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**NEGOTIATING SEXUALITY WITHIN A UNIVERSITY'S WOMEN'S FOOTBALL
TEAM: A QUALITATIVE STUDY.**

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**Thesis submitted for the Degree of Masters by Research in Physical
Education and Physical Activity**

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Abstract

Women's football has been known as a space that provides significant context for the exploration of discursive practises, specifically relating to sexuality and gender (Caudwell, 2013). Illuminating homophobic and heteronormative discourses provides valuable insight towards how these discourses can be challenged, resisted and reproduced within a women's football team, as represented in this research. Historically, football has acted as the bastion of male power that imbues hegemonic masculinity (Drury, 2011). At times, this may have caused controversies for female footballers because they can be labelled as lesbian (Magrath, 2016). This assumption is fallacious through the social construction of gendered assumptions that football is perpetuated as a 'man's game.' Homophobia in women's football however, is reduced through the gradual visibility of lesbian players and their interactions with heterosexual team players (Cox and Thompson, 2001). This research project provides an account of how sexuality is contested and negotiated within a university's women's football team.

The project was produced over a year, following a university's women's football team over the 2016-17 season. Participant observations were produced during training sessions, and followed the team through their Varsity game, which is one of the most important games in the season against another rival university football team. Six participants who were considered to have built rapport with the researcher, were then selected to conduct a semi-structured interview. These were produced to gain further insights into how various sexualities were produced and maintained within the sporting space, and how identity construction was negotiated through sexuality and gender discourses.

Through the application of queer theory, as well as Foucault's discussions of power and discourse, the findings suggest that women's football at university, is a space for the negotiation of sexuality. However, personal subjectivity means that football is considered a 'safe' space dependent on personal experience and how one identifies their sense of sexuality and gendered practises.

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Finally, this thesis is dedicated to all female football players. I hope this research will give you a better insight towards understanding how sexuality and gender is explored in women's university football, allowing you to express your true sense of self.

Introduction

‘ “I was living a lie...I’ve never hidden it within football circles because it is accepted...but to the outside world, I’ve never spoken about my sexuality.” ’
(Magowan, 2014).

Casey Stoney, previous England women’s football team captain, speaks for the first time in public about being gay, providing evidence that footballing spaces allows for greater acceptances of sexuality.

My Personal Stance into Football:

From as young as I can remember, I have always been physically active and enjoyed participating in numerous sports. My enthusiasm for sports stems from my Dad and Brother, who encouraged me to participate in sports with them at weekends. I recall one of my earliest and fondest memories with them both, was playing tennis as the local park, when a tennis coach approached my Brother and I and asked us to join his club. This was the first time, as a young female, I felt physically competent and confident that my body could perform equally to my Brother who was older, taller and more muscular. I remember thinking at this stage that there were no gender differences in sport and it was an equal and open space for all to participate freely.

Reminiscing back to about the age of 9, I recall my Brother continuing to enjoy football as he played for a local team, despite him encountering numerous injuries, that at times, limited his involvement. At this age, I also trialled for a girl’s football team, and it was the socialisation process I endured with my Dad and Brother which encouraged my initiation within the sport.

During my time at secondary school however, this was when I was aware of gender differences occurring in sport. I remember Physical Education (PE) classes differed from primary school because the girls and boys were split into two classes to participate in different sports. I remember not understanding why girls were separated from boys,

especially as I, as a female, enjoyed playing sports with my Dad and Brother. I will never forget one of my first PE classes at secondary school, when I was excited to play football as I watched one of the teachers get the footballs out of the storage cupboard. However, my excitement was short lived as I realised it was only the boys playing football and the girls were sent up to the playground to play netball. I struggled to understand why the boys would always learn mainly football and rugby and girls would learn netball and dance.

I played football until around the age of 14, and because I was enjoying interacting in a team environment, I spent less time playing sport with my Dad and Brother. I remember when I was playing for my local team, some of my friends would be apologetic during training if we collided unintentionally and players were more concerned about who was wearing the best pair of football boots. Having spectated at my Brother's football games when I was not playing myself, I realised my footballing experiences, as a young girl, was in stark contrast to my Brother's socialisation into football. For example, his team were more focused on physical contact, top performances and withstanding injuries.

From the age of 14, up until I started University at the age of 18, I was heavily involved with competing in athletics and consequently stopped playing football. I still watched some of my friends play and train, and I still supported my favourite premier league team. During my time at University studying PE, Sport and Exercise Science, I became friends with a handful of girls who were playing for the University's women's football team. Having not played myself for a few years, I did not trial for the team but I enjoyed spectating and watching some of their training sessions. Being in close connection with a female football team again, it was interesting to see how relationships were forming and developing within the team, but during normal time at University, the formation of these relationships seemed at times, almost non-existent. The ability for sexuality to be negotiated within a footballing and sporting space within the University, which seemed freer than wider society, was what interested me the most to complete this research.

Current Research Positioning:

When considering research in football, over the past decade there has been a shift from the focus of the sport being a 'man's game' to the upcoming popularity of women's football. Previously, the main research focus on sexuality in football has considered dominant discourses of heterosexuality engrained in hegemonic masculinity, to now looking at women's football, and how female players are labelled lesbian (Magrath, 2016). With regards to sexuality, there has been a focus on young people and how they come to engage or disengage with sexual identity labels (Cox and Thompson, 2001).

There has been much evidence that has focussed on the untangling of gender and sex looking at the controversies about what constitutes the identity of a 'woman' (Butler 1999; Beauvoir, 2014; Caudwell; 2007). From a young age, as I experienced through the gender segregation in PE, individuals are immersed into a world of gender discourses, for example, how girls are exposed to the pressure of heterofemininity and boys to hegemonic masculinity (Hauge, 2009). However, this can cause complications for females who participate in predominantly male dominating sports who do not always demonstrate hyperfemininity, and thus, sexuality is then questioned (Clarke, 2006).

Football which is considered the bastion of male power and sexuality (Hemphill and Symons, 2012), is an interesting sport to investigate how women negotiate and identify with their identity and sexuality. Through the tools proposed by Foucault, including relationships of power, normalising judgement and docile bodies, we can investigate what expanding norms are prevalent in women's football, particularly when discussing the sex and gender dichotomy (Purdy, 2016). In turn, this led to the labelling of individuals which can be unpacked through the application of queer theory that challenges and liberates sexual and gendered identities (O'Brien, 2009).

The above provides merit for the continuing investigation into women's sexuality in football. However, to date, research has not focused solely on sexuality in a women's university football team, but rather, most research such as Caudwell (2007), has investigated women's football league teams. As demonstrated in the discussion (see chapter three), the socialisation process for my participants, created through University

social events, was central to the development of understanding individual's sexual identity. Therefore, the focus of looking at sexuality within a university setting was key to unpack how sexuality was contested, negotiated and accepted. Furthermore, research should continue to focus on alternate sexualities in women's football that shifts away from women adhering to the male gaze, to the lesbian and queer female gaze. It is the lack of research on women's football, particularly within a university setting, and these gazes that has provided further justification for this research project.

Central to my experiences of playing and spectating in football, my observations about how sexuality was explored within the university women's football team and current literature, the following aim and research questions were devised:

Research Aim:

- To investigate how sexuality is contested and negotiated within a University Women's Football Team.

Research Questions:

- 1) To what extent is women's football considered a safe space for the negotiation of sexuality?
- 2) To what degree is the labelling of sexuality significant within this sporting space?
- 3) How does sexuality and relationship status affect power relations within the team?
- 4) How do female football players consider their gendered representation?

Structure of Thesis:

Within chapter one, some of Foucault's key concepts that relate specifically to sexuality will be described. This includes some of his broader concepts: power and knowledge through discourse. Foucault's key ideas will be explored within this, for example, surveillance under a disciplined society that may reveal normative behaviours, which in turn can develop docile bodies. These key ideas will then be discussed later in the thesis to help explain the data regarding female sexuality and a university women's football team. Leading on from the development of Foucault's ideas, section 1.2 will explore how the concept of classification links to the labelling of sexuality which can be understood through the application of queer theory (Lauretis, 1990). This poststructuralist critical theory will analyse the systems of sex and gender (Butler, 1990), which once again, will be useful concepts when exploring the experiences of women within this study. The final section of the literature review, section 1.3, will focus on empirical data surrounding the labelling of sexuality and discussions central to sex and gender. Developing into a narrower focus, analyses will concentrate on football, and more specifically women's football, including influential research from Caudwell (2006, 2007, 2009). This research will then act as a useful comparison and point of discussion when compared to the experiences of the female football players within this research.

Having explored the analyses of sex, gender and sexuality in chapter one, the next chapter, methodology, explains how the data was collected and analysed through participant observations, followed by semi-structured interviews. The reader will follow the journey concerning how I immersed into the research field and will be introduced to the players interviewed. A rationale regarding a reflexive approach to this research will also be justified.

Chapter three, the discussion, will include verbatim from the semi-structured interviews and some extracts from the participant observations to understand how sexuality was negotiated within the team. Drawing on theory and literature from chapter one, chapter three, the discussion, will explain how some players contest

current dominant discourses deeply engrained within women's football and their perception of gender, sexuality and labelling.

Finally, the conclusion aims to evaluate the successive nature of the research project against the research aims and questions. Considerations of gaps in literature will be addressed with recommendations for future research in this field.

CHAPTER ONE: Review of the Literature

1.0 Introduction:

This chapter will address the literature that provides current knowledge to understanding of gender connotations and sexuality within women's football. It will consider these ideas that focus on the research aims and questions. Firstly, Foucault's key concepts of sexuality will be explained in relation to power and knowledge through discourse. Progressing on from this, there will be an application of queer theory (Lauretis, 1990) which links Foucault's idea of classification to the labelling of sexuality. Finally, this section will draw upon empirical research specifically relating to gender and sexuality discourses in women's football.

Applying Foucault

1.10 Introduction to Foucault:

As previously stated in the introduction, football has been perceived as the bastion of male power and sexuality (Hemphill and Symons, 2012). The main aim of this thesis is the exploration and negotiation of sexuality within a University's women's football team, and so, understanding Foucault's ideas of disciplinary power, classification and normalising judgement for instance, will be utilised as an effective means of understanding the data.

Foucault suggests that in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the matter of sexuality became a political issue with regards to how society managed and directed the sexuality of individuals. There was an increase of bio power because of this, and so this was connected to the discourses on sex and sexuality (Foucault, 1990). When Foucault discusses bio power, it refers to the possession of power over other bodies (Nealon, 2007). These discourses implied that sex and sexuality were biological and inscribed as part of an image, thus, influencing the social behaviour. It has been suggested that based on Foucault's work, normative heterosexual drive was the main system of operation in society, yet this behaviour can also be deviated (Dreyfus and Rabinow,

1982). In turn, social institutions then created categories of normalisation and deviance to treat and sanction behaviour that was not classified as normal and healthy to enhance the individual and society. Therefore, this suggests the behaviour performed in modern society is controlled and manipulated through normality, and so deviance captures the truth of an individual's behaviour.

Foucault's ideas provide a platform to explore, not just the history of sexuality, but the experiences within sexuality. Through notions that are based upon numerous binaries, Foucault locates the body as the holder of power, and through the dividing of practises, for example heterosexuals and homosexuals, oppressive power relations can be formed (Markula and Pringle, 2006). In this section, I proceed to explore Foucault's concept of discourse that operate in relation to power, to later explore the connection within a sporting context. Foucault had a clear rationale, yet his political stance continues to elicit contradictions and inconsistencies concerning analysis of the social phenomena (Mills, 2003). Despite this, Foucault's (1990) refutation of the repressive hypothesis has helped to explore discussions about sexualities that were not confined to heterosexism. Foucault's main objective was the investigation of sexuality which was central to the development of how we use power based upon knowledge (Deutscher, 2012). Foucault's extensive investigation into sexuality and exploration relating to power, knowledge and discourse, provides useful theoretical explanations of understanding sexualities in social contexts, in this case, women's football.

1.1.1 Relationships of Power:

The utilisation of power, a core element in Foucault's work, will help to understand the relationships and dynamics of sexuality within the women's football team because power influences knowledge and produces discourses, all of which is multidimensional. By the 19th century, society was based upon knowledge of telling the truth through confession which is a denotation of power and therefore, power can be considered as productive and constraining (Gaventa, 2003), depending on how one perceives sexuality.

Complexities of power can be understood and critiqued through Foucault's (1990) five understandings and characteristics of a 'political analysis of power'. Firstly, power cannot be obtained or shared with individuals; power cannot be externally pursued with knowledge, sexual relationships or economics; power relationships occur in all levels of society; these power relations are not silenced and they are intentional; finally, where power exists, there are several resistances. Foucault's characteristics of power will be applied with the data collected, with particular reference to the resistances of gendered practises and the combination of silencing and exploration of sexuality and relationships within the football team. Investigating power relations within the team is important to convey how women's football arguably resists dominating discourses of sexuality and the increased visibility of homosexual players. It can therefore be questioned if this sporting space operates in a way in which sexuality can be explored and contested, and what power struggles may be prominent.

1.1.2 Disciplinary Power:

Foucault's five 'political analysis of power' help to understand and distinguish it from the 'sovereign conception of power' (Hewett, 2004, p.10) that was used under the system of surveillance. Within a surveillance society, individuals internalise rules and regulations based on their own subjection (Foucault, 1990). This new technology of sex was based through economics, medicine and pedagogy. This meant it was a concern to religion and the state, and in turn, sex mattered to the social body as a whole, and specifically to individuals because everyone was then placed under surveillance (Foucault, 1990).

Surveillance produced disciplinary power, suggesting individuals must possess a set of qualities to be appreciated and recognised highly in society. One of the main fundamentals of disciplinary power is that power is projected directly onto the body. Through discipline, there is a production of practised and subjected bodies, also known as 'docile bodies', which will be discussed further in section 1.1.3i. Through constant surveillance, which targets disciplining the body, Foucault also discussed that it can also

produce a psychological state of visibility because individuals internalise a self-awareness (Foucault, 1979), which will be discussed in more detail (see section 1.1.3).

The work of Bartky (1988) has been the most influential piece of research that discovers how society challenges perceptions that may disempower the female body in relation to this project. Bartky (1988) helps to connect the works of Foucault and the participants used within this study. Furthermore, Bartky (1988) accepted the idea of disciplinary power because it explains the social control of women. Progressing on from this, Bartky (1988) goes on to suggest that Foucault's work has helped to understand this idea that the female body is subjected to disciplinary practises including exercise and beauty which is a portrayal of femininity. It is interesting to note that Bartky (1988) suggests these forms of femininity do not remove power from women, but rather, they confer the maintenance of stereotyping the female body. However, Bartky (1988) suggests women accept the norms of the feminine identity because challenging society's perception would disempower the female body and it could question personal identity. This idea of disciplinary power through physical representation of the female body will be applied to the University football team. It will be referred to in the discussion chapter (chapter three) to determine if disciplinary power of the feminine body is reproduced or resisted in this sporting space. Foucault's work concerning disciplinary power is effective for the explanation of resistances and conformity to society's standards of femininity.

1.1.3 Surveillance:

Disciplinary power often leads to self-surveillance through a fear of being caught breaking rules of expectations (Foucault, 1975). From this, Foucault stated we live in a system of control whereby the order of control within a capitalist and democratic society was produced through the idea that individuals are under constant surveillance. As a result from this, individuals would internalise their behaviours and believe: he who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously

upon himself...he becomes the principle of his own subjection (Foucault, 1995, p.202).

The idea of surveillance is an efficient system that is deeply engrained within society that suggests even if individuals have not deviated from normative behaviours, we are always under the surveillance of authority. Foucault (1979) argues the body is an object of power relations and thus disciplined bodies are under surveillance, most of which are subtle. In turn, these regulations of modern institutions 'individuate bodies according to designated tasks so as to create socially docile and profitable individuals' (Sabanci, 2013, p.60). The representation of individuals within the football team will be analysed to determine if their visibility within the University and whether wider society impacts their actions in the sporting space and outside of it.

1.1.3i Docile Bodies:

The body, as described by Foucault (1979) is objectified and therefore we can determine how fields of power are controlled through discourses. In turn, these discourses shape the body within a disciplined society. Foucault concentrates on the idea of docile bodies which means the body is an object that can be moulded based upon disciplinary forces that act upon it. The concept of a docile body derives from the eighteenth century when Foucault discussed the practise of punishment. Foucault goes on to explain the 'body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved' (Foucault, 1995, p.136). Therefore, if the body was perceived as docile, the individual could be viewed as skilful and effective through discipline (Foucault, 1979).

According to Foucault, the development of docile bodies is based upon 'small-scale models of power' (Foucault, 1995, p.136). Within this, Foucault devised the 'scale of control' which was individualised because control operated through the individual, including 'movements, gestures and attitudes' (Foucault, 1995, p.137) of the body. The effectiveness of treating the body as separate body parts as opposed to a complete unit and entity arguably allows for subtle coercion. Although the research focuses on a football team, analyses will draw upon the attitudes and responses of individuals to determine what extent their body was under 'meticulous' control.

It is important to note that a docile body is not constrained within society, but rather the body is productive because it is taught and registered a certain conduct of behaviour that is deemed acceptable. This leads on to the idea that a docile body is not inactive, but rather it is controlled by a possessor that regulates norms of power; the body is a sight of regulation. The concept of regulation is important when thinking about docile bodies because it determines the extent a body can be called 'healthy' and a representation of how individuals are supposed to 'normatively' behave (Mills *et.al*, 2010). Some examples produced in the interviews and participant observations represent the production of a docile body and forms of regulation that developed alternative behaviour in some participants (see section 3.4).

1.1.3ii Panopticism:

The panopticon an architectural design, produced by Jeremy Bentham (1791) for prisons, asylums and schools, represents a hierarchical observation that is one of the technologies used to produce docile bodies. The process of disciplining bodies which normalise individuals into docile bodies is referred to as panopticism (Markula and Pringle, 2006). For Foucault, the panopticon offered an internalised coercion and constant surveillance of prisoners, allowing the prison guards to act as a control mechanism by observing the prisoners. The panopticon for Foucault meant he could explore the relationship of discipline within a system of social control and the idea of power and knowledge (Foucault, 1979). For example, the prisoner was consciously aware of his permanent state of visibility and the potential for constant surveillance. Foucault suggests the principle of power within the panopticon is visibility because the prisoners are aware of surveillance. However, it is also unverifiable as the architecture of the panopticon is so that the prisoners will not know when they are being watched, therefore, self-surveillance ensues.

Previous ideas and connotations of panoptism have been grounded within social contexts. For example, the metaphorical sense of the panopticon can arguably be perceived as one of Foucault's examples of power dynamics in sexuality created through discourse. It is important to note that Foucault (1990) recognised the

significance of silence within discourses. Thus, when thinking about sexuality, particularly in the 19th century, it was silenced, and when spoken of, it was cautioned. For Purdy (2016), the concept of visibility utilised as a tool of surveillance that can be applied to the body. When discussing the sex and gender dichotomy, Purdy (2016, p.16) questions 'How can we expand this 'norm' within the institution of sex/gender dichotomy that is enforced upon and internalised in individuals?' This demonstrates a practical application of panopticism, because sexuality as a disciplinary power only exists because of visibility (Purdy, 2016). Therefore, this questions if individuals feel the need to define their sexuality in comparison with society's norms that are produced and arguably maintained through discourse. The potential of persistent surveillance on individuals and their bodies, as described by panopticism, can be applied to sexuality whereby individuals may internalise norms, and in turn enter on proceeds of self-surveillance. Foucault's metaphor for the panopticon will be relevant to this study on sexuality. It will determine if individuals experience self-surveillance and internalise their own sense of sexuality and to what extent being in the sporting space influences their actions and behaviour.

1.1.4 Normalising Judgement:

In addition to panopticism, one of the technologies used to produce a docile body, is normalising judgment, the concept that individuals are in a ranking system. Through a disciplinary society, individuals arguably conform to the process of normalisation, and so, normalising judgement and punishment of the non-conforming contributes towards and reinforces dominant discourses. Foucault developed this idea through the belief that rather than standards being developed from an individual, they are created and maintained through society (Foucault, 1979). We can then interpret normalising judgement as a punishment of non-conformity that disciplinary power aims to rectify.

The power tool of normalising judgement aims to create a homogenous society that is operated through disciplinary systems. This homogeneous society is created because individuals are all compared to the same standards, without removing individual traits

as it is 'possible to measure gaps, determine levels, to fix specialities and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to another' (Foucault, 1977, p.184). This suggests the norms produce individual differences to standardize individuals (Rudge, 2016). Therefore, the concept of the individual is what constitutes and matters within society; the norms are there as a reduction of individual differences to endeavour to standardise individuals (Rudge, 2016). Individuals who comply with normative behaviour become docile, but we must be mindful that normalisation is also dependent on individualisation to make people gaze under a normalising judgement. Foucault discusses how judgement is attached to punishment 'from light physical punishments to minor deprivations and petty humiliations...for the slightest departures from correct behaviour' (Foucault 1991, p.178). Therefore, diligent behaviour was punished and revolved around a 'double system: gratification- punishment' (Foucault, 1991, p.180) to allow for further encouragement for individuals to be 'normal' (Markula and Pringle, 2006). This research will concentrate on whether there are examples of normalisation that produces punishment of deviant behaviours, and if particular forms of sexuality are normalised within the footballing space.

1.1.5 Classification:

Foucault defined three modes of objectification that are important to understand how humans become subjects through knowledge, power and discourse; the first mode being scientific classification (Foucault, 1979). In turn, scientific classification structures discourses into disciplines (Keller, 2005). Foucault suggested through medical testing, humans can be placed into categories because our perception of the body is operated as a natural space (Horrocks, 2014). Grouping individuals into illnesses including asthmatics and diabetics based upon analogy and resemblance led to objectification, as our way of identifying illnesses and diseases was reliant on knowledge (Markula and Pringle, 2006). With regards to the application of classification to this study, there will be a discussion relating to the dividing of sexes through classification and how individuals seek to divide them in a footballing space (see Section 3.3). Labels which can

divided individuals through scientific classification was a fundamental aspect of this research.

The second mode of objectification, known as dividing practises refers to the exclusion of individuals if they are perceived as a threat to the community, or rather differentiating the abnormal from the normal. This can be applied to sexuality because through the spread of bio-power, definite and particular sexual identities were produced that created self-disciplined bodies (Andrews, 1993). Within a sporting context, if there are any deviances from the norms of masculinity or femininity, this is viewed as abnormal (Andrews, 1993). This study will determine if any behaviour associated with sexuality is perceived as abnormal, and whether it resists dominant discourses within a sport known to be male dominated and promote hegemonic masculinity. Hackings (2000) suggests social constructions, such as sexuality, can be referred to as ideas and objects that interact within the classification of individuals, as supported by McLaren (2002). The interaction caused between humans and their classifications is called the 'looping effect' which are embedded within institutions and interactions (Hackings, 2000; McLaren, 2002). This means human sciences develops a certain group of individuals that perhaps we did not know existed previously. It is this idea of social constructions that develop the classification of individuals that will be investigated and applied in this research (see section 3.3). Classifications arguably allow for the production of labels that are associated to certain individuals. This signifies the importance of personal identity that, as suggested within queer theory, is not always a fixed determination of oneself.

1.1.6 Summary:

The application of Foucault's ideas surrounding the broader concepts of power and knowledge through discourse helps to understand how society manages the sexuality of individuals. In particular, self-surveillance through disciplinary power explains how the body can become docile through performing normative behaviours. Understanding Foucault's ideas are effective for understanding the attitudes and behaviours of women

within the university's football team. The idea of classification and labelling will be discussed in the next section towards the application of queer theory Lauretis (1990).

Queer Theory

1.2.0 Introduction:

Interrelations between desires, gender and sex not being biological determinants has been discussed for many years (Butler, 1999). They can be understood and explored through the application of queer theory, as first termed by Lauretis in 1990. The main notion of queer theory is to liberate sexual and gendered identities (O'Brien, 2009). This post-structuralist critical theory engages with the system of sex and gender and has a pivotal focus on identity. Importantly, queer theory should not be considered a singular methodological framework, but instead, a theory that analyses the expanding literature of queering (Spargo, 1999). The act of queering is important because it reevaluates current discussions and conclusions surrounding sexual orientation within queer theory. Despite numerous disparate connotations and ideologies of queer theory, the main focus is central to the current queer literature. It questions how society perceives normality, and if this causes oppressive behaviours through the queering of practises. For example, queer theory rejects the socially constructed concept of gender and abiding to sexual identities that are based on binary oppositions, in particular homosexual or heterosexual (King, 2007). The theory argues there is fluidity outside of these binaries to destabilise sexual practises and gender connotations which is known as 'queer' when referring to gendered practises.

