Constructing the Active-Body: A Sociological Investigation

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Abstract

This thesis is set against a backdrop of continued initiatives by the Government for promoting the 'active-body' as a central tenet of its current and future health policy. The purpose of this study was to construct an in-depth investigation into the processes and mechanisms involved in participating in sports and physical activities. The research is centred on exploring the participation experiences of weightlifters, runners and golfers. The data for this study were derived through employing a variety of qualitative based research methodologies, including participation observation, informal and semi-structured interviews and focus group sessions. In this respect data was generated that not only illuminated the processes behind participation in sports and physical activities, but also the *differences* between participating in weightlifting, running and golf.

The findings demonstrate that the processes and mechanisms of participation are complex and multi-layered. However, through employing the works of Bourdieu on the different forms of cultural capital, and the works of Goffman on the presentation of the self, this study shows that the *key* determinant to a successful engagement is the development and maintenance of an acceptable social identity amongst participating others. Furthermore, this study shows that as sports and physical activities are *embodied* activities, the possession of an active-body identity, constructed through the accumulation of appropriate physical, social and sub-cultural capitals, serves as an important 'identifier' by which the social identity amongst participating others is conferred.

It is through investigating and maintaining in the active-body and the subsequent development of an acceptable social identity that individuals derive a sense of belonging, which in turn engenders the ontological security about the physical self that serves to stabilise long-term patterns of participation.

[Key words: Bourdieu, Body, Cultural Capitals, Exercise, Goffman, Participation Patterns, Social Identity]

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Abbreviations

BAWLA	British Amateur Weightlifting Association
BMI	Body Mass Index
CASC	Community Amateur Sports Clubs
CHD	Coronary Heart Disease
DHSS	Department of Health and Social Services
EGU	English Golfing Union
GHQ	General Health Questionnaire
HMAD	Hypertensive-Metabolic-Artherosclerotic disease. A systematic disease of the vascular system.
NHS	National Health Service
OXSRAD	Oxford and District Sport and Recreation for the Disabled
PGA	Professional Golfers Association
SEAA	South England Athletics Association
SLGA	Scottish Ladies Golfing Association
WGU	Welsh Golfing Union

Glossary of Terms

Active-body:	With the term 'active-bodies' I am referring to the body's physical dimensions. Implicit in this is that possession of an active-body suggests a greater capacity to perform physically orientated tasks and elevated levels of cardio-vascular fitness.
Adonisation:	With this term I am referring to the increasing (sexual) representation of the 'ideal' male physique as that portrayed by the Greek statues of Adonis.
Bagman/woman:	A non-participating person who dutifully accompanies their partners to sporting events (and looks after their bags).
Body project:	In Giddens' concept of late modernity the position of the body transcends being confined to a physical entity and may instead be regarded as an action-system. Thus, the body becomes a 'project' that can be developed and moulded to suits the wants and needs of the individual to which it belongs (Giddens, 1991).
Bodybuilding:	The use of exercise regimes in order to construct an idealised body shape. For males, this would usually include using heavy weights to build a heavily muscled physique. For females it would usually entail a mixture of weight training and aerobic work to provide a leaner and more toned physique.
Exercise:	Form of physical activity that is usually performed on a repeated basis over an extended period of time with a specific external objective such as improvement of fitness, physical performance or health.

Fitness:	As defined by the World Health Organisation, fitness is "the ability to perform muscular work satisfactorily" (WHO, 1968).
Golf course:	Term used by many golfers that is interchangeable with golf club.
Intensity:	Expressed in either absolute or relative terms. In absolute terms (for example x KJ/min) it is often used for classification within epidemiological studies. In relative terms it is used as an indicator as to the level of physical activity taken. For example, occasional jogging with friends is a less intense form of exercise than following a training program for a marathon.
Ischemia:	Lack of blood supply to the organs or tissue (Websters, 2000)
Olympic lifting:	Olympic lifting comprises of the two speed lifts of Snatch and the Clean and Jerk. These are the two lifts that are performed at the Olympic games. Being fast and requiring high levels of skill, practice of these lifts is becoming increasingly rare in Britain where there is a shortage of coaches and venues to practice in.
Participation cycle:	Participation in sports, physical activities and exercise regimes comprises of a beginning phase wherein the participant contemplates the activity to be undertaken, a continuation phase wherein the participant actively engages in pursuing the activity and a discontinuing phase wherein the participant first considers and then actively stops taking part. Together these three phases constitute a participation cycle. Participation cycles can either be confined to a particular episode of taking part in a physical

activity, or refer to the life long pattern of cumulatively taking part in a range of physical activities.

Patterns of participation: Simultaneously refers to the choices made in respect to the types of sport undertaken the numbers participating, the frequency of participation, the depth or extent of participation and the duration of participation in respect to the long term lifecycle.

Physical activity: Physical activity comprises any body movement produced by the skeletal muscles that results in a substantial increase over the resting energy expenditure

Power lifting: A specialised form of weightlifting concentrating on the three power lifts of Bench Press, Squats and Deadlifts. These lifts are generally performed more slowly than the two Olympic lifts and require less dynamic skills. As exercises, they form the core of most advanced bodybuilding regimes.

Sets/reps: Weightlifting exercises are usually performed as a number of sets of repetitions. For example, a group of ten sit-ups (10 reps) are repeated five times (5 sets) with a rest after each set.

Sport: Form of physical activity that involves an element of competition

Spot: Spotting is where one weight trainer helps another to complete an exercise by safely guiding the weight when the weight trainer tires. The role of a Spotter is to both encourage the weight trainer and to help push him/her to their limits. However, there is a degree of skill and strength required to spot well. In respect to this, it is unusual to find a novice spotting for an advanced lifter.

Warm-down:	Post-activity exercises designed to stop the body stiffening up. They are often very similar to those for used for warming up the body, but with the emphasis placed on stretching.
Warm-up:	Pre-activity exercises designed to warm up the muscles and prepare the body for physical activity. These often include gentle jogging to get the 'heart beating' plus a short period of stretching.
Weight training:	The use of free weights and/or machines to develop fitness and body tone.
Weightlifting:	Comprises of the two Olympic lifts of the 'snatch' and the 'clean and jerk'. Weightlifters primarily train for competitions rather than the development of the body (cf. bodybuilders).

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Introduction

The origins of this thesis lie in my life-long involvement in sports and physical activities. Practising sports has long been an integral part of my lifestyle, something that I have rarely thought to question. From going for the occasional jog, to training alongside world champions, there appears to be no reason for my actions; it is just something that I do. Yet I could not be unaware that taking part in sport, still more maintaining that participation over time is something that many people avoid. I was curious about this disjunction between my own involvement in sport and others' lack of participation. C. Wright Mills observed, "You must learn to use your life experiences in your intellectual work" (Mills, 1959:216). On these grounds, the subject of sports participation seemed to be an ideal topic for investigation.

Defining the problem

In its many guises, the phenomenon that is modern sport has become an integral part of modern society. In terms of total economic expenditure within Great Britain the sports market represents a multi billion pound industry (Sports Council, 1992). Culturally, sport has become an important facet of daily life; in 1985, more people tuned into the Wimbledon tennis finals than watched Coronation Street (Euromonitor, 1987). However, it is the relationship between sports and health that formed the initial premise upon which the research for this thesis is constructed. As will be demonstrated, not only is the positive relationship between participation in sports and enhanced health epidemiologically proven, but it is also a relationship that a large proportion of our population accepts.

It is important to recognise that 'sport' is a very subjective term. It readily evokes not only physical performance, but also competitive engagement. To some 'real' sport is categorised by a degree of physical exertion, (a position that includes middle distance running but not shooting). For others, skill is a major factor (a position that includes snooker but not hill walking). Where competitiveness is regarded as the defining factor, sport includes chess but excludes aerobics, the latter being more an exercise regime that does not normally include an element of competition between participants. The reaction

of some to the elevation of synchronised swimming to Olympic Status demonstrates the ambiguity of the term sport. Despite including physical exertion, skill and competitiveness, some do not recognise synchronised swimming as being a 'proper' sport. As the provision of improved health is related to the 'physical' component of sport, for the purposes of this thesis I will take the definition of sport as 'an activity that involves a substantial element of physical exercise'. In this respect and throughout this thesis, the terms sports and physical activities are regarded as being closely related. Hence, under my use of the term, sport excludes chess but includes aerobics.

The relationship between practising sport and the corresponding improvements in health is one that the government sees as being a central tenet for the improvement of the health of the nation (Dept. of Health, 1999a). However, the general concern that culturally we are gradually becoming a nation of sedentary, obese and hence unhealthy individuals (Watts, 2002) highlights the difficulties of implementing such a policy. Furthermore, a level of physical activity needs to be maintained as part of the long-term lifestyle if it is to be an effective mechanism for improving health. This has profound implications because not only are fewer young people taking up sports, but participation rates further decline with increasing age (Roberts, 1989). The following problem therefore describes the context of this study:

"How to enable the participation in sports and physical activities in order that they become an integral part of the long term lifestyle?"

The objectives of this study

Though laudable, the above question lacks a contextual framework around which a solution can be constructed. For example, is the solution to be couched in terms of the economic, logistical or cultural? Furthermore, the question also presupposes the existence of knowledge about the mechanisms by which individuals practice sports and physical activities. However, though there exists a large body of knowledge about how to practice sports in terms of developing physical competences and health (Heyward, 1991), there has been little qualitative research aimed at understanding the processes behind participation (Wright, Macdonald & Groom, 2003).

Sports are not something that people 'just do', the relationships between individuals and their participation in sport and physical activities are far more complex. There *are* reasons behind why some participate and others do not, and therefore the developing of meaningful solutions to the problem of understanding participation starts at understanding 'how' and 'why' individuals participate. Therefore, the objective of this study is to contribute to the development of an understanding of the processes and mechanisms that combine to construct the observable patterns of participations[1]. In so doing the thesis will also contribute useful knowledge to solutions to the problem of enabling more individuals to participate in sports and physical activities.

The work undertaken

As the primary source of knowledge about the processes of participation lies within the experiences of the individuals participating, the research was undertaken using the grounded theory method (Glazer & Strauss, 1967). Information was generated by using the research techniques of participant observation, personal interviews and focus groups (Bryman, 2001). In keeping with a naturalistic enquiry, wherever possible the research was conducted in the environments within which participation naturally occurs. Choice of whom to study was informed by logistics. Not only do sports clubs provide a location at which participants can be accessed easily, they also provide unique and identifiable 'environments' within which any research findings can be contextualised. Accordingly, the fieldwork was undertaken with the members of the Headington Road Runners, Hinksey Heights and Studley Wood golf courses and the users of the heavy weights room of the Oxford Brookes University sports hall that is widely used by members of the local community as well as the university's students and staff. By choosing the specific activities of weight training, running and golf the research encompassed a spectrum of socio-economic and physical variants. At one extreme, the golfers represent a traditionally elitist activity with a relatively low physical component; at the other, the

[1] In using the term 'patterns of participation' I am simultaneously referring to the choices made in respect to the types of sport undertaken, the numbers participating, the frequency of participation, the depth or extent of participation and the duration of participation in respect to the long term lifecycle.

runners represent a low cost highly physical activity. Furthermore, all the clubs studied are closely located, drawing their members from similar catchment areas. This in turn allowed for a more rigorous comparison of research findings to be made than if each of the clubs drew its members from disparate areas.

Outline of the thesis.

The thesis is divided into three parts. Part 1 consists of a literature review, a detailed account of the research methodology used, and a descriptive outline of the sports clubs studied. Within the literature review, I provide a synthesis of current knowledge about the relationships between exercise and health, and the historical patterns and processes of participation. In addition, I explore the applicability of the works of Giddens, Bourdieu and Goffman in respect of constructing a sociological interpretation of my results. The research methods chapter chronologically documents the research work undertaken, offers a critique of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and describes how by using this methodology my research developed. This chapter is supplemented by a research audit presented in Appendix 3 that outlines the key stages of my research, and provides an overview of the rationales behind any decisions made regarding methodology. The final chapter of Part 1 is an outline description of the general workings and practices of the sports clubs studied. I have included this chapter to provide a 'context' within which readers can evaluate the characteristics of the clubs, their members and the corresponding differences in the types of activities they practise.

Part 2 of the thesis presents the results of the fieldwork. It consist of four chapters each relating to a primary aspect of the research undertaken. Chapter 4 explores the relationship between individuals and their bodies, whilst chapter 5 looks at how the processes of social interaction affect the patterns of participation. Chapter 6 explores the construction of the sporting identity, and finally, chapter 7 investigates how the different activities each have their own sub-cultural identity and how such identities in turn influence the observable patterns of participation.

Part 3 of the thesis provides an interpretation of the results presented in Part 2. Chapter 8 provides a reflexive account of the research undertaken. In chapter 9, I employ Bourdieu's concepts of the forms of cultural capital to both identify and explore the

various processes that are involved in practising sports and physical activities. Chapter 10 builds on chapter 9 through using the work of Goffman to look at the relationship between the processes of participation and the subsequent development of elements of an acceptable social identity amongst participating others. In this manner chapter 10 provides an insight into the mechanisms that lie behind the observable patterns of participation. The final chapter explores how policy regarding how to improve the levels of physical activity within our society can be informed by the knowledge generated by this study. The final chapter also includes a review of the work undertaken for this thesis and provides recommendations for future research.

Terms of reference

Within this thesis, I employ several terms of reference that are used by the participants of the study. In this manner, I aim to more accurately represent their views and opinions. However, the use of such terms can be confusing to the reader who has little knowledge of the subcultures being studied. For example, whereas the runners refer to themselves as belonging to a running 'club', the golfers refer to themselves as belonging to a golf 'course'. Given the confusion this may cause, I have provided a glossary that defines all the terms used.

Part 1: An Analysis of the Problem

Chapter 1: Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

This thesis explores the processes involved in undertaking physical activities as an integral part of individuals' long-term lifestyles. Any suggestion that individuals may be categorised as belonging to one of two opposing groups, either those who regularly participate or those that do not, is over simplistic. There are gradations between participants and non-participants, as well as difficulties in allocating people to such categories. The reasonings behind the choices of whether or not to participate are equally difficult to unravel, as the rationales for participating are as diverse as the individuals making their choices. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an insight into the range of influential factors relating to the 'how' and 'why' individuals choose to participate. Furthermore, in presenting a range of factors, I will illustrate the limitations of taking an essentialist approach to understanding the processes behind the patterns of participation in sports, physical activities and exercise regimes.

Central to developing an understanding of the processes of participation is the question of identifying what constitutes participation. At what level of activity does the non-participant become identified as participating, and is such identification best imposed by an external arbiter or internally realised by the individual participating? Woodward (1997) notes that the essentialist and the non-essentialist constitute the two main approaches to identity construction. The former postulates that identities are constructed from a clear and fixed set of characteristics that do not alter over time. This fixedness of identity may refer either to roots within biological determinism, or to where identity is developed from the fixed truth of history (Shilling, 1991; Woodward, 1997). For example, biology differentiates males from females, and the biological role of motherhood makes for women who are inherently more nurturing, caring and pacifist. For some within the feminist movement this 'fixedness of identity' has led to the development of a subverting history that has fixed the position of all women (Woodward, 1997). This approach however is highly contestable as fixity of identity does not allow for development and takes little account of the relative positions of

individuals. The above example categorises all women and lacks reference to the differences between cultures, races and individual histories. Taking rugby as a leisure related example, as an amateur game its players were characterised as much for their boisterous social life as for the game they played (Donnelly & Young, 1988). However, subsequent to professionalisation, a new ethos has emerged whereby players are repositioning their approach to the game. This in turn has increasingly identified them as highly trained 'professional athletes'. In both cases, the participants are 'rugby' players but their associated identities are radically different. I believe that the second, non-essentialist approach to identity construction ultimately provides the more insightful and rigorous paradigm.

However, there are aspects of identity construction that can be viewed as essentialism and which cannot be ignored. For example, biological limitations of the body define many aspects of participation. World records exist because no body has gone faster, higher, better etc., weightlifters, boxers and rowers are categorised by weight because to quote an old saying 'a good big'n *will* always beat a good little'n', and short athletes by their physical size have far greater potential to excel in gymnastics as opposed to basketball. As the positive relationship between exercise and health is especially important, Section 1.2 explores the relevance of this physiological influence on sports participation. Within this section, I investigate how the act of participating in physical pastimes has become culturally endorsed as a healthy pursuit and one that is encouraged by health authorities throughout the western world. A second area where reference to essentialism is relevant is in the construction of a gendered identity. The differences in the physiology of the male and female body are reflected in differences between the patterns of participation between the sexes[2]. However, gendered identities are also constructed through social practices[3] (Shilling, 1993). Section 1.5.3 then, explores how

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[2] Males *are* generally bigger and stronger than females. Hence, there are few sports where men compete directly with females.

[3] For example, though both males and females are physically capable of participating in boxing, culturally the male boxer is far more acceptable than the female boxer.

the (physically and socially) gendered construction of sporting identity affects patterns of participation.

Sports and exercise regimes are often identified as being the pursuits of the young. However as will be seen, participating as a lifestyle helps provide for an 'active' old age. There is no date beyond which participation ceases in totality, and any investigation therefore requires contextualising in respect to the ageing process. Again, biological determinism has relevance as the performing of physical acts directly involves mobilisation of the body, and the biological constraints of ageing are omnipresent in respect to the modes of participation. For example, ageing professional middle distance runners frequently 'move up' from 1500m to 5000m and then 10000m specialisms in order to prolong their sports careers. Lifestyle choices of individuals are also heavily influenced by age-related social structures and processes (Riley, 1974); many people take up golf as part of an early retirement for example. Section 1.3 investigates the importance of such age related issues by examining the relationships between the physiological and sociological processes of ageing and their influences on participation opportunities, choices and patterns.

Bendle (2002) suggests that although there is an awareness of identity in much current theory, there is also a contradiction between regarding identity as central to collective action and regarding identity as being impermanent and fragmentary. This tension is also evident in the development of sports sociology. For example, there has been extensive research into the positive association between the efficacy of sports teams and levels of group cohesion (Nixon, 1977; Carron, 1980; Spink, 1990). Murrell and Gaertner (1992) suggest that group cohesion is a function of the "extent to which individuals within the group or team share a common identity such that they perceive themselves as one group rather than two separate units"(1992:5). This implies that the successful practice of sport leads to the development of a strong group identity. However, most sports teams are constructed from specialised individuals (Attacker, defender etc). In respect of this tension, Sections 1.4 and 1.5 examine contrasting approaches to investigating current patterns of participation. Section 1.4 looks at class related issues in relation to participation and explores how sporting practices have become socially stratified and hence 'identified' with different groups. Conversely, Section 1.5 looks at concepts relating to the 'body' in social theory and explores how

issues regarding the relationships between bodies and identity construction have come to influence individual choices about leisure time practices.

In so organising sections 1.2 to 1.5, I have in effect separated out the essentialist/non-essentialist, and agency/structure approaches to understanding the processes involved in participating in sport. However, due to the specific vagaries of modern sport, restricting my thesis to any one approach could prove limiting, and a theoretical approach and methodology that transcends these dichotomies is required. Therefore, in section 1.6 I consider the relevance of the works of Giddens (1990; 1991) and Bourdieu (1973, 1978, 1986) to the investigation into patterns of participation in sport. However, the active decision to participate lies almost entirely with the individual. With the exception of schools and the armed forces, participation in physical activities is not compulsory, and continued participation must be dependent on a base level of intrinsic enjoyment of and/or reward from the activity. If people found they disliked an activity then they would invariably cease to participate. Building on Bourdieu's concept of social capital, Section 1.7 therefore concludes this chapter by exploring the processes that are involved in creating a social environment conducive to maintaining participation.

1.2 The relationship between health and exercise

Aneurin Bevan's post war rationalisation of the health service reflected key aspirations contained in the Beveridge report of 1943. That is, the health service should be universal, comprehensive and free (Baggott, 1994; Webster, 1998). Major criticisms of the new structure were directed at the degree to which health provision was focused on the role of the hospitals, and the assumption that free access to health care through improving the nation's health would in turn reduce demand (and hence cost) on those services (Ham, 1985; Bevan, 1993). However, since its inception the national expenditure on the health service has steadily increased, and in 2002 the NHS budget totalled £61.3 billion (Department of Health, 2003). Over the same period health provision became more service orientated, with a corresponding decline in emphasis on a broad public health provision (Baggott, 1994).

