevin).
> I think people…moving away and stuff like that from their family. People are different with their family, so if you say a wrong comment about someone's family and if you've always said it or you just say it once people, some people react differently with comments like that. (Alfie).

These comments revealed personal jokes about significant others such as family members are a potential contributor to the personal impact which the players felt underpinned bullying. However for others the content of this personal impact was different, indicating quite a subjective element to this theme:

> Obviously bullying can be a one-off where you say something but I think that's gotta be straight personal. But I think when it's over time

211

> it could be like a little thing like ah you're fat, say you're fat and you think "oh shut up, it's a laugh init" then you keep saying it and then you're like "hang on a minute" you look in a mirror and think "am I fat" probably you'd think you are and then obviously when it spirals and you do stupid things and it obviously gets to your head. (Oli).

This demonstrated pertinent points in relation to mental wellbeing through a potentially obsessional element to this aspect of bullying. Oli added to this "actually, actually what that guy said to him made him think he was fat. Made him do that (doubt himself) when he actually wasn't." These findings add to the bullying literature by linking bullying to body image concerns within professional sport. To date research on these links has been limited to physical education and participatory level sport but these findings raise concerns about the prevalence of these issues in professional sport (O'Connor & Graber, 2014; Slater & Tiggemann, 2011).

As with the *emotional effect*, the personal nature of bullying can affect both the individual and performance. In the case of performance, one participant raised the issue that this can be at the heart of the personal bullying which might happen in football:

> Trying to make them feel bad and like saying things about…like having an opinion about everything they're doing every day. Could be to do with their like game at the weekend, like saying everything about their like game. But like saying it openly to people, and in front of everyone to put them down or whatever, saying negative things. (Ed).

On a wider and perhaps more concerning level for the players' wellbeing and those in their environment, Ed suggested that this may lead the victim to adopt this behaviour themselves:

> It can affect them…and that's when they might go away from the situation…That's when they might go and bully someone else. And it can have a knock on effect really. And once these bullies started it, people try and like, maybe be like them and try and be someone they're not. And just eh, fit in the situation, but they're not being themselves. Just to get them through the day, and feel like they're not being the victim of bullying.

This quote exemplifies how players can end up becoming bully-victims (Perren & Alsaker, 2006; Sekol & Farrington, 2010; Dane-Staples et al., 2013). In addition it provides insight that football's culture may reinforce the protective value of becoming a bully. Moreover these personal and performance outcomes were symbolic of Kerr and colleagues' (2016) view that a strict definition of bullying in sport may be less useful and instead there should be a focus on classifying the behaviours which either actually or possibly affect an individual's wellbeing or perception of bullying.

Victimisation
Consistent with the *single victim* theme, victimisation emerged as an overlapping element within the act of bullying. What became clear was that victimisation was seen as part of the bullying act or at the most was synonymous with it. This rejected the notion that bullying is part of victimisation or indeed victimisation is regarded as a standalone concept in football. Therefore, victimisation was subsumed into bullying for this thesis. For half the participants, victimisation was viewed as part of the bullying process:

> I suppose there's a victimisation, it's a form of bullying if somebody's being victimised…If you're being victimised and picked on and stuff

> like that then it's definitely a form of bullying and it shouldn't happen. (Lenny).
>
> I think victimisation is like that form of bullying, where that one teammate is getting picked on for whatever reason. How they play as a footballer or how they are as a person. (Rob).

The perception that victimisation belonged to bullying rather than the concepts of banter and teasing was confirmed by Phil:

> I don't think you're a victim if you get teased, you can get teased a lot but I wouldn't say you're a victim because it's who you're with. If you're getting teased by your best friend at football you're not a victim. You're not a victim. You're only a victim if you're getting bullied in my opinion cos everyone teases everyone.