1.2.1 Identity Politics:

Queer theory is a movement and an academic discipline that is considered separate but related to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) research. Studies central to sexuality have rarely focused solely on LGBT and this can be considered problematic as heteronormativity remains unchallenged (King, 2008). In turn, this reproduces normative behaviours of heterosexual and homosexual binaries that deems alternative

sexualities as abnormal and judged (Rumens, 2016). However, the application of queer theory disrupts the fixed connotations of sexuality and heteronormativity. Despite this, queer theory is rarely applied singularly in LGBT studies because not all members of the community are accepting how 'queer' is applied. Queer theorists explicitly oppose the gatekeeping of performing to gender expectations, therefore, some scholars criticise queer theory based upon the refusal of identity politics that are predominantly male focused (Lewin, 2009).

The concept of queer cannot define a particular identity but it holds the power to disrupt an identity through the tool of self-reflection and critical reflection in our societies (Brooks and Edwards, 1999). Although identity politics allows individuals to focus on the embodiment of their own oppressive behaviours, it began to develop negative connotations in the late 1990s. This became evidently clear for those who identified themselves as lesbian because the term 'queer' problematized their identity. As Garber (2009) describes, queer theory when it was originally introduced, highlighted the issue of sexism. In turn, the referral of 'queer' became objectionable as it was deemed homophobic and led to lesbian invisibility. Now that the term 'queer' has dominated research, current studies have compromised with the referral of 'Gay, Lesbian and Queer' studies. Using the term 'lesbian' is important to establish notions concerning identity. Similarly, queer is useful to challenge stability of the lesbian labelling (Garber, 2009, p.74).

1.2.2 Butler (1990) and Queer Theory:

The development of queer theory was based upon the work of Judith Butler, with particular reference to the book 'Gender Trouble' (1990) which was the most influential for the development of queer theory (King, 2008). Butler's discussion of queer theory was denoted through the criticism of feminism because Butler (1990) stated it produced an error through the assumption that women formed a collective group that attain similar characteristics. As Butler explains, this reinforces a gender relation of a distinct binary: men and women. Therefore, feminism reduced individual's possibilities of exploring an individual identity, disallowing any negotiation for resistances that

exceeded the culture of male and females. Interestingly, Butler stated 'there is no gender identity behind expressions of gender' (Butler, 1990, p.25), insinuating identity is a creation and exploration through our own performances. Butler's concept of gender being a performance plays a crucial element within queer theory because it suggests individuals can adapt and change. Therefore, the changes made to identity produce an expression of oneself that is considered more valuable than social constructions, and thus, through repetition individuals develop an inner belief through discourse (Gauntlett, 2008). Performativity of gender is not a radical choice because often individuals encounter the repetition of oppressive gender norms that can be subversive and not necessarily conscious (Butler, 1990). Identity categories can facilitate as oppressive structures or as a moment of liberation against normalizing categories. As Califia (2005) suggests, Butler did not signify the difference between liberation and oppression and the lack of clarity may have been intentional to convey deeper understandings about what actually lies beneath the surface of identity.

Butler's concept of expressing identity through the repetition of performance was encompassed with the idea of the internal psyche. This concept was devised by Butler to express the process of women identifying with femininity and likewise men identifying with masculinity (Flanagan and Booth, 2002). Butler's main focus of the psyche is to act as a mechanism of repetition because our unconscious gender performances become embodied and thus internalised within our psyche. The conceptualisation of bisexuality within identity politics has been explained through the metaphor of the internal psyche. Butler (1990) stated that Freud, who devised the psyche, would have understood bisexuality as the formation of two heterosexual desires that are framed within one psyche. However, as Butler and Kirsch (2013) noted as post-structuralist writers in queer theory, the focus on the psyche assumes individuals perceive their psychical requirements as different, and thus more important than others. In turn, this causes a quest to find someone else with similar identification traits. Hall (2003) acknowledged Butler's commentary of the denaturalisation of identity, yet, Hall suggests this is necessary for a radical and political stance for the reality of sexuality, but this is not the crux for a change and challenge to sexual identity. Rather, the process of denaturalisation is utilised to convey ones identity as inauthentic

when it has been challenged or questioned (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005). How individuals wish to portray their identity construction is dependent on the claims made by the person who is asking.

1.2.3 Summary:

In summary, it is important to note that queer theory which can be considered a constructivist theory, analyses self-reflection and awareness based on sexual desire. However, we must consider that the controversies surrounding sexual identity can be considered from an essentialist stance (Lovaas, 2013). This suggests differences in both gender and sexual identity are caused by biological differences. Often, essentialist queer activists argue that homosexual desires have always existed (Nash, 2009). When determining essentialist and social constructionist perceptions on queer theories, we must be mindful that we cannot be 'pure' in our stance, therefore we must consider both understandings of the development of queer.

The attraction of the term queer has derived from the fact that unlike the terms gay and lesbian it is not gender specific. However, queer theory is considered multi-layered in the sense that it offers no singular definition, yet, all accounts of the theory are in agreement that it refutes the notion of sexuality beyond issues faced by lesbians and gay individuals (Sykes, 2006). Although there is not currently a singular definition, most queer activists agree queer theory interrogates social construction of compulsory heterosexuality/heteronormativity and the notions of what is considered within the normative categories of male and female. Finally, queer theorization is often categorized as 'queer theories' due to the various voices that contribute to the theory that have overlapping and some contrasting views (Hall, 2003). Queer theory works alongside gender but most importantly, it arguably has the potential to break the taboo of gender and works within ontology to shift current perceptions of gender. The next section will analyse empirical research in women's football and how sexuality and gender are contested within this sporting space.

Empirical Research in Sport, Gender and Sexuality

1.3.0 Introduction:

Sport, gender and sexuality has been an ongoing area of research interest for several decades (Hargreaves and Anderson, 2014). Previous and current research has conveyed the exploration of numerous sexualities, some of which are seen as deviant, and subversive gender practises. The application of gender and sexuality within sport settings has provided an insightful exploration towards the understandings of how individuals contest and negotiate their personal identity and sexuality. Current and previous sport research has explored a narrow focus towards young people's perception of sexual identity (Morgan,2013). It would seem young people generally have a wider degree of openness to share their sexuality and how they consider different forms of identities, particularly in sports, such as football (Cox and Thompson, 2001). Over the past decade, we have seen a shift from football being considered the dominant notion of heterosexuality, of which is deeply engrained in hegemonic masculinity, to female players and the stereotypes of being labelled a lesbian (Magrath, 2016). There is a requirement however, for research relating to the gaze in sports to also make the transition from the male gaze in heteronormative practises which football has often been associated with, to an area of exploration into the queer-female gaze.

Untangling differences between gender and sex is important to analyse beliefs of identity and how individuals negotiate and construct their position within social contexts. Gender can be described as a characteristic denoted by society to classify individuals as either masculine or feminine. Sex on the other hand, is considered a biological determinism and considers the biological differences of a male and female (Anderson and Taylor, 2007). However, as Butler (1999) suggests the idea of what constitutes male and female is a social construction. It should be noted that gender roles within society may differ cross culturally but the following discussion analyses research in the Western culture.

1.3.1 The Labelling of Sexualities:

With regards to sexual identity, Irigaray (1985) provides one of the most insightful analyses, argues that women pose a contradiction with identity because women can be considered as the 'sex'. Identity can be figured for women through the concept that one sex does not exist through the expense of other. Additionally, Irigaray perceived women as the Other; women's sexuality has been defined by men and understandings of the one sex derives from the male perspectives of the women's body. Irigaray use of masculinist language suggests the consideration of women's bodies are based on the social and political roles they obtain. If a woman does not secure roles especially outside of the family home and obtain the role of the Mother (Irigaray, 1985), their sex does not exist and is not considered. Perhaps we can draw upon Foucault's (1980) idea of silencing because perhaps the stereotypical view of the woman reveals no more than a fabrication.

More recently, sexual identity has progressed to move beyond understandings of homosexuality and heterosexuality. As Paris (2011) suggests there has been much consideration of the removal of sexual identity labels. Research trends suggests the connotations of homosexuality is an outdated label of identity because it was originally used to refer to those who had a deviant procreative norm of heterosexuality, and arguably no desire towards the same sex. Non-procreative heterosexuality was viewed as deviant, alongside non-procreative homosexuality (Fischer and Seidman, 2016). Furthermore, Diamond (2000) presented one of the few longitudinal studies addressing sexual identities in women. Interestingly, throughout the ten years, around half of the women altered their identity label more than once. This suggests an increased amount of fluidity of sexual behaviours, although this does not mean society accepts differing sexualities. Diamond's (2000) research draws interesting conclusions, stating that some women preferred to remain unlabelled when asked to define their sexual identity. This could be justified through the work of Paris (2011) who provided the justification of remaining unlabelled through the gendered connotation of being female. Arguably, if someone wishes to remain unlabelled, they might accept gender binaries of male and

female, and therefore, perceive one gender to define their sense of self. This links with Foucault's (1979) idea of classification of one's behaviour judged on a scale of normalisation, which encourages the production of labels assigned to certain individuals (see section 1.10 for Foucault's work).

Similar to Diamond's (2000) research, Yarhouse (2013) concluded many college-aged students did not wish to associate their identity to a sexuality label. Yarhouse interviewed both men and women who also highlighted the consistent view that females when compared to males, experience more sexual fluidity as they changed their identity to suit their most recent sexual interests. Yarhouse's (2013) reflection of the data suggests attributions (reasoning for personal attractions), derives from interest to an emerging sexual identity, as society is more open and acceptable to a wide range of sexual interests. Within this research, participants explain how their sexuality has altered over time and personal opinions on the attachment and detachment of labels will be explored (See section 3.1).

More recently, Eisenberg *et.al* (2017) concluded that research is still using traditional labels to classify individuals who are considered to be within a sexual minority. Young people felt misunderstood and uncomfortable with these labels including gay, lesbian, and bisexual and as a result, some did not wish to classify under any of these labels. Interestingly, the results demonstrate that individuals who wanted to be associated with new sexual identity labels also used new gender labels such as genderqueer. This suggests future research must consider rephrasing questions relating to sexual orientation that move beyond the labelling system. Participants in Eisenberg *et.al*'s (2017) study insinuated there is more to understand about a person and their identity beyond sexuality labelling. This research endeavours to investigate if individuals wish to be identified with a sexual identity label in both the sporting space and wider society, and if the way in which they describe their own identity, differs to how they describe those around them.

The most up to date research surrounding the positive alterations about how one decides to label or 'un-label' their sexual identity is explained through McGlotten (2012): the new emergence and exploration of sexuality can be referred to as sexuality

of speculation. This entails analysing current expectations of sexuality and speculating changes to challenge what is considered solid knowledge and redefine political stances of sexual identity. For example, McGlotten (2012) explains the new understandings of sexual identity is changing patterns through more than word play. Instead, sexual identity labels are represented through something called alphabetic approaches. Rather than using traditional labels including heterosexual/homosexual, many now use acronyms to describe their sexual orientation. For example, LGBT is an acronym that can describe various sexualities and this new current term has less stigma associated with it. Sexual stigma is often referred to individuals that deviate from alleged normative heterosexual behaviours. For example, lesbian identities can be stigmatised through stereotypical portrayals of masculinity or femininity. If an individual does not conform to society's perception of a particular gender role, the connection to a stigmatised sexual status becomes apparent (Zimmerman, 2000). We can then refer to discriminatory behaviours that are stigmatised to a lesbian, such as 'butch' or 'dyke.' Paris (2011) insinuates the alphabetic approach is a positive turn from the original label of homosexual. Since the nineteenth century, the label of homosexual was used as a negative identity connotation and throughout time, it has overgeneralized alternate sexualities which in turn does not describe most individual's sexuality fully (Paris, 2011). Despite this refinement of alternate sexualities, the new pattern and trends still insinuate sexual desires and attractions link directly to identity and heterosexuality is still the dominating norm (Fischer, 2013). This research will question whether individuals interpret heterosexuality as the norm in women's football through semi-structured interviews and participant observations.

1.3.2 Critical Discussions of Sex and Gender:

The notion of gender is an integral part of an individual's identity. Gender is a socially constructed idea that has been split by feminist theorists to untangle distinctions of sex and gender. Within Butler's (1999) writings, it was suggested the investigation of sex and gender is built on the notion of current beliefs of binary gender systems. Arguably, this poses an issue because as Butler recognises, the terms sex and gender are categories created by social structures, with mindfulness that science is one of them. In

turn, perhaps society is unsure if sex is produced through scientific discourses that are developed within a social context and perhaps override biological beliefs. Therefore, this questions if society can continue to classify gender as an interpretation of sex if sex can also be deemed as a gendered binary term.

Interestingly, Butler (1999) analyses and breaks down the meanings behind the social construction of gender. For example, Butler begins to explain that the cultural construction of gender is understood through a set of laws that are distinguished between determinism and free will. In a different line of argument, Beauvoir (2014) proposed an alternative view to Butler. Beauvoir suggested the idea of being a woman within an identity is through the act of becoming one, rather than being born a woman. This is different to Butler's understanding of gender construction because Beauvoir discusses something called an agent, or rather a 'cogito.' This term is believed to express personal objective truths and individual experiences. In turn, Beauvoir insinuates the cogito takes on gender in many different forms, suggesting construction is a choice for individuals under cultural obligations. Although fine details of gender construction may differ between Butler and Beauvoir, they both suggest society and cultural understandings influences 'woman'. It is also important to note that although Beauvoir states an individual can become a woman, there should not be an automatic assumption their sex is female. This statement aims to emphasise the influences upon women to create understandings of a 'woman'.

Despite controversy surrounding the idea and definition of gender and sex construction, Butler (1999) suggested the body is at the heart of the construction and can be referred to as a medium. This is an interesting analogy because it allows for cultural meanings to be externally applied to the body. However, this does question what importance bodies have prior to the biological and cultural determinants of one's identity and to what extent bodies are significant with absence of gender connotations. Concluding Butler's thoughts, sex and gender are difficult to determine their free or fixed state and their construction is dependent on the discursive cultural possibilities.

As mentioned by Caudwell (2007), femme-identity, although complex, signifies a diverse range of sexualities. Femme can be defined as an individual that perceives

themselves as a lesbian and behaves in a way that is considered feminine. With particular reference to football and the femme, Caudwell (2007) states that typically the stereotype of the butch is celebrated and therefore the identity of the femme is marginalised and dismissed. However, the data of the football team did note that there were often debates regarding which players acted more femme and butch; this may insinuate that the ritual in the team allows lesbian players to reclaim, support and celebrate their selfidentity and lesbian gender. The data collection concludes the femme was marginalised on the pitch and at times disregarded. It can be argued that the focus on the femme may problematize how we currently imagine the normative stereotype of the women: masculine-lesbian (Mennesson and Clement, 2003). Caudwell argues lesbian players can reinforce this normative culture through the disruption of heteronormativity. However, it can be questioned if this behaviour occurs through misunderstanding and misinterpretation of femme bodies being a delicate and fragile version of men's football players.

Alternatively, empirical research concerning women in sport has briefly focused on hyperfemininity. As Clarke (2006) suggests, women who participate in traditionally male dominating sports including football and rugby may feel uncomfortable and thus their sexuality is questioned. As a result, Clarke (2006) suggested some heterosexual women display hyperfemininity to disconnect their identity from links with lesbianism. This can be accomplished through various methods including makeup, jewellery and wearing tight fitted sports attire. Sailors, Teetzel and Weaving (2016) suggests hyperfemininity is produced and maintained in the fitness culture industry as exercise classes and videos are aimed towards the heterosexual market and therefore social pressure is exerted on women to demonstrate heterofemininity. The fitness culture which can be used to train towards a sport is confined to heteronormative ideology. However, bodybuilding opens up an alternative debate within the fitness culture because as third wave feminism suggests, it is regarded as a method women use to self-empower (Sailors, Teetzel and Weaving, 2016). However, bodybuilding does not provide an opportunity to transgress unlike sports such as football and therefore it is constricted to bodily representations of the ideal women which does not challenge gender and heterosexuality.

1.3.2i Accepted Social Norms of Femininity:

Heterofemininity exerts a dominant pressure in women's football (Drury, 2011) which is often led to seek male attention. The consequences of performing heterofemininity as a social construction is a pressure that is introduced to girls from primary school age (Renold, 2000). From childhood to adolescence, it becomes apparent that the relationship between gender and sexuality on one hand, and individual perceptions of relationship subjectivity on the other, is inseparable. As highlighted in Hauge's (2009) study of bodily practises in girls through adolescence, there is no fixed resolution to negotiate the complexity of gendered notions or tensions around the subjectivity of the female body. The results of Hauge's interviews of the girls suggests the multiplicity of negotiating discourses of heterofemininity which can be resisted or accepted which is troublesome for some of the individuals. For example, one of the girls interviewed at primary school age positioned herself within contradictory discourses; she enjoyed the company of boys and dismisses the adherences of 'girl traits'. This data from the interview highlights that from a young age, individuals are immersed into a world of gender discourses and the awareness of differences between how male and female represent their bodies. The analysis of the girl's transition from childhood to adolescence in a schooling environment with both boys and girls signifies the prevalence and pressure of heterofemininity as the dominant discourse in Western society. Therefore, as Aapola, Harris and Gonick (2005) interestingly conclude, the most contested and debatable battle for adolescence and their identity is their sexuality and bodily practises. Moreover, Charles (2004) agrees school is often the main construction site for girls to produce heterofeminine behaviours including looking aesthetically pleasing which produces objectification of their bodies and is therefore associated to the notion of the male gaze.

1.3.3 The Influence of the Male Gaze:

The construct of the male gaze has a direct link with heteronormative behaviours, including heterofemininity. The male gaze creates an external pressure, particularly in

women's football (Drury, 2011). It is one of many concepts within feminist discourses that governs current research ideologies through the harmful representation of women and the objectification of their body.

Literature has considered the sporting gaze which is culturally learned through the analysis of sporting movements. The structure of the gaze can portray opinions that can be both unconscious and conscious through the expectations of what they endeavour to see in sporting performances (Huggins, 2008). Predominantly, research concerning the male gaze in sport has focused on media representations and the construct of images of sportswomen. Brandt and Carstens (2009) analysis of the media concluded imaging is shaped by the male gaze and as a result women are categorised into three stereotypes: become a sex object; to be aesthetically pleasing for men; portrayal of a wife and mothering figure. Consideration of media representations of sportswomen is an important critique because it highlights the maintenance of hegemonic power. Brandt and Carstens (2009) elaborate their findings to conclude that most sportswomen endeavour to be perceived through the idealised identity of performing to look strong and powerful in their sport and being emotionally stable. The stark contrast of misrepresentation of women continues to misinform readers that sportswomen have an appearance desirable to men. In turn, this may reinforce negative discourses and connotations surrounding sportswomen which is prevalent in society today. Although media relations will not be discussed directly in this research, there will be consideration whether gazes were produced and maintained.

The main motive of the male gaze is for women and sportswomen to portray their body in a sexually pleasing manner that appeals to the male viewers. However, research concerning the gaze has progressed more centrally on the gay male gaze. Wood (2008) suggests that unlike feminists who oppose against the male gaze, gay men encourage the progression of the gay male gaze for the resistance of hegemonic masculinity. However, with regards to women, there has been no research to date that has considered the queer female gaze, particularly within sport and football. Often, comments concerning the queer female gaze has been masked by the male gaze. This has also occurred when studies make reference to the lesbian gaze. For example, Clarke (2006) analysis of lesbians in sport and Physical Education settings suggested women

who participate in sports that are not perceived as stereotypically feminine, are under scrutiny of the male gaze. In turn, Clarke (2006) suggests the male gaze can trivialise women's sporting performances and it is untraditional and less socially acceptable for women to be a successful football or rugby player. Similarly, Caudwell's (2006) participant observations with a women's football team suggests the lesbian gaze was only acknowledged and unmasked through the absence of men at the training sessions: a heterosexual footballer was questioned on her tight sports clothing choices and the only justification of this behaviour was to comply with the lesbian gaze. Future research should progress the lesbian gaze to focus on the empowerment of lesbian visibility in sports. Overtime, this may avoid the narrow assumption that women's appearance and attitudes is limited to the society's misogynistic view that women as objects for men only.

1.3.4 The Performative Model of Gender:

To overcome barriers to these strategies, women can liaise with the performative model as suggested by Walsh (2001). This comprises of conscious behaviours fluctuating between masculine and feminine norms, allowing women to align their body within the ideal perception of femininity and/or traits of masculinity. The performative model aligns with Butler's (1999) idea of performing gender and Messner (1992) 'doing heterosexuality'; performativity is a process of power through discourse that manifests norms of society.

Welford (2011) effectively incorporates the performative model within the analysis of women's football, suggesting performances act as an individual's perception of gender to shift power relations. The conscious and unconscious acts within the performative model were classified as 'doing gender' as Welford (2011) suggests. This is an interesting connotation to apply to the model because it reinforces that gender is a social construct through conscious and unconscious practises. More broadly, Claringbould and Knoppers (2012) discussed women's perceptions of 'doing gender' in sports organisations which serves as important to demonstrate how men dominant

positions of leadership. The data contributes to current understandings through the acknowledgement of minimal changes to the gender ratio within sporting practises. Interestingly, the results concluded that current regimes of practise both maintained and challenged the uneven gender ratio. The most effective method for change occurs through disruptive practises as this contributes to the undoing of gender within organizations, such as gender normalcy and neutrality (Claringbould and Knoppers, 2012). This method is better for the encouragement of change when compared to normalizing current gender practises.

Welford (2011) rightfully addresses the positive attributes of doing gender within the performative model, and signposts the problems women in football may face. For example, negotiating and moving between masculine and feminine norms only addresses identity issues and so it is not challenged. It is deemed difficult to challenge men's football due to the domineering historical contexts of the sport which have been attached to the superiority of men. The history of the sport could mean certain ideologies are embedded in the game and therefore taken for granted. However, what can be challenged within the performative model is the difference within female perceptions. It enables us to translate the current perception of females being weak and inferior to superior through the independence of clubs that have no referral to men's football.

1.3.5 Women's Experiences of Sexuality in Football:

The work of Jayne Caudwell has provided further understandings of women's sexuality with reference to sporting cultures. Moreover, Caudwell's work concentrates on women's football and how gender representations and sexualities are applied with feminist theory and numerous other theories of sexualities that will be explored in this research. For example, Caudwell (2007) analysed the feminist-queer theory surrounding the lesbian community within football, which at present, is one of the few pieces of research to utilise this theory within women's football. The three-year ethnographic study of an 'out' lesbian football club was effective to understand that queering the space in football is linked with the disruption and resistance to the social

construction of heteronormativity. The findings from Caudwell (2007) conclude the lesbian stereotype in women's football could displace the current notions of dominant heterosexuality. The discussion chapter (see chapter three) will discuss whether the shift of sexual imperative in women's football has developed from when Caudwell published these findings.

There seems to be a common trend in research concentrating on women's football which is particularly evident in Caudwell's analyses. The trend sits firmly in the work of Walsh (2001), suggesting women engage in particular strategies to understand their positioning in male-dominated environments. It comprises of women accommodating for the perceived masculine norms within the environment; building and transgressing from the belief that women are inferior; articulating and emphasising that females are superior; and the act of creating and utilising female-dominated spaces. Walsh states this model explains that women are situated within a conflict of masculine discourses and so they must utilise strategies to overcome issues of values and discursive norms.

Building research around this framework proves to be a useful tool to consider the current stance of women's football and comparing this against the overriding gender structures and beliefs in research to date. Welford (2011) did exactly that, explaining one of women's strategies should be to embrace with normative masculine practises, providing they can demonstrate equal levels of power. However, women must be mindful not to reproduce the same behaviours as men in football spaces because this will continue to reproduce and maintain the norm within football to be the domination of the hegemonic male. The second strategy explained by Welford (2001) comprises of challenging these masculine norms which are usually unproblematised. This allows for the encouragement of feminine norms to be produced and maintained in the sport and disregard the fixed notion of masculine norms. Women typically explore this strategy through the use of their body to highlight gender differences, however, there is a fear this strategy may continue to denote women's football as an inferior version to men's. Interestingly, Caudwell's (2007) analysis of identities within the research signified the complexities of the femme-inine. This identity has been considered as transgressive and acts as a site for reconsidering sexuality in women's football, which has previously been

central to the 'butch lesbian' identity. Femme voices within the 'out' lesbian football team were important because it contributed to greater understandings how lesbian and queer identities are overshadowed. In hindsight, this challenges the current stance of hetero-sexing in football spaces, however, research offers minimal analysis when applying the complexity of the femme to footballing spaces.