The changes in the directions of funding within the health service since the 1980s implies an ideological shift away from an institutional responsibility for health provision,

to the encouragement of personal responsibility for health. The cost effectiveness of individuals taking responsibility for their health was first formally recognised when the Department of Health and Social Services published the consultative document "Prevention and Health: Everybody's Business" (DHSS) in 1976. However, the subsequent government white paper (Cmnd 7047, 1977) though providing more money for health education, fell shy of providing a strategic role in public health activities (Baggott, 1994). The Conservative government of the 1980s continued to recognise the role 'individual responsibility' played in public health improvement (they steadily increased spending on health education campaigns from £1.6 million in 1979 to over £20 million in 1993). However, criticism has been made that the policy focused too much on the ignorance of individuals whilst not recognising the extent to which lifestyle is interconnected with social-economic conditions (Public Health Alliance, 1988; Smith & Jacobson, 1988; Baggott, 1994). For example, the role of low profile local community education was not recognised. Similarly, the strong bias towards spending on clinical services remained; whilst in 1989 £500 million was spent on treating heart disease, only £10 million was spent on prevention (House of Commons, 1989).

In July 1999, New Labour presented to Parliament a white paper 'Saving Lives: Our Healthier Nation'. The object of the paper was to outline an action plan for the improvement of the health of the general population with particular reference to the plight of the poor (Department of Health, 1999a). A central theme of the paper is the importance of individuals and communities undertaking a responsibility for improving their own health. The paper proposes that "physical activity is one of the key determinates of good health. A physically active lifestyle, including walking, cycling or participating in sport, reduces the risks of coronary heart disease and strokes and promotes good mental health...and is one which the Government strongly supports" (Dept of Health 1999b: 3.5). Governmental interests in the health benefits of exercise are not restricted to Britain. In 1993, the U.S. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention expressed the opinion that the positive relationship between exercise and health warranted every American adult undertaking 30 minutes or more of moderately intensive exercise regularly and often (Sharkey, 1997).

1.2.1 Epidemiological evidence

In many of societies the concept that exercise is good for health is fully accepted (Waddington, 1998). In May 1992 the second international conference on physical activity, fitness and health held in Toronto, Canada concluded that there is a recognisable positive trend between physical activity and improvements in physiological fitness, health, quality of life, morbidity, mortality and longevity (Paffenbarger, Hyde, Wing, Lee, & Kampert, 1994). This conclusion is well supported by research. For example, in respect to the relationship between exercise and coronary heart disease (CHD) Morris, et al (1980) found that the CHD rates of men who took vigorous exercise were lower in both fatal and non-fatal clinical manifestations, and especially amongst the (later) middle and (early) old age groups. They conclude that vigorous exercise is a natural defence of the body with a protective effect on the ageing heart against ischemia. Cléroux, Feldman & Petrella (1999) recommend that to prevent and control hypertension in otherwise healthy adults, people with mild hypertension should engage in 50-60 minutes of moderate exercise of the lower limbs 3 to 4 times per week in order to lower blood pressure. They note also that their recommendations agree with those of the World Hypertension League, the American College of Sports Medicine, the report of the US Surgeon General on physical activity and health, and the US National Institutes of Health Consensus Panel on Physical Activity and Cardiovascular Health. Moreover, the medical benefits of a regular exercise regime are not limited to CHD. Wannamethee and Shaper (1992) show that moderate physical activity significantly reduces the risk of stroke. Millar (1999) has found contrary to the opinion that for overweight people health improvement can only be attained through weight loss, all cause morbidity is reduced to the same level for persons with a body mass index (BMI) >30 as for a BMI<27 when both groups undertake exercise. Furthermore, Millar recognises that for the obese solely focusing on weight as a health issue may be counter productive in that the social stigma attached to weight can result in obsessive weight loss behaviour that in turn jeopardises health.

However, exercise can also have an adverse effect on health. Over the course of running the London Marathon an average runner weighing 70kg will subject his/her legs and lower back to a total impact of more than 5 million kg, and will finish the race 1cm shorter in height than when they started (Brewer 1997). Following rest the athlete makes a full recovery, but where exercise is excessive and adequate recovery periods are not

programmed into the training regime the health of the athlete may be adversely affected. Over-training affects 65% of long distance runners at some point in their career, and is associated with fatigue, mood swings and frequent upper respiratory infections (McKenzie, 1999). In 1991, the cost to the health service was estimated to be £240 million per annum for new (sports) injuries, £184 million for recurring injuries and the estimated cost for loss of production due to all injuries was £405 million pounds per annum (Sports Council 1993). In the light of this, the Sports Council advises promoting those sports that have a low injury rate rather than a reduction in participation (Sports Council 1993). There is also evidence that the acute response to exercise is an increase in risk of death (Shephard 1995; Goodman 1995; and Willich 1995). Pratt (1995) notes that sudden death during exercise is of public interest as up to 15% of all sudden deaths may be associated with exercise. However, Pratt also notes that in terms of public health implications the overall health benefits of exercise outweigh the associated risks.

As well as the physiological benefits of exercise there is growing evidence of psychological benefits (Morgan & Ellickson 1989; McAuley, 1994; Cox, 1994; Biddle, 1995; Sharkey 1997b; Boutelle et al 2000). Hiraoka, et al (1998) in their cross-sectional study of 3,132 individuals (1,795 men, 1,336 women) show that good mental health is more common with those who undertake regular exercise. McAuley (1994) in his overview of recent reviews notes that, of the psychological variables (i.e. self esteem, self efficacy, psychological well being and cognitive function), self-esteem has the most potential for benefit from physical activity. In contrast, Biddle (1995) after reviewing the literature on the relationship between exercise and psychosocial health arrives at the cautious conclusions that exercise is beneficial for anxiety, depression and psychological well-being.

There are also negative psychological associations with exercise (Biddle, 1995). Thomson and Sherman (1999) review the relationship between involvement in athletics and eating disorders. They note that a growing subpopulation of athletes are suffering from anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and other disordered eating patterns; the risk of developing a disorder being particularly prevalent amongst females. Sub-cultural traits of certain sports may be a contributory factor. Where athletes often crash diet before competitions to 'make weight' pathogenic weight loss has become an acceptable subcultural practice (Thompson & Sherman, 1999; Cashmore, 2000). Moreover, so

severe are the health risks associated with rapid weight loss that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) bans the use of diuretics. The negative relationship between body image and exercise can apply to male as well as female athletes (Bamber, Cockerill & Carroll, 2000). Wroblewska (1997) notes that recent research suggests that a disturbance in body image in young males may lead to androgenic anabolic steroid abuse, as these drugs are widely believed to promote muscle development. Pope, et al (1997) use the term "muscle dysmorphia" to describe pathological preoccupation with muscularity and note that epidemiological data suggests that such muscle dysmorphia may afflict substantial numbers of both male and female Americans. However, the link between weight training and muscle dysmorphia is not proven (Wroblewska, 1997). Olivardia, et al (2000) in their case-control study of muscle dysmorphia in male weightlifters note that normal weightlifters display little psychopathology and prove closely comparable to a control group of male college students.

1.2.2 The relationship between exercise and lifestyle behaviours

In terms of healthy living, other lifestyle choices such as smoking, drinking and dietary fat intake are also important variables. Whereas diet and smoking can affect the physical capacity to undertake exercise, there is also evidence that undertaking exercise can have a positive reciprocal influence on other lifestyle choices (Wankel & Sefton, 1994). The relationships between positive lifestyle behaviours and exercise participation are complex. Evidence shows that at best there is no positive association between smoking and exercise (Nguyen, Béland & Otis, 1998) and that there is a negative association between smoking and increased participation in sport, this being particularly prevalent amongst males (Wankel & Sefton, 1994). However, there is evidence of an association between other positive lifestyle behaviours (such as seat belt wearing) and exercise (Bouchard and Shepherd, 1994). Boutelle, Murray, Jeffery, Hennrikus & Lando (2000) in their cross-sectional study of the association between leisure time exercise and the health behaviour of 4,907 women and 4,135 men found that the amount of exercise has a bearing on lifestyle choice, the positive relationship being greatest amongst those who exercise the most. For example, exercisers tend to consume a greater percentage of carbohydrates, fibre, vegetables, pulses, fruit and fish but less fat (Wankel & Sefton, 1994; Georgiou, Betts, Hoos & Glen 1996).

1.3 Life course perspectives on participation

For exercise to be beneficial to health, a significant and sustained level of actual participation is required. Over 85 % of the adult population believe that exercise is generally beneficial to health and importantly, over 90 % think that adults should do more sport (Austin, 1996). However, only 49 % of the adult population in Britain regularly participate in sporting activities (Sports Council, 1988). Moreover, there is also a steady decline in participation with increasing age in Britain and throughout the world (McPherson, 1984; Minten & Roberts, 1989; Kamphorst & Giljam, 1989; Ebashi, et al, 1989). Minten and Roberts (1989) report a steady decline in the number of adults participating in physical activities from 58% of 16-19 year olds down to 17% of adults aged 65+. However, the biological process of ageing in and of itself does not necessarily provide a barrier to participation. Clark (1986) documents many elderly athletes who enjoy participating, and are serious about their sports and maintaining levels of competency. Indeed, there is a steadily increasing market in competitions aimed at meeting the needs of the mature athlete, for example local running to world championship weightlifting. The contrast between physical capacity and declining participation rates indicates that the affects of ageing on participation are influenced by the social constructs of the ageing process. The complexity of this is demonstrated by the results of research on peer and parental influences on the participation of adolescents in sports. Evidence indicates that the leisure patterns of adult significant others are strongly influential (Sofranko & Nolan, 1972; Anderson & Wold, 1992). Furthermore, there is a positive correlation between the leisure patterns developed in adolescence and those observed in mid-life; thus those adolescents whose parents participated in sport are themselves more likely to participate in sport in later life (Scott & Willits 1989). However, as Rudman (1989) notes, participation in sport can be influenced by different social factors according to location within the lifecycle. Thus, this positive relationship is often tempered by the influence of intervening variables such as work conditions, family status, income and available free time (Sofranko & Nolan, 1972).

The paradigm of Age Stratification divides the life cycle into normatively defined stages through which individuals proceed as they age (Sugarman, 1986). The life cycle may be divided into a series of life events (marriage, pregnancy, retirement etc.), with each successive generation experiencing an increasing number (Sugarman, 1986). The

timings of such events and their associated role transitions generally follow a social clock that for the majority of the life cycle is normatively defined, for example proscription of males working after the age of 65. Zepelin, Sills and Heath (1987) note that although there has been a loosening of age related norms since the 1950s, they find little evidence for the development of a new age-irrelevant society, and that "the life cycle has a basic order that limits the attainable degree of independence from prescriptive timetables" (Zepelin, Sills & Heath, 1987:253).

There has (generally) been little specific longitudinal research on the influence of age related transitions on the patterns of participation in physical activity. Moreover, much of the research carried out fails to recognise the generic differences between sports and leisure pursuits (McPherson, 1984; Freysinger & Ray, 1994). However, the changes in lifestyle associated with ageing can influence the patterns of participation (Mihalik, et al 1989). For example, Hastings, Kurth and Meyer, (1989) link the timings of life events to phases in competitive swimming careers. Similarly, McGuire, Dottavio and O'Leary (1986) show that the decline in sporting activity with increasing age does not necessarily occur in a linear fashion, but that the most significant decrease in sporting activity occurs between the ages of 44-60. They also note that younger age groups generally change their type of sporting activity more rapidly than do older groups. Fishwick and Hays (1989) attribute the association between increasing age and decline in participation to norms that dictate age appropriate behaviour, for example, that strenuous activities are a risk to health. Ostrow, Jones and Spiker (1981) note that in respect to participating in physical activities, the magnitude of the stereotyping of age appropriateness is greater than gender appropriateness. Austin (1996) found that there is a cumulative increase in peer pressure to forgo participation in sport as an individual ages, but also notes that the acceptability of participation is related to the type of sporting activity, with the more gentle activities of swimming and walking being acceptable for participants of all ages. Featherstone and Hepworth (1991) also recognise the existence of ageism in modern society but postulate that the significance of age related transitions within society is declining, especially amongst the more financially secure middle classes. Finally, collective family transitions also influence the timing of life transitions (Hareven, 1994), and can affect participation; for example, mothers taking up sport when children leave home.

The effects of age related variations in sports participation are often gender specific (McPherson, 1984; Hastings, Meyer & Kurth, 1989; Scott & Willits, 1989; Brown & Frankel, 1993; Fishwick & Hayes, 1994; Freysinger & Ray, 1994). Therefore, at each stage of the lifecycle predicting involvement in sporting activities should also take account of the significant affects of gender and marital status (Rudman, 1989). Furthermore, Freysinger and Ray (1994) conclude that situational factors such as marital, parental and employment status have a greater negative effect on the activity involvement of women in comparison to men.

1.4 Socio-economic status and participation

Changes in ways of living in late modernity have resulted in the increasing individualisation of major life transitions (McPherson, 1984). For example, the expansion in Higher Education has resulted in larger numbers of adults postponing marriage and parenthood in response to the option of future career developments. Therefore, the life span developmental approach, though predictive of general (age related) sporting trends, is limited when applied to the understanding of choices made by individuals. For many, socio-economic factors are greater determinants of leisure activity choice than is stage of the life-cycle. For example, although golf may present itself as an appealing retirement project, the costs involved in taking up golf can be particularly inhibiting for poorer sections of society.

1.4.1 An inherited factor

Historically access to sport has been the preserve of the elite and privileged. In the eighteenth century, the 'leisure classes' mainly restricted their participation to shooting and hunting. Their interest in other sports such as pugilism, cockfighting and horse racing was generally restricted to either patronage or gambling. Holt (1989) notes that cricket is the first sport in which there is reference to aristocrats participating with commoners. However, he also notes that the aristocrats' fellow players were often servants or tenant farms whose 'deference' was assured. In a similar vein, Sage (1990) observes that the term 'leisure classes' is derived from the practice of the more affluent within society displaying their wealth by regularly taking time to play sport. In contrast,

such practices were restricted for those from the working classes through dint of the effort and time required of their labour. The early history of the development of cycling illustrates class related control of leisure practices. Soon after cycling became popular in Britain the press led (through their editorials) major campaigns against the cyclist, and many papers were published on the health hazards of cycling. This resulted in a cultural backlash against the cyclist. However, the main reason for the institutional railing against cycling was most probably due to the proliferation of the bicycle making the working classes more mobile. Moreover, this in turn improved their access to areas previously frequented (and hence the domain of) by the wealthier classes (Pearson, 1983). In contrast, at around the same time in Italy the bicycle enjoyed a degree of cultural respectability. Representing more than a means of transport, it was regarded as a symbol of modernity, being popular not only with the working classes but also with the bourgeois (Pivato, 1990).

Perkin (1989) notes that changes in the increasingly urbanised and disciplined Victorian society moved sport away from the rowdy and violent to the more disciplined team games. At around the same time much of the organisation and control of sport (for example, the establishment of Football Association and the Rugby Football Union) grew from the influence of Oxford and Cambridge University's alumni (McPherson, Curtis & Loy, 1989). In addition, the spread of British hegemony through the development of the Commonwealth resulted in the profligation of British sport amongst the Colonies (Perkin, 1989). The early development of modern sport in North America was also class biased. Baseball was initially a game located within gentlemen's clubs, access to which was restricted to wealthy white males. Similarly, American Football's early development is traceable to the elite private colleges of the American Northeast (Sage, 1990; Cashmore, 2000).

1.4.2 Class and participation

The class bias in participation and control evident throughout the Victorian era and the twentieth century arguably still plays an important part in shaping current sports participation patterns (Gruneau, 1983). There is clear class stratification in respect to participating; the lower the social class the less likely a person is to participate (Hargreaves, 1986a; McPherson, Curtis, & Loy, 1989; Sage, 1990; Warner-Smith &

Brown, 2002). There is also a relationship between class and type of sport undertaken. Though changes within modern lifestyles have resulted in the working classes possessing both more leisure time and disposable income than previous generations, differentials in respect to access to sport still exist (Sage, 1990).

Conflicts of interest between classes during the development of modern sports have resulted in class related preferences in choice of sporting activity. For example, from the outset professionalism allowed the working class resources to compete for 'location' within pastimes that were traditionally the preserves of the middle and upper classes (Halladay, 1987; Eitzen, 1989; Greenhalgh, 1992). Rugby Union played throughout the United Kingdom was, until recent changes, essentially amateur in ethos, and is predominantly played by members of the middle classes; whereas Rugby League being professional from inception is mainly confined to traditional working class areas within the North of England (Dunning & Sheard, 1976; Greenhalgh, 1992). The degree of suffusion of class-based representations of the meanings attached to sport has resulted in some sports becoming icons of social status. For example, tennis rackets, golf clubs and lacrosse sticks are symbolic of middle class elitism, whereas the basketball is more representative of a city game played by a specific sub-cultural (and lower class) ethnic group (Carlston, 1986; McPherson, Curtis & Loy 1989).

The availability of resources strongly influences current participation patterns. In the UK the majority of sports provision (outside of educational and limited municipal facilities) is reliant on the ability to pay. Furthermore, costs are directly proportional to the degree of involvement. Apparatus, coaching and travelling are all incidental expenses that become increasingly essential with deeper involvement. For most participants these expenses are met either by themselves or by their family. For example, amongst the winter Olympic athletes, the wealthier classes are over represented in sports such as skiing and skating (McPherson, Curtis & Loy, 1989). Similarly in Britain, most competitive tennis revolves around private members clubs, the costs of which can be prohibitive. Interestingly where improvements in the standards of living have resulted in sports drawing participants from broader social backgrounds, evidence suggests that participants tend to restrict their interaction to those who come from similar class backgrounds (McPherson, Curtis & Loy, 1989; Aversa 1990). This 'exclusion' between classes can also be reinforced by the manner in which facilities are provided,

and in the way in which they are used (Roberts, Fagan, Boutenko & Razlogov, 2001). For example, it is argued that the drift towards centralising leisure facilities within urban spaces discriminates against the poor in rural areas (Warner-Smith & Brown, 2002). Hargreaves (1986a) notes that the public provision of sports facilities is often aimed more towards the wants, needs and expectations of the middle classes. Hargreaves goes on to document cases within Moss Side in Manchester and in North London wherein a lack of understanding of lower-working class cultural traditions (in respect to leisure) has led to conflicts over usage of the facilities. In each case, the result was poor uptake in participation by the local population. However, economic deprivation need not result in barriers to participation in physical activities. Lowther, Mutrie & Scott (2002) in their study of the results of a physical activity intervention program for 3000 non-regularly active participants demonstrate that "contrary to popular opinion, those in a socially and economically deprived community are not 'hard to reach' and respond well to physical activity interventions" (Lowther, Mutrie & Scott, 2002:557). They further note that the cost of specifically targeted exercise intervention programs is probably outweighed by the cost savings to the health service due to improving the physical health of the participants.

1.5 Social identities: Participation and the physical body

Participation in sports does not take place within a social (or physical) vacuum. It requires interaction with others, and takes place within defined physical environments that serve as auditoriums for the display of performances. For example, football can be played by two professional teams at large football stadia, or by school children at break time. For either game to continue requires the individuals taking part to cooperate and adhere to the codes of conducts that define *how* participation is to proceed[4]. Mead notes that within social groups or communities, individuals adopt "organised social attitudes" that serve to govern their conduct and which are congruent with the aims of those groups (Mead, 1934:156). In respect to sports participation, through the process of repeated

[4] Cf. the popularity of William Webb Ellis' indiscretion of picking up and running with the football in 1823, is traditionally believed to be the origins of the game of rugby.

practising, individuals develop comportment and behaviours that are characteristic of the different activities undertaken (see section 1.5.1 below). In turn this adoption of the mores of participation and thus becoming identified with a particular sport or physical activity is a process that has the potential to both enable and constrain an individual's leisure practices (Shogan, 2002).