This was most revealing of this conceptual distinction and emphasised the important buffering role of friendship. As Keltner and colleagues (2001) described the reduced social distance and thus increased familiarity of friendship, affords individuals the chance to tease more often and in more hostile ways, which was concurrent with Phil's account. For other participants the link between bullying and victimisation was even more certain, as Peter put succinctly, "I think victimisation's the same as bullying in my opinion." In line with the theme around a *single victim* or group who are being bullied Peter also stated with reference to victimisation and bullying: "I'd think they're the same. It could be someone singled out as one person or a group. I'd say they were round and about the same." Whilst these findings illustrate some slight deviation in the participants' accounts, they describe victimisation as being synonymous with bullying, in line with some parts of the existing research literature (Piek et al., 2005). This was in contrast to researchers who viewed bullying and victimisation to be conceptually distinct or bullying to be part of victimisation (Peguero & Williams, 2013; Peterson et al., 2012). The current findings particularly opposed Peterson and colleagues' view that bullying is part of victimisation and instead implied the opposite that victimisation is actually part of the bullying act. Consequently the players made an important contribution to the sporting and wider bullying research literature, where the confusion of these terms has led to methodological and practical issues around identification.

Disengagement

Primarily the participants discussed disengagement as the main outcome of bullying. This fitted with outcomes highlighted by previous research, such as negative effects on performance, withdrawal and a range of barriers to participation in sport (Georgakopoulos et al., 2011; Li & Rukavina, 2012; P. K. Smith, 2016). Whilst it was acknowledged that this theme was not mentioned on as many occasions as some of the others, the consistency of the participants' accounts and significance of this as a potential outcome of bullying, implied it was an important finding. As Lenny outlined:

> If you enjoy football and that's what you want to do…if bullying or victimisation or banter goes too far…ultimately it can stop you wanting to do it. So it's a difficult subject but one I guess that needs to be addressed towards footballers in the changing rooms, so they're sitting knowing what to do, how to do it and when to do it…It can definitely drive them out of the game because if they're one day love the game and they're being bullied, they don't want to go to that certain environment that certain changing room, they might look at that changing room at a different club and think that's gonna be similar because that's just football. So it can definitely drive them out

of the game because if they love the game you want them to stay in it and try get the best career they can.

This assertion illustrated the profound impact of bullying within the football context and the possible result that it might cause players to end their careers. James added weight to this, "Yeah but…there's cases where people have quit football…because people can't deal with it or there's nowhere they can go with it." The latter point also raised worrying questions around a lack of supporting mechanisms for players experiencing negative behaviours in football and may explain part of the association between low social support and mental health issues in the game (Gouttebarge, Frings-Dressen, et al., 2015).

Kevin's account was congruent with these ideas, reinforcing the passive acceptance of these behaviours and that the responsibility for handling them was with the victim. "but honestly I don't think there's a way in football you can get it to stop. They get bullied in football until they leave the team." Again the lack of available support to get the behaviour to stop was highlighted and the result of the player leaving the team was still severe, however Kevin's language showed a disturbing deference to this behaviour or more even more worryingly a lack of commitment on behalf of players to intervene. Indeed the least severe (yet still significant) impact of disengagement on the bullying act in football, was highlighted by Peter "just not involved really, you can see them physically drained from it all and it's starting to have an effect on maybe their performance out there." This demonstrated the encompassing and deleterious impact on bullying in terms of player wellbeing and performance, whilst highlighting the potential for this act to reinforce ostracism of some players. Ultimately it left a deeper level of concern that this may act as a gateway for individuals to be susceptible to more clinical mental health issues, as there was no real sense the victim's feelings would be addressed.

Undetectable
The final subordinate theme within 'The Bullying Act' was possibly most concerning of all for authorities looking to address this behaviour. Whilst there was some divergence in the participants' accounts, they largely described a complex act which is difficult to identify, without the presence of an obvious emotional effect. This contrasts others who have defined bullying as an observable process (see Olewus, 1993; Volk et al., 2014). Of particular concern was that although an emotional effect was regarded as being one of the distinguishing factors which makes particular behaviours bullying, detecting this effect may be problematic, due to the nature of the football environment:

> But then what you don't realise is, if you are calling someone a 'batty boy' or homosexual or something like that, you don't know whether that is affecting anybody because you can never ever be seen to have a weakness…If for example, the word "fatty" is associated with somebody, they would never show that is affecting them because if they did then they would get it more because its classed as funny. (James).
> But then I suppose at times it can be difficult cos people can put a front on and they can be seen to have a laugh and you think they're having a laugh but um…deep inside they're not enjoying it stuff like that. But it can be difficult but I guess you've gotta know the boundaries in your head and be clever with it. (Lenny).