Furthermore, Caudwell's (2011) focus on UK football culture's gender analysis is not just within a gender, but also between genders. Interpretation of football analyses between genders and within gender signposts the subtle discrimination that is still prevalent in women's experiences. Whilst it is fair to say that women have an active role in football both on and off the pitch, which has been acknowledged and accepted, the sport is still central to male dominance and power. Research in the past decade has shifted focus of the gender lens from the gender separation and struggles of participation, to concentrating on the personal accounts of playing experiences, for example Caudwell (2007). The growing volume of research concerning women's experiences against men's football has allowed for greater analyses of the intersectionality against genders, thus, highlighting the significance of sexuality. As Caudwell (2011) interestingly highlights, research that explores gender connotations with men's experiences, only use the word 'football' without a modifier and is unmarked. Comparatively, women's research on football has always been marked by a prefix, for example, 'women's' or 'girls' football. Despite this contrast, it does signify the increasing amount of research concerning women's footballing experiences.

1.3.5i Queer Feminist Approach:

Caudwell (2009) progresses the analyses of sexuality and football to film connotations. For example, the family in the film 'Bend it Like Beckham' respond anxiously to their daughter's participation through the belief football will make their daughter more sexual. Whilst this film is not an academic source, it provides a media representation of perceived sexual identity for women in the sport. The family fear the sport may elicit greater contact with boys or she will enjoy contact with girls on the team and become a lesbian; we can consider this as sexual deviance or hyper-sexuality. The family's

concerns about their daughter, negotiates social control over her sexuality in the sport becomes the motif of the film. Caudwell (2009) applies a queer-feminist approach to the film to discuss how heteronormativity can be disturbed through the presence of lesbians in football and female heterosexual behaviours. Applying a queer-feminist approach is useful to investigate sexuality, sport and desires from an individual's perspective. Sykes (1998) first developed the queer-feminist approach as a matter of inquiry concerning how sporting practises become gendered practises that categorises individuals as lesbian or heterosexual. Sexuality within the queer-feminist approach is organised and regulated through social relations which gives individual's power. Although the approach agrees that sexuality is socially constructed, it seeks to look beyond the label of lesbianism and consider the possibility of counter-hegemonic sexuality. Furthermore, a queer-feminist approach can consider the current stance of heterosexual's requirement of the marginalisation of lesbianism; this maintains the existence of heterosexism and how they position themselves for the continual maintenance of a dominant and privileged position in sporting cultures.

1.3.5ii The Negotiation of Sexuality within Women's Football:

Progressing onwards from the work of Caudwell, Drury (2011) explores responses to homophobic attitudes against the current heteronormative climate that is located within football. The findings are central to players who participate in a lesbian football club which is articulated through participant observation and interview narratives. This can be considered an effective methodology because it elicits personal accounts about how one can identify themselves in gay football and their responses to the tensions drawn from homophobia and resisting heteronormative behaviours. Focusing on the lesbian team allows for greater understanding of the inclusivity within the gay sporting culture. This culture differs from the heterosexual male-dominated culture that currently surrounds the sport and can be understood as a reaction from the hostility towards gay sports participators. Investigations from this study are congruent with previous studies within the gay sporting culture as it is known to encourage inclusion but it manifests power relations that are governed around gender and sexualisation. For example, individuals who classify themselves as bisexual or transgender are considered as the 'Other' and an outcast to the gay sporting subculture. This allows for

greater investigation about the inclusivity of this subculture and how it imbues sexual power relations.

Furthermore, research can agree that football creates and maintains complications of gendered discourses for female footballers. Current trends suggest that individuals have the ability to overcome gender barriers, yet, the main issue lies with the identity confusion of being a football player and negotiating the main discourse of the heterosexual female (Scruton *et.al*, 1999). This is also perceived as the ideal and desirable discourse for female footballers. Similarly, Jeanes and Kay (2007) agree that it is difficult to alter the ideologies central to women's football as it continues to be based on the notion of being inappropriate and an unusual trait to femininity. Current literature agrees with this statement because of the heteronormative assumptions and beliefs of female athletes deviating from this norm. Drury (2011) argues this assumption is the most influential and prevalent in football when compared to other UK sports; discourses of heteronormativity and production of homophobia can be understood as pervasive. Caudwell (2007) reinforces this statement signifying that in football there are an increasing number of players who identify themselves as lesbian, the maintenance of heterosexuality occurs through perceiving lesbians as the predator and convertor. This suggests footballing space is a safe place for the negotiation of alternate sexualities through the number of players who identify as lesbians.

However, research is mindful that the pressure women's footballers experience is not solely from the male gaze, but also from heteronormativity and heterofemininity, which will be investigated in this research. Up to date, research agrees that homophobia and heteronormative behaviours are buried within the discourse of football. In turn, female players are not explicitly aware that it can reproduce and maintain these discourses. As Drury (2011) discusses, the presence of the lesbian can become more problematic than the homophobic attitudes experienced in the sport; these attitudes are believed to be the fundamental reasoning why women's behaviours are restricted and manipulated irrespective of one's sexual identity. It is important to note that discourses within women's football are widespread and complex but it is how we construct and understand these complexities and how they can be transformed to make football a safer space for inclusivity of sexual identities that is crucial.

1.3.6 Summary:

In summary, research has explored the connotations of sex and gender within a variety of football teams to explore how identity is negotiated and contested. This line of research has incorporated studies that unpack definitions of sex and gender, with particular reference to labelling. Throughout time, identity labels have altered from the traditional binary of male and female or heterosexual and homosexual. There has been consideration for the removal of identity labels as a result of the greater acknowledgement and diversity of alternate sexualities. Caudwell proves to be an insightful read that links negotiations of gender within an 'out' lesbian football team with considerations of the femme identity. Heterosexuality is still proven to be the dominant discourse and hyperfemininity is a notable behaviour seen to disconnect a women's identity from lesbianism, highlighting the requirement to further discuss sexual identity conflicts.

1.3.7 Conclusion:

The literature review chapter has provided an overview of the literature relating to gender, sexuality and how it has been contested and negotiated within women's football. The knowledge based upon literature was constructed in a logical way so that a broad overview of Foucault's concepts of power and knowledge through discourse were understood. Foucault's (1979) mode of objectification, classification, spoke about the production of labelling individuals. However, through the discussion of queer theory (Lauretis, 1990), there was an understanding when applying gender and sex, that identity is not always affixed determination of oneself. Finally, the last section, empirical research, endeavoured to highlight what we already know about women's football and sexuality identity construction. The literature review signified there is a gap in research regarding the consideration of sexuality in women's football at university. It also signified there is minimal research to date concerning the queer-feminist gaze and the lesbian gaze, as this line of research has been overshadowed by the male gaze. The next chapter, methodology, will discuss the research process undertaken to complete this project and considerations of methodological literature.

CHAPTER TWO: Methodological Considerations

2.0 Introduction:

This chapter will explore the methods of data collection deemed most suitable to respond to the research aim and questions. It will also explore the ontological and epistemological positioning of this research. This chapter will explain the participants interviewed within this study and some extracts from the participant observations.

2.1 Qualitative Research:

Given the objectives for the study as outlined in the introduction, a qualitative approach to research is deemed most suitable. This is considered an umbrella term for multiple interpretive practises whereby the researcher is 'situated' in the world, making the thoughts and feelings of participants visible (Smith and Sparkes, 2016). In this study, the subjective experiences of female footballers and their engagement with the social world for their own reasons in 'naturalistic settings' are therefore emphasised (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008; Kumar, 2014).

Methods of data collection and analysis are linked with the researcher's ontological and epistemological positions. Ontology is concerned with questions such as: "What kind of being is the human being?", and 'What is the nature of reality?' This study adopts a relativist ontology in which multiple realities are thought to exist that can be created and mind-dependent. Multiple ideas of reality can be questioned but they cannot be falsified or absolutely correct (Dieronitou, 2014). Epistemology concerns how these realities are examined. This study is underpinned by epistemological constructionism which assumes knowledge is constructed and subjective, and so what is 'out there' is not independent of researchers:

‘From this epistemological position, there can be no separation of the researcher and the researched, and values *always* mediate and shape what is understood. The knower and the known are inter-dependent and fused together in such a way that the ‘findings’ are the creation of a process of interaction between the two. As such, there can be no theory-free knowledge’ (Sparkes & Smith, 2014, p.5).

These basic philosophical assumptions shape my understandings and representation of the world my participants and myself live in. In doing so, I focus on: meanings, context and process; engage with others extensively in their natural settings; adopt a reflexive approach throughout all phases of research and produce a tolerance for complexity and flexible research designs (Sparkes and Smith, 2016). This approach is therefore beneficial when analysing and understanding people’s lives. According to Yin (2010) qualitative approaches: 1) allow for the expression of individuals in natural everyday settings, 2) challenge researcher preconceptions as ideas and thoughts that are captured through real-life events and social interactions, and 3) accountability for all contextual conditions including social, environmental and institutional which are all valued in a person’s life. Therefore, qualitative research provides insight and justification of existing concepts and has the ability to emerge concepts that endeavour to seek a deeper truth of personal lived experiences. To successfully capture and investigate the personal meaning attributed towards gender and sexuality within naturalistic settings, I will be required to engage and participate with individuals in their worlds. I will draw upon the tradition of ethnography to understand how personal choices were produced.

2.2 Access:

Although I have previous experience of playing football and submergence in football cultures, throughout my time at University, I was not an active participant in the University’s teams. However, I had built a previous relationship with the captain of four years for the women’s team prior to the commencement of research; Jo acted as my

'gatekeeper.' This is an individual that has obtained an insider status within a social or cultural group of given interest, and therefore acts as the first point of contact for the researcher (Creswell 1998; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). A slow approach towards the gatekeeper should be adopted by the researcher, particularly if they are considered a 'stranger' to the culture being studied. The nature of ethnographies and case studies means the gatekeeper requires information about the study that typically comprise of answers from the researchers (Creswell, 1998).

Previous engagements with my gatekeeper was important for the development of relationships with other team members. The positive connections I gained with Jo facilitated with the smooth running of my research for both participant observation and the interviews. Although I had not initially met my gatekeeper in a footballing context, I had previous experience playing football (see section 2.3 for a biography of my gatekeeper and interview participants). Building and maintaining a positive rapport with a gatekeeper in qualitative research is crucial to have access to new participants and territories that can be used to elaborate investigations (Sands, 2002). The open access I gained resulted in no delay or denial to speaking with the team and players in their natural setting. To maintain access to sites of research and active participants, I provided my gatekeeper with a clear insight of my study and my research intentions. Actively communicating with the gatekeeper was important so they were motivated and interested with the continuation of my data collection.

Prior to the interviewing process, it was paramount I built a rapport with players. I recall during my first visit to the training session feeling unsure how to engage with the team as a collective and individually. My previous connections with the gatekeeper meant I had to ensure I did not act too comfortable too soon in unfamiliar grounds with new acquaintances. As the captain of the team and regarded a worthy football member, I had a sturdy platform to develop conversations with other players. As the evening elapsed and the team observed my friendly interactions with their Captain and leader of the training session, they seemed inclined to join our conversation and introduce themselves. Going forward, I felt comfortable rapport building within this social circle.

Sands (2002) suggests building a trustworthy rapport with the gatekeeper helps to uncover new potential participants and allows the researcher to understand the social and cultural phenomena. My previous knowledge of the sport and how social circles are formed helped me understand when to watch, listen and observe the unfolding of conversations and when I can get involved to connect myself with other players. The following is an extract from my research field notes, dated 30th January 2017:

‘There are now evident tensions and group dividing which is possibly linked to the upcoming Varsity game. I was unsure where to position myself before the training session began as there was about four groups standing away from other groups, all engaging in different conversations. I moved into a group of three girls who I had not developed strong links with compared to other players. At first, I felt uneasy talking with them as they discussed why one player got a lift to training with Alex as they haven’t always been the ‘best of friends’. I remained silent and didn’t cast an opinion. Luckily, the third girl in this group, who was injured and could not train for Varsity selection, shrugged, said she wasn’t sure why the two players got a lift together and moved the conversation on. This time, the conversation concerned the FA Cup game that happened the week before. Having watched this game, this was my chance to engage in a conversation that didn’t link with the University team. Although I didn’t support the same football team as the others, it was a good initial link with these players as we all shared our opinion on the game’.

The ease of access to the team as granted by my gatekeeper, meant I could produce my participant observations. The team were friendly towards me and open to my study. They did not ask many questions relating to the research. Training sessions occurred off campus, resulting in players driving from main campus, where most players met beforehand, to the training location. However, as the weeks went by and Varsity team selection was rapidly approaching, tensions occurred within the team. Perhaps because of this, fewer players met on campus before driving to the training session. This

prohibited my ease of access with the team because I often spoke with players before and after training sessions.

After Varsity, Jo was still organising training sessions but the attendance rate dropped. Despite this, I continued to attend which allowed me to once again build and maintain one-to-one relationships with players. However, some players who I developed good relationships previously, did not attend training after Varsity. I decided to pursue new relationships with different team members. Below is an example from my research field notes, dated 21st February 2017:

‘After the men’s team left the training ground and the women’s team could then move from the corner of the 3G, to the pitch. The training session seemed quieter than usual. Attendance was really low this week, maybe because Varsity has finished, but the usual players who dominate conversations were not present. I recall there being about 7 players this evening, some of which I had not developed strong links with, unlike other players. Half way through the session, one of the players stood next to me and placed her hands in her pockets after she threw her drinks bottle on the floor. This was the perfect time to make conversation with a player that I was slightly unfamiliar with. We discussed the Varsity victory and exchanged a couple of jokes how she wasn’t selected but wore the team’s mascot outfit. I noticed after this she took her hands out of her pockets and seemed more comfortable leading the conversation’.

The coach, hired by the Sports Sab, attended at least one training session per week. Having gained access from Jo, I was subsequently put in contact with the coach. Below is a biography of the team’s coach:

- The coach was externally hired to train the women’s teams. The coach was new to the University this season and joined in December. Although I was not present when the team were first introduced to their coach, I could sense players were still trying to understand how she operated both on a personal level and how she was managing team’s dynamics. The coach was in her late

twenties and had previously studied at University. Approximately two years ago, she had stopped playing football and decided to coach full time. The coach worked for an external football company coaching young children in the community and after school clubs. Alongside this, she also acted as a youth support worker in her local community, helping children with problems at home. Players called the coach by

her first name, and often conversations had a central discussion to the team's play and their positions. I asked discretely during training what some of the player's thought of the coach. I received the same response from the players who overall stated she was 'alright' the coach did not fully understand how their team worked. Half way through one training session, I overheard three players discussing the coach. One player was telling the others that the coach was in a relationship with a girl as shown on her social media pages. Players smirked when this player also released the news that her partner was not previously a lesbian until the coach 'turned her' into one'.

Access to the coach was initially difficult because she would arrive twenty minutes into the training session and left promptly at the end of sessions in her work van. However, Jo organised with the coach an additional indoor training session, located on campus in the sports hall every Friday evening. This session was designed to be more relaxed and allowed players to enjoy an informal game. The coach also attended most of the Friday evening sessions and due to the relaxed nature, she became more accessible and seemed interested in my study. The coach then went on to discuss how men's and women's football will never be treated equally, despite significant improvements in the gender gap.

After developing numerous connections with both players and the coach, I could observe how different personalities bonded and clashed before, during and after Varsity. Below is an extract of my field notes of an incident that occurred just before Varsity team selection, dated 30th January 2017:

The coach put the team into a game situation at the end of the session. Sandra received the ball and crossed it into the 18 yard box. There were no players

standing there at the time she crossed the ball, and no players made an attempt to chase the ball down. This caused Maria to shout out 'there's no point kicking the ball up when there's no one f*****g there.' Sandra was angry by this remark and seemed embarrassed that her efforts were not appreciated. She then proceeded to walk off the pitch and shouted for all to hear: 'Might as well play with men because it would be less b****y than playing with you lot'.

2.3 Sample:

A common and shared trait amongst qualitative research is a small sample size. For Wolcott (2008) a smaller sample size especially in ethnographic research allows for a more thorough analysis. Wolcott (2008) goes on to explain '...such modest increases in sample size do not accomplish an adequate basis for generalization, but they most certainly compromise the opportunity to report in depth' (Wolcott, 2008, p.93).

Utilising a small sample size allows for a deeper understanding which is important to gain insight into the lives of others. This research will contain six participants used for the completion of semi-structured interviews. Malterud *et.al* (2016) suggests a small sample size is effective when the participants have the potential capacity to elucidate the research project aims. This will generate focused information surrounding the inquiry of this research. In turn, the personal experience of participants will create useful data that is thematically analysed to gain creditable research findings and conclusions (Cleary, *et.al*, 2014).

I utilised a selective method to generate my target group, using purposive sampling as suggested by Patton (2002). Participants were selected if they adhered with two or more classifications in the following criteria:

- A member of the women's University football team.
- They willingly discussed their current and previous relationships with other team members during the participant observations.
- They have/had a relationship with another team member.
- Affected by team roles and dynamics.

Guarte and Barrios (2006) suggests purposive sampling is most effective when the researcher has access to a population of individuals that eludes the most information concerning the research intentions. My population, the football team, comprised of players that seemed to elicit a great insight towards a better understanding of team dynamics and sexuality in women's University football.

Below is a summary of each participant that was interviewed to demonstrate how they emerged into the data collection and their involvement with the team:

- Jo is a 22 year old female, born in New Zealand and is my gatekeeper. I first met Jo three years before this research, both studying on the same undergraduate course at University: Sport Science. Jo has played on the University football team for four years (she had to retake first year of undergraduate study), and has been captain for three years consecutively. My study followed Jo into her fourth and final year playing on the team. We both remained in contact with each other throughout our time at the University and so Jo granted me with immediate access and authorisation into the team. When I informed Jo of my research intentions, Jo told me she was running and organising the training sessions for the lead up to Varsity. Jo opened up site fields by informing other players my name and why I was going to be following the team for the upcoming months. Jo put me into contact with the team's President, Julia, who was also her girlfriend. When introducing me to the President, she did not label her as a girlfriend nor the President but just by her first name. Developing good links with the Captain and President provided me with a suitable platform to develop relationships with the team as a collective and individuals. For example, during the build up to Varsity, the team had one home match. I asked Jo if I could watch the game and sit in the changing room before and after the match.
- Alex is 22 years old and in her second year studying Sport and Exercise Science. Alex has been playing since the age of four years old and plays football as a stress relief. Alex did not make the selection for Varsity as the 10 players did not want her to play, despite the coach fighting for her position. Alex worked at the

London Olympics at the age of 16 and the opening and accepting community that she worked within at the Olympics was a suitable environment to inform everyone that her feelings for girls that developed strongly at the age of 14 was permanent. Alex thinks if she was not involved in football she would have trouble informing others she was gay. Alex is currently in a relationship with another girl not in a football team.

- Maria is 22 years old and started playing at the age of 5 but stopped playing for 4-5 years. Maria returned to football when starting at University 3 years ago, and has finished her 2nd year studying Sport and Exercise Science. Maria is also a cheerleader at University. Maria considers herself as heterosexual and enjoys playing in a single-sex team most of the time, however, had difficulties with the coach and managing shared opinions from the relationship of the Captain and President. Maria played in the Varsity game.
- Georgie is 20 years old and has finished her 2nd year studying Radio, Television and Film. Georgie has played football from the age of 4 and also plays for the University's cricket team. Georgie has played football socially with boys growing up, and her first football team was mixed gender, however she now prefers playing in a women's team due to differences in physical strength in male players. Georgie would not apply a sexual identity label to herself and believes if feelings develop for an individual it would not matter what gender they are. Georgie played in the Varsity game and next season will be the Captain.
- Roni is 19 years old and studies a foundation course. Originally from Cyprus, this was her first time playing football as they wished to pursue a sport that was deemed British. Roni did not make selection for the Varsity game. Roni has attended a handful of social events with the football team and received negative responses when she consumed alcohol at these events. Roni believes sexual identity labels are confusing and did not label herself. Roni is unsure if she will return to the University's football team next season.
- Julia is 22 years old and started playing football at the age of 5 but stopped playing for 3 years and disliked her time apart from the sport. This season, Julia

was President and now that her time playing for the University team has ended, she is thinking of joining a Sunday league team but feels this will be a different environment, yet enjoys playing in a single-sex team. Julia says she was not previously attracted to girls before she met Jo, and states football was the right situation to come out as gay. Julia does not like to label herself as lesbian but if asked the question, she would say yes.

2.4. Data Collection.

2.4.0 Interviews:

Interviews are an effective research method that verbally communicates the thoughts of an individual which provides relevant information concerning a topical discussion relevant to the chosen research field (Kumar, 2014). Typically, interviews elicit personal and subjective experiences that ease out a story to capture thoughts and emotions of the interviewee (McNamara, 1999). For Holstein and Gubrium (2004), there are assumptions that knowledge constructed in interviews consist of:

‘Respondents [that] are subjects basically conceived as passive *vessel of answers* to whom interviewers direct their questions. They are repositories of facts, reflections, opinions and other traces of experience’ (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004, p.144).

Rather, the interviewee through skilful questioning, can develop active and elaborate responses that is constructed in the time and location of the interchange between the interviewer and interviewee. The interview will comprise of the interaction of two identities and the development and formation of a particular identity that is formulated throughout the interview process (Dexter 2006; Yates, 2013).

The most common and arguably the most useful interview type for my research is semistructured, and so this will be administered in my data collection. The focus of a semistructured interview which consists of a face-to-face communication, enables the specificity of research aims to be address and allowing room for the interviewee to provide additional meaning (Galletta, 2013). Although I address my participant’s lived

experiences in football, the semi-structured nature of my questioning allows them to freely and openly discuss notions of sexuality which is deemed a sensitive topical conversation. The gradual unfolding of my participant's story, enables space for them to disclose as much information that may wish to divulge with myself which is usually unproblematic. The structuring of my questions (see Appendix One) were crafted to elicit long, meaningful and thoughtful responses without feeling pressured to elude very personal accounts on a given situation. Unlike structured interviews, semi-structured allows flexibility whilst providing guidance and discovery, with clarification where necessary (Gill *et.al*, 2008).

In addition to the semi-structured questions produced prior to the start of the interview process, probes were used to encourage the interviewee to provide relevant and expansive answers. Probing was beneficial to elaborate personal reflection and I aimed to demonstrate this when questions began with 'do you...' I avoided starting questions with 'why' because this may cause the interviewee to become despondent and defensive. Instead, questions often began with 'what'. I was also mindful that the questions I asked were not considered leading or bias.

The technique of laddered questions aided the use of probing in my interviews. Laddered questions are applied to detect the most appropriate level of questions based upon my anticipation of the interviewee's level of comfort. As the interviewer, I cannot fully predict how my participants will respond to the questions, but a mindful and understanding approach will be adopted. Price (2002) stated laddered questions can operate on three varying levels:

- 1) Questions about action: Considered the least invasive, these questions are asked at the beginning and end of the interview. They invite a descriptive response and ensures the interviewee is aware of the nature of questioning to help set the scene.
- 2) Questions about knowledge: This is a moderate level of invasiveness and endeavours to ask the interviewee their opinion about a subject matter to

deconstruct their thought process. Often, this may cause the interviewee to discover thought patterns they were not previously aware of.

- 3) Questions about philosophy: This is the most invasive level of questioning and concerns values, beliefs and feelings about the subject matter. They aim to help the interviewee understand and analyse personal identity and share this with the interviewer.

Understanding one's values and motives can sometimes be difficult to unpack within one interview. However, the most invasive questions were only asked when the interviewee signalled an agreeing level of comfort and openness towards myself. Effectiveness of ladder questions conveys a simplistic approach to probing and assist with a mediating level of etiquette concerning the inquiry about an individual's personal identity construction.

I described the nature of my research and the questions prior to the recording on the Dictaphone and ensured the participants read the information sheet about the research project. When the participant agreed to the interview, they signed a consent form. These preliminary stages of the interview were important to allow the participants to know their rights. For example, their right to withdraw from the data at any given moment and they are not required to answer anything they may wish not to discuss.