On a macro scale, the cultural origins and locations of many sports provide for a symbolic identity to be attached (Wilson, 1988). For example, in Britain weightlifting is not regarded as an important *national* sport in comparison to say football, whereas in Iran (along with wrestling) it is regarded as *the* national sport. Similarly, where sports have their origins in class structures their identities have become representative of their cultural (class related) roots (McPherson, Curtis & Loy, 1989). Hargreaves (1986a) notes that studies of working class communities show that the type of sports played within these communities help to reproduce working class culture and identity. For example, crown green bowling and rugby league football are synonymous with the northern working classes. Similarly, fox hunting and its associated paraphernalia of costumes, horn, dogs and hunt followers are symbolic of 'leisure class' pursuits. Different sports, physical activities and exercise regimes can therefore be regarded as having their own sub-cultures that are dependent on their cultural and historical locations within society. Moreover, the actions of their respective practitioners reinforce sub-cultural identities, whilst the processes of socialisation into sporting sub-cultures contribute to the important act of identity construction (Donnelly & Young, 1988).

1.5.1 Creating the social identity

Goffman's work on human behaviour helped to develop further the symbolic interactionist framework in that he interprets human interaction as a reciprocating process of information exchange regarding role and identity expectations (Karp & Yoels 1979:75). In this respect Goffman notes that the "rules of conduct impinge upon the individual in two general ways: directly, as obligations, establishing how he is morally constrained to conduct himself; indirectly, as expectation, establishing how others are morally bound to act in regard to him" (Goffman, 1967:49). In agreeing to undertake a role within a social group, the individual is then also expected to possess skills and attributes that are appropriate to that role (Goffman, 1967:105). That is, the individual

projects an acceptable image of themself, which through subsequent actions gains confirmation from others. As Goffman, in his work on the presentation of self in every day life, notes: "the individual may deeply involve his ego in his identification with a particular part, establishment and group, and in his self-conception as someone who does not disrupt social interaction or let down the social units which depend on that interaction" (Goffman, 1959:236). Where confirmation of identity is not achieved a site of conflict arises, and either the individual renegotiates the role or alters their actions accordingly (Lauer & Handel, 1983). Where individuals continue to break the rules of appropriate behaviour, their actions can result in them being labelled as deviant, often leading to subsequent ostracism from the social group. However, Becker (1963:15) notes that deviancy and the labelling of "outsiders" is relative, and that from the view point of the outsiders, it is those that make the rules who may be regarded as deviant. Clearly there are power dimensions implicit in these different positions. This has important implications in regard to the patterns of participation in sport. For example, in joining a running club whose core identity lies in the physiological capacity to run, being unable to 'keep up' risks being labelled as a non-runner and therefore not part of the group. Conversely, where the individual's capacity exceeds that of the club, s/he may then reject the club and seek a 'proper' running club to join. In this respect, it is the way in which individuals interact and identify with other participants that has important implications to the development of a sporting identity (Kivel, 2000).

1.5.2 The use of symbols in creating a social identity

As noted above participation does not take place in a physical vacuum, but is located in arenas chosen for their suitability. Hence, professional football is played in large stadia, golf is played at golf courses and weight lifting in gyms. The responses that these 'objects' arouse are socially and culturally located (Karp & Yoels, 1979), thus, taken together they represent spaces in which participation *ought* to take place. Goffman uses the concept of front to represent the "expressive equipment of a standard kind" that is used by individuals during their performances (Goffman, 1971a:34). Examples of expressive equipment used in sports include sports equipments (javelin, rackets, various balls etc), ancillary props (scoreboards, court markings etc) and uniforms. Goffman, drawing on dramaturgy, categorises fronts into two sections, the "geographical setting" which stays put and to which individuals bring themselves in order to perform, and

"personal fronts" (Goffman 1971a:34). The appropriate use of these fronts provides evidence of the authenticity of an individual's identity. For example, the instinctive (practised) manner in which the experienced golfer *knows* which club to choose differentiates them from the novice who has to ask advice. Similarly, appropriate dress sense, language use, and comportment are all personal fronts that demonstrate belonging.

1.5.3 Physical Activity, the body, body image and satisfaction

Recognised by Goffman as part of the body idiom (Goffman, 1963:33), one major constituent of the personal front through which information about identity is conveyed is the physical body. Although classical social theorists rarely explicitly address the body as a topic for investigation (Gilroy 1989), it is through our bodies that we derive our experiences of the world, and it is embodiment that provides the mechanisms by which we communicate and interact with others (Shilling, 1993). Elias (1978) in his work on the history of manners shows that bodily practices are historically and culturally situated. This is reflected in the variety of body practices of different sporting activities (Shogan 2002). In this respect, bodies can be both enabling and constraining. An example of this is found in Clark's biography of ageing athletes which shows both the physiological constraints imposed by the ageing body and the use of the ageing body a means of establishing social relations with other 'oldies' (Clark, 1986).

Within what Giddens (1990) has termed 'late modernity', the body has become culturally fashionable (Shilling, 2000). The body saturates much of the modern media. There are numerous books and magazines dedicated to defining the shape, presentation and use of the physical and spiritual body. The industries of cosmetics, fashion, sex and sport all 'objectify' the body for commercial gain. Giddens writings on late modernity and self identity notes "the body is not just a physical entity which we 'possess', it is an action-system...and its practical immersion in the interactions of day to day life is an essential part of the sustaining of a coherent sense of self identity"(1991:99). Within late modernity, it is argued there is a cultural drift towards valuing the narcissistic body, which has resulted in the body becoming a 'project' for development. The values that are attached to the narcissistic body are most prominently displayed within the subculture of bodybuilding. On writing about body building subculture Klein notes that "there is a discrepancy within the norms of bodybuilding subculture: between actual

behaviour and what is presented to the bodybuilding public in media and magazines" (Klein, 1993:140). Cursory examination of specialist bodybuilding magazines shows that bodybuilding is presented as *the* desirable lifestyle for our modern times. Representing health, individualism and strong (hetero) sexuality the highly muscled, low fat body of the bodybuilder also represents the extremes in commodification of the body for consumption. But, to succeed in bodybuilding often (through the use of extreme diets, drugs, training regimes and nepotism) is the antithesis to the public face of bodybuilding. Few succeed and many suffer serious physical and mental effects from trying (Klein, 1993). However, as Klein also notes top level bodybuilding (and the cultural hypocrisy it represents) only applies to a small percentage of actual bodybuilders[5] (Klein 1993:141).

This increase in the proliferation of bodily regimes of diet, exercise and cosmetic adornment (including surgery) demonstrate the body's progression towards becoming a site for "a phenomena of choices and options" (Giddens, 1991:8). For many, attainment of such choices is grounded in the physiological changes in body shape (and attitude) that respective sports' training regimes engender. For example, top weightlifters' large quadriceps, trapezium and deltoid muscles characterise the dense physique developed through explosively moving heavy weights; contrast this to the lithe physique adaptive of long distance running. Similarly, psychological approaches to body difference can result from the contrasting mental approaches between sports (Birrell & Turowetz, 1979). For example, the harmonising, fluid and internalised movements of Ti Chi Chuan stem from a mental process that embraces developing equanimity and balance with an opponent, whereas the dominative posturing and sharp hard movements in boxing are externalised, and stem from a mental process designed to master an opponent.

1.5.4 The actively gendered body

Social practices provide a qualitative meaning to differences in the gendered body (Shilling, 1993). Connell (2002) uses the term 'social embodiment' (2002:47) to refer to

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[5] although there is strong evidence of a steadily increasing black market in steroids that is fuelled by the increasing desires for the muscled body (Klein 1993)

the hypothesis that bodies are simultaneously objects of social practice and agents in social practice. For example, the way in which the body is presented to others involves a physical sense of genderedness. Gendered body identity includes aspects of size, shape and control of movement (Connell, 1987). Similarly Thompson and Heinberg (1999), have noted "the current societal standard for thinness, as well as difficult-to-achieve standards of beauty for women is omnipresent" (1999:340). There is therefore conflict between normative expectations and achievable aims. This problem is compounded by the primary source of information about the development of the female body being located within the media positively advertising such physical ideals (Thompson & Heinberg, 1999). Moreover, much of the advice on constructing body ideals is centred on individual initiative and responsibility and an oversimplification of the relationship between lifestyle and the body. By 'merely' choosing regimes of dieting, cosmetics and exercise, the socially desirable body is 'automatically' achieved. The reward for attaining these bodies is the 'possession' of a healthy, successful and happy lifestyle. The extent of this association between exercise and the ideal body has profound implications on women's perceptions on what physical activity represents (Duncan, 1994). Klein (1993) in chronicling the development of female bodybuilding shows that the position of the (athletic) female body has seen major changes over the last three decades. Initially there was great hostility both inside and outside of the bodybuilding subculture to the development of the muscled female. During the late seventies, the little female bodybuilding that did exist was frowned upon with females being ostracised from many top-level bodybuilding gyms. Even when during the nineteen eighties female bodybuilding became more mainstream, what was acceptable was tightly controlled with the overtly muscled female body being frowned upon by the body building establishment (Klein 1993). However, the recent increase in the profile of the female athlete within the media has paralleled the increasing acceptance of female bodies in the bodybuilding gyms.

Within the male population, much of body image satisfaction revolves around issues of musculature (Philips & Drummond, 2001). The classical Greek statues of Adonis have come to represent the lean, strong muscularity *and* sexuality of the ideal masculine body; evident by media images increasingly adopting an adonisation of the male physique. The identities of male models used in the male orientated magazines are overwhelmingly young, tanned, fashionably dressed and athletically muscled. Magazines also reinforce

the desirability of such physiques, equating them with positive traits of healthiness and sexual attraction. The interest in possessing these physiques has spawned a plethora of specialist publications (such as Muscle and Fitness, Flex and Men's Health) all selling 'body projects' wherein the individual is led to believe they can shed the skinny, flabby and weak body. Furthermore, the monthly circulation of tens of millions highlights the current 'desire' to possess the muscular physique. Pope et al. (2000) in their comparative study of the ideal body image of males in France, Austria and the United States found that in all three countries an ideal physique possessed approximately 13kg greater muscularity than the ones owned. They also found that the perception of masculine muscularity that is sexually desired by women is similarly 14kg greater, and conclude that the differentiation between actual bodies and ideal bodies leads to a level of body dissatisfaction, which in turn may explain the current rise in anabolic steroid use. Phillips and Drummond (2001) similarly report a relationship between male body shape and body satisfaction. They note that male fitness leaders and their clients are highly conscious of physical appearance and that "there is a strong notion that physical activity equals leanness which in turn equals health" (2001:103)

1.6 Rationalising participation

The active incorporation of physical activity into a 'lifestyle' is subject to the interplay between processes relating to class *and* biological determinism *and* social embodiment. Shilling (1999) argues that theories aimed at rationalising the structure vs. agency relationship are limited in that through overemphasising cognitive abilities they engender a disembodied view of the agent. This in turn underplays the role of emotions within human interaction and social structure. However, the work of two social theorists namely Giddens and Bourdieu not only aim to rationalise the agency/structure relationship, but also pay specific regard to the body within modern society. Giddens (1990) ascertains that human actions and social relations are equally the product of both agency and structure, and that the rapid rate of change witnessed in late modernity is reflected in the increasing choice of lifestyle open to individuals (see section 1.6.1 below). Bourdieu (1986; 1994a) rationalises cultural practises that cannot be solely reduced economic differences through the concepts of cultural capital, and habitus (see section 1.6.3 below).

1.6.1 Late modernity and self identity

With the commodification of sport, potential participants are increasingly presented with the option of participating. Most towns and cities now contain a range of private and municipal facilities. In addition, 'pro-active' information as to the benefits of participation is now widespread, from doctors' surgeries through to TV adverts expounding the healthy lifestyle. The old axiom that sports are the preserve of the leisure classes is becoming increasingly obsolete. Giddens postulates that modern social institutions are separated from traditional social orders by the sheer pace and scope of change that the era of modernity has set into motion; that "modernity has swept us away from *all* traditional types of social order" (1990:4). Technological changes have inculcated a disembedding of social systems wherein social relations are no longer primarily situated within local interactions, but are increasingly restructured to incorporate social interconnections that span the globe. However, the mechanisms of disembedding are dependent on what Giddens terms 'trust', and he position of trust stems not from a disempowering but from a "lack of full information" (Giddens, 1990:33). For example, technological innovations within banking have (to an extent) negated the need for the tourist to carry local cash. Using a credit card the tourist (as well as introducing a degree of separation from social interaction) through having no understanding of the mechanisms, 'trusts' that the correct money at the correct exchange rate will automatically be deducted from his/her account that in turn may be situated on the other side of the globe. Without trust in the technological systems, the tourist is reduced to interacting with the local currency. However, the use of the credit card is also reliant on the social acceptability of this form of payment by the vendor, and trust in the vendor to use the information provided on the card 'properly'. Hence this example also illustrates Giddens' concept that within conditions of modernity trust also exists in the context of the general awareness that human activity (including the impact of technology) is both socially created and is set within a society increasingly changed through the scope of human action (Giddens, 1990). Giddens notes that as tradition loses its hold, the more daily life is "reconstituted in terms of the dialectical interplay of the local and the global" (1991:5).

Late modernity is reproduced through what Giddens refers to as the 'duality of structure'. Human action generates a sense of continuity through the regular interaction patterns that occur as part of the daily routine. The establishment of these patterns in

turn forms a framework of structural conditions from which individual actions can be constructed (Kuentzel, 2000). Within the duality of structure, human action exhibits a level of reflexivity as individuals continuously monitor their own and others' actions and reactions, and use the information gained to reassess and refine their social practices. This "reflexive monitoring of action" (Giddens 1990:36) takes place on two levels. At the level of discursive consciousness, agents are able to articulate the nature and reasons for their own and others' actions. At the level of practical consciousness, the reflexive monitoring of actions occurs automatically in a form of a sub-conscious logging that does not distract the individual from performing tasks (Giddens, 1991).

Giddens' work lends itself to the study of participation in sport on several fronts. The first is that through 'trust' participation in physical activities may be rationalised in terms of the trust in the advice of medical experts that exercise reduces the risk of poor health. Furthermore, the choice to participate is backed by patterns of trust in the social (support of other expert practitioners), medical and fiscal systems reducing the physical and financial (value for money) risks of participating. For example, the construct of trust can be applied to the desire to open up options of the more dangerous (and often expensive) activities such as skiing and climbing. The second is that within late modernity, the choices and patterns in the types of sport and physical activities undertaken are increasingly set against the developing capitalisation and globalisation of sport. This trend reflects a disembedding of sport whereby the local practitioner increasingly performs within the international arena. For example, the role models currently inspiring children to take up football are increasing stateless in that a Brazilian born football hero can play for a local English team against a team from mainland Europe and still be regarded as 'one of us'.

The third informative aspect of Giddens' work is with respect to the body and reflexivity of self-identity. Giddens regards the body as an action-system, the maintenance of which involves bodily aspects of appearance, demeanour, sensuality and regimes (Giddens, 1991). The combination of these leads to a coherent sense of self-identity. Giddens goes on to argue that due to the many lifestyle choices that are available within late modernity, there is an increasing freedom in choice when constructing identities. Moreover, globalisation in stretching social relations across time and space provides access to a greater repertoire of cultural styles. Consequently, given the plethora of

choices individuals face on a daily basis, they have little choice but to choose their lifestyle and hence mould their personal identities (Giddens, 1991). For example, purchasing milk includes the rationalising between full cream, semi skimmed or skimmed milk, with the choice of low fat milk also representing a choice to 'live' a healthier lifestyle. An example of the usefulness of this as a tool for investigation participation in sports is in the growth of golf. Golf is a body-orientated pastime, and in playing golf the golfer also dresses the body with a sub-cultural dress code, conducts his/her play with appropriate demeanour, derives physical stimulations in the act of playing and partakes of a sport culturally defined through transnational practices. Furthermore, the reflexive body project of 'golfing' within a capitalist orientated leisure market, increasingly presents golf as a positive lifestyle investment, rather than a casual pastime.

1.6.2 Limitations of Giddens' work in respect to sports participation

The relationship between self-identity and the body is central to Giddens' analysis of high modernity (Giddens, 1991). However, in this respect Giddens has been criticized for overemphasising the control that individuals are able to command over their bodies (Burkitt, 1992; Shilling 1993). Shilling notes "for Giddens, the human body has moved away from the sphere of nature into the sphere of culture" (Shilling, 1993:185). For Shilling, Giddens' overemphasis of the power that individuals can exert over their bodies neglects the evolution of the body as "a simultaneously biological and social phenomena" (Shilling 1993:202). Shilling further notes that although individuals in the affluent West have an "unprecedented" control over the body, that control is finite (Shilling 1993:203). This limitation to Giddens' work has important connotations in respect to this thesis. As will be shown, physiological constraints on the development of the body have the effect of constricting the *accessibility* of choices in physical activity. For example, for someone choosing to take up sport as a retirement project, the physiological constraints of the aged body limit choices in who to practise with. For them, it would be a fruitless exercise to try and integrate into an elite gymnastics club. Their aged body would be too constraining for the establishing of 'meaningful' interaction with other participants.

A second criticism of Giddens' work is that it fails to account adequately for normative constraints on the realising of choices open to individuals (Southerton, 2002). This limitation is particularly relevant to the consumption patterns exhibited in sport. Though predictive of the patterns of the choices open to individuals in respect to participation, Giddens' work is less predictive of actual general trends within wider populations. Given that late modernity is marked through a general increase in access to resources, there should be a discernible change in participation patterns over the past century in respect of socio-economic status. For example, the widespread dissemination of information regarding the health aspects of physical activity should also be reflected in changes in participation patterns in respect to class profiling. However, participation patterns are still strongly class related both in terms of participation rate and in terms of choice. The poorer classes are still very under represented in sports participation; and it is not just a matter of financial constraints. Within many 'sports bars' can be seen the avid sports fan wearing his/her expensive team shirt, and the expensive designer sports shoe is bought more as a fashion icon than a 'trainer' for participating. As will be shown, although participation in running has little class embedded history as opposed to fox hunting or rugby, membership profiles of running clubs are still overwhelmingly middle class. Moreover, this is despite the proliferation of TV media heroes such as Linford Christie, many of whom are manifestly working class. In a similar vein, many within our society choose not to undertake the 'informed choice' of a healthier lifestyle.

Though repeatedly bombarded with information regarding the major health benefits of taking up exercise as part of one's lifestyle, overall participation is declining. Furthermore, participation rates drop markedly with increasing age, a trend that is intuitively counter to the increased opportunities to participate that should be resultant of the breakdown of age related normative barriers to participation within late modernity.

1.6.3 The relationship between the space of sports and participation

The limitations of Giddens' work in respect to understanding class related participation patterns is better addressed within Bourdieu's theoretical constructs relating to habitus and the different forms of capital (in particular cultural capital) operating within modern society. The origins of Bourdieu's development of the concept of cultural capital are rooted in his explanation of the relationship between class and class fractions and the

patterns of academic success of children (Bourdieu, 1973; 1986). In particular, he developed the concept of cultural capital as a mechanism to rationalise cultural practices that could not be attributed solely to economic differences. Cultural capital exists in several forms. In the objectified state, it refers to the possession of cultured goods, the consumption of which can only be realised through apprehending their meaning; for example, museums and works of fine art (Brubaker, 1985; Bourdieu, 1986). In the institutionalized state, it refers to the objectification of, for example, tenets in educational qualifications or sporting success. The embodied state of cultural capital is of particular relevance to my research. Bourdieu notes, "most of the properties of cultural capital can be deduced from the fact that, in its fundamental state, it is linked to the body and presupposes embodiment" (1986:244). This embodiment of cultural capital in turn suggests that the assimilation of cultural capital is dependent on the individual allocating an investment of personal time; "like the investment of a muscular physique or suntan, it cannot be done at second hand" (Bourdieu, 1986:244).

Bourdieu refers to *habitus* as the systems of durable dispositions that collectively function to generate and organise practices (Bourdieu, 1994a). That is, subconscious opinions about the 'correctness' of different actions inform the process of rationalising choices. These internalised opinions in turn act to create teleological structures that provide realisable goals and paths to follow. The habitus is created from the product of past practices, and through its structuring of present practices lends itself to a degree of self perpetuation. Habitus therefore acts to "guarantee the 'correctness' of practices and their consistency over time, more reliable than all formal rules and explicit norms" (Bourdieu, 1994a: 98). As habitus is the product of historical practices, it tends to reproduce the social regularities inherent in the conditions within which it was constructed. Therefore, conduct that is generated through the habitus is regulated through social situations, and aspirations regarding future practices become internalised as being either reasonable and common sense, or unreasonable and "not for the likes of us" (Bourdieu, 1985:728).