These references exemplified the potential emotional effect of bullying behaviour in football, as well as its links to highly discriminatory behaviour, whilst evidencing the issue with showing the emotional impact of bullying. This illustrated flaws with existing definitions of bullying even when they have been targeted at adults (e.g. Volk et al., 2014) and possibly explained why the implementation of codes of conduct around bullying in relation to discriminatory behaviours may have been limited in their impact, as players do not realise when bullying has occurred . On a wider level it also revealed that the totality of the professional football institution and its inherent culture, serves to provide a barrier which accepts discriminatory behaviours and eschews workplace law in the UK (UK Government, 2010)

The challenge for trying to detect the emotional effects of bullying was reiterated by Jamal, who also emphasised a common thread that the behaviour was only going to be revealed if the victim spoke out:

> Cos at the end of the day if someone never brings it up and never shows it, someone could be putting on a brave face. You're never gonna know it's bullying, even if it is to them.

This quote reemphasised the issues with whistleblowing and the changing room, where the responsibility to deal with this behaviour was the victim's. It would seem to suggest that victims have digested the message that they need to display a 'brave face', to avoid the negative connotation or stigma associated with exposing this behaviour (Bjørkelo & Macko, 2012).

Furthermore some players specifically related their views to coaches who were seen as the important personnel in addressing this behaviour:

> Very hard, very, very hard. Very hard for them to, unless they were to sit them down and speak to them and dissect it. They wouldn't be able to realise if someone's being bullied too much or the person's doing the bullying. (Kevin).

With the issue of victims speaking out and the sense held by some footballers that talking about bullying was not a desirable behaviour within this context, Kevin showed potentially how hard it would be for coaches to identify this behaviour. A contrasting view however is that bullying may originate from coaches and thus they may prefer to extricate themselves from this situation. Parker (2006, p.692) for example, described a situation where "violent and abusive language, direct personal castigation, scornful humour, and traditional 'all-male banter' was common to most coaches." In addition, it was noted how these coach behaviours became more extreme within the private confines of the club environment (A. Parker, 2006). This coupled with the largely deferent attitude to this behaviour from players, may provide an alternative explanation as to why the participants preferred not to implicate coaches in the bullying process. Furthermore the sanctum of the changing room was also seen as a barrier to bullying being spotted:

> I think it can be hard because the dressing room can be very private. Because in training you've got your game head on, like your training head on, you're not all thinking about anything other than playing football and doing the best you can. But it can be hard you know for a boss to see if anyone's gotten abused or whatever. Just because they're not there. (Mickey).

As Mickey stated, the lack of surveillance by coaches and culture of silence within changing rooms raised concern as to whether bullying in football could ever be detected (Gearing, 1999; A. Parker & Manley, 2016). This lack of surveillance provides a similar explanation for why bullying occurs in other contexts such as school (Fekkes et al., 2005). As Grant concisely

reflected "yeah I think it would be really hard to spot unless you…heard it and it just kept going through the club. I'd say it's really hard to spot."

Thus ultimately the detection of the bullying act may fall on the coach's subjective interpretation and experience. Lenny encapsulated the problematic issue of identification of bullying for coaches, especially if this is a behaviour they are not experienced in football:

> Most of them have been in that environment and can understand when it's going too far cos they've experienced it before. But if you've not experienced the bullying happening or they've not experienced it in their environment, then it can be difficult to…eh recognise when somebody is being bullied and do something about it, which is mainly due to the person coming out and talking about it, which is the most difficult thing. (Lenny).

Lenny's extract shows how coaches are further compounded by being reliant on players, who may be very reluctant to disclose this behaviour. An additional layer to this issue is that previous research has found coaches are unable to define constructs such as peer aggression and are unable to estimate the extent of this at their clubs (Baar & Wubbels, 2013). Finally, coaches may be the instigators of bullying through their own authoritarian and abusive practices and thus they may not possess the necessary awareness of their own behaviour, before addressing the players' (S. Kelly & Waddington, 2006; A. Parker, 2006). Therefore this lack of understanding by key authority figures implies why bullying in football remains a largely undetectable act. It also reveals the challenge to football and potentially other contexts, with identification of this behaviour.