My data collection aims to follow Caudwell (2007) research on women's experiences in football regarding gender and sexuality which utilises semi-structured interviews. Alternatively, Caudwell (2007) did suggest participant observation is crucial to reveal valuable and personal insights that may be left untold if the researcher is considered an outsider to a team's culture. Therefore, in addition to semi-structured interviews, I have adopted participant observations that granted me access to sporting spaces including training sessions, field of play and the changing rooms.

Interviews took place on campus at the University's library. I booked out a study room within the library because the environment was free from distractions and noises and was a neutral yet familiar setting for both myself and the interviewees. In turn, I hope the interviewee felt the suitability of the environment helped them to relax to produce

productive answers. The environment being abstain from noises was effective for allowing small gaps of silence. Transcribed verbatim was produced on campus in the offices to avoid other students potentially viewing the conversation on the computer screen. The transcripts and the Dictaphone were under lock located in a room on campus.

2.4.1 Participant Observations:

This method has become a popular feature of qualitative analyses that endeavours to gain insight into cultural groups from the participant's perspective (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2011). As the researcher, control is difficult to maintain because interactions and situations unfold at the scene. In turn, only a small proportion of observations can be anticipated, and so the researcher must adapt their note taking to concern how these events elapsed within new cultural contexts.

As the researcher conducting the participant observation, I was a participant observer during the 2016-17 season of the University's women's football team. During the participant observation, I attended training sessions throughout the week, some matches which included sitting in the changing rooms and listening to team talks with both the players and the coach. My participant observation consisted of the following points to analyse the interrelationships of team members within the field setting:

- How social circles are formed and maintained within the team.
- Conversations and comments relating to the body, gender, relationships and sexuality.
- Interactions during play relating to social dynamics and performance related communications.

Although the above points were my main focus during my participant observations, over time this changed. For example, I began to understand that the initial twenty minutes of Monday's training session was adapted to allow the men's team to finish using the pitch. Each week, as the men's team finished their session and walked past

the women's team to go home, I would watch to see their level of interaction. The following is one of the few examples of the men's and women's team interacting that I had not initially considered at the beginning of my participant observations, dated 30th January 2017:

'The team had warmed up and were kicking the ball amongst themselves as they waited for the coach to arrive. They located themselves more central to the men's team this week who were finishing their training session. This was the closest they had ever trained next to the men's team. One of the guys booted the ball towards the girls and the President of the women's team jogged out of the circle to retrieve their ball. One of the men's players shouted to one of his team mates: 'oi look it's the small ginge lesbian...pass it here then'. She sheepishly kicked the ball back and didn't look impressed by his remark. The other girls laughed it off and continued to kick the ball in the circle'.

The above points were meticulously included in my participant observation field notes to connect my data collection with theoretical concepts and the research process. In turn, this increases the validity of my study (Roldan, 2002). To further enhance my field notes, I provided accounts of the atmosphere and behaviours between players. For example, although it seemed trivial at the time, I noted the reaction to physical contact: When one player was knocked to the floor, the opponent would also stop playing, apologise, offer a hug, then they would both return to the game. I aimed to produce a vast array of field notes even if situations and conversations did not seem relevant to my study. I hoped this would reduce what Atkinson (1992) calls selective field notes whereby the researcher will only record what they feel is significant and important.

Given the extensive nature of my field notes and my study, I produced different forms of field notes:

- Mental notes: These occurred whilst events were unfolding in front of me and provided a conscious thought process, allowing for the recall of conversations, the time of the occurring actions and the physical environment (Emerson *et.al*, 2001).

- Jotted notes: Mental notes were then transferred onto my phone shortly after the situation occurred. Using a mobile phone proved more effective than the traditional method of pen and paper because it stopped participants speculating I was recording their conversations. I would often walk away from the players to use my phone.
- Computerised notes: The jotted notes produced on my phone were then typed up on a computerised document to summarise chronologically all the events and conversations I witnessed. Typing the notes organised my thought processes and may be used as a memory jogger when revisited at a later date (Emerson *et.al*, 2001).

It is important to consider the different types of participant observation. For Spradley (1980), research can consist of an ordinary participant and a participant observer. As the researcher, I am considered the participant observer within the social situation and I convey myself as an ordinary participant. An ordinary participant which are the football players, engage in social situations without thinking about their actions. Spradley (1980) suggests the main difference that disentangles myself from the participants is my unseen intention of investigating behaviours and interactions within the environment. When placing myself in the research field, I ensured I acted in the appropriate manner similar to ordinary participants. My previous experience playing and spectating in the sport and being immersed in the familiar setting of a football playing field meant I did not face any challenges behaving appropriately in the research field. As a researcher completing my participant observations in a familiar setting, I was acting with insider and outsider experience. My engagement with individual's and their general sporting conversations suggests I am considered an insider. Simultaneously, I was considered an outsider because I was a new body in the social circle wanting to gain access to the team's social dynamics. Spradley (1980) says the researcher should therefore adopt a wide lens approach when gathering data in social contexts. This can comprise of trivial data, but the wide observational analysis may become the crux for important discussions and generalised findings.

In hindsight, if I were to become an active participant in their training sessions, this may have disturbed the natural flow of conversation both on and off the pitch. This was because the team were training hard to be selected for the Varsity team and they perceived their place to be determined by their friendship with the captain and vice-captain who would decide team selection with the coach. If I was to become an active participant, players may have interpreted me as interjecting with their chances of selection.

2.4.2 Field Relationships:

There are various considerations that must be adopted by the researcher when utilising interviews and participant observations as data collection methods. The following provides specific instances of my critical reflection with empirical data to demonstrate the progression of field relationships:

1. **Rapport Building:** This serves as high importance to produce a successful personal interview, especially as the questions aim to divulge sensitive data. Rapport building can enhance the receptiveness of the respondent and often this occurs when they sense a strong and trustworthy connection with the interviewer. In turn, the interviewee may confide to the interviewer and perceive them as a key listener who is compassionate and interested in their story. King and Horrocks (2010) state the success of qualitative interviewing is central to the relationship between the interviewee and interviewer. However, King and Horrocks (2010) go on to suggest trying too hard and being forceful of the development with the interviewee can be detrimental. The interviewee could interpret the forcefulness of the interviewer negatively through the interrogation of personalities and the attempt to reinforce their opinions in a domineering manner.

My lack of participation resulted in a gradual socialisation process rather than potential immediate connections with individuals. Given the duration to allow for a trustworthy rapport with players, being a non-participant was beneficial because team members did not consider me as a threat to their position in the team, or influence the Varsity

team selection. The coach and my gatekeeper was responsible for selecting Varsity players and my friendship with her might have been perceived negative and threatening if I did participate prior to Varsity.

I communicated with the team before and after training sessions and the topic of conversations at times concerned romantic relationships with those on the team and others not associated with football. I did not want to show explicit interest towards these conversations when they unfolded because at times they were discussing sensitive relationship topics and I had not known the players long enough to cast an opinion. Conforming to the role of a non-participant then served greater benefits because I could walk around and listen to these types of conversations and make myself available to all players.

Dunning and Malcolm (2003) suggest sports are used as deliberate informal socialisation agents that provide a platform for individuals to socially interact with the modelled behaviour, values and norms. It has also been argued sports may overemphasize desirable characteristics that are predominated within sporting cultures. For example, within my participant observation, I noted physical interactions that may be considered feminine including hugging and holding hands. Conversely, language comprised of loud shouting, swearing and the use of male pronouns such as 'man on,' all of which are often classified as male behaviours in a football setting. However, Dunning and Malcom (2003) suggest some individuals refute the ideology of sport being a platform for informal socialisation because the competitive nature becomes the crux of the socialisation process for individuals. Throughout my participant observation, there was evidence of a competitive nature and informal socialisation processes simultaneously. I ensured not to participate in conversations that comprised of Varsity which included a competitive nature as this could negatively impact the field relationship through potential biased or opinionated comments.

Although I attempted to make strong links with most of the football team, I interviewed six participants. This was because qualitative data that utilises ethnographic sensibilities tend to use small sample sizes and concentrate on the development of the research relationships over a long period of time (Sand, 2002).

2. Presentation of self: One of the main fundamentals that provide a suitable justification for the effective rapport building was how I wished my identity to be understood by others. I initially introduced myself as a student who was studying at University and I explained this was how I was familiar with their captain. This deemed an appropriate way of introducing myself as I studied the same undergraduate course with others and immediately we shared something in common that did not just relate to football. Yates (2013) suggests finding categories of social and cultural similarities with the gatekeeper provided greater ease of access to individual's identity and a better level of cooperation. The positive behaviours my gatekeeper demonstrated during our interactions reassured others I was not a harmful threat to their group cohesion, and so I continued to portray my identity as a student and not as a researcher.

I dressed casually and wore trainers when observing the training sessions to emphasize my student status and interest in casual gym wear. This was not a deliberate selection of my visual identity but rather a popular choice in my usual outfit selection, particularly when socialising in sporting spaces. Upon reflection, the appropriate footwear of trainers served as important for rapport building because I often kicked the ball back to players when they rolled off the pitch, and at times I would play kick ups with the ball. On separate occasions, different players would ask if I am going to participate in the session or perhaps the following session. I replied saying that I used to play but not anymore and shifted the conversation towards being a football spectator and the team I support.

Although I was unaware of my actions at the time, in hindsight, I hope this demonstrated to players that even as a non-participant in their training sessions, I have experience and interest in football. I envisioned this contributed to a trusting atmosphere with a mutual connection between myself and other players.

3. Empathy: During my participant observations, I met Roni who was originally from Cyprus and this was her first year residing and studying at University in the UK. English was not her native speaking language and it was evident this was a barrier to her participation. I empathised with Roni because other team members seemed reluctant to

initiate a conversation with Roni not because they could not understand but rather Roni gave a small response, or just nodded to acknowledge someone was attempting to communicate with her. However, team members did seem to encourage her during play and call her name when they wanted to receive the ball. Some team members would comment amongst themselves on her appearance, including her shaved hair and her distinct tattoo situated on her ankle but no one attempted to pursue their interest in Roni's appearance to her directly. I attempted to approach Roni at the end of training sessions to engage in conversation but also received a smile and nod with no answer. After gathering common knowledge on Roni's story, it was brought to my attention that the only information players knew about her was she moved to England recently from Cyprus and shaved her hair off to represent her sexuality. I endeavoured to seek Roni as a potential interviewee because I was interested in her story and reasoning for joining the football team. In an attempt to overcome the language barrier, I watched the Varsity game with Roni as she did not make team selection. When we spoke, other team members were not within listening distance of our conversation. After speaking successfully with Roni, it became apparent the language barrier she was portraying in front of the team was not because of her lack of English speaking skills. Although I initiated most of the questions, Roni was able to ask questions back and form numerous fluent sentences.

When interviewing individuals that consider their identity to belong with a different culture to the interviewer and have a different native speaking language, Rubin and Rubin (1995) insinuate the following protocols should occur for a successful interview: The interviewer should develop a relationship that builds and connects with a common language. In turn, the interviewer can initiate conversations based upon shared experiences and deal with empathy where necessary. De-Tona (2006) suggests respondents are encouraged to share their experiences with the researcher if they are perceived as sympathetic to their given situation. Additionally, Shah (2004) suggests

when removing language and cultural barriers, the researcher must avoid stereotyping and develop cultural awareness. When speaking with Roni I ensured to create conversations based on our similar interests including football and education. However, I did struggle to continue rapport building when Roni was aware other team members were listening to her speaking. I am yet to discover Roni's reasoning of expressing herself as someone who cannot speak fluent English amongst the team. After interviewing Roni it has become evident that perhaps she uses her language barrier to shut down communication when she feels nervous and anxious about a given conversation.

4. Reflexivity: This is an integral part of qualitative research that concerns examining the positioning of yourself as the researcher throughout the research process. It is important to denote that a critical reflection differs from reflexivity despite these words being used interchangeably in research (D'Cruz *et.al*, 2007). Effective reflexivity concerns a continual self-reflection whereby the research lens reflects back on oneself to take responsibility how the researcher is situated within the study. The self-examination process that takes place in reflexive researchers considers prejudice, assumptions and values face during the research (Koch and Harrington, 1998; Hand, 2003). Within this study, my reflexive approach will be based upon Spencer *et.al* (2003) fundamental components of research:

- There must be consideration of any biases and how they are negotiated and emerged throughout the data collection process. For example, my previous good rapport with the gatekeeper who was also the Captain of the team meant she had previously informed me of the general atmosphere when playing in the team. I was open-minded when I first entered the field and ensured other players did not assume I favoured Jo over other players.
- Attempts to highlight any forms of bias was another fundamental component of the reflexivity in this research. This can be addressed through comprehensive and systematic analysis that consists of reflectiveness on the research methods

utilised and my decision-making process that may consequently prohibited the study. Throughout my participant observation, I continued to be reflexive about my cultural and social backgrounds, how I portrayed my sex and gendered body to individuals who were present in the research field. Berger (2015) suggests reflexivity can occur under the positional stance of being an insider-outsider within the research field. Although I was not an outsider to the dynamics of football and how teams merge together, I was arguably an outsider to the team because I was initially unaware of the group's norms.

- Thoughtfulness to minimise myself as the researcher influencing data collection process was also considered. This was mainly achieved through my nonparticipatory role as I did not interrupt team dynamics prior to the Varsity team selection. I did not cast or share opinions on certain members in the team and endeavoured to remain neutral at all times.

2.5 Ethics:

An integral part of any research project that involves participants must consider ethical issues to prevent the risk of harm to others. Singh (2012) states there are numerous ethical principles that must be accounted for prior to researching in the field. Firstly, honesty of intended methods, the procedure of research and declaring all data and results is important. Secondly, integrity serves great importance especially when dealing with personal thoughts and emotions. This comprises of not breaking any promises or agreements with participants, being sincere and never disclosing personal data or interests of anyone related to the study. Being careful not to make errors and avoiding negligence of my work whilst being open to criticism and credit is a skill I must obtain. Overall, Singh (2012) explains retrieving fully informed consent from all participants, accepting and confining with conclusions based on evidence generated, and ethics of authorship make up the basic fundamentals that demonstrate the importance of ethics.

At the beginning of my participant observations and initial introduction with the team, I introduced my research verbally to encourage personal contact and avoid communication processes that can be deemed administrative such as emails. The President of the team read and signed the consent form at the beginning of my participant observations to ensure their understandings of my presence matched my research intentions.

The Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA, 2011) form the crux of British ethical principles that act as a suitable guideline for research projects. I endeavoured to follow the protocols of British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) from the commencement of my research to the completed submission of my thesis. My official ethics was submitted to the University's Ethical Committee that comprised of details concerning the nature of my study, number of participants, methodology and a risk assessment form. When the University's Ethics Committee approved my proposal, I designed a consent form (see Appendix Two) explaining my research intentions and asked permission from the football team's President to watch their training sessions, and a participant information sheet (see Appendix Three). BERA (2011) suggests voluntary informed consent enables the research to begin researching because the participants are at the stage where they have agreed and understood how the research affects themselves and others involved in the participant observations. The consent form I devised clearly states participants that are being observed and interviewed have the right to withdraw themselves from the research. BERA (2011) states participants who consented to the research do not have to provide a reason for their withdrawal from the study. However, it further states as a researcher, I would need to investigate and reflect on my actions to determine if they influenced their withdrawal decision. The researcher does have the obligatory to alter the research approach to persuade the withdrawing participant to re-enter and re-engage without using coercion.

I ensured there was no deception or exaggeration throughout the whole research project and ensured my motives and aims were stated clearly in the consent form and I verbally explained them to individuals and to those who asked general questions about my research. I ensured there was no offensive or discriminatory language used both verbally and within the written consent. This avoided and prevented emotional harm

of those I made contact with and ensured there was no misleading information. Thus, my ethical guidelines followed the BERA (2011) protocols and participants were given a good depth of knowledge and understanding concerning my research.

Communication with the team was mainly face-to-face, however, organising interview schedules were conducted through social media platforms. Having previously submitted my ethics, I was not prepared for communicating through social media. Iphofen (2012) states social media has provided new and innovative methodological insights for researchers that are adopting an ethnographic approach. Social media is a representation of personal identity and this may cause conflict for ethical research with regards to consenting and vulnerability. Iphofen (2012) interestingly suggests the researcher must negotiate the differences of public and private space, which may be used for the creation of a social networking identity, known as management of identity as networked individualism (Wellman, 2004). My contact with participants through social media was not used for online participant observation.

Under my ethical agreement with the ethics committee, I have created pseudonyms for all the members of the team that I discuss in my research. Pseudonyms must be used to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of my participants. However, it must be noted in qualitative research, it can be difficult to achieve full anonymity due to face-to-face interactions in field research and interviews (Hoonard and Hoonard, 2016). As Given (2015) implies, it is crucial each pseudonym is unique to ensure data analysis is distinguishable for each participant, allowing for easier comparative analysis. Consideration for the cultural and social contexts surrounding the research area is another factor that may affect pseudonym selection. Given (2015) stated when gender analyses are included in the research, similarly to this thesis, I should select a female or male name that best matches participant's gender selection. In some cases, a genderneutral name that does not directly represent one particular gender may be used. In my research, I selected the pseudonyms for my participants, I did not give them the option to select a name. Allowing the participants to select their pseudonym can create problems with the anonymity of the data because research has demonstrated individuals will select a name that has significance to them, including real names of friends or relatives (Corden and Sainsbury, 2006; Allen and Wiles, 2015). I adopted the

appropriate measures to ensure transcriptions and the Dictaphone were under lock within the University's campus to maintain confidentiality of individuals.

2.6 Data Analysis:

Data analysis is an ongoing and elaborate process. Dickie (2003) suggests data analysis in qualitative research can be deemed more favourable than quantitative data analysis because it helps to perceive a given situation in a new stance. Despite not all qualitative research uncovering new standpoints, the data analysis can question what is perceived as normal and how we can break down this current and idealised perspective (Dickie, 2003). To create new and undiscovered knowledge from the data, the researcher must engage in a type of analytical process. This can be distinguished better from quantitative data through the understanding of a set of assumptions and values (Thorne, 2000).

A thematic Analysis (TA) was employed for this study that can be understood as examining and selecting themes across data sets that are relevant to the research phenomenon (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis allows for researcher flexibility and in turn, results in a comprehensive and detailed explanation and analysis of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

For Sparkes and Smith (2014) a thematic analysis:

‘Is a relatively straightforward and flexible form of qualitative analysis. A strength is that it highlights similarities and differences across the data set. It summarises key features of a large body of data. With a strong emphasis on interpretation, it has the potential also to push the researcher toward deep, freewheeling aesthetically satisfying interpretation of the data’ (Sparkes and Smith, 2014, p.124).

Employing a TA can develop research credibility through analytical discussions (Guest *et.al*, 2012). Verbatim quotes will provide the reader with enough depth and scope to judge and cast a valid opinion on the research findings. In support of this, Guest and

MacQueen (2008) interestingly stated verbatim quotes are the fundamental connection between the phenomenological understanding of the participant and the researcher's understandings of the data collection. I applied quotes throughout my discussion of results to represent the themes chosen. Guest *et.al* (2012) insinuates quotes must be carefully selected since they cannot be refuted, therefore, they must exemplify themes accordingly. The quotes chosen throughout this research may be brief but they endeavour to explain the intended themes and demonstrate the variability in qualitative data analyses.

However, there are numerous limitations of a TA that must be considered. Firstly, TA which is based upon the theory/theories and analyses are all selected and produced by the researcher, and could result in the researcher initiating findings that align with previous literature (Javadi and Zarea, 2016). Although I have considered similar studies such as Caudwell (2006, 2007, 2009, 2013) prior to this study, I have been mindful in my TA to consider all aspects of the data, thus, avoiding a limited scope. On the contrary, Javadi and Zarea (2016) advises reviewing literature before the analysis to be aware of current research stance and trends.

TA covers a high volume of narrative which can have varying significance. Javadi and Zarea (2016) suggests the analysis of TA can be weak, particularly when themes are too similar and so lack consistency. This issue may arise when some of the narrative or data is missed and this could result in a lack of description and interpretation of the data.

With regards to coding however, Dickie (2003) suggests these codes have more than likely emerged from the researcher's mind. To overcome this issue, I discuss and justify my thought patterns and the patterns that are produced from the entire data set. Generally, the approach for my TA will be adopted in a constructionist perspective; I will concentrate my focus on the reality constructed by the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Gibson (2006) highlights three limitations of TA, which must be addressed to conduct effective data analyses:

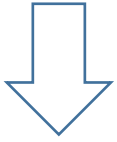
- 1) Interpretativism: This theoretical issue suggests data of individuals is interpreted through our understandings.

- 2) Language: The way in which individuals describe events, thoughts and feelings is conveyed through ones imitation of their understandings.
- 3) Patterns versus Repetition: Failure to understand the repetition of a certain subject does not directly link with patterns.

To successfully complete the process of thematic analysis, I aimed to follow Braun and Clarke (2006) guide (See Figure 1 on the following page):

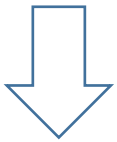
Figure 1:

Familiarising myself with the data and becoming immersed with the content of my transcriptions and my field notes.



Production of coding which is a continual development throughout the data analysis.

Coding is deemed important for my research because data is categorised and organised into sections. This is different from creating themes which are often used for interpretative analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).



Investigating the chosen themes to develop broader relevant data analysis that can be placed into themes.



Themes are then compared with the data collected to ensure they give the best and honest account of individual's stories and ensuring this relates to the research intentions. Themes are then given a name which helps to convey the unfolding of a story.



The final stage comprises of connecting the themes and codes with the individual narratives and linking this with current relevant literature.

2.7 Representation:

Crises of representation are evident in qualitative research. For Denzin and Lincoln (2005), they suggest a triple crisis: representation, legitimation and praxis, especially within human disciplines in social theory. In turn, the triple crisis is problematic for qualitative research because it is believed this type of research cannot fully explain and capture lived experiences. Rather, lived experiences are formed through the researcher's creation written in social texts. The legitimation crisis is perceived as problematic through the interpretation and evaluation process of qualitative research in a poststructuralist paradigm. The legitimation crisis therefore questions and endeavours to rethink reliability and validity and generalisability. The final crisis, praxis, as suggested by Denzin and Lincoln (2005) is formed by the previous crises, and so it questions if changes can be made if society is only ever perceived as a text.

Furthermore, Denzin and Lincoln's (1994) discussion of the crisis of representation questions whether it is ever entirely possible to speak of the Other and legitimately retell their story that sits within social sciences. However, as Richardson (1990) insinuates, writing in qualitative research cannot be represented as an objective reality, but rather a perception of reality. My selective and personal choice of interview questions aimed to view and described lived experiences of an individual (see Appendix Four for the transcription with Jo). Questions were also crafted to make a solid connection between the world of individuals and current literature (Nelson *et.al*, 2014).

To aid the correct representation of results, Sparkes (2002) discusses scientific tales which is deemed most popular in the social sciences. The scientific tale is adopted most profoundly when the results are documented in third person, resulting in a passive voice that separates the researcher from the findings and interpretations (Sparkes, 2002). During the participant observations, as an active participant observer, I needed to write in first person to simulate myself with the participants and record events as they elapsed in front of me. At times, I wrote in third person to allow the reader to create their own interpretation of the individual and their situation. Third person was also useful to ensure my own voice and opinion did not overshadow the thoughts of others involved in the research and to remain unbiased.

Moreover, I aimed to adopt a modified realist tale which mostly focuses on the researcher being absent and it also includes sections of the researcher's voice (Sparkes, 2002; Purdy *et.al*, 2009). My adoption of a modified realist tale seeks to follow Sparkes (1994) life history interviews of a lesbian PE teacher in a secondary school as the research shows the developing relationship of the researcher and participant despite there being some evident power differentials between the participant and researcher (Sparkes, 1994), which is similar to this study. Sparkes (1994) cleverly intertwines sections of theoretical stance and the participant's own voice. This was a clever example of a modified realist approach because it allowed the reader to understand theoretical components that did not overshadow personal accounts from the participant. Therefore, the participant's voice in Sparkes (1994) that was once silenced in social situations, was voiced to represent how they negotiated homophobia. Interestingly, Sparkes (2002) states in a modified realist tale, the absence of the researcher's voice can be considered an illusion and textual strategy because they are guiding and shaping the telling of the research. I endeavour to follow this approach to guide the reader on a journey to cast their opinion on the individuals and generate a range of emotions as a response to their verbatim quotes.