Bourdieu argues that the distribution of sporting practices can be modelled in terms of supply and demand; that is, the differentiated ways of practicing sports (supply) plays against the system of dispositions (or desire) to practice (demand). Bourdieu notes that sporting practices are characterised by the possibility (or not) of expressions of

physicality, and by their relationships with the other types of sporting practices that are concurrently available. Furthermore, being relationally and structurally determined through historical and socially situated conditions, the 'desire' to practice sport is in turn part of the 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1978; 1988). For example, polo is a game characteristic of the upper classes and precludes working classes by both its cost and historical social location.

To understand fully a particular sport, its position must be contextualised in relation to the position of all sports in society (Bourdieu, 1988). Understanding a sport is achieved through taking account of (amongst others) the social position of the participants, the distribution and makeup of the governing bodies, and the possession of assets. In this fashion, Bourdieu's work goes some way to rationalize current class related differences in participation patterns. The current issues around foxhunting illustrate this. The process of cultivating both cultural capital and habitus predominantly begins within the family (Brubaker, 1985). Where the practice of fox hunting is part of a family's cultural heritage the offspring are themselves likely to be inculcated into the appropriateness of the practice. To them, foxhunting is a sport legitimised through its control on the population of a vermin. Cultural capital is accumulated through the understanding and acceptance of the meanings attached to the dress codes, the strict pecking orders of Master, Huntsman, Whippers-in-assist and Hunt Followers, and the distribution of honour through trophies of the fox's brush, mask (head), and pads (feet). Cultural capital acts as a gatekeeper to participation as the final practice of fox hunting is permitted only where such capital is seen to be sufficiently accumulated. Once participating, the individual has greater opportunities to invest in his/her capital by for example, demonstrating prowess in horsemanship. The greater the accumulation of capital, the more likely the individual is to move up the hunt's pecking order, and generally the greater is his/her internalisation of the ontology of the fox hunting lifestyle. Without a possession of this particular cultural capital, the practices associated with fox hunting appear anachronistic and alien when placed within a backdrop of modern western society. The fox becomes an animal not a vermin; the hunt a cruel divisive sport of the privileged. Hence, the hunt has become a location for conflict between the *rights* (as they see them) of hunt followers and the *beliefs* of hunt protesters.

Bourdieu addresses the inverse relationship between social hierarchy and sports participation rates in his writing about the amateur vs. professionalism divide in sport. Bourdieu (1978) notes that as popular sports also serve as "spectacles" (1978:828) they can be regarded as a mass commodity; the consumption of which increases with decreasing social hierarchy. By being gradually reduced to the role of spectator, the layperson is dispossessed from the actual experience of participating. This in turn leads to a decline in participation rates (Bourdieu 1978). An explanation of this process stems from the evolution of the professional athlete being weighted towards the growth of the specialist, for example, the increasing differentiation of the 100m, 200m and 400m runner. This process in turn demands an increased specialisation in the space that sport occupies. That is, in a media driven activity, professionalised sport demands an *arena* in which to perform. The resultant display of excellence serves to define sporting practice in respect to the collective consciousness, in turn disenfranchising all but the most competent amateur (Bourdieu, 1978). This disenfranchisement from the practice of sport also affects the type of values individuals place on sport. By being increasingly bereft of practical experiences from taking part, spectators are removed of their frames of references in regard to the intrinsic values of practising sport and are thus reduced to evaluating sport in terms of extrinsic values such as winning or losing (Bourdieu, 1978). The internalisation of these representations of the value of sport in turn acts as a disincentive to participate as there is little value in taking part, there is only value in winning, an aim progressively more difficult the longer one abstains from participating.

1.6.4 Embodiment and physical capital

The position of the body within society relates to the embodied state of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). The body in the development of its size, comportment, style, shape, fashion etc. has the capacity for the possession of 'value', of which the translatability into other forms of capital is referred to as physical capital. Bourdieu examples this concept with a gendered use of physical capital; "a sporting career...represents one of the few paths of upward mobility open to the children of the dominated classes; the sports market is to the boys' physical capital what the system of beauty prizes and the occupations to which they lead – hostess, etc. – is to the girls' physical capital" (1978:832). The career of Jackie Chan Kong Sang is an example of how the possession of physical capital can be realised as economic and cultural capital. Unable to provide

an education for their child his parents deeded him at the age of six to the property of the China Drama Academy. Though not taught to read and write properly, the bodily skills he learnt enabled him to create a career first as a stuntman then as film actor having made over forty films (Sang, 1999). Through the physical capital of his body and body practices, he has become one of the world's most sought after action stars. Furthermore, the unique style and energy of his body practices has turned him into a cultural icon revered throughout the world.

Bourdieu notes that the matching of the supply of goods to consumption is the result of "objective orchestration" (1984:230). Through competitive practices, material and/or cultural products are developed, which by meeting demand, also serve to objectively define what is possible at any given moment. A consequence of this process is that individuals develop 'taste' for systems of goods that represent desirable lifestyles. Moreover, changes in the system of goods induce changes in taste. The development of taste (in effect a manifestation of habitus) in turn directs the ranking of objectified capital. For example, being a representation of status (i.e. possessive of cultural capital) for many owning a Ferrari is more desirable than owning a Ford.

In respect to physical capital, the development of taste has strong implications for people's relationships with their bodies (Shilling, 1993). For example, current tastes in the aesthetics of the body have elevated the worth of the lean, athletic and young body. However, a differential disenfranchisement from the ideal body is currently occurring because of differences in people's tastes for food. The proliferation in consumption of cheap convenience foods that are high in saturated fats is leading to an epidemic of obesity related health disorders. This is particularly prevalent amongst the lower socio-economic classes whose lifestyle 'choices' show an over consumption of these goods coupled with low levels of physical activity. As a result, there is amongst these groups, an increasing prevalence in body shape that is 'contra' to the current ideal. The wealthier classes however, with their 'tastes' (in a Bourdieurian sense) for better quality foods and the means to purchase them coupled with a propensity for relatively higher levels of physical activity, are more able to posses the socially acceptable body. Moreover, where 'natural' processes are insufficient, they are able to purchase the ideal body through cosmetics and surgery (Dull & West, 1991).

1.6.5 Bourdieu and late modernity

Bourdieu's theories have been criticised for an over emphasis on the class based constraints to individual actions, and for not sufficiently allowing for changes in consumption orientations (Southerton, 2002). His work has also been criticised for failing to explicitly develop a theory of modernisation (Shilling, 1993). However, in respect to the emphasis Bourdieu has placed on the increasing importance of the body (and associated physical capital) within society, there are inherent similarities with Giddens' work on the position of the body and the reflexivity of the self through which identity is constructed. For both Bourdieu and Giddens the location of the body reflects a relationship between the availability of resources, and the position of the body as a life long project. The relationship between practices of sport and the influence of class however, is more accurately reproduced in Bourdieu's construct of the habitus.

Bourdieu allows for developmental change by recognising the continuous realignment of people's tastes. Writing on the space of sports, he notes that sporting practice in its technical sense has inherent malleability, and that "the social meaning attached to a sporting practice by its dominant social users (numerically or socially), can change" (1988:158). Sporting practices are thus transitorily defined through the different groups who practice it at each juncture, and the 'supply' at any one moment is the product of a series of relations between modes of practice and dispositions to practice. Though in effect this tempers some of the constraining properties of the habitus as Bourdieu constructed it, given the rapid pace of social changes within late modernity I concede that an over reliance on Bourdieu's work may be too limiting in respect to the developing an understanding of the processes behind the patterns of participation.

1.7 Enjoyment, socialising and exercise adherence

Unfortunately, the health benefits of exercise cannot be banked and cashed in later. As soon as participation ceases the muscles begin to atrophy, body weight tends to increase and protection against CHD declines. For exercise to function as an effective health policy, participation needs to be maintained in perpetuity. Reasons of health are in themselves not sufficient to maintain participation; individuals must also derive a sense of pleasure from taking part. As participation is voluntary, then where individuals are

not enjoying themselves, participation rates invariably decline out and eventually cease. Pleasure in participating can be rationalised in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards (Snyder, 1983). Pleasure in physical exertion and the efficacy of accomplishing a task of physiological competence for example, climbing a mountain, provides intrinsic satisfaction. Central to extrinsic satisfaction is how competition relates to the positions of significant others. This may be in respect to personal improvement but invariably involves striving for victory over others. However, for extrinsic satisfaction to be realised, 'victory' requires recognition. This may be in the form of trophies, prize money or simply a congratulatory pat on the back. Within late modernity, the structure of sport has seen a progressive change in emphasis from the intrinsic to the extrinsic as the professionalisation of sport places value on winning rather than taking part. Against this trend, the casual amateur is left rationalising his/her rewards from the satisfaction of taking part and the occasional pat on the back.

1.7.1 Support of significant others and social capital

The research findings of sports scientists reflect the importance of enjoyment for the continued participation in physical activities (Snyder, 1983; Wankel, 1985; King, Taylor, Haskell & CeBusk, 1990). However, in order for a potential participant to enjoy his/her chosen activity s/he needs to be located within a supporting environment. Wankel (1985) notes that access to the social support of significant others (family, friends and activity supervisors) is important for maintaining participation in exercise programs. Moreover, it is a finding that is widespread amongst the literature on sports participation (Gregson & Colley, 1986; Anderssen & Wold, 1992; Carron, Hausenblas & Mack 1996).

Social Capital is another important form of Bourdieu's concept of capital (Bourdieu, 1984; 1986). For Bourdieu, social capital is the possession of resources (actual or potential) through the ability to access social networks and connections. It is achieved through relationships with mutual acquaintances, and by recognition of being part (or member) of a group. The amount of social capital an individual possesses is proportional to "the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilise and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected" (Bourdieu, 1986: 249). Bourdieu's concept of social capital provides a useful construct for investigating the influence that

significant others play in shaping participation patterns. For the prospective athlete, the greater the possession of social capital, the greater the potential to receive support from significant others and the greater the prospect of a stable pattern of participation.

1.8 Concluding comments

The pressure to participate in exercise is becoming omnipresent. Information on the health benefits of exercise is conclusive and pervasive. The Government regards exercise to be an important factor in the health of the nation, spending millions of pounds every year promoting and advertising the physically active and hence healthy lifestyle. Individuals are frequently confronted by images of lean and athletically muscled bodies. The incessant promotion of the desirability of such body types has arguably promoted the 'athletic physique' to be a coveted commodity, with the values placed on these physiques supporting new million pound leisure industries. Moreover, a majority of people regard participation to be important for both health and the development of the desirable body. However, overall participation rates are falling and our population is becoming increasingly sedentary. The unvalued obese body is increasingly becoming the norm. There therefore, exists an incongruity between the *beliefs* and the corresponding *actions* of the general population. Furthermore, within our late modernity, cultural barriers to participation should be increasingly obsolete, yet there continues to remain a negative differentiation between the participation rates of the higher and lower socio-economic classes. And this continuing trend cannot be accounted for on economic grounds, as activities such as jogging are not prohibitively expensive.

Despite the observed trends towards decreasing participation rates, many individuals do participate, and maintain that participation as part of an ongoing lifestyle. Questions therefore arise regarding the processes that lead to these individuals bucking the trend. Why do such people take up physical activity, and what keeps them participating? Through studying the processes of participation, can knowledge be generated that would help to encourage a greater rate of participation and hence improve the general health of the population?

Chapter 2: Research Methods

2.1 Introduction

The ways in which sports and physical activities are practised is dependent both on the type of participant, and on the location within which the activity takes place. Playing sports with a group of friends at a local village hall is markedly different to performing at sports stadia in front of paying audiences. Consequently, developing theory about the participation process also requires knowledge of environmental influences. My research design therefore employed a naturalistic approach, with the meanings and motives of the participants explored as they occurred within the social environments in which participation normally takes place.

2.2 Research design

There is a broad range of sports and physical activities on offer, and the first stage of my research design was to choose a manageable number of activities to study. The three activities of weight training, road running and golf were chosen for two principal reasons. The first is that between them they cover a broad spectrum of participant types. The second is that each is represented by clubs situated in close proximity within the city of Oxford, and drawing their membership from the same catchment area. This limited the affects of compounding variables due to differences in the socio-economic characteristics of the activities' catchment areas (class can have a strong influence over the patterns of participation (Bourdieu, 1978; Hargreaves, 1986b; Aversa, 1990)). The clubs were also accessible to potential participants using local transport.

I chose weight training to pilot my research techniques as I had easy access to a group of weight trainers who were willing to act as 'guinea pigs' for my research. The results obtained from studying this group were then used to refine my research methodologies when studying the runners and golfers. Running and golf were chosen because of the contrast between the two activities. Running is essentially free, easily accessible, and physically active, whereas golf is perceived to be relatively expensive, requires specialist

facilities and is less physically active. However, between them, the two activities cover a substantial portion of the population, with running biased towards the younger participants and golf biased towards the older more affluent participant (Elliott, 1998).

In terms of frequency and duration, the general trend is for participation in physical activity to decrease with increased age of participant (Minten & Roberts, 1989). The processes behind this general trend depend on the ongoing relationships between individuals and their chosen leisure activities (Mihalik, et al, 1989; Rudman, 1989). Therefore, in order to develop an understanding of 'why' individuals participate I needed to employ a research design that could access their motivations and desires 'about' participating. As noted by Georges and Jones (1998:407) "while it is fieldworkers who elect to study others...it is the subjects who are knowledgeable...about the phenomena or behaviours that the fieldworkers decide to study". Thus, I decided to employ a qualitative based research methodology as it places emphasis on the individuals' interpretation of their motivations and behaviour, taking account of the research question from their perspective (Hakim, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Allan, 1991; Taylor & Bogdan 1998).

As Burgess notes, qualitative research gives special consideration to "understanding the actions of participants on the basis of their active experience of the world and the ways in which their actions arise from and reflect back on experience" (1984:3). The process of data acquisition places emphasis on a flexible involvement between the observer and the observed, with the research design also necessarily remaining flexible; evolving as the enquiry proceeds (Allan & Skinner, 1991; Taylor & Bogdan 1998). One mainstay of qualitative fieldwork is participant observation (Taylor & Bogdan 1998; Bernard, 1994a), a technique that has been found useful for the study of sport (Gallmeier, 1988; Muir, 1991). Thus, the first stage of my fieldwork was to carry out a period of participation observation amongst the group of weightlifters.

2.2.1 The research question

Reflection on my experience as both a competitor and coach in weightlifting/training indicated that those participants who practised as part of a social group tended to maintain their participation for longer than those who trained on their own. Additionally, those co-participants who initially trained regularly (but separately) over a

period of time tended to drift into loose social groups. The processes of mutual support through social grouping appeared to have a strong influence over how individuals participated. This preliminary observation provided the initial premise of my research, that is, socialising has an important influence on participation patterns in physical activities.

The first stage of my fieldwork with the weightlifters involved a period of participant observation. With permission, observation of the weightlifters and weight trainers took place in the Heavy Weights Room and the Health Suite respectively (both of which are situated in Oxford Brookes University's Sports Centre). The heavy weights room predominantly caters for weightlifters and body builders, whereas the health suite, (though categorised as a weight training facility) is geared more towards aerobic fitness and body toning. Together the two facilities service the spectrum of weight training; one extreme being the male/macho orientated culture of competitive training with heavy free weights, the other the 'inclusive' fitness orientated culture of training with machines. Both facilities are open for use by the public and being competitively priced, are well used by the local population who appear to integrate well with the students.

The observations took place over a period of four weeks, and by extending my personal training times, I could specifically observe the 'practices' of both training facilities without drawing undue attention to myself. In addition to observation, I took time to informally interview participants about their training. Being at the formative stage of my research the questions asked were necessarily exploratory in nature, and were aimed towards refining my research question rather than examining any specific theme (Bernard, 1994b). I observed 10 heavy weights sessions (six during the day and four in the evening), 10 health suite sessions (again six during the day and four in the evening); and carried out around twenty informal interviews. Key observations and supportive quotes (with the permission of the interviewees) were recorded in a logbook, and the interview results were transcribed later from the field notes.

The results of the preliminary stage of the fieldwork indicated that though socialising is an important factor in the facilitation of sports participation (see chapters 5 and 6), in and of itself the socialising factor is limited when applied in isolation to the question of integrating physical activity as part of a lifestyle. Each interviewee had a different story to tell as to why s/he participated, and significantly, socialising was not a primary

catalyst to participation for many of the participants. Other factors such as body image, cultural mores, and personal aspirations also had a significant 'role' in choosing to undertake physical activity. More importantly for the majority of interviewees it was the combination and interplay between different factors that influenced their participation patterns rather than any one overriding factor. In the light of these preliminary findings, I decided to refocus the research question in order to explore how participation patterns are influenced by the *interrelationships* between different factors.

2.2.2 Research design revisited

The fundamental change of emphasis in the research question necessitated a refinement in research design. Subsequently, the principles of the grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) provided the basis of my research methodology. This approach to qualitative analysis emphasises that the generation of theory from data should be grounded in that data. A well-constructed and grounded theory is produced by systematically analysing data, "often sentence by sentence, or phrase-by-phrase of the field note, interview, or other document; by 'constant comparison,' data are extensively collected and coded" (Strauss, 1987:22). That is, grounded theory is used to "build rather than only test theory" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:57)

With the 'how' of data collection being developed and guided by the emerging theory, the focus of analysis is then concentrated upon the organising of ideas that have developed as a result of analysing the data (Strauss, 1987). Of central importance to a well-constructed theory is the process of 'coding'; that is, the analysing of the data into concepts (naming of phenomena), and categories (hypotheses suggesting how phenomena is possibly related) (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Strauss, 1987). The process of coding "allows the researcher to transcend the empirical nature of the data ...while at the same time conceptually accounting for the processes in the data in a theoretically sensitive way" (Glaser, 1978:55). The constructed theory is complete when the analyst has taken the study as far as feasible (Glaser 1978). With respect to my fieldwork, the point at which sufficient data had been collected in order to achieve 'saturation' would be decided once preliminary analysis of data indicated that further collection of primary data would not efficiently serve the further refining of generated theory.

As noted previously I had proposed to collect data from the participants of three different sports. Consequently, I required a method of comparing and contrasting any differences in the data generated. Pawson and Tilley propose the 'realistic evaluation' method of social enquiry as a means of transcending the 'paradigm wars' associated with the historical development of research methodologies (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). Realist research design is premised on the detailed answering of the questions of why, for whom and under what circumstances? (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). The conceptual matrix through which they examine how causation in the social world should be interpreted is conceptualised by the basic realist formula of:

Mechanism + Context = Outcome (Pawson & Tilley, 1997:57)

Though this research paradigm primarily applies to investigating the results of introduced social programs, it does provide a guiding principle for interpreting research data. As the changes in context can have important consequences on any theories generated, it was a useful supplement to grounded theory when comparing the data generated by the weightlifters, runners and golfers.

Having reached the interim conclusion to refocus the research question, the next stage of my research was aimed at identifying which factors exhibit greatest influence over participation and thus warranted further investigation. However, as noted by Strauss and Corbin "each of us brings to the analysis of data our biases, assumptions, patterns of thinking, and knowledge gained from experience and reading. These can block our seeing what is significant in the data, or prevent us from moving from descriptive to theoretical levels of analysis" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:95). Thus, I regarded the next phase of my investigation as an important juncture at which to switch from studying weightlifting/weight training (in which I have significant personal investment) to studying participation in running, an activity in which I had little prior experience.

2.3 Participant observation of the running club

The decision to switch to studying participation of runners within a running club resulted in a change in setting in which to explore participation. The environment in which running participation takes place was radically different to that of the participation

environment experienced by weightlifters/trainers. Therefore the first phase of my study of the participation of runners was to observe how customs and practices of the running club combine to structure the 'act' of running.

2.3.1 Initial observations

The Headington Road Runners contains around 150 members who meet as a group every Thursday evening at the OXRADS' sports centre (see chapter 3). Prior to studying the runners, I obtained permission from the club's secretary who acted as a gatekeeper to the members throughout the course of the fieldwork, and to conduct my investigation on the OXSRAD'S premises I obtained permission from the sport centre's manager. Subsequently, I undertook a period of observation of the running club over four successive weeks. Initial observations were dedicated towards my familiarisation with the logistics, physical layout and social layout of both the site and the running club, in essence "mapping the social scene" (Bernard 1994:144). Moreover, this reconnaissance phase was aimed at identifying where and when I could best engage with the club's membership in more detailed future studies (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). As with my observations with the weightlifters, the fieldwork was recorded in notebooks for future transcription.