The Dividing Line

Personality and Individual Differences
Closely linked to the theme of perception, was the aspect of personality and individual differences being important in establishing when behaviours are seen as bullying or otherwise. The participants generally discussed that the range of personalities in a football team, might dictate how much of certain behaviour is permitted before it is viewed as bullying.

> And some people don't know the line, some people's lines are further away and some people's lines are very close and you can overstep and that's when you can see confrontations in football in the changing room. I'd say half of fights; most fights in football can come from someone overstepping the line of banter…Cos everyone's different cos you could say something about how someone looks and they could get really upset and that's the thing, everyone's different in football. Some people's lines they don't make clear to people. And sometimes people, another thing, people laugh back and really they're not happy with the fact of what someone said but they're laughing to try and cover they're insecurity. (Kevin).
> Yeah once you've been around people for a while you know how far you can push them and sometimes people push them too far and then that's when it becomes into arguments and bullying as such…Yeah you can say one thing to one person and they'll be fine and they'll probably give you a bit of stick back and you can say it to another person and they'll probably go back into their shell. (Ricky).

Similar to the characterisation of the bully and victim in football individual differences in perception also shaped the degree to which behaviours were seen as bullying, banter, teasing and victimisation. The divide from

humorous banter into bullying, was characterised by greater perceptions of bullying being reported in those who had the potential to become more introverted. It also illustrates that personality may drive perceptions around the degree to which humorous behaviour is perceived as inclusionary or disciplinary in nature (Edwards & Jones, 2018). This can be critical in determining whether behaviour is teasing or bullying, as for the former the joking culture in sport is only produced when there is a shared understanding of what is acceptable (Edwards & Jones, 2018). To some extent it reaffirmed the theme of equality as a necessary element of what the players conceptualised as 'Banter and Teasing'. Within this specific theme of personality and individual differences, Kevin's account intimated that this shared understanding may not be possible given players' reluctance to make their lines of acceptability clear and thus this behaviour may drift into bullying.

For some players the aspect of personality was also crucial in determining the extent to which individuals engage in behaviours such as banter. Again the participants characterised a situation where victims were associated as introverts and extroverts were potential bullies (Mynard & Joseph, 1997; Slee & Rigby, 1993):

> Very strong, very strong and opinionated people in your team. You've got strong opinionated coaches that might, love to throw banter as well. Then you've got some people bit shy don't want to talk. Then you've got the aspect of people from abroad so you've got your foreign players. (Phil).

Here Phil showed a concerning aspect to banter which fitted in line with findings that show this behaviour inflicts harm and is open to a range of interpretations, which could be closely related to bullying (Magrath, Anderson, & Roberts, 2015; McCormack & Anderson, 2010). However others illustrated a more situation specific account:

> Yeah you've got a different mix of people. Some people on the pitch not loud at all, go into their shell if it gets a bit tough. On the pitch the loudest people of all, chirping up, bantering everyone. Its crazy the mix. (Kevin).

Kevin depicted a scenario where these personality differences may impact on field behaviour but in contrast to research connecting bullying and personality (Mynard & Joseph, 1997; Slee & Rigby, 1993), they depict a personality type which may adjust itself for the football context. Nonetheless as with other themes in the data, the aspect of personality also shows how the concepts under exploration were hard to define:

> The one person will be like 'hang on a minute that's a bit out of order'. Then the conversation would turn, so the banter would turn into a bit of a debate, whether it's right or wrong and people would start weighing in with their opinions as I said earlier football has very strong opinionated people. (Phil).

Therefore, as with bullying, banter may be perceived in an individualistic way dependent on the player's personality. In summary this reemphasises the *dividing line* between bullying, banter and teasing as being vague in its location and very much down to the perception of the parties involved in these behaviours.

Understanding
Closely related to the theme of personality was the notion of understanding. Within this theme, the participants typically discussed the importance of knowing each other as individuals and how this can allow them to navigate

the dividing line between bullying, banter, teasing and victimisation. A commonly expressed view, was that the perpetrator of the potential banter or bullying behaviour needs to be aware of the personalities of those who are going to receive this behaviour:

> So if you know that like your teammate, you know that your teammate is quiet and shy and not really, is quite an introverted if you focus on shouting at them, getting into them on the pitch you know that you…could break them down. (Rob).