2.8 Judgement Criteria:

There are numerous standpoints for the judgement of qualitative research that has in turn focused on the crisis of representation. Lichtman (2013) suggests qualitative research is being judged through incorrect standards. Quantitative research has a set criteria for judging research, yet this cannot be followed explicitly in qualitative research as it derives from different roots. Yardley (2011) developed rather than a set criteria for judging qualitative research, the following core principles:

- Respect for the sensitivity of the context.
- Transparency and coherence of the research relating to current and previous literature.
- Commitment and rigor.
- The importance and impact of the research to current findings.

It becomes apparent there is not one universal criteria for the judgment of qualitative research that has the acceptance of all researchers in the field. However, I am in agreement with Koro-Ljungberg (2010) for the avoidance of over simplifying and the external objectification of qualitative research that may affect the validity. For Sparkes (2001), the problem of qualitative research derives from the possible coexistence of the following perspectives: replication, letting go, parallel and diversification. Therefore, the criteria for judging research should evolve as research develops. Sparkes (2001), goes on to explain the validation of judgement criteria:

‘It would be recognized that there can be no canonical approach to qualitative inquiry, no recipes or rigid formulas, as different validation procedures or sets of criteria may be better suited to some situations, forms of representation, and desires for legitimation than others.’ (Sparkes, 2001, p.550).

Greenhalgh and Taylor, (1997) explains the validity of qualitative research is rapidly improved through the process of triangulation. Despite adopting ethnographic sensibilities juxtaposed with semi-structured interviews, Reeves *et.al*, (2008) and Denzin (1970) insinuates different types of triangulation that occurs within ethnography. Firstly, data triangulation utilises several sources of data to investigate the phenomenon in various settings. My data collection sources comprise of participant observation and analysing this data with the transcriptions produced from the semistructured interviews. Additionally, I will utilise theory triangulation whereby I adopt different theories and concepts to seek how they endeavour to uncover meanings and understandings of the data.

Throughout my study, I have recognised and considered qualitative research is not a single entity and there are various judgement perspectives. I have endeavoured to follow refutable texts that may be deemed effective for the judgement criteria of qualitative research. The interchange between third and first person in my study allows for the revealing of my own thought process whilst including a reflexive stance. For example, I aimed to follow Richardson’s (2000) list of the five reviewing criteria of ethnography:

- 1) Substantive Contribution: I hope my study contributes to greater understanding of social life and relationship dynamics within the University’s women’s football team.

- 2) Aesthetic Merit: I aimed to write creatively and analytically to open the text up to responses and interpretations from my participants observed and interviewed.
- 3) Reflexivity: I explained how I gathered my data, the ethical procedures and my self-awareness and self-exposure as a participant observer in the field. I attempted to make myself responsible for my standard of knowing the information gathered and providing an honest account of the participants studied.
- 4) Impact: I have expressed how this research has generated to my current research understandings and the generation of new research questions in the field.
- 5) Express a Reality: My writings endeavour to express a true account of the social and cultural embodied lived experiences of participants to give a credible and honest account.

Following the judgement criteria of Richardson (2000) means I can understand fully the audience's expectations. However, I remain mindful of the numerous versions of judgement criteria of qualitative research, all of which is down to personal research methods. I therefore invite my readers to judge my study accordingly.

2.9 Conclusion:

In this chapter, the fundamental methodological and epistemological debates have been outlined and applied to my research design. Addressing the ethnographic sensibilities and epistemological approaches should produce a successful investigation towards exploring the negotiations of sexuality within the university's women's football team. In turn, the methods utilised in this research will hopefully aid a thick description and understanding of relationships within the team. The chapter highlighted the importance of a reflexive approach to research to accurately represent the data. Moving on from methodological considerations, the next chapter, the discussion, will guide the reader towards the research findings. There will be an ongoing theoretical analysis running through the significant data collected.

CHAPTER THREE: Discussion

3.0 Introduction:

This chapter will draw upon the data collected from the semi-structured interviews and participant observations to describe the significance of my findings. As discussed in chapter one, the application of Foucault, queer theory and empirical research in women's football will be applied. In turn, may reveal new understandings and insights towards understanding how sexuality was negotiated within the university's women's football team. Some of the main themes that derived from the data were opinions on labelling oneself and the society's labelling of a female footballer; gendered representations in university's women's football; appearance of the lesbian; how social events shaped individual's experiences of exploring sexuality.

3.1 Personal Identification to Labelling:

The analysis from the transcripts and some evidence from the observational field notes suggests individuals either abide or contest personal sexual identity labels. It was evident from all interviews that labelling when defining oneself was acknowledged and understood, however, it was not always integral. This was also found to be true in Eisenberg *et.al* (2017) which suggested identity construction is more than just a label, and young people disliked using sexual identity labelling. Participants in this research suggested sexual identity labels are prominent in society and they are used to gage how they interpret their own sense of sexuality. However, the majority of participants interviewed disliked the use of labelling when thinking about their own identity, and this became clear when thinking about labelling within footballing or sporting spaces.

Firstly, Julia, when considering her personal reflection on sexuality and labels, stated she detaches herself from labelling. Prior to University, Julia was in a relationship with a male partner, yet did not produce any comments on this relationship being heterosexual or straight. Now in a relationship with a girl, Jo, the Captain of the team, Julia explained

'people always ask me if I'm bi, bi-sexual but I suppose I am because I am attracted to girls and guys but I don't really label myself as that.' Instead, she would classify her sexual identity as an individual that has developed feelings for another person who happens to be female, and therefore would class herself as gay but prefers not to label herself. Perhaps the relationship between Julia and Jo can be understood through Butler and Kirsch (2013) understanding of the psyche as a quest to find someone else with similar traits, for example, their passion for football and shared change in their sexuality. Additionally, how Jo and Julia changed their sexuality is congruent with Diamond's (2000) research that suggests there is more fluidity of sexual behaviours because people alter their sexuality. Julia describes her interpretation about others commenting on her sexual identity label, explaining:

'...if someone came up to me and was like 'are you a lesbian?' like I would probably say yeah but I don't think I'd go up to people and be like 'Hi I'm [Julia], I'm a lesbian' so not really. I, I don't really like to label myself to be honest'. (Julia).

Although Julia might be talking hypothetically, it remains clear she will not apply a label to herself. Similarly, Jo's response to labelling was congruent with Julia as she stated:

'I think I wouldn't be able to put a label necessarily on myself but then people always ask like are you a lesbian and I just respond yes because at this moment in time I am. But that wouldn't necessarily mean that in three years time that I'm not with the same girl I'm with now...that I'd still be a lesbian'. (Jo).

This opinion is congruent with research findings established by Yarhouse (2013) which insinuates women experience a great deal of sexual fluidity, particularly within a space that is more acceptable to a variety of sexual interests. Jo has been a team player for 4 years, and so perhaps she now feels comfortable discussing how the football space (where she met Julia) influenced her change in sexuality.

Moreover, Jo described how if there was a tick box activity for sexual identity labels, she would tick 'lesbian' but would not typically apply a label to herself. Moreover, during the discussion of personal preference of sexual identity labels, Jo went on to link this with her dissertation on disabled athletes, suggesting this was a similar situation to sexual identity because athletes were labelled in to disability classifications before competing. Much of

Foucault's (1979) work concerning classification, one of the three modes of objectification, discusses placing individuals into categories. Perhaps Jo believes sexuality is about how individuals are classified to provide knowledge to others (Markula and Pringle, 2006). The idea of Jo 'ticking' the classification of lesbian, similarly to disability classifications, can be referred to the looping effect (Hackings 2000). Society and institutions are deeply engrained in this idea of self-interpretation, and so through people's actions we create knowledge about how someone should behave.

Similarly, Georgie does not apply labels to her sexuality, rather, she believes feelings for another individual develop from personality and should not be central to gender. When questioned further on her understandings of gender and the application to labels, Georgie could not initiate a response. Interestingly, Georgie said 'I do turn around to someone and label someone as that but when it comes to how I look at it and who I fall for I don't really', suggesting she disagrees with the labelling of herself, but will classify those around her into different labels. It can also be suggested Georgie is willing to gaze at others and make assumptions based on how they portray their body, which could be shaped by the male gaze (Brandt and Carstens, 2009). When thinking about the male and lesbian gaze, it could be argued that Georgie does not like to be labelled or classified because she is unsure how she wants others to gaze her identity. For example, in the interview, Georgie did not explicitly state her sexuality, but rather, said 'but I've like had, had a few like relationships with guys... if I've got with a girl it's just been sort of funny you know' (Georgie). This supports Caudwell's (2004) findings that women's football is a safe space that celebrates the diversity of gender and sexuality.

However, the interview with Alex took a different approach to the others. I recall from my participant observations and field notes that from my first point of contact with Alex, she would be very open about applying a sexual identity label to herself. Below is an extract from my field notes (dated 23rd January 2017):

'As I stood next to the Coach and her girlfriend waiting for the other players to arrive on campus before we commute to the training grounds, the 8 girls who were already talking loudly, suddenly got quiet as a girl walked in on her own into the waiting area, her name was Alex. She then dominated a light hearted conversation with everyone in the room, and joked around by touching another player. The

other player seemed uneasy and said jokingly to Alex 'Don't touch me, get away!' Alex seemed offended by this comment and replied in a harsh tone 'Well there's nothing you can do about it, I'm a lesbian and I swear everyone else is here anyway' (Alex).

As my observations unfolded, it became apparent Alex would comment during most sessions that she is a lesbian and seemed to respond in a defensive manner when others would also pick up on her repetitive comment. Alex's overtness towards the labelling of herself as a visible lesbian, supports the claims made by Caudwell (2004). The research suggested attitudes towards labelling could be seen as challenging the 'coming out' of individuals that are regarded non-heterosexual. Alex's could be embracing her label both within society and in this sporting space.

3.2 Personal Experiences of Labelling in Football:

Following on from a personal reflection of sexual identity labels, most participants progressed the interview towards the labelling within football. It was evident participants had two separate viewpoints regarding how they wished their sexuality to be perceived and societal connotations used against the female football player, which seems central to sexuality and gender connotations. It could be suggested the labelling of the female football player is considered negative, and therefore, some participants detached their identity to societal perceptions.

Julia detached herself from sexuality labelling, suggesting 'in football some girls would like label themselves as homosexual, bi-sexual or heterosexual...but they probably do label themselves as it,' suggesting labels are prominent within women's football. Julia goes on to explain:

'you play against some teams and you might talk amongst you and the team mates and be like they've got some lesbians in the team. And like just from looking at them and they probably say the same thing about us but like you do it every week wherever you go'.

Despite Julia's personal detachment from labelling, it becomes apparent that within a team scenario, most conversations concerns labelling the sexuality of their opponents, rather than predicting their performance. Additionally, the judgement of sexuality that Julia

suggests happens weekly could align with Foucault's (1975) concept of the panoptism because during matches, there is a sense of permanent visibility. In turn, this may lead players to ensue self-surveillance concerning how they wish their opponents to view their sexuality. As Purdy (2016) suggests, this state of visibility occurs because sexuality is a disciplinary power. In turn, there is this expanding norm of labelling female football players as lesbian.

Both Maria and Georgie have been questioned on their sexuality when informing others that they play football. Maria explains ...'as soon as you tell someone you play football, everyone jumps to that conclusion that you're a lesbian and it's just one of those things you just brush off because it happens a lot'. As a player who considers themselves as heterosexual, the persistent labelling does not affect Maria's stance or how others perceive her to be. Perhaps this is because when thinking about Foucault (1979), there is an acceptance of normalisation, and maybe Maria feels stating she is heterosexual is an acceptance of 'normality'. Maria being the only player interviewed to identify as heterosexual, did not conform to Clarke's (2006) idea of hyperfemininity to disconnect from lesbianism because from my participant observations, she did not display forms of hyperfemininity.

Similarly, Georgie says amongst the team, they label each other but this does not influence or change how she wishes to be viewed by others:

'Just like so silly like 'oh you look so gay today' and like with me I'll just be like yeah thanks and I'll just compliment it like if I take it as a compliment it's fine, but yeah normally it is, it's just like banter it's just a joke...' (Georgie).

Georgie's acceptance of these comments could be seen as compliance with normative behaviour that produces a docile body (Foucault, 1979). Georgie normalisation of these jokes about sexuality suggests she gazes under a normalising judgement. Perhaps Georgie has a fear of deviating from this acceptable level of behaviour. In turn, this may lead to a form of punishment, which relates to Foucault's (1991) idea of the double system: gratification-punishment. This can also be explained by Markula and Pringle (2006) who states that the double system encourages individuals to act 'normal', and so Georgie

complies with the labelling of others to be considered the same and normal to the rest of the team.

It becomes clear from the interviews and the participant observations that passing comments surrounding sexuality and labelling is an integral part of their team dynamics that has helped to build and formulate relationships on both a romantic and friendship level. However, when questioning if it is safe to negotiate sexuality in football, it can be dependent on who is doing the labelling and their sexual orientation. For example, Georgie and Maria seemed to receive the labelling in football light heartedly. Perhaps this was because players such as Alex were the individuals contesting sexuality, as she goes on to explain:

‘I can’t say majority but, a lot, a lot of girls in the footballing sort of, like a pattern are lesbian or bisexual. Or if they are straight they do, they do question their sexuality. Like every straight girl I know that, I’ve played with, they have always questioned, their sexuality just because they’re surrounded by these girls that are in the changing rooms and, we’re open and obviously the loud sort of lesbians like me for example will say little chuck away comments to these straight girls and stuff like this and say little half-hearted comment things and kind of make them laugh or whatever, and it’d be just, just changing room like banter really.’

It was interesting to note from the participant observations that Alex who has a fixated sexual identity was the individual who was labelling and teasing others. Perhaps this behaviour was Alex’s way of encouraging the rest of the team to explore sexuality within the safe space. On the flip side, the level of openness and continuous confrontation displayed by Alex could make it unsafe for ‘straight girls’ to explore sexuality, and acting from the resistances of the dominant discourse of heterofemininity (Hauge, 2009). As Butler (1990) suggests, the fixed notion of gender and sexuality, is dependent on discursive cultural possibilities, insinuating Alex believes football to be an acceptable space for the possibility of alternate sexualities.

Alex makes it clear that she uses labels to classify her team players and wishes to be labelled as a ‘loud lesbian’. However, it remains evident from my participant observations that Alex is passionate about reshaping and defining lesbians in football, as she continues

to explain 'Like that's what we like as women footballers we don't want to be known as these f*****g raving lesbians that just go round running around the football pitch hitting people and stuff and having that opinion of us.' What remains prominent throughout my time knowing Alex is she feels comfortable to challenge sexuality labelling within her team, but dislikes society's connotations that surround a lesbian football player. Alex concludes 'It's the, the opinions and perceptions of people of women's football is so a far from what it actually is.' Therefore, Alex seems to accept the labelling of lesbian players, yet wishes to challenge and alter the current negative connotations surrounding this label. It can be suggested that Alex dislikes how within the footballing space and society, we are based upon Foucault's (1975) concept of panopticism with a permanent state of visibility. Perhaps Alex wishes society would stop these connotations of female footballers as norms that are maintained through discourse (Purdy, 2016) and challenge the reality of how female footballers behave. Caudwell (2004) suggests that discussing lesbian visibility may produce the fear of being labelled a 'butch' lesbian, which is one of the connotations Alex is passionate about changing.

The experiences of labelling in football for Jo fits in line with Caudwell's (2004) findings from her participants that the labelling of the lesbian as butch and dyke 'indicate that the lesbian stereotype has currency and may work to displace notions of hegemonic heterosexuality.' Jo suggests the following which is also more central to stereotyping:

'...but I think there's probably stereotypes in like a lot of people will come to your team and stereotype that a lot of us are lesbians but they're not wrong like a lot of us are or a lot of us are in relationships with women and so I guess to some respect but then I personally think that them stereotypes are true like as much as you know it's horrible to say that were lesbians and were this and were that but a lot of us have experienced it or are in a relationship with a girls so they're not wrong'.

It is interesting to note that whilst Jo openly admits to her team that she is lesbian, Jo thinks this is a negative idea of describing one's identity, and therefore, people will always label the team as lesbian because this her reality of the truth. In turn, this may resist the dominant discourse of hegemonic heterosexuality.

3.3. Appearance of the Lesbian:

Continuing the discussion of labelling, what became clear through the interviews was most participants had a similar view on the visual appearance of a 'lesbian.' This follows on from the work of Caudwell (2007) which suggests analogies to the word 'butch', a common word used by my participants, is a common reference to women's football. Most participants were aware labelling the lesbian as 'butch' and 'manly' is a normative process (Mills *et.al*, 2010). For example, Jo elaboration of labelling the lesbian continues with the referral of stereotyping:

'people are like have you got a boyfriend and I'm like not I've got a girlfriend and their faces are like oh oh I've said something wrong but I think more so people are just shocked because I wouldn't necessarily look like a typical lesbian like stereotypical but if people would come to me and I'd say I'm a lesbian they like oh you don't look like one and the same with Julia like we're often, I guess the stereotype would be tattoos shaved head like quite butch' (Jo).

For Jo it becomes clear that people are puzzled by her sexual identity because she describes herself as the opposite of the stereotypical lesbian, despite stating previously she acted masculine. Perhaps because Jo does not conform to the stereotype of a lesbian, society assumes she is conforming to Caudwell's (2007) idea of the femme identity, whereby an individual is considered feminine and can be identified as a lesbian. The contradictions between the typical visual appearance of the lesbian and how Jo does not physically represent this, can be understood through Foucault's (1979) concept of classification. Jo differs from the stereotypical physical representation of a lesbian and so this may be seen as abnormal. The works of Bartky (1988) who accepted the idea of disciplinary power can be used to understand that Jo's appearance accepts the norms of a feminine identity in wider society, and avoids disempowering the female body.

However, as my discussion with Jo progressed, her negative opinion on people in society labelling her, altered when discussing her stance within the football team as she explains: 'I guess they don't really have an opinion I guess they think that you know we come as a pair' Jo. I sensed a more comfortable approach to labelling herself and current connotations of the lesbian when she discussed the matter within her football team, and

this may be because there are acceptances within the group that to be labelled as a 'lesbian' constitutes more than being 'butch.' This is dissimilar to Caudwell (2007) who stated women's football has been central to the idea of the 'butch lesbian' identity.

Similarly, Alex when discussing the label of a lesbian, suggests the perception does not match up to true description. For Alex this misogyny features women fulling the role of masculinity within a male-dominating sport. Alex states:

'Because when we show masculinity in the game and we're aggressive and stuff like that you think they're more butch than us. Do you know what I mean? And it's that, and we've, we've threatened males, we threaten males because they feel demasculinised when women can do the same as them. Do you know what I mean? And then that's why some people have these opinions oh oh she's lesbian she's lesbian. Like look how manly she is but it's not that. See us off the pitch on a night out we're completely different. Do you know what I mean?'

(Alex).

What is interesting to note, that although Jo and Alex have the same idea of what people believe to be a lesbian in football, Alex is still open to the association of being a lesbian and embraces the challenge of changing perceptions. On the contrary, Jo detaches herself from the label, perhaps due to her current experiences of this label being negative and misunderstood. Furthermore, Alex's reference to masculinity could be explained through the performative model because individuals can fluctuate between masculine norms such as aggressive behaviour on the pitch, and aligning with the ideals of femininity when socialising. Alex's discussion of the controversies surrounding the representation of female football players suggests the requirement of undoing gender, as suggested by Claringbould and Knoppers (2012) to gain gender neutrality.

For the others interviewed, they also had similar viewpoints concerning how a lesbian is labelled. What did become prominent in Julia's interview was although she does not classify herself as lesbian, she said 'I suppose the way they act like probably a bit like me, not very feminine, like maybe short hair, and yeah.' When Julia discusses how she is not perceived as feminine, this sits in line with queer theory because it rejects the idea of performing to gender expectations. Perhaps Julia insinuates part of her identity does fit in

with her perception of a lesbian, yet disconnects the label to herself. In summary, Georgie also said similar comments concerning the labelling of female football players suggesting people 'think we're all gay like you know we're masculine, we're in a masculine male dominated sport, like they'll label us maybe butch, dykes like...'(Georgie). It becomes clear from the data gathered that most participants had the same idea about how society labels a female football player. What does remain consistent throughout all data regarding labelling is not one participant will conform or agree to the current stigma associated with a female football player. When discussing stigmatisation of women athletes, we can still address previous literature that has suggested it occurs through the deviance from femininity, as the culture we live in associates athleticism and elitism with masculinity (Blinde and Taub,1992). More recent research also suggests it is gender disparities that continue to stigmatise lesbian identities, however, it has been suggested women athletes now use techniques such as withdrawal or reservation to combat stigmatisation of lesbian athletes (Sartore and Cunningham,2009). When thinking about Lauretis' (1990) application of queer theory, players endeavoured to destabilise sexual practises to allow for the fluidity outside of a gendered binary system. Most participants instead detach themselves from the label of a lesbian in society, but a more open-minded approach is adopted when they discuss sexuality within their football team. Russell (2007) supports this claim that sportswomen are aware of the existence of the lesbian label, and so they avoid any assumptions that is linked with lesbianism.

As mentioned above, it is interesting to note that most participants offered a similar stereotypical stance on society's perception of a 'lesbian' and the masculine traits associated with this view. Julia said early on in the interview that:

'I would refer to myself as a lesbian but if someone came up to me and was like 'are you a lesbian?' like I would probably say yeah but I don't think I'd go up to people and be like 'Hi I'm Julia, I'm a lesbian' so not really. I, I don't really like to label myself to be honest'. (Julia).

I assumed from this point forward in the interview that Julia in spite of being in a relationship with another girl, would be despondent to representations of the stereotypical lesbian. However, as the interview progressed, she described how she would spot a lesbian when she admitted to stereotyping, explaining: 'I don't know I suppose like

the way they act like probably a bit like me, not very feminine, like maybe short hair, and yeah.' Julia has long hair and so although she did not identify with this personal characteristic of defining a 'lesbian' it was the referral of masculine traits that connected herself with these connotations.

For Roni, through my participant observations, I learnt that she altered her physical appearance. Apparently, when she started to trial and join the football team, Roni shaved her hair short and identified herself as a lesbian. Perhaps this links with the assertion made in queer theory that there is a power to disrupt identity through the tool of self-reflection (Brooks and Edwards, 1999) which Roni might have engaged with. Furthermore, when Butler (1990) discusses gender performativity through queer theory, this can be understood through Roni's changes to identity. This aligns with (Gauntlett, 2008) when they discuss that identity alterations produce an expression of oneself through discourse.

3.4 The Importance of Socials:

Socials were seen as crucial for the development of team interrelations on both a friendship and relationship level. Despite all interviewees discussing social events and the prominence of this during my participant observations, it became clear individuals attended social events for different reasons. The social events occurred once a week, typically on a Wednesday evening and involved the team to wear a particular theme of fancy dress. The reoccurring theme of the socials was the consumption of alcohol and drinking games that aimed to elicit personal details of other members within the team. Typically, the socials at University consist of a joint evening with both the women's and men's team, but it became clearer through the interviews that both teams organised separate events.

The discussion with Julia in particular focused on the detachment of social events from the men's, explaining they often chant sexist remarks, for example, 'sit down, shut up, do the

f***ing washing up you b*****' (Julia). The men's team would then go on to 'call everyone in the team lesbians' and Julia believes this negativity towards the women's team is because '...it kind of hurts their ego a little bit when they go and chat up a girl and they're like 'no sorry I'm gay.'" This behaviour can be understood through Foucault's (1979) second mode of objectification, classification. Homosexual female football players operating in the same space as heterosexual male players resists the dominant discourse of promoting hegemonic masculinity through the dividing practises of sexuality. In turn, homosexual female players are seen as a threat to the dominating norm of hegemonic masculinity. Classification allows for the labelling of individuals, and we can also draw upon Butler's (1999) idea of performing gender which may be evident on social nights when the men's team are present. Additionally, when men would approach the female football players, they seemingly felt no pressure to exert hyperfemininity as Clarke (2006) suggested.