For the runners, participation occurs in three general stages, arriving at the sports centre; going out for the run; and returning from the run. The first two weeks of observation centred on obtaining a general overview of both the facilities and the running club. During the third week of observation, I concentrated on the processes associated with arrival and preparation for the run, and in the fourth week, I observed the returning from the run and leaving the club stages. These initial observations indicated that future researching of the club should occur during the second and third stages of participation, as more investigating the runners during the first stage would have been too disruptive. As gaining access to situations involves managing personal identity and the projection of an image that will fit in with the social environment (Bernard, 1994; Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998), during this observation phase I also took special note of the running club's dress code and any normative behaviour that might affect my future integration into the club.

2.3.2 Informal interviews with the running club's membership

In the period between returning from the run and leaving the sports centre, many of the runners take time to socialise both in and around the foyer area of the building and within the centre's bar facilities (see chapter 6). This characteristic of the memberships' participation pattern afforded me the opportunity to carry out a number of informal interviews with a wide range of participants. The purpose of these interviews was twofold. Firstly, by informally interviewing I got to socialise with many of the participants and build a degree of acceptance and rapport with the membership, thus aiding future access to the knowledge held by the participants (Bernard, 1994; Bryman, 2001). Secondly, the information gained in these interviews provided a preliminary assessment of the processes involved in running and was to inform future research. The interviews were conducted in an ad hoc fashion with choice of interviewee derived from a mixture of both happenstance and snowballing whereby chance interviewees would introduce me to 'others who may be of interest' to my research. With prior consent the interviews were recorded at the time through the taking of continual notes, included in which was documentation regarding who was interviewed, where they were interviewed and their position in the club (for example, team coach or novice runner). In addition, volunteers were sought for future semi-structured interviews. During this period, the exchange of information was two-way. As well as my exploration of the club, I was careful to provide information as to the purpose of my research, both to allay any apprehensions regarding my presence, and to develop interest in my work.

2.3.3 The questionnaire

One major finding from this stage of the research was that research requires the 'filling in of a questionnaire'. Furthermore, a significant portion of the club's membership expressed this expectation. This led me to the conclusion that the production of a questionnaire would help to both legitimise my work and to further introduce my work to the club.

The decision to introduce a questionnaire into my research methodology also gave me an opportunity to undertake a limited amount of quantitative research into the club's membership profile. This in turn would serve to contextualise any results derived from future qualitative analysis. For example, results from the interviews indicated that

though the membership regarded itself as being composed of people from a broad range of social-economic backgrounds (see identity chapter) actual makeup may have been more limited. In addition, the logistics of studying a large group risked the overlooking of participants who otherwise may have been interested in taking part in the research and thus not have provided an important input. Distribution of a suitable questionnaire would go some way in accessing this otherwise unobtainable material (Czaja & Blair, 1996; Bradburn, Sudman & Associates 1980).

Before designing the questionnaire, I contacted representatives of the club's committee to discuss both the appropriateness of distributing a questionnaire and for advice on its content. In this manner, I hoped to engage actively 'key personnel' in my research, who would then go on to further encourage the wider club membership to take part. This strategy worked well; not only did I receive constructive advice on questionnaire design, but the club's committee also formally endorsed the survey and agreed to help distribute the questionnaires.

To maximise accessibility I kept the questionnaire to two sides of a sheet of A4 paper, a copy of which is provided in appendix 1. A covering letter introducing myself and outlining the purpose of the research was included as well as an introductory passage stressing that completion was voluntary and any replies would be treated with strict confidentiality. Sections 1 and 2 of the questionnaire were constructed from a series of closed questions designed to provide a limited quantification of how the membership participated in sport. Section 3 explored why people regularly participate in sport, the questions in this section being designed to encourage the membership to reflect on their reasons for taking part in sport; in essence priming the membership towards further involvement in my work. Section 4 was an open question regarding sporting histories, whilst the final section 5 was designed to provide a socio-economic profiling of the club's membership. Respondents were invited to partake in future research through providing a contact address/number. Finally, a comments section was also included to provide space for additional information thought important.

Copies of the questionnaire were distributed throughout the club by handing them out to members as they arrived for training, passing on multiple copies to members who then further distributed them and through inclusion in the club's monthly magazine. Completed forms were collected either by me in person or by members of the committee.

In total two hundred forms were distributed with fifty-three completed copies returned. At the time of distribution, total membership of the club numbered approximately one hundred and twenty five, giving a response rate of approximately 42%. However, at the time of distribution (during the month of August) due to seasonal variations attendance rates at the club averaged around seventy giving a more representative response rate of approximately 75%. Prior to the questionnaire, I had to constantly reintroduce my self and my work with each new encounter. However, subsequent to personally handing out the questionnaire the ice had effectively been broken, giving me a much freer access to the members. Section 3 of the questionnaire provoked particular interest; many respondents noted that it was the first time that they had reflected on the reasons behind their participation in sport. Through getting the members to consider the questions surrounding participation, I had brought about a partial transfer of possession of the research topic to the individuals being studied. This was demonstrated in conversations during post running socialisation, which now included discussions on why and how participation in sport took place. Moreover, an increasing number of runners started to volunteer their time to help in future work. A full breakdown of the results from analysis of the questionnaire is presented in Chapter 3.

2.3.4 Semi-structured Interviews

Preliminary results from the informal interviews confirmed that socialising in itself was too limited to explain the processes involved in adopting sport as part of a lifestyle. Concepts of identity construction, physical capital and social capital had also emerged from the data. Therefore, the next stage of the research was aimed at investigating these emerging areas if interest.

I then conducted a series of fifteen short, informal interviews with a range of runners. The interviews took place within the bar area of the OXSRAD sports centre, the notes of which were written up later the same evening. During the informal interviewing, it became clear that the interviewees felt comfortable and relaxed when talking about their involvement with running and sports in general. For some the interviews were of mild interest, generating a level of casual curiosity in my work, whilst for others it was an opportunity to share their passion for running. The latter cases provided a problem of control over the interviews as the respondents tended to embellish their answers with

(often extended) life histories. However, such biographical narrations when carefully controlled can produce grounded constructions that may cumulatively shed light on how lifestyles develop definable patterns (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; Plummer, 2001). Furthermore, personal experiences can also provide powerfully expressive narratives that provide insight into historical social mechanisms within a given culture (Wengraph, 2001). I decided therefore that the next phase of the fieldwork would be a series of semi-structured interviews in order to provide the interviewees with more time and freedom in which to explore topics in greater depth.

The results of the informal interviewing provided the topics for the semi-structured interviews, with the questions for each topic collated to create an interview guide (Bernard, 1994); see appendix 2. The works of Holstein & Gubrium (1995) and Bernard (1994) informed the interview process. In order to develop my interviewing techniques, two pilot semi-structured interviews were conducted with the weightlifting group, with the questions asked being altered to account for the context change. Within these interviews, I experimented with the uses of different interviewing techniques including probing methods such as the silent probe, echo probe and Uh-huh probe etc. and phased assertion whereby I acted as if I knew something already in order to get people to open up (Bernard, 1994). At the end of each pilot interview I held a feedback session with the interviewees in order to analyse the success or otherwise of the interview. After reflection on the results from pilot studies, I proceeded to set up a series of interviews with members of the running club.

Knowledge generation depends on who is being interviewed and under what circumstances. Analysis of the completed interview must be contextualised with regard to the historical location of the interviewee, and the socio-economic environment that framed the interview (Whyte, 1984; Bernard, 1994; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Pawson and Tilley, 1998). Results from the informal interviews indicated that the runners sub-divide themselves into variety of loosely defined categories according to running ability. I therefore used these to divide the club membership into a working matrix (see table 2.1 below) to monitor the range of members interviewed, and to ensure that I had covered a representative range of the runners.

	Males	Females
New Member (<1 year)	4	2
Long-Term Member (>5 years)	3	2
Back of Pack	1	1
Middle of Pack	2	1
Front of Pack	1	1

Table 2.1: Interview Matrix

As with the informal interviews, the semi-structured interviews took place within the bar section of the OXSRAD sports centre after the completion of the club's normal Thursday evening training run. Initially I had tried to pre-arrange interviews with those runners who had indicated they would be willing to partake in further research. However, other 'factors' often took priority over the interviewee's time; lift sharing, runs being longer than expected, club duties and baby sitters are examples of 'things cropping up' and curtailing the interviews. I therefore needed to be more flexible in my approach to whom I chose to interview at any particular time. The problem of access was resolved by 'grabbing' a succession of runners as they returned from their runs and asking for volunteers to spend time being interviewed after they had finished changing. As on any one evening up to hundred members would be taking part in the training run, over the course of a month I was able to attract sufficient interviewees to complete the matrix and hence cover a representative selection of the club's membership. The figures in table 2.1 are the total number of members interviewed per category. With several representing more than one category, the total number of members interviewed was 12. The interviews ranged in length from around ten to forty minutes.

Though the interviews provided a cross-sectional study of the running club, there was also a longitudinal element to the research. By targeting the interviews at runners engaged in different stages of their sporting careers (see chapter 3), and by getting them to reflect on past experiences, I was able to compare experiences from different stages of a running career (Bernard 1994). For example, new members were asked to describe their feelings about getting involved with running, whilst established members were asked the same question but in a reflective sense. Thus, by applying the same interview

guide across the matrix I was able to establish a degree of validation of the results through cross-referencing.

The main advantages of interviewing within the bar area was the convenience of the location and the accessibility to interviewees. Moreover, the ambience of the location meant that the interviewees generally felt comfortable with the interview process. However, transcription of the first set of three interviews proved problematic, as tape recordings of the interviews were rendered inaudible due to the general noise levels associated with the social setting. Subsequent interviews were recorded using written notes and were fully written up as soon as possible. A second problem relating to the location of the interviews was in isolating the interviewee's answers from the influence of other members of the club. Given the close proximity of the other members, often where an answer to a question proved difficult to the interviewee, s/he would sometime seek help from other club members. Though the resulting answers could therefore not be regarded as uniquely representative, I regarded them as authentic as they were often derived through mutual consensus. Where there had been collaboration a note was made in the interview transcripts. Despite the limitations of the setting, I decided to continue interviewing within the bar area as the advantages of access to interviewees outweighed the limitations.

2.4 Theoretical sampling and analysing generated data

The move from 'description' to 'analysis' involves the construction of generalisations from data (Whyte, 1984). With regard to analysing the active interview it involves the construction of a framework that informs the interdependency of 'the what' and 'the how'. In this way the social world is explained and contextualised from the interviewees' perspectives (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Within grounded theory, data and theory are linked through the conceptual code that is created through asking questions of discrete items of data (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). That is, data is 'coded' by asking questions of it; for example, "What is this? What does it represent?" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:63). Through comparison, commonalties between sets of data from different events or instances of phenomena can then be linked via the coding to create data categories (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Rather than just being a passive group heading for codes, categories in themselves are dynamic in nature and as such are

developed in terms of their properties. And these properties in turn are contextualised or dimensionalised in respect to their location. Through development of the properties and dimensions of categories it is then possible to build an understanding of the relationships between categories, which in turn leads to the construction of a grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). However, core to generating grounded theory is the writing of technical memos, that is, noting ideas about codes and their relationships (Glaser, 1978). These memos are written during the coding process to explain the code through clarification and elaboration, and represent a constant process that continues throughout the research.

The generation of theory from data need not exist in isolation from the research methodology but rather represents a more fluid operation being interdependent with, and informative of, the process of data collection (Miller, 2000). Within the grounded theory approach, the iterative process of data analysis informing data collection is referred to as theoretical sampling (Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). After I had conducted each semi-structured interview, the results were analysed in accordance with the grounded theory procedures. They were then used to inform the questions of the next interview. However, resultant deviations from the interview guide were constrained by the need to produce coherent sets of data to complete the interview matrix. Balancing the desirability of developing the interviews against the need for consistency was achieved by retaining a set of comprehensive core questions whilst employing additional refined questions where time allowed. As my analytical skills developed, I paid more attention to the noting of theoretical memos both during the coding process and during the interviewing, in the latter case through constructing additional observational memos regarding body language and situational factors etc. On completion of the coding of the semi-structured interviews, I undertook a comprehensive analysis of the results of the fieldwork, both to review strengths and weaknesses within the body of work completed, and to map out necessary future work. From this analysis, three major processes or categories were identified that appeared to play pivotal roles in the adoption of physical activity into the lifestyle. That is, participation appeared to be strongly linked to processes associated with physical capital, social capital and identity construction. In addition, comparisons between the results of the initial observations (see section 2.3.1) and the observational memos indicated that these categories were in part directly observable within the mechanisms of participation.

Up to this point my research of the running club had taken place entirely within the confines of the OXSRAD sports centre. Given that this constitutes only part of the running experience I decided that the next stage of the fieldwork should involve studying the processes involved with the actual running phase of participation.

2.5 Participation observation as a 'runner'

My personal experience of running is very limited, and mostly confined to short (3 mile) occasional runs to maintain fitness; I did not regard myself as a 'runner'. However, this meant that I was able to position myself as a prospective new member with no direct experience of running clubs. By actively taking part in the club's runs, I was able to experience first hand the processes involved with taking up running.

During the summer, the club formally meets twice a week at two venues, the OXSRAD sports centre on Thursday evenings and Shotover Country Park (a large park on the eastern edge of Oxford) on Tuesday evenings (see chapter 3). On Thursday's run, the club divides itself into groups of differing abilities. Being a self confessed novice I made the prudent decision to attach myself to the novice group for the first couple of weeks. Each of the runs was informally organised by a group leader. The runs lasted for approximately forty minutes and included intermittent resting points in order for stragglers to regroup. Where possible I did try to engage other runners in conversation about their running. Though instigating conversation whilst running may seem intrusive, one major aspect of running within a club is the 'idle chit chat' that takes place between runners whilst training (see chapter 3). However, given my relative lack of aerobic fitness and the nature of the running these conversations were necessarily short. Most of the fieldwork consisted of making observational memos about the processes involved with taking part in a formally organised run. These memos were recorded as soon as possible after completing the run.

On Tuesday evenings during the summer, the club meets at Shotover Country Park, an area of woodland open to general public use. Due to its proximity to the club's base at OXSRAD, it is of particular worth to the running club. It is a pleasant environment and has numerous different tracks that provide a variety of routes of varying difficulty. After running with the novice groups, I decided to use the Tuesday's runs to observe the

intermediate groups. Fortunately, the method of participation on a Tuesday evening differs from Thursday in that groups of all abilities take part in the same run, with the lesser standard runners taking short cuts to keep up with the better runners. Hence if I felt over exerted there would be opportunities for me to scale back my running. Though I managed to actively participate with the intermediate groups, the availability of such 'get outs' was mentally reassuring. Without them, participation observation of the intermediate runners would have been daunting. As with the novice groups where possible I did engage the runners in conversation about their running (though rather less frequently) though again the research was mainly confined to the noting of observational memos.

As I did not regard myself as a runner, I noted my own personal experiences of joining a running club. At this point, I would like to make particular mention of the runners who though being studied made the effort to integrate me into the runs and provided moral support. At no point during the runs did I feel out of depth; I always felt that if I could not keep up I would be 'looked after' by the other runners. Though I managed to successfully observe the intermediate groups, I decided not to try to progress to the advanced groups. My limited running ability would have been too restrictive and as such, I would not have been able to realistically integrate myself into these groups. Any attempt to do so may have risked alienating myself from the runners, which in turn might have affected any future research work.

2.6 Limitations of participant observation

Decisions regarding the obtaining and processing of qualitative data are subject to questions regarding their neutrality and external validity (Blackman, 1993). Consequently, a major aspect of the review of the completed work was to identify areas that could be subject to inaccuracies and/or bias. Holstein and Gubrium's (1995) work on the active interview informed the conduct of the interviews. Within this method the interviewer is not restricted to asking set questions and recording answers, but rather engages the interviewee; "working interactionally to establish the discursive basis from which the respondent can articulate his or her relevant experiences" (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995: 47). During the semi-structured interviews of the runners, this methodology worked well. The interviewees were particularly responsive to a less

structured interaction and proved keen to relate personal incidences and happenings. Given the topic, location of interviewing and nature of the interviewees I believe this method of interviewing yielded information of more depth and quality than may otherwise have been obtained with a more structured and/or formal approach.

Within the active interview, there is the possibility of narrative guidance, which due to personality factors may bias interviewer/interviewee interaction (Hakim, 1987). The interviewee may skew answers to impress the interviewer; pre-judging the point of the interview and altering the answers accordingly (Plummer, 2001). Similarly, I may have inadvertently biased the questioning to provide self-serving answers built on prior expectations (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). Within the semi-structured interviews, I aimed to uncover information from the perspectives of the interviewees. However, as the interviewer/interviewee relationship is socially constructed (Lofland & Lofland, 1995), there is a potential risk of introducing bias in information generated (Plummer, 2001). For example, though I took measures to interview a representative cross section of the club, those members of the club with the more 'communicative personalities' more readily presented themselves for interview; a situation compounded by my selection technique. It is also important to note that using the techniques of theoretical sampling risked compounding errors. Parts of the interviews were constructed on knowledge derived from the results of previous work. If therefore there were any misrepresentations within the original interpretations, these may then have been replicated and built upon in the subsequent interview. In a worst-case scenario, such errors may have coupled with presuppositions to provide errors that become cumulative with each set of interviews. The validity of any conclusions drawn from my research work up to this point is therefore centred on the interviewer-interviewee relationship. That my own persona would have an effect on the outcome of my research was evidenced by an incident that occurred at the end of a run in which I had joined in with an intermediate group. My capacity for running was (unknowingly) better than I had stated to the other runners. Thus, when I finished the run ahead of a significant portion of the field, I was accused of being 'economical' with the truth, and one participant voiced suspicions regarding my trustworthiness. Therefore, a significant portion of the participation observation phase of my research was subject to influence by the dyadic characteristics of interviewing

2.7 Focus group interviews with the running club

Review of the participant observation phase of my fieldwork indicated that little new information could be attained through either further observation, or continued semi-structured interviewing of the runners. In effect, an acceptable degree of 'saturation' had been achieved (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). However, following this review of the fieldwork, I concluded that the major processes associated with physical capital, social capital and identity construction warranted further exploration through employing a different fieldwork methodology.

2.7.1 Focus group research

The 'focus group' as a research methodology in the social sciences has its origins in the post war work of Robert Merton on morale in the U.S. military (Kitzinger, 1994; Morgan, 1997). Though focus group research has fluctuated in and out of favour, it has seen a resurgence in the late nineteen eighties with the works of Morgan, (1988) and Krueger (1994). Today focus group techniques are established within a wide range of social science disciplines (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999).

Focus groups are a form of qualitative research that generates data by explicitly utilising communication between research participants (Kitzinger, 1995; Morgan, 1997). Conducted by a moderator working from an interview guide of open-ended questions, focus groups usually involve a relatively structured group interview of six to ten participants. The aim of the moderator is to orchestrate the interview so that the interviewees develop group discussions and explore issues that are important to them. Done well the focus group interview allows participants the opportunity to generate their own questions and priorities and thus generate data that is grounded in their own vocabulary (Kitzinger, 1995). Through instigation of every day forms of communication, new dimensions of information may be observable that may be suppressed within the confines of the individual interview dyadic (Morgan, 1997; Green & Hart, 1999). Focus groups are potentially empowering (Burgess, 1996; Goss & Leinbach, 1996). As a socially constructed event, focus groups are a useful tool that can be used to explore knowledge and experiences held by the participants, whilst allowing the participants a level of control over, and possession of the research. An additional

aspect of the focus group is that it acts on "captive populations" (Michell, 1999:36). This then would provide an opportunity to study how any ongoing social relations within the running club affect group dynamics, and thus highlight areas of consensus and diversity within the running club as a whole (Morgan, 1997).

Given the potential of the focus group methodology to reveal data otherwise not obtainable from the participant observation and semi-structured interview stages of my research I therefore decided to undertake a series of focus interviews with the members of the running club. A further advantage to focus groups is their potential for confirmation of results obtained from other methods (Goss, 1996; Morgan, 1997). As such, data from the focus groups would also serve to triangulate the results from previous fieldwork and thus address the aforementioned issues regarding the trustworthiness of my data.