This example emphasised the importance of the aforementioned themes of perception and personality and individual differences in fostering understanding in footballers. As with adolescent populations (Cuadrado-Gordillo, 2011, 2012), Rob's account suggested that the notion of intent to harm, is viewed as a delineating factor between banter and bullying with adult footballers. In addition this effect is exacerbated for introverted victims who have already been identified as being more likely to be subjected to this behaviour (Mynard & Joseph, 1997; Slee & Rigby, 1993). Moreover, the players discussed that this process of getting to know another player is crucial in determining where behaviours become unacceptable.

For some players the intimacy of friendship was vital in providing the depth of knowledge of an individual, which determines what behaviours are acceptable to them:

> It would be more likely to use your friends cos you know the boundaries you can push with them and have a laugh or whatever, with people you don't know so much you're less likely to say something like teasing, (is) like (a) risky sort of thing. (Alfie).

In line with the literature which has conceptualised teasing, this behaviour was viewed as something which is largely pro-social and facilitated relational closeness (Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009). Furthermore the understanding described here provides the opportunity for jokes to remain non-aggressive and humorous (Bishop-Mills & Muckleroy-Carwile, 2009). Interestingly this highlights that teasing behaviour is much less likely to happen without the security of friendship. It is important to note though that in the emergent superordinate theme of 'The Football Environment', a number of players questioned the value of friendship to professional footballers. Thus in highly competitive environments such as this, players may not afford each other the understanding offered by this relationship, which may explain greater potential for bullying to take place. As players noted within the 'competition' subordinate theme, jealousy and resentment can be prevalent within professional footballers and the lack of friendship may exacerbate this effect and differentiate bullying from what they viewed as 'equality' within the theme of 'Banter and Teasing'. Furthermore even when this friendship is present, it has been suggested that although players display friendship quality components such as companionship, they also display negative competitiveness in the fight for starting places and in performance measures (Kerr et al., 2016). Therefore despite positive reflections from players in places, friendships need to be treated carefully as to whether they buffer against behaviours crossing the dividing line into bullying. In a contrasting fashion, Phil provided a similar perspective:

> But because there's so many different personalities, so many different people, you'd never really know how you'd word it. So I think it's really, really tough. I think it's something that helps you learn as a person.

This was highly symptomatic of the need for footballers to develop a shared understanding each other, as otherwise banter and teasing behaviours had

the potential to morph into bullying. More specifically, the absence of either friendship or high quality friendship in professional football may mean that as things stand, the dividing line between bullying and banter is not delineated.

This need for understanding may in part be explained by the specificity of the football context:

> Sort of 'cos especially in football you know who they are, you train with them, been with them for months or whatever, you know what's banter to them. So it's your own call really. (Oli).
> Just being around each other, especially for months as I said 10 months of the year basically, you're with each other. You don't really see, you basically see, these 21, 22, 23 players every day. You spend 6 days a week with them. (Phil).

These accounts emphasised the sheer volume of time that players spend together and how this hopefully fosters understanding. This amount of time coupled with the enclosed, segregated nature of this context was viewed as facilitating the understanding which can breed the camaraderie which is so revered amongst players (Gearing, 1999; Nelson, 1995; A. Parker, 1996). Gearing (1999) specifically described the banter which fosters the team spirit and togetherness alluded to here. Elsewhere in their accounts the players reemphasised this theme of cohesion as part of their overall concept of 'Banter and Teasing'. Nonetheless it still emphasises a potentially fraught responsibility for those engaging in banter to judge as to what is appropriate.

Kevin provided a divergent account to the general belief amongst players that this understanding needs to come from the instigator of bullying, banter, teasing or victimising behaviours. Here much more onus was placed on the victim to articulate where their dividing line falls. This was an interesting juxtaposition with this participant's account elsewhere, when they discussed the issue with whistleblowing in football.

> Well some people don't understand, so you have to make them understand yourself personally, where the line is. Like for me like, my line's like family anything about family I don't joke. If they were to make a joke about any of my family members, then I would say like I take it personal.

The importance of this communication and understanding was also hinted to by Paul:

> Um cos you can…you can't always know if they're doing it on purpose or if they think that's a limit of the other person's…You can't always put a tag on someone, you don't know what they've been through and you don't know whether they feel they're being victimised, even though they are perceived as being a bully.