The connection between Julia's interview and my participant observations signify the distancing between both teams is an issue based upon sexuality. Julia explains the distancing from the men's team may help some players come out as gay because they can express their feelings within the close proximity of the women's team. Interestingly, Julia suggests:

'...there is probably a few girls who haven't come out because maybe they can't like if you're in a different sport which I don't know like pole or cheer like they tend to always joint socials with the football boys and they get with each other all the time, it like might be harder for them to come out because all their friends are getting with guys, I don't know maybe.' (Julia).

The creation of joint socials with the pole dancers and cheer leaders, unlike the women's football team, could be understood through these sports being connected with the male gaze. These sports differ from women's football because they might be considered sports that produce objectification onto the female body (Charles, 2004). In turn, men's football is understood through hegemonic norms that defines their position in discourse that is taken up by men in these social circumstances (Wetherell and Edley, 1999).

For Julia, socials are described as an event whereby 'you play a lot of social games which involves kissing one another and then like feelings develop. Like I didn't even know myself

really, like I never...I never like thought I'd be gay, I never thought I'd be in a relationship with a girl, so I don't know...' This suggests socials are an integral aspect of forming romantic relationships and a space for the negotiation of sexuality. The most interesting comment that developed from Julia's interview was the explanation of how the football team interact with other sports clubs on a Wednesday evening:

'the top floor in the corner is where the football girls, and the hockey girls and the rugby girls all tend to go and everyone calls it lesbian corner because like there's known to be a lot of lesbian girls in those teams, so like that's always been used for as long as I can remember....' (Julia).

This is an interesting analysis of the importance of socials at university because it may suggest these sports voluntarily separate themselves from the men's team and the male gaze. Rather, they encourage the lesbian gaze which is more prominent when there is the absence of men (Caudwell, 2006). This was also congruent with Russell's (2007) findings of netball players who stated if they played football or rugby, they would be more susceptible to the perception of lesbianism.

Conversely, Georgie proposes socials help to connect players in the team, particularly on a friendship level, and suggests the socials in particular have made her relate to herself as a 'social butterfly' talking to different team members. Although Georgie did not give an explicit example to herself, she explained:

'But yeah as in like...as in like sexual relationships I guess it's just where it, it's developed before like getting to know each other and I guess socials do help because you get to find out a lot about the girls in the games we play and like previous experiences and that'.

The players interviewed seemed very content with the distancing of the men's football team in social events, and the main motive of joint socials is the potential formation of romantic relationships. It can be argued the women's team did not feel the need to pursue joint social events because they were pursuing relationships within their own team, and therefore did not need to seek other relationships externally. It can be argued that the distancing between the two teams reinforces Butler's (1990) distinct binary of men and women which could lead to the ongoing battling differences between the two gendered

teams, rather than analyses within one gender. This became true when reflecting on Jo's interview as she explained the men's team 'chant like sexist like songs at us like go back to your kitchen' and thinks 'the football boys just think they've got a big ego and they're better than anyone else.' Rather, Jo argues socials within her team are important for the development of friendships and relationships because:

'Nobody's going to judge you or nobody's going to have an opinion on it like you're open to try. I also think that a lot, some of our girls probably get confused between having a really good friend and someone who they might like. For example, you know they'll be really good friends and then on a night out they might kiss and then apparently have feelings for each other, which isn't a problem.' (Jo).

Perhaps the confusion can be explained by Foucault's (1979) concept of docile bodies; the norms of power held within the women's team was demonstration of the exploration of sexuality. Therefore, those who were willing to test if their partnership with another team member was a friendship or relationship, can be considered behaving normatively (Mills *et.al*, 2010).

As the Captain, Jo goes on to promote social events in a positive perspective, with connotations to sexuality:

'Like I said like in games like I have never you can say I have never kissed a girl and people that have kissed a girl will stand up and drink and...like our team for example the majority bar maybe two will stand up so I, doesn't necessarily force the girls sitting down to go oh I'm going to kiss a girl but like it says that you're not going to get judged if you haven't. like where the where at university people come from different backgrounds different you know ethnic groups different sexualities were all together just because you have a common interest of football your all put in the same team because we welcome anybody and people will have you know different stories to tell different you know lives that they've lead that it's all in this one room.' (Jo).

Perhaps some of the new players this season felt obliged to engage in activities that negotiated sexuality through fear of the non-conforming towards the dominant discourses

(Foucault, 1979). Socials could be viewed as disciplinary systems that compare individuals against the same standard (Foucault, 1977) to produce individual differences.

It seems that for Jo, the openness and declaration of a player's sexuality is told through a story held amongst drinking games. It is these journeys that are conveyed which seem to help the team bond and understand each other on a personal level, which may not be told in a story format if the team were restricted to their training and matches. Jo explains the main themes of these stories:

'It's normally like sexual or like if they've kissed anyone or I don't know like any their sexual experiences or it can literally be about anything like sometimes they'll say my favourite colours blue like literally about anything but often you know when you're drunk it ends up it dirty or ends bit rude like.' (Jo).

Therefore, it can be suggested that the negotiation of sexuality in the University's women's football team is central to the development and formation of social events that operates within disciplinary power regimes.

So far, the discussion of social events which has elicited positive responses with regards to the production of friendships and relationships amongst the team. However, I now wish to move on to the different experiences shared by Roni. Despite this being limited because of the language barrier, Alex willingly spoke without any prompts about Roni's experiences in socials which allowed me to connect and understand how she was really feeling which I could not correspond with in her interview.

Half way through the interview with Roni, just as I sensed she was feeling comfortable with the conversation, I asked her questions regarding the social events within the team. When asked to tell me about the socials, Roni replied: 'I wasn't like the better to drink a lot and I was new with it and of course and doesn't go very well in the beginning (laughs)' (Roni). I then wished for Roni to inform me why she felt socials did not go well for her initially, and her response was: 'Erm I was a bit drunk very quickly and there was I mean, the others was drinking, still drinking and I wanted to be not the one not drinking because for that reason and yeah, was just drunk very quickly (laughs)' (Roni). It then became apparent that she was unfamiliar with the connection of drinking in social situations, and her first experience of a social at University was central to alcohol consumption. Roni goes

on to explain 'I didn't have any other choice because was like games, drinking games and I did not want to be out of it because they're a bit like yes (laughs)' (Roni). It was almost as if Roni had a fear of non-conformity to the disciplinary power held within these social events, thus, becoming docile (Foucault, 1979).

It seems the only way Roni could situate herself within the socials was to drink like everyone else and perhaps seemed this was a good way to initiate connections with other team members. What highlighted most in the limited conversation with Roni was how she felt that she had no other option but to consume alcohol, presumably at the same rate as other team members. I envisioned Roni would continue to describe positive thoughts about the social and drinking games, and so I asked her how the team reacted to her being drunk for the first time. Roni responded saying they were 'scared' and it was 'weird' because they did not know her. The responses of Roni weakened even further when I questioned if she enjoyed the social events, and she responded with 'because when they got drunk they be nasty and sometimes really annoying' and would not explain her thoughts and emotions any further.

My first interview was produced with Roni and so I felt puzzled on the general atmosphere and nature of conversations that occur within socials that made Roni shut down in the interview and for her to interpret the team as 'nasty'. After completing interviews with Jo, Julia and Georgie, I struggled to connect the thoughts of Roni's with the others because they suggested socials were an inclusive environment that promoted relationships and a safe place for to learn about each other on a personal level. Perhaps the players who thought socials were an inclusive environment had already complied with normative behaviour (Foucault, 1991): the exploration of sexuality within the team, and Roni was yet to learn this.

The last interview I engaged in was with Alex and I was pleased to have the chance to discuss matters with her as she openly discussed her outlook on Roni's situation, with particular reference to the social events with the absence of me directly asking Alex.

When asked what the nature of conversations included in socials, Alex responded with:

'Like, just little throw away comments and I remember there's a girl in our football team called Roni, do you know her, remember her Roni? Skinny girl glasses. Now

she was never socially accepted in the team. Yeah, but I was always one to be so vocal and when she made a mistake and stuff I'd be the one going come on Roni like unlucky Roni, whereas I'd hear the girls giggling and stuff like that and like that's not what you should do. Someone's wanting to improve their footballing ability you, you f*****g help them you don't laugh at them in a b*****y way. And on these socials this Roni would come out and she struggles to speak English and stuff so on these socials they're quite strict so if you don't say this you have to drink this and if you, like all the games like, it's fun and it's enjoyable and it's part of the University experience and I'd advice everyone to do it, but, when, when the drinking gets too much and within half hour of everyone being with each other everyone's on the floor smashed and saying things about the person opposite them and stuff and when you have to stand up and do something and this poor Roni would normally get up and go to start in the games or go to be involved in them, and she'd be totally disregarded, because the girls know that she's quiet and she wouldn't speak up.' (Alex).

When drawing on empirical data, Roni's quietness within these social events can be explained through identity construction. Caudwell (2013) suggests identity construction is developed through antagonistic discourses, including ethnicity or gender, in addition to social demarcations such as religion and sexual preference. Therefore, Roni involvement, yet reserved nature can be understood through identity construction and negotiation within this new sporting space. Additionally, women's drinking in social circles has also been associated with twin discourses of celebration and wanting to escape from uncertainty (Palmer, 2016). Roni seemed to accept and embrace the atmosphere within the social events, but perhaps she was also uncertain within herself how to cope in this new environment.

Alex was very passionate about helping Roni succeed in her footballing abilities and to become a valuable member of the team, and this was also evident in my participant observations. The comparison between herself and Roni was also interesting because she describes herself as the opposite character to Roni, and despite being very vocal within the team, she was willing to assist the quietest team member. At this point in the interview, I assumed Roni's negative experience of socials was central to the language barrier.

However, Alex continued to discuss Roni and it appears her negative experiences go deeper than language complications:

‘But then if, if Roni was to say the same thing, they’d show her such little respect and every week I’d see it or every time I’d go out and they’d make her drink more than others and, and she even had to go to hospital one time after like an hour and a half and they were laughing about it next day at training and I was thinking you really enjoy putting people in those positions and in those states and I don’t like that because you would never dream of treating me like that so why, why someone quieter that I can hardly understand what you’re saying anyway which makes it even more the ruder. I just don’t like it. And I don’t like being, I don’t like then going out with people that are like that because when other people identify them being like that, and I don’t want to be associated with people like that’ (Alex).

What is interesting to note, is other players interviewed: Jo, Julia, Georgie did not mention this in their interviews, despite the seriousness of the incident which occurred in a social event. At this point during my interview with Alex, I understood fully why Roni shut down in her interview and wished not to talk any further. Moving back to the interview with Alex, at this point in time, it was good to hear that she supported Roni despite being opposite characters: ‘but all that I knew that I could do was develop a better bond and friendship with so that then she felt more at ease knowing that one of the loudest people on the pitch has her back.’(Alex). I did find it particularly odd how

Alex who was a very big character within the team, both on and off the pitch, wished to connect with Roni who was a very distant character. It was empowering to watch this in the participant observations, particularly as women’s football, which has shown an increased number of players identify as lesbian (Caudwell, 2007), and so, characters like Alex seemed to positively influence Roni. When considering if football is deemed a safe space for sexuality, it can be argued the development of friendships is fundamental for an individual to explore sexuality.

As the interview continued to progress, I began to understand more her reasons: ‘...and I remember on one of the socials she turned round and said that she thought she was gay. And she thought that she was lesbian. And the girls laughed. And the girls were having such fun about it’ (Alex). Upon reflection, I fully sympathised with Roni and admired her courage

to conform to the norms within the socials of drinking and telling stories about yourself, and I understood why she did not wish to share this information with me. Alex who wishes to be known as a 'loud lesbian' who had her own journey of informing others of her sexuality, seemed willing to assist Roni in hers, and felt passionate about making her feel comfortable to express herself within the team. I sense Alex was angry and upset that other team members did not accommodate for

Roni like they have others. The behaviour demonstrated by Roni could align with Foucault's (1979) concept of power being controlled through discourses, which develops docile bodies. It could be suggested Roni through the social events, Roni was taught the conduct of behaviour of consuming alcohol and reveal personal thoughts about sexuality. When thinking about Foucault's (1995) scale of control, Roni was under meticulous control by certain team members who acted as the possessor that regulated the norms of power. Throughout Roni's time with the team, she was under a form of regulation as she observed and wanted to express her feelings. This falls in line with (Mills *et.al*, 2010) idea of regulating a 'healthy' body as a representation of normative behaviour within social circles, that Roni struggled to maintain.

Additionally, the behaviour demonstrated by Roni could be interpreted as conforming to the process of normalisation. Therefore, normalising judgement as suggested by Foucault (1977) and punishment of non-conforming to drinking in social events, reinforced dominant discourses regarding the openness of sexuality.

3.5 The Role of the Captain:

At the beginning of the academic year, players would vote for the best candidates to fulfil roles within the team. For example, some of the roles comprised of President, Vice President, Social Secretaries and the Captain. These roles were considered important and were utilised throughout the season. Often, these roles would manipulate team dynamics, but they helped to build structure.

Jo was Captain for 3 years and it was clear she enjoyed fulfilling the role each season. Jo who was arguably in the most powerful role, did not use this in a malicious manner. Rather Jo performed the role of a Captain to share positivity and connect players together.

During the interview, Jo was questioned on her interpretation and fulfilment in the role, stating 'where I am captain of the team I do have to speak to people I do have to ask them if they're alright'. This suggests Jo made herself emotionally available if players ever needed to discuss a personal or football related matter with her. At this point in the interview, I assumed Jo separated herself from Julia to increase the likelihood of players approaching her. However, Jo went on to say:

'...and in previous years Julia last year was social sec which means you're in charge of the nights out so she has to speak to people and this year she's president and she's there if anyone's got any problems so she like we both have had various roles in the club where we have to speak to people whether their our cup of tea or not. We're there, we're part of the committee that has to make everyone feel welcome make everyone feel part of the team. And I guess you know that's probably why we've spoken out.' (Jo).

We can apply Foucault's (1979) concept of power when thinking about the role of the captain. Jo knew she was in power and therefore, the gaze of the individual in power is then internalised by the rest of the team who were arguably being subjected. This links to the idea of panopticism because Jo was aware they were under a gaze, arguably the lesbian gaze, and so they become accustomed to their own subjection.

It was interesting to note that as Jo elaborated her discussion of roles within the team, she had a change of focus. As demonstrated above, Jo spoke about herself as an individual being captain within the team, and as the conversation developed the roles were more central to herself and Julia as a couple. When Jo mentioned welcoming others in to the team, she insinuated that both herself and her partner, who both have important roles on the committee will welcome new members. It seems important for Jo, as the Captain of the team, to subtly make other members aware she was the Captain who is in a relationship with another team player. With regards to negotiating sexuality, perhaps Jo wished to introduce and welcome members through her relationship status with another player to suggest there is a safe space for sexuality in the team. Wagg (2004) suggests it is becoming easier for female footballers to disclose and display their sexuality as the lesbian in football is becoming more visible.

Alternatively, Jo could be introducing herself and Julia as important committee members to new players to be authoritative and understand that if they confine in one of them, they confine in both. As a result of this, perhaps new players could be seen to internalise regulations of the openness towards differing sexualities within the team and automatically, players are under surveillance (1990). However, the power that was operated by Jo and Julia through their roles in the team should be considered individually, because as Foucault (1990) stated in his political analyses of power, it cannot be shared with individuals.

Later in the interview, Jo was questioned on how others may perceive herself as Captain being in a relationship with another player who is also on the committee. Jo stated:

‘I guess it could give them like if they wanted to try I guess try is not the right word but if they wanted to experience being in a relationship with a girl like I guess two people that are that are like a committee or like seen as authoritative in the team like you wouldn’t be judged but I don’t think me being a lesbian has an effect on like new people coming it because I don’t rub it in people faces like I wouldn’t go up to people and force them to be any way, their entitled to like whoever do whatever. I am in a relationship with a girl and she’s also in the team but that doesn’t like I don’t like yeah like a said rub it in people’s faces like in fact when were in football that’s the time we spend a lot of time apart from each other. You know so I don’t I don’t think that that has any effect on anyone coming in’. (Jo).

At this point in the interview process, I had envisioned other players would see Jo and Julia as an accommodating couple to both new and original team members, and the committee was deemed as strong, yet understood the negotiation of different sexualities. Following on from this, I then interviewed Maria, who gave a different perspective:

‘like our captain and her girlfriend they’re very uptight about things like on the football pitch they’re very passionate and the way you get spoken to sometimes is like, not like how you want to be spoken to, and the games where they weren’t there, we played really well and our whole team just like, it was just like a joke on the pitch, so we played well, we won the games

without our captain being there because we were all having a laugh and it wasn't serious and we just bonded together as a team very well and we just knew who each other was, so....I suppose that's a bad thing winning a game when the captain wasn't there.' (Maria).

Similarly, Alex did not share the accommodating atmosphere that Jo believed to have portrayed to her team. Alex stated: 'Erm, yeah, with Jo, Jo was the captain and her girlfriend was playing and most of the team did believe that, when you get picked in, because Julia was only getting picked in the first team while she was captain. So it did have any effect on the team definitely' (Alex). This then questions if football can be deemed a safe space for the production and maintenance of homosexual relationships because it could produce interpersonal conflicts that detracts away from team goals. When referring to disciplinary power, perhaps both Jo and Julia possessed the quality of being open about their sexuality and relationship through surveillance, and this caused them to be recognised as obtaining high levels of power within the team.

3.6.0 Gender Considerations:

During the interviews, participants were asked to share their understanding of gender to determine if this linked to their norms of how men and women should be perceived. Some participants gave a personal account on gender and application to a gendered sporting identity.

For Jo, she was aware 'there's a difference between sex and gender' and so people 'could be either a man or a woman but not feel like they're male or female.' Jo's understandings of gender was directly related to sexuality as she went on to explain 'I guess that comes with like your sexuality, because you're a man doesn't necessarily mean that you like a woman.' This could be understood through queer theory which that rejects sexual identities being based solely on binary oppositions (King, 2007). When asked if gender is a representation of her identity, Jo's responded with links to her sporting experience:

Erm, I guess so I guess because I don't, I'm a female and I'm not following you know societies norms of liking a male and I guess I'm a female and I

take sport seriously which again is not seen in society but and I guess that represents gender in the fact that I'm not, I'm expressing my own values not because the way the person like the female' (Jo).

It is interesting to note how Jo did not think it was common for a woman to take sport seriously. This may suggest that typically, the female athlete can be considered the construction site for the production of heterofeminine behaviours to objectify the female body associating it with the male gaze (Charles, 2004). Jo's comment is also in line with Griffin (1998) who stated women taking sport as a serious matter violates gender roles that crosses gender barriers.

Similarly, when Alex was asked on her perspective of gender, there was an application to identity within the sporting world. Interestingly, during her discussion, there was no mention or comments regarding how she believed gender to be negotiated within her own identity:

'Gender it's very...multidimensional thing if that's the right word to use. Because it's slightly now there's so many different forms of gender, like do you know what I mean? There's male there's female, transex like do you know what I mean it's just all...erm I think we still have, think women are still unrepresented a lot than men. We are very unrepresented. But then it is also like the era of feminism and Beyoncé and women sticking up for themselves so I do think females are getting more power as they go on in sports. But I think it will always be, gender dispositions in sport will always be, it will always be less for women than it is for men.' (Alex).

Perhaps Alex did not wish to classify herself within a gender, or obtain traits from each gender because she disagrees with the distinct binary of men and women. The beliefs of Alex can be understood through Butler (1990) who suggests gender is a creation from our own performances. Interestingly, Alex was the only participant to mention gender is greater than the binary of male or female, as she mentioned transgender.

However, Julia spoke specifically about the differences between male and female. Julia when asked, defined gender as 'what you kind of perceive yourself to be like feminine or masculine or...' What is interesting from this quote is she states gender is either or, however, previously in the interview, she stated that she is female, yet, obtains masculine

traits. The application to her own identity however, was confusing for Julia because she said 'I don't know like I am female but I do kind of have masculine traits, like people would see that and think that I am maybe.' The idea of Julia always enjoying sport was perceived as a masculine trait for herself. However, when asked if football represents gender, there was some contradictions in her answer:

'...not really...not really no because I think there's such a different like variety of girls on the team and there's some girls on the team who, like are extremely masculine like have masculine traits and then there's like really ridiculously girly girls that would cry if they broke a girl and I don't think so no, and they're all just as good as each other' (Julia).

This aligns with Butler's (1990) idea of gender performativity when thinking about queer theory because identities can adapt and change, and so individuals develop an inner belief through discourse (Gaunlett, 2008). This suggests not all the players performed to gendered expectations of the female football player and because of this, there is a sense of liberation against normalising categories. This was evident in my participant observations as some players wanted to be perceived as feminine by wearing makeup and others were masculine in their behaviour both on and off the pitch.

When interviewing Georgie, there was further contradictory answers. For example, when asked her opinion on gender and representation of identity, her response was: 'understanding of gender...that, I don't know why that's such a hard question to answer (laughs)... ... I will think of an answer, can we come back to it, is that alright?' However, prior to this comment, when Georgie was discussing her dislike for labels, she explained: 'I really don't like labels, like I don't, I, at the end of the day, I, I if I develop feelings for someone I I develop feelings because I like their personality, I don't think it should matter what gender they are.' At this point in the interview, I was puzzled how Georgie could discuss gender and labelling but when I asked her opinion on gender, she could not elicit a response. We came back to the question towards the end of the interview. Again, Georgie's response related to my other participants because of the gendered binary between male and female, with mentions to sport. However, this time, Georgie applied a biological idea on her idea of gender rather than through scientific discourses developed in a social context (Butler, 1999). Georgie explains:

'... I want say it like within sport but then I'm just going to like go back to how different like men and women are playing that, but...yeah I guess it's like it is difficult because this is just my thought on it but like with females, like this article I was reading a couple of weeks ago basically said like females are just there to reproduce and they're there to just look after the kids and that and the men are the ones to go out you know do the hard work and get the money and do the men jobs, and the women are meant to be staying at home, do the washing up, look after the kids, but I guess like that gender within sport, it's grown so much like now you do see women's rugby, you see women's football, and that was so different years and years ago when women shouldn't be playing sport full stop' (Georgie).

It can be argued that Georgie's confusion of understanding what constitutes gender can be understood through Butler (1999), who stated sex and gender is built on a binary gender systems. Therefore, this can cause confusion between when to draw a distinct line between the two.

3.6.1 Gender Negotiations with the Coach:

Gender negotiations were also considered with the coach as individuals had varying views on how she constructed her identity and how she was willing to be perceived by the team. The coach was new to the University and joined just after the start of the season. It became apparent, especially in my participant observations that during training sessions, the coach was very much focused on football and performance levels of the team. From what I could observe, there was not much interaction between the team and a coach on a personal level, and at times, I think some players disliked that their coach could not develop a bond over interests beyond football. Perhaps my opinion on this matter would have differed if there was not such a strong focus on winning Varsity, or if I had seen the coach interact with a player one-on-one.

What I did gather from the players during my participant observation, was during training they would at times discuss between themselves if anyone knew of any personal details about her. They would ask each other where else she worked, which teams has she played for and where she lives. Interestingly, they would not ask the coach directly, but rather, seemed amused to play a guessing game amongst themselves about her personal

life. Below is an extract from my participant observations, dated 6th February 2017 that really stood out about the dynamics between the team and relationship with the coach:

‘At the end of the session, the coach asked those who were the 20 who had already been selected to play in varsity to divide themselves in to two teams. This left the other players standing on the touch line watching which they wasn’t happy about. Whilst they were standing at the side, two players asked the rest if they knew about the coach’s partner. No one knew what they were on about so they asked the two girls to explain what they meant. One girl explained that the coach has a girlfriend but the coach’s girlfriend was not a lesbian until the coach ‘turned her’ into one. Some of the girls who seemed surprised by this new information, asked the two girls how they knew this. They replied saying they found out through Facebook and then explained how the girlfriend is good looking. One of the other players proceeded to get their phone out to search up the coach and her girlfriend on social media’.

The way in which the coach wanted to be perceived by the team can be understood through Griffin (1992) who stated lesbian coaches go through an identity management strategy for their portrayal of sexuality and gender. After the session dated 6th February 2017, it could be argued that the coach was conforming to what Griffin (1992) calls ‘completely closeted’ rather than ‘publicly out’. This was because she did not engage in personal conversations with the team, and so there was no requirement for the coach to mention her partner.