2.7.2 Selecting participants for the focus groups

My first consideration in the application of focus group research was in respect to the composition of the groups. Ideally, purpose of project should inform the construction of the focus groups, thus minimising bias within the data produced (Morgan, 1998). Therefore, in order to generate participants who have an appropriate knowledge, where possible (and in keeping with grounded theory) choice of group composition should be informed by theoretical sampling (Kitzinger, 1995; Burgess, 1996). In respect to this recommendation, rather than randomly select participants I decided to construct a series of focus groups, each categorised to represent a different faction within the running club's membership. Moreover, in this manner I aimed to create focus group memberships that were mutually compatible. The advantage of achieving group compatibility is that it lends itself to the building of a comfortable atmosphere within which trust is more readily developed between participants. Through developing trust, participants are more likely to be more forthcoming, open and honest with their answers. And compatibility reduces the need and hence time spent by participants explaining themselves to each other (Morgan, 1998; Kruger & Casey, 2000).

Data from the participant observation of the club indicated that the segmentation of the club into numerous factions is a natural result of the processes of participation (see Chapter 3). Correspondingly, the club membership was definable as an amalgamation of

the four main categories of Beginners/New Members, Established Runners, Females and Males. I was also keen to differentiate those members of the club who held positions of responsibility as group dynamics can be affected by power relationships (Morgan & Krueger, 1993; Kitzinger, 1995). However, an absolute identification of such members was difficult as results from the previous work showed that positions of power permeated throughout the membership, with role differentiation being both fluid and transient (see chapter 3). To address this problem I decided to create a fifth category of 'Members in Positions of Responsibility' (which for the purpose of convenience I termed Committee Members), members of which would be self-selecting. By creating this additional category, I hoped that such members would gravitate towards taking part in this group. This category also enabled me to explore the additional commitments required of these supplementary roles.

Before recruiting members for each group, I again sought permission from the club secretary, who in turn obtained endorsement from the running club's committee. From the outset, I had kept the club informed about my work, a stratagem that proved its worth with the easy uncensored access to the club's membership it had gained me. As with my previous fieldwork the club was keen to be involved and appeared genuinely interested in my results. I therefore decided to advertise for focus group recruits through announcements at the start of the Thursday warm-up sessions, and by placing a list on the club's notice board for interested volunteers to sign up to.

2.7.3 Focus group interview location

The environment in which a focus group interview takes place can affect the ease of information exchange between participants. Using the natural environment of the interviewees can be advantageous as it provides a familiar setting within which participants routinely feel comfortable to meet and talk (Holbrook & Jackson, 1996). However, it may also prove detrimental as familiarity may inhibit discourse, especially when covering areas of potential conflict (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Although previously I had used the bar area of the OXSRAD sport centre to conduct my interviews, several factors weighed against using this area for the focus groups. Firstly, the members usually gravitate towards small, socially defined groups whose composition may not have replicated a focus group category. To set up a 'rival' artificial group

within this environment may therefore have created a false situation that inhibited dialogue. For example, the putting of questions regarding gender equality to an all female group may have risked setting up a conflict situation with adjacent male non-group members. Secondly, as proved with the semi-structured interviewing, the general hubbub within the bar area prevents the production of an audible taped recording for transcription.

I was however keen to hold the group interviews as close to the sport centre as possible, as for reasons of logistics it would be easier to recruit volunteers if they didn't have to travel far to be interviewed. Fortunately, the sports centre contained a small committee room that on inspection proved suitable for holding the focus groups. The room was small enough to encourage interaction whilst not being too cramped. Furthermore, as well as being situated close to the bar, the room contained a table, chairs and a power point for my tape recorder. With permission of the centre's management, I therefore booked the room for five two hour-long sessions, each session to take place on a Thursday evening after training. To allow time for preliminary transcription and analysis, each session was separated by two weeks. The five focus group categories were based on the assumption that they reflected natural groupings within the running club. However, as groups defined by outsiders may not necessarily reflect affinities felt by informants (Baker & Hinton, 1999), I also booked an additional evening to accommodate a further focus group should the need arise (it also provided some leeway for postponing interviews due to unforeseen circumstances).

2.7.4 Focus group question guide

The work of Kruger (1998) informed the manner in which I was to conduct the focus groups. Obtaining quality data relies on developing the social aspect of the focus experience, so that questions encourage conversation rather than awkward situations (Kitzinger, 1994; Krueger, 1998; Krueger & Casey, 2000). Kruger (1998) suggests that questioning can be classified into two main strategies, namely 'Topic Guide' and 'Questioning Route', with each having its advantages and disadvantages. The topic guide method consists of topics or issues to be discussed, and provides the moderator with a list of key words or phrases from which to work. The questioning route provides the moderator with a list of set questions to ask. The advantages of the topic guide are

that it provides the moderator with the opportunity and freedom to be more spontaneous with the questioning, for example incorporating previous answers into future questions. The main disadvantage of the topic guide is that it risks introducing inconsistencies where comparisons between different focus groups are sought. However, the questioning route though providing for better control and consistency, may inhibit the development of spontaneity and moderator-group interaction. I therefore made the value judgement that topic guide strategy (through its inherent ability to be adaptive to the flow of the interview) would serve my purposes better. However, the topic guide method is more reliant on the skill of the moderator, and having had no previous experience of conducting focus group interviews, I decided that I would also have a list of pre-set questions attached to each topic to fall back on if the need arose.

The results of the previous fieldwork defined the issues for the topic guide. Although the core of the topic guide was to remain constant throughout the interviews, changes to the guide were incorporated to reflect differences within the various focus group categories. In this way, I aimed to produce data on core issues (the consistency of which could be ascertained through cross referencing different groups), whilst still generating data on particular issues relating to the character of the different focus groups. Time was allowed at the end of the interview for interviewees to put questions to the facilitator.

2.7.5 Moderating the focus groups

Choice of moderator for groups is clearly important in focus group research. However, limited resources precluded the use of a professional. This left me with the choice of either carrying out the task myself or seeking out an experienced colleague to act on my behalf. As I felt that I had established rapport, and the interviewees had not appeared inhibited in expressing their views, I felt that they would be more comfortable with me facilitating the interviews than a stranger. I did consider employing an outside facilitator for the female focus group. This was because I was concerned that an all female group would feel less free to explore gender related issues with a male moderator. However, consultation quickly revealed that the participants were happy for me to lead the focus group. Several of the group went so far as to express their bemusement at the idea that they should require a 'female moderator' -turning the tables by suggesting that it was I who was daunted by the prospect of interviewing them!

I had no prior experience with moderating a focus group discussion, and therefore decided to run a couple of pilot focus group sessions. The first of these I ran with a group of research students who met socially once a term to discuss their work. The object of this session was to develop a feel for moderating a group discussion through experimenting with different styles of moderating and using techniques such as open, introductory and summary questions questioning (Krueger, 1994). After reflection on the results of this first pilot study, I constructed a topic guide pro forma to use with the different running club's groups. To insure that applying the pro forma resulted in a coherent focus group session that flowed naturally from topic to topic I conducted the second pilot session with the weightlifting group I had used previously. For this second study, I also tape-recorded the interview, which left me more time to take field notes about how my personal mannerisms and body language effected the flow of the session. The topic guide pro forma worked well, but what was noticeable was that the group members were continuously looking towards me for approval. Where I made a conscious effort to distance myself from the replies the discussion became less a question and answer session and more a group discussion. Even small gestures such a head nodding had an effect. However, in places these subliminal signals also helped the session progress through sticking points. I concluded therefore that my field notes from the running club focus groups would also have to include references regarding my personal inputs.

2.7.6 The focus group sessions

As the club had seen a recent influx of new members, I decided to start the focus groups with the new members/beginners group before they became fully integrated into the club. However, recruitment of volunteers proved problematic. Though I had advertised on the club's notice board for interviewees and spread the word amongst the membership, on the night of the interview I had no confirmed volunteers. I put this down to a mixture of natural reticence due to the new members being confronted by a new and unfamiliar environment, and the dissemination of information about events being especially problematic for new members. Of greater concern was the fact that I had only received two volunteers for all the subsequent interviews, the response rate being in direct contrast to the interest and promises that had been verbally expressed. The solution to the shortfall quickly presented itself when in conversation with one of

the new members it transpired that a significant proportion of the membership were willing to donate time there and then, but were less inclined to commit to some future time where they were unsure of their priorities. Therefore, interviewees for the beginners/new members' focus group were drummed up on the night. Throughout the focus group interviews I had to resort to this method of recruitment, this being partly due to the reluctance of the runners to commit their free time, and partly due to the fact that after the first night it became the expected method. (Subsequent to the beginners group I removed the volunteer list replacing it with a notice that I would be seeking volunteers for focus groups on specific training nights). Consequently, on any specific night I had sufficient volunteers to make the session viable. As well as being easy to operate, this method also had the advantage of randomising the selection process, as I had no control over who would be available for interview. The success of this method of recruitment was directly attributable to the close proximity of the interview room to the bar, and that I sold the 'focus group' as an interesting and fun social experience.

The focus groups consisted on average six members with a total of thirty-one runners being interviewed, (nine females and twenty males, two of whom were interviewed twice). The one focus group within which I did experience difficulties recruiting was the female focus group where I only managed to obtain three volunteers. This was particularly disappointing as the male/female split of the club as a whole at the time was approximately 60/40 respectively. Furthermore, it was in direct contrast to the recruitment of females for all the other groups wherein they were adequately represented (though their numbers within the different groups consistently fell slightly shy of reflecting the female/male ratio of the wider club). As the group were keen to proceed, I decided to go ahead with the interview rather than rearrange for a time when more women would be available. Reasons for the poor turnout were unclear, but I did receive a number of apologies from which I concluded I was just unlucky in my scheduling of this particular group.

With prior agreement from each group, the interviews were tape recorded for transcription. Supplementary information regarding body language, group processes and my personal inputs to discussions were documented with hand written notes. The committee room proved a good setting for the interviews; it was large enough to accommodate the groups whilst still small enough to create an intimate environment

fostering good social interaction with the interviewees. However, due to clerical error I was unable to use this room for the committee group, as it was double booked. For this group I used a cordoned off section of the main sports hall. Although private, this room was significantly larger, and with poor echoed acoustics, did make a significant impact on the nature of the focus group interview. Getting the session to flow at the beginning was noticeably more difficult than were the other groups, (this was also partly due to the volunteers stepping out to fetch their coats as the room was also rather cold). I did offer to rearrange the session but as the group were all assembled and prepared, they preferred to continue rather than reset the date.

The choice to use the focus group methodology proved a success for as well as yielding a rich body of data; the participants also expressed their approval of the process finding it both enjoyable and interesting. Positive feedback from volunteers to the rest of the running club meant that recruitment became noticeably easier with each successive focus group. The final (committee member) focus group despite its location also proved to be a success, so much so that I was invited to give a talk on my findings and to act as an independent advisor regarding decisions on the future direction of the club. Though I had provisionally booked the committee room for a supplementary interview, review of the focus groups indicated that additional groups would not necessarily result in the production of significant additional information. With regard to the small turnout for the female focus group, the low numbers in my opinion did not significantly alter the nature of the interview. I therefore decided not to arrange for a second female focus group session.

2.7.7 Transcribing and analysing the findings from the focus groups

All the focus groups were with permission, tape-recorded. However, after transcribing the first focus group verbatim I was presented with a very long document. Furthermore, 'information' was difficult to assimilate as the discussions often involved two or three people speaking at once with numerous interruptions. In addition, using this format, the contextualising of data by integrating the field notes taken during the interviews, led to the document becoming even more unwieldy. I was also concerned that added richness in data through incorporating verbal intonations (clear on the tape) was also limited, as they did not transfer well to the written script. I therefore made the decision to transcribe

the interviews in an abridged format, removing conversation that I deemed irrelevant and adding extended field notes where pertinent. As with the semi-structured interviewing I analysed the resultant focus groups transcripts in accordance with grounded theory, generating the relevant codes, technical memos and categories. Subsequent to transcription, through matrixing the focus group transcripts I was also able to investigate similarities and differences between the sets of data by cross-referencing the responses according to focus group category.

Communications within focus group interviews are subject to influence from 'group dynamics'. Furthermore, the action of abridgement and then coding exposed the data generated to external influence according to my personal location. Thus, I was concerned that the data from the focus groups were open to a degree of misinterpretation. Furthermore, as the focus group is in effect an artificial construction, any conclusions drawn from the generated data may not have truly represented how the participants actually viewed participating in sport when not part of a focus group. In an ideal world, all of the participants would have had an equal input to the interview, whereas it was noticeable that within each group there were differences (causally relating to group dynamics) in input between the participants. I was concerned therefore to provide an opportunity for all members of each group to have an input to the generated data. In light of these concerns, I decided to rewrite the abridged transcriptions and subsequent analysis in a format that was accessible, and present the resultant scripts to the focus group members for comment. In this fashion, I afforded an opportunity for all the group members to have a strong input, whilst also providing a mechanism by which the validity of my conclusions could be examined. Each volunteer was therefore provided a copy of an annotated transcript of their respective focus group interview and asked to make any notes they thought appropriate. To help ensure a detailed reply I encouraged the respondents to write their comments (in effect mark the work for accuracy etc.) on the scripts. To preserve the confidentiality of the work I restricted the number of photocopied scripts to the number of participants, and personally handed them out to each member. The response rate to this exercise was good with approximately fifty percent providing written comments and a further forty percent verbally expressing approval of the work. In addition, many of the respondents noted their appreciation of the opportunity to comment on my research findings.

2.8 Key informant interviews (runners)

During the course of my fieldwork, I had identified key personnel who I judged to have extensive experience of being both involved in running, and of facilitating running within the sports club. Two in particular had detailed knowledge of the workings of the club (logistically, socially and politically), and of the wider context of running in Britain. The first of these was the club's secretary, the second a coach and nationally recognised runner. Therefore, after completion of the analysis of the focus group interviews I organised an unstructured interview with each. The main purpose of these interviews was to discuss the preliminary findings from my research, and through the discussion enrich my data from their wealth of experience. Furthermore, with their broad experience of running within the national framework, I was also able to go some way in contextualising my results in respect to the general running scene within the United Kingdom.

To date my fieldwork had been concerned with those runners who either were in the process of taking up running, or were actively involved with running on a regular basis. However, at the outset, the purpose of my research was to explore the processes involved with participating in sport, and an important part of this is the process of disengagement from participation. I was therefore eager to explore this process as well. I had largely achieved this by incorporating questions relating to disengagement both in the semi-structured interviews and in the focus groups. However, accessing retirees from sport for first hand information proved problematic as most of the runners who left the running club did so through the processes akin to force majeure. Of the eight retirees identified over the period of my involvement with the club, four left due to change of job, one left due to injury and two simply disappeared. Fortunately, the eighth remained in the area and agreed to a semi-structured interview about her experience of disengaging from the running club. As with the focus group interviews, I taped the interview and provided an annotated transcription for comment.

2.9 Researching golf participation

Given limited resources and time, I did not propose to carry out an extended investigation into golf participation. Rather than attempt to build theory from a close

examination of golf participation, I decided instead to explore the results from my work with the runners with the golfers. In this fashion, I aimed to investigate how unique (or otherwise) to running my results were, and therefore gain insight into how they could apply in a wider context. Given the success of the focus group interviews with the runners, I decided to repeat this approach with the golfers, using a topic guide derived from the results of the running fieldwork.

The range of golf clubs situated within the same catchment area as the running club was large. At the lower end of the golfing market lay a municipal golf course, which in terms of participation costs and access most closely matched the running club. However, as the distance between the nearest such golf course and the running club was in excess of 15 miles, and has no formal club membership, I decided not to use this facility as a research base. Because the cost of playing 'private' golf varies markedly, I decided not to restrict my fieldwork to one club, but to choose three clubs representative of the budget, mid range and prestige market respectively. Unfortunately, I was unable to gain access to the local 'prestige' club, as its proprietors were concerned that my research could interfere with and upset the club's corporate clientele. However, I did get permission to freely study the memberships of a budget and midrange club (Hinksey Heights Golf Course and Studley Wood Golf Course respectively). However, as my experience of the world of golf was limited, I first organised a set of semi-structured interviews with key informants.

2.9.1 Key informant interviews (golf)

The first of a set of interviews with individuals who had important knowledges about participation in golf involved informally interviewing several acquaintances that regularly played golf as leisure activity. These interviews were aimed at gaining background information about golf as a pastime. The interviews were recorded using written notes and transcribed into a series of technical memos, for use in future interviews.

The roles of resident professionals, whose daily routines involve working closely with the club's membership (see chapter 3), are integral to the workings of most golf courses. Therefore, to gain an understanding of the logistical, social and political organisation of golf clubs I arranged to interview one such professional. The interview consisted of two

parts, the first designed to build on the informal interviews previously conducted, and the second aimed at contextualising some of the differences and similarities between participating in golf as opposed to running. My previous work with the runners provided the basis of the agenda for the second part of the interview. The interview was taped and transcribed in the same fashion as the focus group interviews. However, I was unable to return a script of the interview for comments as the interviewee moved house shortly after being interviewed.

I conducted the second and third key interviews with the proprietors of the two local golf clubs I had chosen. For reasons of continuity, I planned the key interviews so that they alternated with the focus group interviews. I was then able to complete all the fieldwork at the first club before moving on to the second. The interview with the proprietor of the Studley Wood golf course occurred through happenstance as on first entering the clubhouse I was immediately shown into the manager's office and given an hour of his time. Thus, this interview being opportunistic was completely unplanned and unstructured; though I made some notes, most of this interview was written up from memory. However, with the interviewee being genuinely interested in sport and in the nature of my work, this interview yielded a wealth of information about the club, its membership and their respective locations within the wider golfing sector. The interview was particularly interesting as the interviewee conducted his replies from a commercial perspective, contextualising the role of golf within the local and national leisure industry. The interview with the proprietor of Hinksey Heights golf course was prearranged and took place within the course manager's office. The interview was conducted on a formal basis using an interview guide and transcribed from notes and a tape recording.

2.9.2 Focus group interviews (golf)

After gaining permission from the proprietor of Studley Wood golf course to carry out research on the club's premises, I approached the membership for volunteers for a focus group. Etiquette associated with the golf club's cultural mores required me to seek permission from the club captains before I started my interviews. Initially the response to my request met with general approval with the captains agreeing to organise members for a male and female focus group respectively. Subsequently however, these interviews

proved difficult to arrange. Cooperation from the team captains was limited by their lack of free time. Moreover, due to the logistics of playing golf, organising a point in time whereby sufficient club members would be available to form a representative focus group was problematic. As with the running club most of the members were willing to take part but hesitant to commit to specific times. Additionally, the points at which the whole club membership naturally meets is limited to official club meetings (organised months in advance) and club matches, neither of which were particularly suited to organising a focus group around. I therefore decided that the focus group approach to this phase of my research was not a feasible methodology given my constraints on time.

I was however, directed towards interviewing retiree members who generally play during the working day when the course was less heavily used. I therefore decided to interview a focus group based on members who practised/took up golf as part of a retirement lifestyle. Access to male retirees was straight forward as they met in a loose social group once a week to play. Constructing a similar female group however proved too difficult; as a group, they appeared disparate in nature, neither meeting at a regular time nor providing a gatekeeper who could direct/introduce me to interested members. My first golf focus group therefore involved interviewing a group of (by their own description) late middle aged retired and semi retired professional males.

The focus group interview took place in the bar/lounge area of the clubhouse on a Tuesday afternoon and, with prior agreement with the volunteers, tape-recorded for later transcription. As noted above the topic guide was constructed around exploring themes and processes based on the results generated at the running club, but extended to include a section for exploring the process of participation in respect to retirement. However, partly due to a misconception of what was expected by the volunteers, and partly due to my miss-reading the mechanics of golf participation, the composition of the focus group would best be described as fluid. Of the initial eight volunteers, only four stayed to the end, with the number of participants swelling and reducing as members either returned from their rounds of golf or left to play. That I manage to retain a core in my opinion resulted in the interview being valid, but the constant change in personnel did result in a variable group dynamic, the facilitation of which proved challenging.

During the key informant interview with the proprietor of the Hinksey Heights golf course I expressed concern about the logistical difficulties of organising a focus group

interview with representatives of the club's membership. It was conceded that due to the nature of the game organising a point in time when golfers would meet as a group was problematic. However, the proprietor did agree to help organise a group of golfers who would be willing to take part in a focus group before a committee meeting. Thanks to his help, I was able to interview a general focus group comprising of committee members, course employees and interested players. Consequently, between the two focus groups I was able to cover a broad range of individual types involved with playing golf.