These narratives raised an interesting challenge for professional football in that they stressed the need for players to communicate clearly what is acceptable for them. This is despite the game's often authoritarian, subservient culture (A. Parker & Manley, 2016). At the same time the players also stressed issues with perception around intent to harm and whether the behaviour has crossed the line from banter into bullying (Cuadrado-Gordillo, 2011, 2012). Ironically, given the challenges players reported with whistleblowing, they did reinforce an underlying sense that the onus was on the victim to determine the line between behaviours such as bullying and banter.

Performance

An area of consensus amongst the participants' accounts was that the line between banter and teasing, to bullying, could be detected in relation to performance. In the case of bullying, the players saw this as having a negative impact on performance, whereas in the case of banter and teasing this was seen as facilitative. Lenny described the beneficial effects of banter:

> I feel like if there's no banter then…it becomes more like work. So you have to something in football so that you're enjoying it, otherwise you're not going to perform to your best. So there needs to be something in football where (there's) some sort of banter going on or some sort of enjoyment, it's just recognising when to have it and when to be serious and to improve as a player and when you can have a laugh.

This account showed the impact of banter on enjoyment and the key relationship this has with performance. This was echoed within the enjoyment theme, as part of superordinate theme of 'The Football Environment', where players indicated that banter was essential for their love of football and to foster good performance outcomes (Appendix F). Similarly with respect to teasing Phil furthered:

> Them words will light a fire in someone's belly. You know its common nature and if you, if you say that you either want them to improve or you're saying cos you know. And I think that's when it's good. I think it's all positive 100% of the time.

This extract evoked a strong positive emotional effect on the competitive nature of footballers which teasing can stir. By contrast the same participant powerfully demonstrated the impact bullying can have on performance:

> And that might kill someone's confidence for the rest of their career and you don't, you don't want to be the reason why someone's career has ended early or their career was not at their full potential, cos you or a group of people decide to belittle someone.

The view that bullying was detrimental to performance was verified by Greg, "yeah cos then they might start playing badly and they might start getting agitated or annoyed at themselves and they might find themselves outside of the team." Overall these accounts tell a familiar story of the view that banter and potentially teasing lead to facilitative performance aspects, such as relieving stress and benefiting cohesion (Nesti, 2010; Wagstaff et al., 2017). Similarly, they are consistent with the notion that bullying leads to negative performance related outcomes such as physical exhaustion and a reduced sense of accomplishment (Yildiz, 2015). Consistent with their conceptualisation of enjoyment (Appendix F) it also reinforces the misguided views of coaches that abusive behaviours bring out the best in their performance and vital forms of motivation (S. Kelly & Waddington, 2006; A. Parker, 2006). As such performance outcomes might be one way of identifying whether the line between bullying and banter has been crossed. Interestingly the theme of performance also showed the fluid nature of the concept of teasing. In this case teasing may enhance socially acceptable behaviour, affection and intimacy and enhance cohesion and group membership with the overall benefit on performance, much like how banter was portrayed (Eder, 1991; Eder et al., 1995; Eisenberg, 1986; Weger & Truch, 1996).

In addition to performance serving as a distinguishable outcome between banter and teasing compared to bullying, it also served to predict these

behaviours. As such with banter, light-hearted behaviour was used around performance:

> There are not so much behaviours, um just banter, just full of banter every day. So like I say if somebody's slow or something like that, you're getting on them, saying 'you're slow, towing a caravan around' something like that. That got thrown around today during fitness testing. (Lenny).

Banter served an enjoyable function here, by fostering a sense of togetherness with an associated in joke around performance rather than personal related features (Gearing, 1999). However something more profound can occur if an individual's performance is not viewed in a positive light more generally, whereby an escalation of 'banter' might take place from various sources, which might materialise as bullying:

> Say somebody's having a bad, say the manager's getting on to him in training or some of the boys are getting on his back cos he's not training to the standard that they think. (Rob).

As Kelly and Waddington (2006) found negative performance could serve as a trigger for managers to engage in abusive and intimidatory behaviours which underpin bullying. According to the players in the current study, this serves to further inhibit performance. In summary this theme reveals a divergence in the participants' perceptions, in that performance could serve to drive banter or bullying behaviours. Therefore the line between these behaviours needs to be considered carefully, when players are not achieving some of the standards expected of them.