During the interview with Alex, she made positive remarks about the coach, stating she ‘had a, a good kind of credit behind her in the football kind of industry already, and on the coaching aspect of things. So there was an immediate level of respect’ (Alex). The professional background of the coach was clearly important to Alex, especially towards the build-up of Varsity. This seemed to allow Alex to develop a trustworthy bond with the coach that extended beyond performance-related conversations. For example, in the interview with Alex and her discussion of Roni, she stated:

‘...and it affected me and I did turn round to the coach and I said that I don’t like it, like I really don’t like, like when she was questioning how she was like she was really drunk and she was like I think I’m gay, I think I’m lesbian blah blah blah and then she thought that she liked Georgie, you know Georgie, and then everyone started taking the piss. Like, and I just thought hang on, when, some of the other girls had been in that situation they’ve come to me. I haven’t laughed. I haven’t, I haven’t made them feel awkward about them doubting themselves’ (Alex).

For Alex, the coach was there on a personal level to mediate between her strong beliefs of allowing Roni to express her sexuality in the footballing space, and preventing it affecting her own relationship with the rest of the team. Despite the coach’s ‘completely closeted’ stance with the team, the close bond she had with Alex to discuss matters such as sexuality, can be referred to as ‘special friendships’ (Griffin, 1992). Typically, these friendships are formed when a player, who identifies themselves as lesbian, forms a friendship with a lesbian coach. It can therefore be questioned if Alex would have confided in a male coach in the same way she did with the female coach.

However, for Maria and Georgie, they did not seem to positively react towards the coach. They both stated the coach prioritised certain players over others if they had the ability to positively influence the formation of the team. However, Georgie did go on to explain ‘...when she came in she was like right let’s get to work, but I do think that did benefit us.’ Interestingly, the conversation about the coach with Georgie developed into a conversation of gender differences between her old male coach in her team prior to starting University, and the female coach the University employed this season:

‘I think, I I get on, I play a lot better when I have a male coach. I don’t know if it’s because like having a female coach this year, I found her quite patronising. I don’t know why that would’ve been but in previous years like, I mean I did play for one club and there was a couple of coaches who I really didn’t get along with at all and I mean that resulted in the club folding, I mean that was clearly just a coaching problem. But then there has been a few amazing male coaches especially when I was younger that I’ve got on with really well and they focus on developing you, but yeah it must have

just been this individual coach because I've never had a female coach before. It might have just been how she coaches but yeah.' (Georgie).

In previous years, Georgie has gained her footballing experience from male coaches. Despite not have the best connections with all her male coaches, Georgie believes the patronising mannerism of the coach as a female, seemed to differ from her male coaches, and so this was one of the main reasons she could not connect with her. The idea that Georgie found the coach quite patronising can be explained through gender differences between the male and female coaches. As Messner (2009) discusses, female coaches have different personalities to male coaches because they are more compassionate and interact in a feminine way. Conversely, male coaches are considered to be harsher and dictate players in their coaching style. Perhaps it is the differences of how a male and a female coach present themselves to players as one of the reasons why Georgie struggled to bond with the coach.

Similarly, Maria said the coach did not positively impact the team as well as she hoped, stating that:

'I don't really get along with her, like she tries to talk, talk to us all but she treats us all a lot like children, like the way we're spoken to is very like patronising and as if we haven't actually played football before and some of the things she says, you just think that's not really necessary for you to say that. She has her favourites as well so...just one of those.' (Maria).

Again, as Georgie explained, Maria found the coach patronising, yet it was the idea that she thought she was being treated like a child, or perhaps mothered during training. It has been suggested that the female gender role that some coaches unconsciously adopt, can either be devalued or celebrate by athletes. Nurturing behaviours are deemed to be inherent and perpetuate femininity (LaVoi, 2016). In comparison to male coaches, female coaches may tend to glorify a female gender role because research states there is little else for women to claim as a source of power, because men are deemed to be more 'qualified' to coach (LaVoi, 2016). Perhaps this is the stance Maria also adopted towards the coach this season, as she had previously been coached by a male outside of university.

3.7 Conclusion:

To conclude this chapter, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) suggests, how individuals portray their identity is dependent on the claims produced by the person asking. With the exception of my gatekeeper and her partner, the rest of the team were not explicitly aware of my sexuality. I would sometimes engage in conversations with some of the men's team players after their training sessions had finished, but I did not make my sexuality apparent. Therefore, when discussing the findings from the data gathered, I must be mindful that some players may not have openly discussed their personal journey and experiences of sexuality because they were unsure on my sexuality. The next chapter, the conclusion, will summarise the thoughts and ideas discussed above from the data collection and relate it back to the research aim and questions.

CHAPTER FOUR: Conclusion

4.0 Introduction:

This chapter will draw on the conclusions from the data, and will discuss how the application of Foucault, queer theory and current empirical research aided explanation of data and responses to research questions. Limitations of this project will be addressed, followed by suggestive ways to move research forward in this area. Revisiting the project's research questions will guide and facilitate the finalising comments to draw succulent conclusions. The research questions will now be addressed one by one in relation to literature.

4.1 Research Questions:

- 1) To what extent is women's football considered a safe space for the negotiation of sexuality?

Interview data relating to the social events within the team, suggests women's football at university is a space for the negotiation of sexuality. However, evidence remains inconclusive whether football is considered a 'safe' space because it is subjective to personal experiences, as demonstrated with Roni and Alex. Within the university, it became clear the football, rugby and hockey teams were deemed spaces for alternate sexualities. In turn, the lesbian gaze was eminent which arguably replaced the male gaze. This may have caused the distancing between the men's and women's football teams, perhaps because football is known as the bastion of male power. Therefore, this allowed space for women to explore their sense of sexuality.

Interestingly, participants who gained a role within the team either this season or next season, seemed content about football being a safe space for sexuality negotiation. Perhaps through these positions of power within the team, individuals were more aware of their visible state to others (Foucault, 1979). They internalised a self-awareness to the dominant discourse of society's label of lesbian in women's football and their roles led to an increase of power which may influence social behaviour within the football team (Foucault, 1990; Nealon 2007). Conversely, those who did not obtain

a role within the team, could be considered a docile body through constant surveillance of players who possessed a position of power. This may have pressurised other players to define their sense of sexuality to the sex/gender dichotomy that was enforced upon them.

The team created the practising of sexuality as a category of normalisation, thus, creating a space for sexuality, which was not always deemed a 'safe' space.

2) To what degree is the labelling of sexuality significant in this sporting space?

The general response to labelling was that most participants did not like being labelled, but would happily label others, in particular, their opponents. This contradicts Fischer and Seidman (2016) because labelling someone as homosexual in women's football is not regarded as outdated.

However, Alex's satisfaction with the labelling of lesbian could be justified through her being considered a docile body who wanted to conform to the norms of sexuality negotiation within the team. Another concept that was highlighted in the data was the participants were only willing to label themselves as lesbian when approached by the men's team during socials. It is almost as if they used this label to ensure the continuing practises of sexuality exploration was remained untouched from hegemonic masculinity, unlike other sports in the university, including pole dancing and cheer leading. When considering queer theory, perhaps players disregarded their individual label because they did not want their identity to remain a fixed determination of themselves. There seemed to be a great deal of sexual fluidity within the team and the connotation of a label would restrict one's negotiation of sexuality.

3) How does sexuality and relationship status affect power relations within the team?

The findings suggest players who had a fixated sexual identity, Alex and Georgie, seemed to struggle with team dynamics, perhaps because they both did not have a role this season.

Alternatively, Jo, Julia and Georgie who all seemed open about their unfixed states of their past and current sexuality stances, did not seem to have issues regarding power relations. This suggests the spread of power was developed from sexual fluidity which was also heightened by possessing a role in the team. Jo and Julia relationship status seemed to unsettle other players with regards to state of play. Perhaps this was because they were considered to be in a position of power that regulate norms: openness towards sexuality and romantic relationships in the footballing space. Additionally, Jo and Julia provide justice that openness of a homosexual relationship in women's university football increases power and an unfixed/open mindedness approach to sexuality became normalised.

4) How do female football players consider their gendered representation?

One of the dominant discourses held within women's football is the stereotype of the butch identity (Caudwell, 2007). It seems that players interviewed dismissed the idea of butch, however, some stated they possessed masculine traits. The interchange between masculine and feminine identity traits relates to Butler's (1990) idea of gender performativity. This was evident when we apply queer theory to the data because identities were adapted and moulded, changing inner beliefs through discourse (Gaunlett, 2008). Perhaps participants reinforced the normative stereotype of the masculine-lesbian (Mennesson and Clement, 2003). Alternatively, as witnessed in the participant observations, some players displayed hyperfemininity which might be viewed as disconnecting identity from lesbianism. Overall, the data suggests that through the performative model, participants did not comply fully to the gendered binary system of male-female, but rather, created their own identity of performing gender.

4.2 Limitations and Future Research:

Connotations surrounding sexuality is dependent on personal and subjective experiences, and so we must consider answers may vary accordingly even in the same sporting space. I envisioned my outsider-insider stance to my participants would mean that I was involved and immersed within the field, yet away from any politics that arose during my time with the team. My neutral standpoint meant players were engaging and trusting towards me, allowing for a detailed account about their negotiation of sexuality. However, a limitation for my method could be that my observer role meant that I could not fully explain phenomena as a team player. There may have been inside information that I was not a party to, and it might be that, as a player, the trust would have been deepened, and so I would have heard more conversations. Additionally, I could have attended the social events which seemed crucial for the negotiation of sexuality. This may have given me a better understanding of my explanation of them.

Future research could continue to look at sexuality within women's football at university by adopting an ethnographic approach to research. This would be beneficial because the researcher can build, progress and maintain relationships with the participants over a longer duration. In turn, this allows for a thick description of events that can be retold authentically through the researcher (Fetterman, 2010). Additionally, adopting an ethnographic approach would allow the researcher to submerge themselves deeply within the field to analyse the queer female gaze and the lesbian gaze, both of which are undermined by the male gaze (Clarke, 2006) and under researched. Applying both of these gazes within a women's university football team may lead to interesting findings, particularly within an ethnography.

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Appendix One: Semi-structured Interview Question Guide

- 1) Why/how did you start to play football?
 - a) What made you continue to play?
 - b) Tell me why you decided to play football rather than other sports.
 - c) What position do you play?

- 2) Tell me how this season went for you.
 - a) What went well this season?
 - b) How could this season have been improved?
 - c) Tell me how varsity went this season.
 - d) How was the varsity team selected?

- 3) Do you enjoy playing in a single-sex team?
 - a) Are the women's football team treated as fairly and equally as the men's team?
 - b) Has anyone got/had a relationship with a player on the men's team?
 - c) Has anyone got/had a relationship with another player on the women's team?
 - d) How would you describe your relationship with other team players?
 - e) Do you see other players outside of football?

- 4) In society, sexual identity is often associated with different labels, for example, heterosexual, homosexual, bi-sexual. When thinking about your own identity, would you apply a sexual identity label to yourself?
 - a) Why?
 - b) Have you heard of any other labels used to represent a person's sexual identity?
 - c) Are these labels used in football?

- 5) What is your understanding of gender?
 - a) Does gender represent your own identity?

- b) Does football represent gender?
-
- 6) As a player on the women's team, have you ever experienced any stereotyping?
 - a) Is stereotyping common in football?
 - b) Have you ever stereotyped any football players?

Appendix Two: Consent Form



Dear _____

This letter is to provide you with some information and ask for your consent regarding a research project that I propose to conduct within the University's women's football team. The data will be used in my thesis for my Masters degree in Physical Education and Physical Activity at Canterbury Christ Church University.

The project will aim to investigate perceptions of sexuality within a University Women's football team. I intend to interview approximately five or six players on the team and observe some of your training sessions. The interviews will be conducted within the University's Campus and each interview will last approximately one hour. Interviews will be conducted by myself, Sasha Pay, discussing sexuality in women's football.

This study will not knowingly involve any risk of harm/injury to the participants, and does not involve the misinforming or deceiving of participants (all players will be given details regarding the study before they agree/disagree to take part). When writing up the study, anonymity of participants and the team will be maintained by using pseudonyms in place of real names. Data will remain confidential, and raw data and consent forms will remain safely stored. The raw data will only be used for this research project, and will be destroyed after this project has been marked.

If you are happy for me to proceed, please sign the bottom of this letter. I have enclosed a second copy for your records.

Thank you,

Sasha Pay

s.pay514@canterbury.ac.uk

07530395532

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I understand that any personal information that I provide to the researchers will be kept strictly confidential
4. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Appendix Three: Participant Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET



A research study is being conducted at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) by Sasha Pay.

Background

Sexuality is arguably the crux of identity and recently, research in sexuality has examined intersex relationships within sport. However, current conclusions suggests the insidiousness of heterosexism and at times the suppressive and exclusive nature of homosexuality which derives the main interest and focal point of this research. Indeed, we live in a sport loving nation that can be at times dominated by male-constructed heterosexual sporting performances. Therefore, this research will focus on women who consider themselves as homosexual to discuss the challenges and positive aspects faced as a homosexual individual within 'male' socially constructed sports, investigating personal experiences and how these contribute to team dynamics. There is expanding literature that helps elude information about bodily representations in sport and analysing individual interpretation of this matter is the main focus of the research. In summary, the purpose of this research is to explore your experiences as a homosexual participant in sports and if your sport provides a positive and inclusive environment for homosexual women. It is hoped that the findings will contribute to current conclusions of homosexual women in sports.

What will you be required to do?

Participants in this study will be required to engage in one semi-structured interview that focus on sexuality in women's sports. These interviews will be undertaken by myself in person, one on one.

To participate in this research you must:

- Participate in a sport and compete within a team as a player.
- Be willing to discuss sexuality.

Procedures

You will be asked to take part in an interview that discusses experiences in sport and sexuality. Using the technique of semi-structured interviewing, it might evolve in unexpected ways. Consequently, the Ethics Committee is aware of the general areas to be explored in the interview, the Committee has not been able to review the exact questions. In the event that the line of questioning does develop in such a way that makes you feel uncomfortable or hesitant you are therefore reminded of your right to refuse to answer any of the questions and also that you may wish to withdraw from the project at any stage with absence of any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

Feedback

All the interviews will be recorded on a digital Dictaphone. This is important so I can capture your thoughts, words, ideas and emotions which is the main reasoning behind making the recording. I will make notes during the interview and you are able to access these notes at any point in time. You are also welcome to request a copy of the results and findings and your interview transcripts to ensure that the study adequately reflects and reports what you were conveying and how you felt about the subject matter during the interview.

Confidentiality

I am very conscious of the rights of individuals that take part in this study and the sensitive nature of the information they discussing. Names, team names and places will be changed

in research reports which protects the identity of the participants. I will obtain no information during the course of the study that will be discussed with anyone else outside the research team without prior written consent from the participants.

When writing up the study, identity protection will be provided by using pseudonyms. All data and personal information will be stored securely within CCCU premises in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the University's own data protection requirements. Data can only be accessed by Sasha Pay. After completion of the study, all data will be deleted and destroyed by Sasha Pay.

Dissemination of results

Results of this project will not be published in academic sources and in no way will it be written in a manner linked to any specific participant. You are welcome to request a copy of the results and your interview transcripts.

Deciding whether to participate

If you have any questions or concerns about the nature, procedures or requirements for participation do not hesitate to contact me. Should you decide to participate, you will be free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason.

Any questions?

Please contact me, Sasha Pay

Telephone: 07530395532

Email: s.pay514@canterbury.ac.uk

Appendix Four: Example of Interview Transcript

File Name: Jo

Duration: 0:42:26

START AUDIO

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so tell me why and how did you start to play football.

RESPONDENT: well I played like football in like the back garden with my brother we are quite similar in age so we are quite competitive so anything he played I played. From a young age he played for the Milwall academy so he was always quite good and I wanted to be good like him. And then when I moved to New Zealand, they my teachers were very stereotypical and were like you're English so you must be good at football. And in that respect like I was like yeah I am and and I haven't stopped playing since really...yeah like in New Zealand it's compulsory to play a summer and a winter sport so I guess if it wasn't for New Zealand then I may not have started playing football because a lot of my friends who I played football with at primary school here don't play football anymore so I think if I was still here I would've stopped as well.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah

RESPONDENT: But in New Zealand we I had to, you had to play a summer and a winter sport, I played football and cricket like I had to at least participate and if I'm participating then I may as well try.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah so when you moved over here, what made you continue on with football as opposed to cricket?

RESPONDENT: Well when I, the reason I came back here was because in 2012 I was going to play in the Olympics for the New Zealand team but I broke my leg a month before but I done a slide tackle into the goal post and broke my leg so I came back anyway to support

the team and I was like I haven't been back to England and I haven't seen my Dad in 10 years, I'm gonna come back and see all my family and then I just never stopped playing like so I came back and I saw everyone and I was like oh I'm going to stay here for a little while and I miss my family and bla bla bla and Dad got me into the [X team] so I played with them until I came to Uni and then I played for the Uni team over [X Team].

INTERVIEWER: Okay so what position do you play?

RESPONDENT: I played centre back for New Zealand but for the Uni team I've played centre mid just the majority of the season because it's more of like a dominant role that you can get the ball a bit more but in our Varsity match I played centre back. Centre back is my position but depending on the team I play wherever.

INTERVIEWER: Okay cool, so tell me how did this season go for you?

RESPONDENT: this season wasn't as good as previous seasons we got relegated we finished second bottom however I think our strong was as strong has it has been in previous years, just the results haven't gone our way.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so tell me what went well this season.

RESPONDENT: I think it went well because we had a coach been bought in and it was nice to not have the biasness in the team. I also think that it...our team was as good as previous years and I think most of our players stayed from last year so it was just the second like the second year together which is quite unusual with a Uni team because like people come and go,...yeah I think, I think we won our Varsity obviously which was our 7th year in a row which is a big match against the University of Kent,...yeah so I think in that respect that, that all went well.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah so why was there biasness beforehand, before you had the coach?

RESPONDENT: I guess that was on my behalf because where I'm captain I get to choose who plays each Wednesday I get to choose who I think has made the effort in previous

games and as much as I tried hard not to pick my friends I'm not very good with confrontation so rather than having arguments I...whereas the coach would happily say you're not good enough and therefore be less bias because she would put the best team out not necessarily the team that would cause me less stress.

INTERVIEWER: How was your relationship with the coach?

RESPONDENT: I really got along with her. We had like a WhatsApp group so if we had any problems or I had a problem that I thought would be better if she addressed rather than me she would, we'd talk about how the games went after each game and what we thought we needed to change. We spoke about players and who we thought done well and didn't and we spoke about what we wanted to do at each training sessions so, because we didn't see her out of the training session it was like a good communication to discuss. I mean I think like she has played for Arsenal ladies, she's coached various teams like Gillingham and Charlton, like various big teams and I think she's a very professional coach and I think she'd...sometimes that didn't come across to other people in the best way because I guess she's from the professional side and they'd come to you and they joined football for it to be fun and make friends and when they was told things they didn't necessarily like it all fell to pieces.

INTERVIEWER: So, you said before you'd speak to the coach if you had a problem. so can you give me an example of where you'd speak to the coach about a particular problem.

RESPONDENT: Okay so a problem that I had this year that I hadn't had in previous years was the second team captain struggling to understand that a second has the second best players in. She would often say that...that it wasn't fair that we had all the best players and she would be left with the not so good players when in reality the first team gets the best players and the second or reserves will get what, like whatever is leftover and yeah that is unfortunate but that's how it, it goes really but when I was, when I spoke to the captain about that she'd be, we'd end up arguing or crying or upset or all those whereas

our coach was very much like a she told her how it was and didn't really care if, if it got anyone upset because that's how it's meant to be.

INTERVIEWER: Okay so tell me how this season could have been improved.

RESPONDENT: I don't know if it could necessarily been improved, we just missed a goalkeeper like a goal keeper is a very important player in the football team if you didn't necessarily have a good striker you could train someone up to be a good striker but a goalkeeper is a completely different position unless you know how to dive or unless you know how your position in a goal, it's very hard to train someone that like something that you learn, like growing up and so with a goalkeeper I think our season would have been completely different.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so how did Varsity go this season.

RESPONDENT: this season Varsity we drew nil-nil in normal time which is 90 minutes but in, but it went straight to penalties. Normally in football we would have extra time for another half an hour but we didn't have enough time due to the timetable because the men's first team were on straight after us so it went straight to penalties and I think we won hmmm 3-1 on penalties, I don't know. We won on penalties and our goalkeeper saved three penalties.

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel that the timetable was a bit restricted?

RESPONDENT: I think we struggled because in previous years we've had a training session at Polo Farm and Polo Farm is like a University like area where we're allowed to train, our training pitch was on an astroterf and within the first month of pre-season training one girl fell over and broke her collar bone and another girl dislocated her knee...which meant that we lost two players before the games had even started and it was purely down to the fact that a sandy astroterf isn't suitable like training pitch whereas the boys were allowed to train at a 3g pitch and Simon Lancton but there was never, there wasn't, apparently there wasn't enough room to cater for us, so we had to, we begged and begged and begged like

the new Sports Sab and she let, we then had to go from half eight to ten o'clock on a Monday night which is probably quite late like, for example...like some of the team mates started work at 6 on a Monday morning and had football til 10 o'clock and by the time we got home it was half ten and and likewise for, it was quite a long day and for the first half an hour of our training session the boys were on the football pitch, we was just allowed around the outside until they'd finished, so the boys were allowed an hour and a half of training and they've got 4 teams and they're allowed an hour and a half training each whereas we had two teams and we're only allowed to be on the pitch for an hour and the other half an hour the boys were allowed.

INTERVIEWER: SO how did people feel about the boys having more time on the pitch?

RESPONDENT: I mean we've argued and we've moaned like many of times like for the past four years about it but...like there has been improvement this year in the fact that we was allowed to go up there. Previous years we had to stay on the astroterf like there was nothing they could do to cater for that, whereas this year they've at least let us up there for an hour which is better than we've had before because even the astroterf doesn't have normal size goals, we've had training hockey goals so like at least...although it's obviously annoying that the boys have got more and whatever which is like we have moaned and argued about but at the end of the day we've been given more than we've ever been given this season so it's better.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, so has there ever been any conflict between the girls and the boys team?

RESPONDENT: I think football more than anything we've never been close to the other teams, previously, like other societies and clubs the boys and the girls team have got along, they'll have joint socials, but our teams didn't necessarily, we don't necessarily get along, we've never had a joint social which is like a drinking, like a team drinking night on a Wednesday night and we've been on tour with them not necessarily with them but like at the same time with them and it's just like they'll chant like sexist like songs at us like go back to your kitchen and things like that. I mean I think the football boys just think they've

got a big ego and they're better than anyone else like that goes and they think they're better than anyone else at the University not just our team, previous years they've been in trouble for writing sexist things on Twitter and in my first no second year sorry they locked on of our team mates in a toilet on the coach and when she got out she hit him but we got in trouble because she hit him, not because they locked her in the toilet. They just think they're ya no pretty cool.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, why do you think the boys and the girls team in football are more distant compared to other sports?

RESPONDENT: Again like I said I think it's because they are arrogant and better than everyone else I mean I think this year we've been a bit closer but that's because the University have asked us to have meetings as a whole team and we've voiced our opinions like we've heard their opinions and they've heard our opinions. I also think there have been people at our University both sides, both men and women that have left now that were the cause of a lot of friction., I mean on a social night out there would be people who would make remarks but they've gone now and I don't know like there's a few of our team mates who are now seeing a few them, so I guess on a whole it's brought us closer. I just think they're a bit arrogant and like I said they think they're better than everyone else so, they think for example, we have two pitches at our University at our home ground which is Stodmarch ground and the boys kick up a fuss if they're on the smaller pitch but that's because they're bigger, better than us apparently and they they need the bigger pitch to play their football when in reality if we've been given that football pitch we want the football pitch like why should they I personally think our women's tea, I no we wouldn't beat the men's team but I think we're at a better standard, we're in a better league than their first team but because we're females we we're not as good., and they've kicked up fusses and refused to play their games on the smaller pitches, but yeah.

SP; So you mentioned some players have a relationship with others on the men's team. Has this affected any team dynamics at all?

RESPONDENT: I don't think so, I think like there's people in relationships all over like we...ya no I only no really of one and they get along well so I, I don't think there's any problems as such.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anyone within your team who has a relationship with someone else in the same team?

RESPONDENT: Yeah there's a lot of girls in our team whose either seeing each other or they're in a relationship or have been in a relationship with or in the past. I mean sometimes that causes friction because if they're no longer together that's a bit awkward but...ya no at the end of the day they they were together knowing full well they were in the same football team, so it's not been too much of a problem that I can see, but it has been in the past.