Where the focus group research was limited was in the under representation of female golfers. Within golf, female membership represents a small minority grouping, and it has proved too difficult to arrange a specialist focus group given constraints on time and resources. To address this limitation I arranged several further informal one to one interviews with female golfers. The interviewees were accessed through snowballing. Two of these interviews were conducted face to face, whilst a further three were conducted over the telephone. The interview guides for these were adapted from those used for my key interviews, and the results transcribed into technical memos.

2.10 Concluding comments

The data for this study were derived through employing a variety of qualitative based research methodologies, including participant observation, interviews and focus groups sessions. The fieldwork was carried out at four different locations, Oxford Brookes University Heavy Weights Room, Headington Road Runners running club, Studley Wood Golf Course and Hinksey Heights Golf Course. A total of between seventy-five and eighty participants took part in the various interviews, of which approximately two thirds belonged to the Headington Road Runners. Where possible the interviewees were provided with the opportunity to comment on the transcripts (and interim conclusions) of their interviews. This provided a check mechanism on misinterpretation of the data. For reference, I have included an audit of all the research conducted in appendix 3.

The results of the fieldwork were processed in accordance with grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The principles of realist evaluation were also employed (Pawson & Tilley, 1997:57), and particular attention was paid to the different locations used to

generate data. In this respect, data was generated that not only illuminated the processes of participation in sports and physical activities, but also the *differences* between participation in weightlifting, running and golf.

Chapter 3: The Clubs

3.1 Introduction

The 'way' in which individuals partake in sport relates to 'how' and 'where' it is practiced. Playing golf is different to going for a run, which in turn is different to training in the gym. The aim of this chapter is therefore to provide an overview of the workings and practices of the major groups of individuals studied. The first part of this chapter deals with the Headington Road Runners Running Club, describing the club and its location within the national framework of amateur running. The second part of this chapter explores how the sport of golf is organised and performed at a local level, using the two golf courses studied (Studley Wood and Hinksey Heights respectively) by way of illustration. The chapter concludes with a brief description of the use of heavy weights gym at Oxford Brookes University.

3.1.1 Ethical considerations

The data for this thesis was embedded within the experiences of the participants, and within the working practices of the clubs and groups they belonged to. Accessing and reporting this data raised ethical issues (Mauthner et al, 2002). Though I did not propose to explore 'sensitive' topics, I was aware that some of the participants might have had concerns relating to the future use of the data. To address these concerns I took the following measures:

1. Before any passive observations, I obtained permissions from both the club's committee and/or the owner of the premises wherein participation took place.

2. Unless they have given permission to use their names, all participants for this study have remained anonymous or have had their names replaced with pseudonyms.

3. Data contained within the questionnaire replies was used only for general statistical analysis of the running club. Any information of a personal nature was destroyed upon completion of my fieldwork with the Headington Road Runners.

4. All interviewees were volunteers to this study. Before interview, all interviewees were asked if they wished to remain anonymous. In addition, they were given the opportunity to refuse to answer any questions/topics they did not wish to discuss.

5. Where possible transcripts of the interviews were returned to the interviewees for comment, providing a second opportunity for the interviewee/s to withdraw permission to use the data generated.

6. Photographs of sporting premises are reproduced with permission from appropriate persons.

7. Photographs of individuals were only taken in public places with prior permission. I have only reproduced those photographs that contain images of individuals or groups who agreed to be photographed.

8. Other sports clubs that were named by participants of this study, but were not part of this study have been made anonymous.

9. Any data that could be regarded as commercially sensitive and not published in the public domain were discarded and not used as part of this study.

10. Permission was obtained from all clubs for their names to be used within this study.

3.2 The Headington Road Runners

The Headington Road Runners is an amateur road running club. It was established in the mid nineteen eighties by a small group of like-minded runners who conceived a running club that had an emphasis on enjoyment. The basic function of the club is to provide its members with a framework that enables them to pursue their chosen activity with others of similar disposition. Though the club has since grown considerably, the ethos of providing a friendly and supportive running environment remains. As one runner described it:

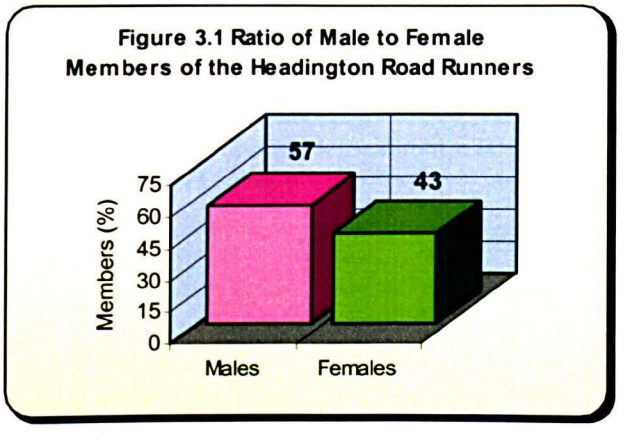
- "We are a social club with a running problem." (Running Club committee's focus group)".

The club meets regularly three times a week with the core of the training centred on the club's Thursday evening session at the OXSRAD sports centre. The other two training sessions occur on Tuesday evenings and Sunday mornings. There are also additional informally arranged sessions for various sub-groups within the club's membership. These are seasonally located in various sports stadia, and country parks. The club caters for medium to long distance road running, and occasional cross-country running. For example, many of the club's members take part (and compete) in local fun runs, half and full marathons (e.g. London Marathon) and cross-country events. The club does not cater for track events such as the 100m sprint and 400m Hurdles. In respect to the national framework of running, the Headington Road Runners represents the numerous local amateur running clubs that are located at the sports' grass roots. Though primarily catering for the non-elite amateur runner, the club also acts as a 'feeder club' bringing on younger runners who go on to compete at county and national level. Consequently, the club membership incorporates a mixture of running abilities from complete novices through to county standard and above.

3.2.1 Membership characteristics

The following analysis of the club's membership (see chapter 2) represents a snap shot of the membership profile at the time the survey was conducted. However, it should be noted that the membership profile varies throughout the year as the sport of running is seasonally affected.

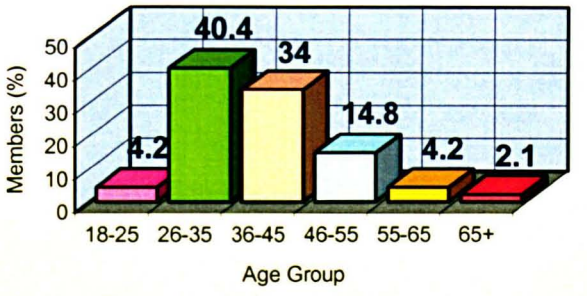
Figure 3.1 Ratio of Male to Female Members of the Headington Road Runners



Though the gender balance of the Headington Road Runners was more evenly distributed than is normally seen in a sports club, the male/female ratio was slightly

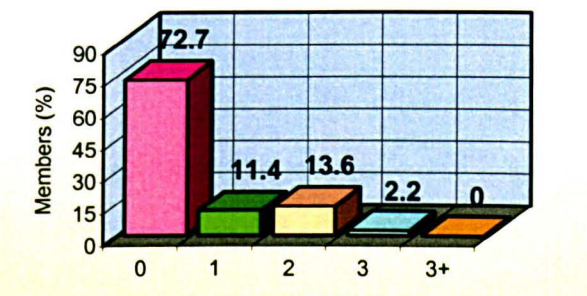
weighted towards males (see above, Figure 3.1: Ratio of male to female members of the Headington Road Runners). Similarly, though there was a wide age range, the overall age profile of the club was slightly biased towards the younger runner (see below, Figure 3.2: The age distribution of the membership of the Headington Road Runners).

Figure 3.2 The Age Distribution of the Membership of the Headington Road Runners



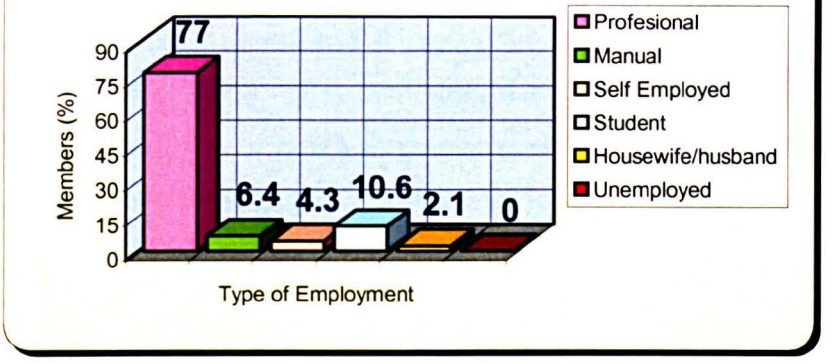
Due to issues of legal responsibility, the club's membership elected not to incorporate a junior section, and consequently had no members aged less than sixteen years. As shown in the above Figure 3.2: The age distribution of the membership of the Headington Road Runners, there was a relative paucity in members aged under 26, and a peak in membership between the ages of 26-35, after which membership exponentially declined with increasing age. The low numbers of members over 65 is attributable to the physical nature of the sport. Though over 75% of the members were aged under 45, at 72% the proportion of members without dependent children was small in comparison to the general population (see below, Figure 3.3: Proportion of the members of the Headington Road Runners with dependent children).

Figure 3.3 Proportion of the Members of the Headington Road Runners with Dependent Children



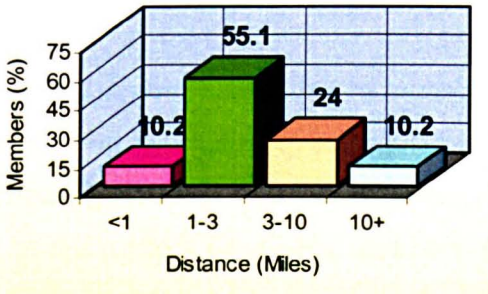
Though the club had a membership drawn from a variety of social classes, the bulk of the membership were employed in professional occupations, with few employed in manual occupations, and no unemployed members (see below, Figure 3.4: The employment characteristics of the members of Headington Road Runners).

Figure 3.4 The Employment Characteristics of the Members of Headington Road Runners



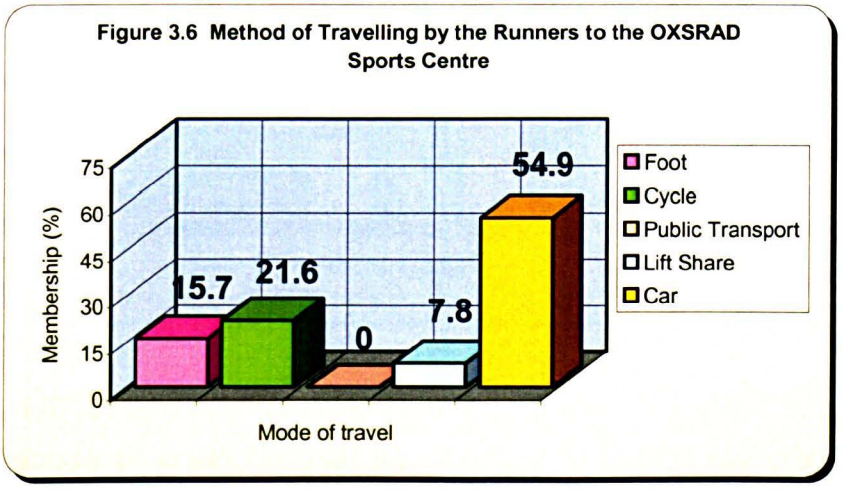
However, the catchment area of the club cannot explain the relative polarisation towards members from a professional background. The majority of the members travel between one and ten miles to attend the club's main training session at the OXSRAD sport centre (see below, Figure 3.5: Distance travelled by the runners to the OXSRAD sport centre). Moreover, within a circle of radius of half this distance from the OXSRAD sports centre lies four large council estates, three industrial estates (including the BMW car plant at Cowley) as well as two Universities, several major hospitals and some of Oxford's most expensive housing. This therefore infers that road running is predominantly a middle class activity.

Fig 3.5 Distance Traveled by the Runners to the OXSRAD Sport Centre



The relatively high number of student members is attributable to the close location of the club to Oxford's two universities. The proportion of the members (approximately 38%) who either walk or cycle to the club reflects the close proximity of population centres. Though the OXSRAD sport centre is well served by public transport none of the membership use it as a regular mode of travel to and from training (see below, Figure 3.6: Method of travelling by the runners to the OXSRAD sports centre). The expected proportion of journeys (for leisure) made by car would be 37% as a car driver, 37% as a car passenger 18% by other means and 8% by public transport (Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, 1995). It is interesting that as a leisure use the majority of journeys made to the club by car is as a single occupant (54.9% as opposed to 7.8% who lift share). As noted above the predictive car use for leisure journeys would be closer to a fifty-fifty split.

Figure 3.6 Method of Travelling by the Runners to the OXSRAD Sports Centre



The majority of the members trained at the club at least once a week. However, a significant number (22.7%) used the club less often than this (see below, Figure 3.7: Frequency of participation in club orientated running by the members of the Headington Road Runners).

Evaluation of the questionnaire replies shows that a significant proportion of these runners also regularly ran on their own and hence, 'dipped into' club running as and when it suited them. Importantly however, the survey results show the stability of the membership. Over 40% of the runners have been members for over five years (see below, Figure 3.8: Distribution of length in membership of the Headington Road Runners).

Figure 3.7 Frequency of Participation in Club Orientated Running by Members of the Headington Road Runners

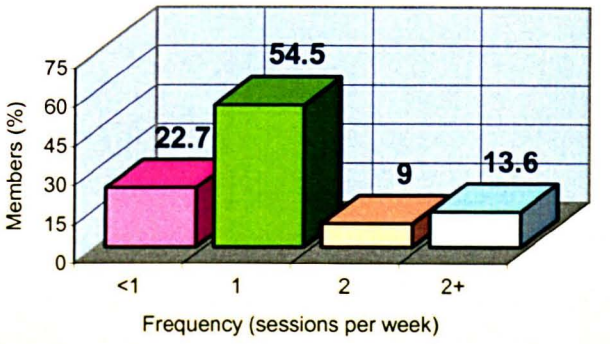
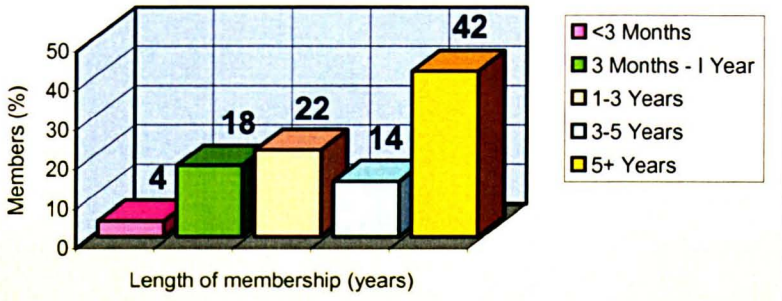


Figure 3.8 Distribution of Length in Membership of the Headington Road Runners



Interviews with the runners about recruitment indicated that many new members don't last more than about 1 month, but those that continued beyond this period tend to remain members for long periods. The results from the survey appear to support this view.

3.2.2 The organisation of running club

The primary function of the club was to provide a location for individuals to pursue running, as one committee member put it:

- "In the first instance it's [the club] there to provide an opportunity for local people to be able to run with like minded people." (Running club committee's focus group).

In many respects, this commonality of purpose provided the framework for the organisation of the club. At a base level the club, being affiliated to the S.E.A.A. (South

England Athletics Association) was constitutionally required to form a committee to oversee its affairs. Each year the club therefore elected members to a formal committee. Titled positions were restricted to club chairman, secretary, treasurer and membership secretary. However, due to the large amount of work involved in the day to day organising of the club's activities, the committee pulled in additional members to help. The number of these additional (untitled) posts were not fixed but varied according to need and available personnel. All committee meetings were open, with any club member welcome to attend, though this right was seldom exercised by the club's general membership. The club did not pay any professional coaches/managers to organise and run the club's activities, but relied instead on established members 'volunteering'. This position was 'formally' due to restrictions imposed by the S.E.A.A. who will not insure clubs that employ professional coaches. The members who did undertake to coach and organise the running did so for intrinsic rewards (see chapter 5) and were generally well-established long-term members of the club.

Financially the club had three major outlays. The first was payment to the OXSRAD sports centre for use of its facilities every Thursday evening. The second was the annual subscription to the S.E.A.A, (South England Athletics Association) on behalf of its members. Without this subscription, the runners would not have been able to take part in any events organised by the S.E.A.A. These included county and regional championships, centres of excellence and coaching awards. The third was the cost of providing the monthly club newsletter. To pay for its outlays the club charged an annual membership fee, though this figure was relatively low at £15 per annum (correct as of Sept. 2000). The newsletter contained listings of forth-coming events (running and social) as well as articles on training, running stories and tips on injury prevention. In addition to the newsletter, the club also maintained a notice board in the foyer of the OXSRAD sports centre.

3.2.3 The 'running'

The club offered several different runs to suit the various needs of its membership. The core runs took place on a Thursday evening, with other supplementary runs organised for Tuesday evenings (Summer time only), Saturday mornings (Winter months) and Sunday mornings. All runs consisted of three stages. The first of these was the pre-run rituals of

meeting, talking, changing and warming up as a single large group, which took place before all the club's runs. The second stage was the actual run. On Thursdays and Sundays the runners separated themselves into smaller groups according to ability, with each group embarking on a run tailored by pace and distance. The time taken to run ranged between three quarters to one and a half hours, with Sunday morning runs being generally longer than those on Thursday evening. On Tuesdays and Saturdays, the run was organised differently so that the club ran together as a whole. The final stage occurred when the runners return from their runs. On the runs based at the OXSRAD sport centre, many of the runners warmed down and took time to socialise in the bar. However, where the runs were not based at the sports centre (Tuesday and Saturday), after a brief warm down the runners quickly dispersed after limited socialising. Chapter 5 provides a more detailed discussion on how the runners organised themselves and their training.

3.2.4 Other activities

In addition to the main runs described above the club also catered for the 'developing runner' with formally organised track and coaching sessions available throughout the year. As noted previously, membership of the club allowed the runners to access the various formal competitions on the running calendar. The club's teams (and transport to and back from these events) were generally organised between the members. Many of the runners also informally organised themselves into small groups who met up for supplementary runs on non-club nights. Finally, the club also held various informal social events including barbeques, barn dances and Christmas meals throughout the year.

3.3 The golf courses

Golf courses are expensive to run. Building, developing and maintaining golf courses can cost from hundreds of thousands to millions of pounds per annum (Sports Council, 1992b; Gimmy & Benson, 1992). This necessitates a professional structure to the organisation of the game and contrasts with running where apparatus, namely roads and footpaths, are essentially free to use. To meet these costs, golf courses are generally run under a business ethos, supplying facilities in return for remuneration. The avenues for

income generation can be numerous, the main ones being annual and day membership fees, profits from clubhouse activities and corporate sponsorship. Golf courses are usually either privately owned or owned by their members, and depending on location and prestige annual membership fees range from around four hundred to thousands of pounds (Sports Council, 1992a). The small-scale stand-alone golf centres have primarily provided for the growth in the popularity of golf during the late twentieth century. There has been little expansion in either municipal courses or member-owned courses. Where member-owned courses have arisen, they have mainly been funded through the issues of shares or debentures that can cost up to £10,000 each (Sports Council, 1992a).

3.3.1 Cost of playing golf

Both Studley Wood and Hinksey Heights golf courses were typical of the recent growth in the stand-alone, proprietary-owned golf course, with neither club possessing the traditional 'waiting list' and both providing equal membership rights for females. Studley Wood was representative of the mid-price golf course. It was established in 1994 and consisted of a par 73, 18-hole course, driving range and clubhouse. It had a joining fee of £1300 and an annual 7-day subscription of £925. It also offered a corporate membership at £5400 (Studley Wood, 2003). Hinksey Heights golf course was representative of the 'entry level' golf course. Opened in 1995, it had no joining fee, an annual 7-day subscription of £457.50 and corporate membership at £407.50 per person per year[6]. It consisted of an 18-hole championship course, a 9-hole par 3 course, driving range and clubhouse (Hinksey Heights, 2003). Both courses offered 5-Day, and Day memberships at reduced costs. In addition, both clubs also provided their members with professional coaching facilities, access to a range of golfing competitions and social events based around the clubhouses. With both courses being rurally situated on the outskirts of Oxford, neither was easily accessible by public transport, but each had ample parking for cars.