INTERVIEWER: Why has this been a problem in the past?

RESPONDENT: I guess just the females that have been together they're very loud and they will...I guess loud isn't the right word but they'll make each other feel awkward, they'll I don't know. Like one example is one of our girls was in a relationship for the three, no the two years is that she is at University but then when she left her girlfriend was still here and then her girlfriend started seeing someone else in the team so because like this girl had left she was no longer part of the Uni, part of the football team as such, and they broke up for various reasons but within a very short time she was seeing another girl in our football team.

INTERVIEWER: How did these relationships form? Was it through football or elsewhere?

RESPONDENT: I mean personally, like I, I am in a relationship with a girl on the football team and I don't think, I I would see myself as a lesbian as such before being at University. I think it's just the environment and everyone like sees I don't know like even tries, I guess that's not the right word but you no you're open to a lot of it, like if a girl was to kiss a girl,

no one would frown upon it whereas, all the time I was in previous teams I wouldn't even have considered it because...I didn't think I was that way inclined as such like, like I've been in relationships with boys up until University and so has my girlfriend, so I don't know I just think we're a lot more open and wouldn't like necessarily frown upon it. If, well in our team there's more girls that are lesbians than they are straight so you've probably got more chance to be picked on if you like a boy than you have for liking a girl.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you think there are more people in your team who have more relationships with girls?

RESPONDENT:...like I said I think it's just because like it's not frowned upon like nobody's gonna mock you for liking a girl because it's so open at the University, like every sport, not just football, every sport there's a lot of girls who not, who might not been lesbians but they've tried or kissed a girl and or they've thought about being in a relationship with a girl. I think...that where nobody's gonna judge you or nobody's gonna have an opinion on it like you're open to try. I also think that a lot, some of our girls probably get confused between having a really good friend and and someone who they might like. For example, you no they'll be really good friends and then on a night out they might kiss and then apparently have feelings for each other, which isn't a problem but it's just where we spend so much time with each other. Like we live with each other, we play football three times a week with each other, we go out on a Wednesday night with each other, a lot of us are on the same courses with each other. So I think like just spending so much time with these people you obviously get like develop a bond and sometimes people think forms a relationship, which fair enough like that's their choice, but like I think in that respect if you spend a lot of time with anybody you're gonna develop some sort of feelings, it just depends if you decide if it's gonna be a relationship or a friendship.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think these bonds happen in other sports as well?

RESPONDENT: Oh definitely like, we, I'm quite close with a lot of football, teams at the University and I do no like it's similar in women's hockey and women's rugby like...it happens at University and I think it's just because nobody frowns upon it, nobody's gonna judge you and because there is quite a large group I guess of girls who fancy girls that it, it

just mixes and some like, there's been times where people in our football team have dated someone in the rugby team, or hockey team, or.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think er similar sort of relationships form in Sunday league teams in football?

RESPONDENT: I mean I don't think so, I don't think so in the fact that, because... I think it's because you don't spend so much time with them. You go to training and then you don't see them again until you play a game with them, I, I don't think so because at University there's loads of stereotypes where at University you're allowed to like try and maybe I don't know drink and do drugs too much and try a relationship with a female. I mean there's been a lot of girl relationships at University and once University is over their relationships over. SO whether it's something to do whilst at University I don't know but I think it's just because... they can try and maybe they're away from their parents like if they live in halls or whatever so they can lead a different life without people knowing or, whereas on the Sunday league team... people well, they're women's now so people can be like 40 years old and they can have a family and kids or, Sunday league maybe means that you've chosen this sport and therefore taken it seriously to turn up to play football and go home. Whereas at University you, we, we accept people who haven't even kicked a ball before and they might not necessarily be there to play football, they're there to, to form friends, to be part of the social aspect and then, and meaning there's more opportunities in that regard, respect.

INTERVIEWER: When people leave University, does their sexual orientation change back to how they originally were or...

RESPONDENT: Sometimes, sometimes I don't know there's been girls that have become being lesbian and left being lesbian, like me for example I'm, you know I consider myself straight to start with and now I'm in a relationship with a girl and hopefully, I don't think it's going to end now University has ended, and there's been girls who have tried, or seeing girls now and knowing full well they're never going to tell their parents, they're never going to tell their family, and I think without being able to do that I don't think they can continue

being in a relationship with a girl once they leave University. I mean, I just think it depends I think...if I like...If I hadn't come to the University and felt so open about maybe liking girls then I don't think I, I wouldn't be in a relationship with a girl now, like if I didn't feel so open, I'd still be wanting to see boys. Like if I was to walk down the street, I'd like talk to like girls like Julia whose my girlfriend and I'd comment that they're attractive, I'd never walk down the street and comment that other females are attractive. So could that maybe mean that, that because of University I'm in a relationship with a girl but like I wouldn't consider myself as a lesbian because I don't find females attractive.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, so if you were still at University, but you didn't play football, how do you think your sexual orientation would be then?

RESPONDENT: Oh I 100% think that I would be straight in the respect that, that as I said previous, I find boys attractive I don't find girls attractive. I think like I said earlier that just being around females all the time I may have got confused between a good friendship and a relationship but we've been together three years now and, and you know a relationship has formed but...the girlfriend that I'm with now when we first knew each other we didn't like each other at all like we, I was very quiet I kept myself to myself and she's a very loud person, likes to be like the joke of a group and I thought that she, that she was very loud and obnoxious and I thought that she needed to be like a fresher that needed to be like told to calm down and she thought that I was rude and arrogant because I never spoke to her but its just our personalities were completely different and then after spending a night out together like you know we kissed and we've not we've been together pretty much ever since so..I think yeah I think initially we got confused between a friendship and a relationship and if I wasn't in the football team I don't think...that would of happened.

INTERVIEWER: So how did other people in the football team react to your relationship with Julia?

RESPONDENT: I mean initially they they encouraged both of us not to like on a drunken night out we said that like in a social we said that we kissed girls but we'd never be in a relationship with a girl we never fancied girls and we both said that and people would say

to us look your just doing this its not what you want like, like Julia was in a four year relationship with a boy and she broke up with him and we were together a week after and a lot of people anyone would say that too soon anyone would say like your just being silly like. you know its just a rebound or whatever those things are called and now I'd agree but we're still together now so...I don't know like I think as people say its cheesy but sometimes you need to be opposites or whatever sometimes being different makes it easier like we are very similar in a lot of ways we like a lot of the same things we have a lot of the same opinions like when we talk about things we just have completely different personalities like I'm quite shy I'm quite, I'm not very good with confrontation whereas like in my family with like just me and my brother you know in her family she's got five sibling, like we're just completely different like backgrounds and personalities in that respect but we have the same like interests

INTERVIEWER: So in society people often use sexual identity labels. So, for example like bi-sexual, homosexual, lesbian, gay etc. When you think about your own identity would you apply a label to yourself?

RESPONDENT: I mean, I I, it's hard. I mean at this moment I'd say I'm a lesbian because I'm only in a relationship with a female but like as I've said to you previously I don't find females attractive. And if I wasn't to be with Julia I'd say that I was straight., if I was to tick a box now I would say that I was a lesbian because I'm in a relationship with a girl.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah

RESPONDENT: But...if I, yeah, I honestly think that if I wasn't with Julia I wouldn't ever be in a relationship with a girl again because it's too much hard work

INTERVIEWER: What makes you say it's hard work?

RESPONDENT: I just think like when girls argue they argue they shout they scream like there's a very emotional sort of, whereas boys. I don't know whenever I've been in a relationship with a boy you message or see each other once every you know week or so two week like twice a week or whatever. You talk to each other when you wanna talk to each other but when you're in a relationship with a girl nah from the day we started talking three years we've not spent a night apart. and sometimes that's too much and Julia and I both said now we said that sometimes we wish that we'd only spent two nights a week with each other because now...sometimes we get on top of each other and were annoyed with each other but we wouldn't want to leave each other for a night because then we know that like we know that it's serious. Whereas if you've fallen out with your boyfriend for example you can not talk to him for three days calm down and everything's fine. Whereas, when we argue we then have to get back into the same bed together. And not talk to each other and I think that escalates it more because I'll have the hump that she's not talking to me she'll have the hump that I'm not talking to her.

Whereas if we both spent some time apart I think it would be completely different and like we message each other all day everyday and that's just so much hard work like I want to obviously like you do but...I would never of done that before I would never be on my phone like I'd be the sort of person that wouldn't take my phone out with me because if I needed to talk to someone I'd just check my phone four hours later. Whereas now if I don't have my phone on me and I don't reply within, I know I'm making her out to be this paranoid person but I'm the same if she doesn't reply to me I know she's got her phone on her. Like why aren't you replying to me? Whereas I think it would be different with a boy I think you know we're just very emotional were very like argue, like we don't argue often but when we argue it's a big argument whereas I personally think since being in a relationship with a boy I never have had an argument remotely as extreme as the ones we have now

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so do you think in society these labels should remain as they are or do you think they should change?

RESPONDENT: I guess it's hard because you know people, there's always going to be labels there's always going to be someone wanting to know like, in my dissertation I done mine on disabilities and and about the Paralympics and how you've got to have a degree a label to be put in a class like I don't know for athletics for example you've got to be in different classifications, and that's somebody without a disability putting a label on someone just so that they can compete just because someone's decided your that way or, or for example if someone has got cerebral palsy they've got to determine how bad your cerebral palsy is as to what basketball team you're in. And so people always have to have labels because that's how it is but I don't necessarily think like, like one day for example in my dissertation this girl with cerebral palsy would be able to walk fine and people would be like you're a cheater you can walk but then other days she'd be really in pain and couldn't even walk to the toilet and would require hoist to get her in and out of her of a bed and so therefore she wold be at the lower like the lower spectrum or you know more severe spectrum of her disability. So I think like it changes people change like I think I wouldn't be able to put a label necessarily on myself but then people always ask people always ask like are you a lesbian and I just respond yes because at this moment in time I am. But that wouldn't necessarily mean that in three years time that I'm not with the same girl I'm with now...that I'd still be a lesbian.

INTERVIEWER: How does it make you feel when people ask if you are a lesbian?

RESPONDENT: I don't know I guess like...I guess people always going to have their opinion like initially your scared to tell people that you're a lesbian or that you're seeing a girl or like a lot of times when I'd go to family gathering people would ask have you got a boyfriend yet and I'd have to be like no I've got a girlfriend or when I start new jobs people are like have you got a boyfriend and I'm like not I've got a girlfriend and their faces are like oh oh I've said something wrong but I think more so people are just shocked because I wouldn't necessarily look like a typical lesbian like stereotypical but if people would come to me and I'd say I'm a lesbian they like oh you don't look like one and the same with Julia like were often, I guess the stereotype would be tattoos shaved head like quite butch and

neither one of us are that and in a club if someone's trying to flirt with me and I'd be like nah I'm a lesbian they'll be like yeah everyone says that like prove it and sometimes that annoys because why should I have to prove that I'm seeing a girl. Why should I prove that I'm a lesbian just so these boys think that I'm not lying to them. Like so that's one thing that annoys me like if we were to go down the street people would like double look because I guess again because we don't look like people that should be holding hands. But it doesn't really bother me know because I don't really care what other people think like everyone in my family knows and they haven't got a problem with it so I don't really care what anyone outside thinks

INTERVIEWER: So how people in like the football space felt about you being a lesbian or in a relationship with a girl?

RESPONDENT: I don't, I don't really think, I mean their always going to have an opinion because like my friends are her friends and were all in the same environment but everyone now like we've been together this is our third year being together and everyone your only normally at university for three years so everyone that's still here knew us in a relationship and were still in a relationship so. I guess they don't really have an opinion I guess they think that you know we come as a pair like if they ask one of us to do something it normally means that were both going to do it. But I don't really think like we don't really shove it in people's faces unless people were in our football team, I guess when freshers come, when we initially tell them or they find out were together they their shocked only in the fact that were not all over each other at training you know we are different people I'm quite shy like Julia likes to be in a middle of a circle like telling a joke and we don't have to be stood there holding hands while she does that like, I can be with another group of girls talking about something completely different...erm but I don't think it has an effect as such like were all quite good. The only I guess the only problem we would have is if we were to get into an argument that maybe on a night out people often struggle who to like go to because you know if someone was to come and ask if I was alright like Julia might be upset that they've come and asked me and not her and vice versa if it was the other way round I could be upset like why are they seeing if Julias alright but I do we know we knew that we were all

friends and normally we don't argue that much so we haven't really put our friends in that situation.

INTERVIEWER: Did you both meet through football?

RESPONDENT: I guess so like we I never knew her before university I never knew her outside of football so I guess that we did meet each other

INTERVIEWER: Do you think you still would have had the same relationship outcome if you'd met outside of football?

RESPONDENT: I don't think so only in the respect that we are completely different people like she's like I said very loud I'm quite quiet and...we are different people but once we got to know each other we do have a lot of interests but like I said initially we didn't like each other because we thought various opinions of each other and unless we had to talk I don't think like if we weren't in football I don't think we would of spoke.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah so...what is it about football in particular that have made these sort of good connection relationships develop?

RESPONDENT: I don't really I know I think more because we have to train we had to see each other like we have to we go on holiday and stuff I guess there's just opportunities where you spend a lot more time with each other and like where I am captain of the team I do have to speak to people I do have to ask them if their alright and in previous years Julia last year was social sec which means your in charge of the nights out so she has to speak to people and this year she's president and she's there if anyone's got any problems so she like we both have had various roles in the club where we have to speak to people whether

their our cup of tea or not. We there, were part of the committee that has to make everyone feel welcome make everyone feel part of the team. And I guess you know that's probably why we've spoken.

INTERVIEWER: So tell me what happens in social events

RESPONDENT: so there's two social secs and they on a Wednesday night there'll be a different theme which we get dressed up in fancy dress everyone takes it quite seriously so everyone looks as silly as each other and you sit round a table and just play drinking games. Some that you know that I've played outside of uni and some that I've learnt through uni. And you find out like you play a game like I have never which involves someone ask a question and if you've done it you stand up and drink and if you haven't you don't. So you find out about stuff about people that you wouldn't necessarily know unless you've played games like this. and then we have a joke and we have a laugh and then we go to the night club at the end of the night and

INTERVIEWER: What do you usually find out about someone in a social compared to everyday settings?

RESPONDENT: Like I said like in games like I have never you can say I have never kissed a girl and people that have kissed a girl will stand up and drink and...like our team for example the majority bar maybe two will stand up so I, doesn't necessarily force the girls sitting down to go oh I'm going to kiss a girl but like it says that you're not going to get judged if you haven't. like where the where at university people come from different backgrounds different you know ethnic groups different sexualities were all together just because you have a common interest of football your all put in the same team because we welcome anybody and people will have you know different stories to tell different you know lives that they've lead that it's all in this one room whereas at school you know you can be put into a class based on how smart you are. You can be put in a class based on you

know what area you live whereas at university it's literally anyone and anything and any anyone all together in this room and I guess regardless of if you have an opinion on something that your shown that you have to experience it because normally there's someone else in the team that it does.

INTERVIEWER: So how are people responding to these drinking games which talk about kissing girls and things?

RESPONDENT: I mean you know it's your choice to turn up to socials I you don't like it you don't have to come like. But I think being open and now like we all know everything about each other like there's nothing to hide like you can laugh and you can joke like sometimes people make fun of something you done like last week or they might joke and you know it might then be put on the back of your top like when we have tops made up for events and it will have like I don't know previous ones has been like todger dodger and things that are like meant to be funny or a personal story about yourself that by looking at that top its something that has happened throughout the year that everyone else has found funny. But because were laughing everyone's laughing at everyone's expense not just you like. And if it was something to be particularly that they didn't like then we wouldn't bring it up its just we are so open we laugh about things we joke about things but if it was bothering someone we wouldn't then continue joking about it.

INTERVIEWER: How many people turn up to social events?

RESPONDENT: I mean this year not so many maybe fifteen but previous years in my first year we'd have forty forty-five. I think it just depends you know like we've had a lot of third years in our team this year and and therefore uni does come first but in my first year second year there was a lot of freshers and there's a lot of people where you know you do drink a bit too much and you can turn up. I think it also depends on the social sec like if their welcoming and if their like enjoyable if they make you laugh they turn up. Whereas if their

a bit quiet and don't say a lot like this year. I mean its not their fault its just who they are but you know its hard we played a lot of the same games each week so you didn't learn anything new. we sat in we were in a pub that was quite loud so you often couldn't hear what was going on so we just didn't it wasn't as enjoyable but you know a lot of the team come

INTERVIEWER: Have these social events affected how you all play on and off the pitch?

RESPONDENT: I think like it I think again I think socials learn more about each other more of a friendship you have more more of a bond with each other because you know more than someone. You know if you know a lot of stories about anybody your going to be close to them. Or you've built like this trust because they know stories that have been told and not necessarily told everyone else. But it also causes friction in the fact like I said previously like their all my friends and I don't want to argue with them like when I pick teams when I when I have to decide who's in the first and second team like because they are my friends and I don't want to upset them so there are pros and cons. When if two girls were to fall out I don't know for various reasons it could be evident on a football pitch but I think we're all adults now like my team we play in the first team we do take football seriously because we're all at a decent standard of playing football and so I'd hope that if anyone had a problem like a social problem with anyone that has happened off the pitch I would hope that it wouldn't occur on the pitch. But I mean I don't know if that's necessarily the case for the second team where you know there are a lot of mixed abilities.

INTERVIEWER: Can you give me an example where either yourself or somebody else has given a story about themselves in a social event and opened up to the rest of the team?

RESPONDENT:...I don't know I guess like when like I have never's and stuff when people you know say I, people I don't know there's stories for example you know when someone may have had their first kiss behind a shed or something I don't know like I don't know and

we'd ask them to tell the story and they'd tell the story of how it happened what happened what was involved and you know because somebody's opened up another person might, would feel comfortable to tell their story and

INTERVIEWER: What's the main theme to these stories?

RESPONDENT: Its normally like sexual or like if they've kissed anyone or I don't know like any their sexual experiences or it can literally be about anything like sometimes they'll say my favourite colours blue like literally about anything but often you know when your drunk it ends up it dirty or ends bit rude like

INTERVIEWER: Okay so what is your understanding of gender?

RESPONDENT: I do know that there's a difference between sex and gender. I mean I've never studied sociology so I don't really know the extent but I know that like some people can they could be either a man or a woman but not feel like their male or female., I do not that I guess that comes with like your sexuality because you're a man doesn't necessarily mean that you like a woman. like I do understand all that but not well enough to tell a story about it.

INTERVIEWER: That's okay so does gender represent your identity?

RESPONDENT:, I guess so I guess because I don't, I'm a female and I'm not following you know societies norms of liking a male and I guess I'm a female and I take sport seriously which again is not seen in society but and I guess that represents gender in the fact that I'm not, I'm expressing my own values not because the way the person like the female

INTERVIEWER: So does football represent gender?

RESPONDENT: I guess again I guess similar like sport isn't it like sports very like male orientated like men play sport men play football. I think that men in football are completely different to women in football

INTERVIEWER: Whys that?

RESPONDENT: You know like for the the top paid woman football transfer was sixtythousand. And a man could be you know millions like ridiculous amount men get shown on tele week in week out women don't but that's across every sport I guess not necessarily just football. I think football is becoming more of like evened out in that there's just as many females playing it now as males and I guess its not such a masculine sport and in fact that people often say that men who play football are wooses or girls or and to be more of a masculine male you play rugby or...you know. But I don't know I guess like football, I guess football where it is such an easy sport to play you literally need a ball and every I assume my opinion is a lot of houses will have at least a form of a football and therefore it is inviting for anybody any age any to at least kick a ball in the back garden whether you take it seriously or not. And where football is such a big sport like I read before 98% of the world play football. There's often a lot of like clubs that you can just turn up to on a Sunday or there's a lot of like like after school clubs that involve football or like school holiday tournaments which involve football. And they might not necessarily involve a different sport

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. So do you enjoy playing in a single sex team?

RESPONDENT: I guess I've only really ever played in a single sex team so I don't really know. I never really took football seriously at a young age when it was mixed and since then

growing up I've I've just played in women's team. So I guess I can't really comment in that respect but I you know I think I could imagine playing with boys it can be less bitchy it can be less they I guess you know it could be more aggressive. I guess that's just me being stereotypical but I think you know footballs football and if you enjoy playing football I guess it doesn't matter whether you're a man or a woman.

INTERVIEWER: Okay so as a player on a woman's team have you ever experienced any stereotyping?

RESPONDENT: I guess like people are shocked like with how I guess that our team are quite a good football team like that. I don't know like in where I do P.E at university and will play football in a class people are shocked maybe that I am as good as as some of the men in the team. I wouldn't say not all of them like I'm stereotypical I think that men are always going to be I am I have that opinion I think men are going to be better bigger stronger like I do and its just the way that their built but I, what people don't think it that women can be just as good if they try or if practice.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think stereotyping is common in football?

RESPONDENT:...I don't know like I think we are open like I guess in rugby to play a position you've gotta be a certain height a certain weight a certain like if you're a winger you've gotta be fast. Whereas in football you don't necessarily have to be fast you could be a different type of winger you could be someone that crosses a ball and therefore you don't need to move at all but I don't think there's stereotyping in positions but I think there's probably stereotypes in like a lot of people will come to your team and stereotype that a lot of us are lesbians but their not wrong like a lot of us are or a lot of us are in relationships with women and so I guess to some respect but then I personally think that them stereotypes are true like as much as you know it's horrible to say that were lesbians and

were this and were that but a lot of us have experienced it or are in a relationship with a girls so their not wrong

INTERVIEWER: And how does that make you feel when people stereotype, on your sexuality?

RESPONDENT: Like I said like you know people have their opinions their always going to but their not wrong there is a lot of us that are in a relationship with women and they can call us lesbians they can call us this they can call us butch but I know full well I'm no butch I think I'm tall and reasonably skinny and I'm not butch. Things like that don't offend me but I am in a relationship with a girl so therefore I am a lesbian.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you think people often always use the word butch?

RESPONDENT: I guess I guess it's just a way of saying you know to describe a lesbian because they are more manly than a woman. Like a butch lesbian would be someone that looks a lot like a man that's quite big that probably has shaved hair probably tattoos which is often you know a lot of mean would be like that and I guess there is evidence of people that do look that way to be lesbians.

INTERVIEWER: Okay and just concluding up so you were the captain for how many years?

RESPONDENT: I've been captain this is my third year I'm leaving university now so I'll only be captain for three years but I've been captain for the longest time that anyone has at the university. Partly because you know I've been here for four years and so its enabled me to be captain for three years

INTERVIEWER: and how do people react to your role as a captain?

RESPONDENT: I guess like you know for a lot of the people its what they've known like I've been captain since they've started for example Julia I've been captain in her first year and I was captain in her last. I guess you know people would have to vote me to be captain the next year if its not what they wanted. But also it might prevent people from going up as captain in previous years because they know that I've been captain and because I'm going up again they might feel like oh I'm not going to do it because, so I might of prevented some people from doing something that they might of done but I think I feel like you know, I'm of how well we've done and I'm proud of what like I've achieved and I think I am an easy person to talk to and I think people can come and not feel intimidated by me. But sometimes you need to be the strong like assertive person in charge. Like for example previous years when I took training people didn't take me as seriously because I wouldn't tell them off if they weren't doing it properly or they weren't putting in the effort but we've we've done well previous years so that that could be said but we were still winning and you know. So I don't know what, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: As the captain of the team whose also in a relationship with another girl on the team, how do you think new players reacted to you?

RESPONDENT: I guess, I guess like I've said throughout like where were like all in the same situation and like people know my story people know things that I've been up to they can relate to me or they can like you know they could like or dislike things that I've done. I guess it could give them like if they wanted to try I guess try is not the right word but if they wanted to experience being in a relationship with a girl like I guess two people that are that are like a committee or like seen as authoritative in the team like you wouldn't be judged but I don't think me being a lesbian has an affect on like new people coming it because I don't rub it in people faces like I wouldn't go up to people and force them to be any way, their entitled to like whoever do whatever. I am in a relationship with a girl and she's also in the team but that doesn't like I don't like yeah like a said rub it in peoples

faces like in fact when were in football that's the time we spend a lot of time apart from each other. You know so I don't I don't think that that has any effect on anyone coming in

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Cool thank you

RESPONDENT: That's alright

END OF AUDIO