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[6] Prices for the year 2002

3.3.2 Profile of the average golfer

Golf is predominantly played by males, with the male/female split being 78/22 respectively. The age profile of golfers is in many respects the opposite of the runners with approximately 67% of golfers aged over forty, and 23% being retired (Sports Council, 1992a). Furthermore, the average age of the golfer is increasing and currently stands at around forty-six (Elliot, 1998). As may be expected from the relatively high costs involved in joining a golf club the class profile of golfers is significantly higher when compared to the general profile of British adults. 47% are classed as AB, 28% as C1, 18% as C2 and only 6% as DE[7]. Class differentiation also occurs between different types of golf course, with municipal courses drawing significantly less from the AB group and twice as many from the DE group (Sports Council, 1992a).

3.3.3 The Handicap system

Central to playing golf is the Handicap system that allows players of different abilities to compete against each other on an equal footing. The handicap is an allocation of shots that are subtracted from the total number of shots played for a round of golf. The poorer the player the greater their allocated handicap and hence the greater the number of shots subtracted from their final scores (EGU, 2003). As the novice golfer improves their game, their handicap is gradually reduced until they develop sufficient skill to have a zero handicap (i.e. no allocated shots) and are then referred to as scratch players. The average handicap for men is 17, and for women is 25 (Sports Council, 1992a).

3.3.4 The logistics of playing golf

It takes approximately four hours to play an average round of golf (for 18 holes). However, adding preparation time and post play socialising extends this to approximately five and a half hours (Sports Council, 1992a). Therefore, with the exception of senior members (see below), the majority of golf is played at the weekends

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[7] At the time of publication of these figures the approximate breakdown of the average adult population was 17% AB, 27% C1, 26% C2 and 31% DE (Sports Council, 1992a)

(especially during the winter months). Correspondingly, due to limitations in course capacity, accessibility to visitors is often limited at the weekends. As noted above both Studley Wood and Hinksey Heights golf courses offered five day membership at reduced rates which do not provide access to the courses at weekends. However, both clubs had a strong 'retired' or senior section to their membership who took advantage of their ability to play during the week at reduced costs.

On a Saturday morning access to the course is usually on a first come first served basis, though some clubs run a time slot system whereby members book a tee-off time in advance. However, each week the members invariably segregate themselves into sub-groups along social and handicap lines that predominantly arrive at the same time and go on to play together. Senior members will tend to meet up at a set time during the week. For example, at Studley Wood golf course the Senior Men's group met up on a Tuesday Morning at around ten a.m. whilst the Senior Women's group met up on Thursday mornings. Golf is normally played in groups of no more than four, and during busy times the membership gravitates towards forming groups with this maximum. This in turn provides opportunities for greater membership integration and for novices to find people to play with, as groups of two or three will look for additional members. On Saturday afternoons the process is repeated with a second group of players arriving to play between two and six p.m. However, a greater proportion of this group will tend to restrict their playing to nine holes, in part reflecting the limited amount of available day light at certain times of year.

Once out on the course each group plays the course in order of holes, keeping to both the rules of golf and the club mores. Unlike the running club where the construction of groups is fluid and transient (see chapter 5), once out on the course each group of players keeps the same composition until the round of golf is finished. As noted above a round of golf lasts approximately four hours, during which there is ample time for the members of each group to interact socially.

3.3.5 Post playing socialising

After finishing playing, the members either leave the club or take time to socialise in the clubhouse. However, due to the nature of the game it is practically impossible for the entire membership to finish their rounds of golf at around the same time. After a normal

Saturday's playing it would be unusual for all the membership to meet up and stay on to socialise in the clubhouse after completing their rounds, and therefore socialising generally occurs between the groups who have previously arranged to meet up at the club house.

3.3.6 Competitions and social events

Most golf courses organise numerous events that provide the opportunity for members to get together and play with people who they may not normally get the chance to play with. These usually involve staging intra and inter club competitions that usually take priority in the order of play on the course. However, the prerequisite to partaking in these events is the possession of a Handicap. In this respect the handicap system serves to restrict course access to novices who have yet to gain their cards as the list of competitions and hence their monopolisation of the course is often extensive (See Appendix 5: The organised 2003 Competition Diary for members of Studley Wood golf course). Inter club competitions are held as either friendly matches, part of local and national leagues, or local and national championships. Access to these competitions is restricted to members of the sports governing body English Golfing Union[8] (EGU) who have a recognised handicap, and both Hinksey Heights and Studley Wood organised membership of the EGU as part of their membership packages. As with the Headington Road Runners running club Hinksey Heights and Studley Wood were in a position to act as feeder clubs for upcoming golfers. However, career development for golfers is complicated by the professional side of the game the organisation of which runs parallel to the amateur game and is controlled by the Professional Golfers Association (PGA). A consequence of the control of the sport by the EGU and PGA is their imposition of 'required memberships' has the effect of deterring many golfers who confine their play to municipal golf courses from taking part in competitions. The lack of 'official' handicaps for these players precludes them from obtaining appropriate governing body

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[8] The EGU is the governing body for male amateur golf in England, and each country has its own separate organisation for example, the Welsh Golfing Union (WGU). Females have their own separate and autonomous set of organisations for example, The Scottish Ladies Golfing Association (SLGA).

membership. (For these golfers obtaining an official handicap is difficult as there are no handicap secretaries on municipal golf courses to oversee the handicapping procedure).

As with most private golf courses both Hinksey Heights and Studley Wood also organised occasional social events based in their clubhouses. As well as appealing to their membership, such events were also a source of additional revenue to the clubs. The clubhouse catering facilities were available to the members at most times, and some members stayed on after their rounds of golf to socialise in the bar or to eat.

3.4 The heavy weights gym

In contrast to the running and golf courses, weight training was seldom organised as a club activity. Though weight trainers had gym memberships, membership was better defined as a 'right to use'. Weight training is not a team event. There are no competitions; there are no club captains and seldom membership committees to oversee the running of the gyms. Participation within a gym is on a first come first served basis, usually takes place as a solitary activity, and there are no pre-organised club nights.

There are essentially three approaches to weight training. The first of these primarily take place in health suites, and concentrates on body toning and general fitness. Within these gyms, most of the exercises involve using machines that are easy and safe to operate after a limited induction session (usually organised by the owners of the gym). Such gyms often have a complement of aerobic exercise machines such as stair climbers and jogging machines. The second approach to weight training is ostensibly the body or muscle building approach. The stresses on the body required for bodybuilding is generally much greater than those for fitness training are. Bodybuilding usually requires the use of free weights, which take time to learn properly. These weights are often heavy and can pose a danger for other users of the gym if they are 'dropped'. Consequently, many municipal gyms shy away from providing extensive free weights facilities. The third approach is weightlifting. Here the object is to develop strength in order to lift as much weight as possible. The exercises involved are much specialised and require a lot of time and effort to learn. Weightlifting as an organised 'sport' comprises the power lifting set and the Olympic lifting set (as seen at the Olympics),

however as a sport weightlifting is very much a minority activity in Great Britain and few gyms specifically cater for it.

At Oxford Brookes University there were two weight training facilities, the 'health suite' and the smaller 'heavy weights room'. Both of the facilities were open for use by students and the public and were well used. The health suite was mainly used by individuals training for body toning and fitness whilst those who were orientated towards bodybuilding predominantly used the heavy weights room. However, the heavy weights room did cater for some weightlifting, and was regularly used by a small group (4-6) of weightlifters who met three times a week to practice. Apart from the weightlifters, most users of both facilities trained individually or part of a self-contained group of two, there being a noticeable lack of interaction between users. This lack of interaction between users of both facilities is commonplace in most weight training facilities. Klein in his observations of west coast professional bodybuilding gyms similarly notes that with the exception of training partnerships "as compared with other sports and/or subcultures, bodybuilding has a paucity of formal relationships...the feudal relations ...are informal, and the contractual relations that bodybuilders fashion with others are haphazard and random" (Klein, 1993:67).

3.5 Concluding comments

In some respects, the running club and golf courses were diametrically opposed. Headington Road Runners was situated close to centres of population, whilst both the golf courses lay outside the city limits. The running club membership was biased towards the younger member whilst golf was biased towards the older. The Headington Road Runners was a not for profit amateur sports club that was organised and controlled by its members, whilst both Hinksey Heights and Studley Wood golf courses were private businesses that were run for profit by their owners. Excluding kit, the costs of running at the Headington Road Runners was around twenty pounds per annum whilst even Hinksey Heights (at the cheaper end of the golfing market) was around four hundred and fifty pounds. When taking the additional cost of kit and equipment into consideration the difference rises into the thousands of pounds. However, whilst age, sex and costs balances differ, both Headington Road Runners Running Club and the two golf courses, Hinksey Height and Studley Wood predominantly drew their membership

from the wealthier classes, and all the clubs had an under representation of ethnic minorities and manual workers. As sports, whilst golf is male dominated, running has a better balance between the sexes. Moreover, running has relatively few rules and social mores regarding participation, whilst golf has a plethora of different rules and regulations as well as firm rules of etiquette.

It is in terms of ethos that the clubs were most similar. The primary aim of all the clubs was to provide their members with the facilities and opportunities to take part in the sport of their choice. Furthermore, all the clubs aimed to foster an environment wherein their members were able to develop their sporting abilities and where possible were encouraged to progress their sporting careers. In addition, through providing a bar and organising social events all three clubs placed strong emphasis on the social aspects of playing their sport.

In contrast, the heavy weights room (and health suite) did not have a club 'feel'. The organisation and structure of weight training was down to individual preferences, with most individuals tailoring their own participation patterns to their personal needs. Though there was some inter-personal socialising during participation, unlike the runners and golfers, weight trainers did not see their activity as having a post training social component; they primarily regarded their activity as a means to an end, be it getting fit or building muscle.

Part 2: A Report from the Field

Introduction to part 2

The processes associated with participation in sports, physical activities and exercise regimes do not exist in isolation. They are constructs born both out of the interrelationships between the individuals who participate and of their interactions with the social and physical arenas wherein participation is located. Neither can the act of participating be regarded as a unique and isolatable event. For some participation starts in childhood, continues through middle age and ends in old age. For others participation represents numerous separate cycles of embarking and disengagement, and for many participation barely starts in school before disengagement occurs in early adulthood. Difficulty in developing an understanding of the processes behind participation is further compounded by the fact that the 'way' in which people participate is strongly affected by the social positioning of sports. Because of variations in external factors such as micro and macro socio-economic environment or gendered lifestyles, there is variation in the availability and acceptability of the different types of activity on offer. A final complication to understanding participation is the biological determinism of the ageing process. Inevitable physical deterioration means that participation in youth *is* different from participation in middle *and* old age. Moreover, this is coupled with the social constructs of age appropriate behaviour, which results in the processes of participation as a schoolchild being different from those of participating as an adult *and* as a retiree.

Participation in sports, physical activities and exercise regimes cannot therefore be investigated as a predictable and quantifiable truth, but rather as a conglomeration of fluid process whose nature is as complex and variable as the individuals who took part in this study. Thus, there is complexity in the results of my fieldwork. Though in and of themselves, each data set represents a cross sectional account of participation experience, combined they create a complex matrix of knowledge about the processes of participation that requires careful dissemination. In presenting my results, I have therefore ordered my data in respect to the three areas that have primary influence on the

participation, these being issues regarding the body, the process of social interaction and the development of sub-cultural identity.

The position of the body within late modern society is becoming an area of increasing interest in sociology (Shilling, 1999, 2000) and is of major importance to participation in sport. Participation is only achievable through the physical capacity of the body to take part, and in this context requires the participant to interact with his/her body. In chapter 4, I address the relation between participant and their body through investigating the possession, development and realization of Physical Capital, the perceived value that is attached to and inherent of the physical body (Bourdieu, 1984a). The processes of developing social interaction between participants are addressed in chapter 5. Participation inevitably takes place within a social arena developed through interaction between participants. In respect to this, in chapter 5 I examine how the social dimension of engagement in sport is interrelated with the processes of participation, and how the subsequent development of social capital helps to stabilise long-term participation patterns. The development of sub-cultural identity is addressed in chapters 6 and 7. Chapter 6 examines how becoming physically active effects changes in an individual's self-identity, whilst chapter 7 builds on chapter 6 by exploring how these identities (and the values attached to them) are further refined through association with different sports and physical activities.

The supporting evidences for these chapters are presented as extracts from both my observational field notes, and the transcripts from my interviews with the participants and key informants (see appendix 3 for a detailed listing). In so presenting my evidence, I aim to provide the reader with a representation of the data as 'generated' by the research. Where I have quoted participants' responses to my questions I have endeavoured to quote verbatim. However, due to the nature of focus groups, it was sometimes difficult to differentiate any one individual's reply to a question. Similarly, where an interview was not tape-recorded, the accuracy of quoting verbatim may also be questionable. Because of these considerations, where I cannot accurately quote verbatim I have instead represented the interviewees' responses through extracts from my field notes. In this manner though the interviewees' actual words are not presented, their opinions are. Where possible I supplied the interviewees with a copy of an interview transcript that included such notes for verification on the validity of my interpretations,

and in all cases the interviewees were happy with my interpretations (see chapter 2). The quotes (and photographs) are reproduced with verbal permission from the individuals who agreed to take part, and where requested I have either withheld names or used pseudonyms.

It is important to note that though it is convenient to separate the presentation of my research data into discrete chapters, the processes of participation are not so easily segregated. In this respect, chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 should be regarded not as separate units, but as constituting an interrelated results section.

Chapter 4: Body Issues

4.1 Introduction

To actively participate in sport individuals must use their bodies. The way individuals relate to their 'active-bodies'[9] and how this effects participation provides the focus of this chapter. Sports, physical activities and exercise regimes are all embodied activities. The act of participating involves individuals recognising the physical potentials of their active-bodies. Moreover, in choosing to participate, participants are specifically choosing to use and interrelate with their bodies in a manner dictated by the type of physical activity pursued. The weightlifter, runner and golfer all position their bodies differently according to the physical and social regimes characteristic of their respective activities. Put simply, the weightlifter seeks to develop the strong body, the runner the fit body and golfer the dexterous, skilled body.

The development of this 'changed' relationship with the body is not immediate, but is characterised by a gradual progression realised over months and years. Sustained participation therefore involves the participant engaging with the body as a long term 'body-project' (Giddens, 1991). However, within the contours of Western societies, different aspects of the active-body are differently valued. For example, compare the 'over thin' model body to the 'over muscled' body builder; both are 'valued' but by different factions of society. Consequently, sustained participation simultaneously exposes the participant to the cultural influences and related implicit values that are attached to their active-bodies. The argument will therefore be put forward that the increasing objectification of the body has direct consequences for the ways in which individuals relate to their active-bodies. This in turn has significant implications for the manner in which the processes of participation are developed.

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[9] The term 'active-bodies' is used to refer to the body's physical dimensions. Implicit within this is that possessing an active-body provides for an elevated capacity to perform physically orientated tasks.

4.2 Physical activities and the body

The potential of sports, physical activities and exercise regimes to change people's bodies was clearly recognised by all interviewees in this study. The following extract demonstrates how this potential for change is regarded as a scientific 'fact' and importantly how such beliefs serve as prime motivators for participation:

- "I think linking it into wanting to control weight has more to do with the **fact** that running is good at burning off calories quickly. Whereas if you go to the gym a couple of times a week you might tone up a bit but you won't burn fat. So if you are weight conscious then running is one of the best things you can do. It's not the case of wanting to look like a marathon runner because...they can look really gaunt, and you know, not particularly healthy. **But knowing that running burns fat quite quickly appeals."** (New runners' focus groups)

The statement was made by a runner with little or no previous education in sports physiology. Yet, in the authoritative style of language demonstrates lay knowledges about the biological aspects of physical activity. The weightlifters also demonstrated 'knowledge' about the effects that physical activity has on the body. In the following interchanges, members of the weightlifters focus group discussed the reasons why people would choose to take up different sports. The first extract is from a female weightlifter who had been training in the heavy weights gym for about 6 weeks. She started by rationalising her choice of training in the heavy weights room as opposed to a health suite:

- "I was a bit worried at first but Polly was there and it looked kind of interesting and Sid tells me what to do. You don't have to wear the right clothes and there aren't lots of girls sitting round in leotards watching MTV. Sid tells me what to do and its proper training, like squats and stuff. **First I thought it's about controlling my weight**, but now it's weights it's much more fun. I'm thinking of competing. Upstairs [the fitness room] it's about losing weight.." (Weightlifters focus group).

In reply, Polly clarified the difference between training in a health suite and 'proper' weight training:

- "For the men it's all about building muscle. But you just can't do that as a women. **People think that you get big muscles but you can't**, not without

drugs. You get stronger but my arms are skinny. It does help to keep the weight down but it's more about body toning for women. I don't want to be skinny like a runner or something it [weightlifting] gives you a better shape." (Weightlifters focus group).

Sid, an experienced weightlifter whom has considerable experience in coaching, further expressed a link between body shape and physical activity:

- "For the lads who come in here they want to build muscle. They want to build muscle quickly and put on lots of weight. It's not like that. As you know it takes years to build a really big physique. Most don't last more than a couple of months because **they think that weight training you can get big arms and things instantly**. They try and lift too heavy and give up. They see this big guy and think he's on drugs." (Weightlifters focus group).

Similarly, although the golfers interviewed did not regard golf as an activity for changing body shape, they recognised that playing golf had an impact on their bodies. The following extract is from part of a discussion within the Hinksey Heights Golf Club focus group about the use of power trolleys. It illustrates the ways in which playing of golf employs the body in a different fashion to the overtly physical approach of other sports:

- Young people use power trolleys because it saves them a couple of shots a round. **They'd rather sacrifice their fitness for a better game.**" (Hinksey heights focus group).

These data extracts reveal an awareness of the body as a physical object. All the participants thought that undertaking physical activity improved the fitness of the body. However, cultural differences of the expectations concerning the body existed between the different activities. The weightlifters referred to their bodies in terms of muscular strength, body toning and shape, the runners in terms of fitness and thinness whilst the golfers regarded their bodies more as a medium through which they can play golf. Interestingly the implication of a demarcation of body use (or identity) according to activity type is reinforced by the ways in which the interviewees talked about each other's sports. For example, in the above interview extract Polly talked about developing her muscles and specifically referred to runners as being "skinny." Similarly, the new runners' focus group expressed the opinion that going to the gym

"tones your muscles but won't burn fat". Moreover, in talking about golf a member of the female runners' focus group expressed the following:

- "It is a sport that people take up when they retire, but does involve some form of exercise in that golfers do walk around a lot carrying their bag of clubs ...**Golf does involve quite a high level of skill** and is addictive in the same way that running is." (Female runners' focus group).

In this statement, the runner clearly regarded golf as being less a fitness activity, and more a skills based one; an opinion generally shared by the focus group. Moreover, it was also an opinion expressed in the weightlifters focus group. In the following interview extract from a novice runner, a recognition of the influence on body shape due to type of activity is evident by the way he addressed the question what makes a good runner?

- "Tall and skinny. I think generally good runners are quite lithe because you know by definition that's what their body shape is...They are certainly a lot more leaner than other people." (New runners' focus group).

The following excerpt taken from the established runners' focus group's discussion about the same subject suggests a similar stereotyping of body shape in relation to activity type:

- "Physical shape isn't really an indicator of athletic ability, there are good runners who if not fat are overweight"
- "I know. I hate it when I'm passed by someone who's a bit fat, **you just don't expect it!**"

4.2.1 The attractive body shape?

The stereotyping of physique according to activity extends to opinions of attractiveness and desirability that the different 'types' of body seemingly offer. Throughout the interviews when asked about the relationship between physical activities and body shape, repeated reference was made to the attractive body images on display within our media. In the case of the female weightlifters, the gendered "false image" attached to female bodybuilding was cited as being strongly inhibitive to the take up of the sport by

females. The following extract, taken from my field interview notes with female weightlifters, illustrates these concerns:

> Talking to female weightlifters about the reasons why women train in the health suite but not in the heavy weights room it was clear that the image of weightlifting discouraged females from taking part. Firstly, the heavy weights room is seen as a **male domain.** Secondly, weightlifting is seen as being hard work, sweaty and difficult to learn. Thirdly lifting weights is seen to be **counter productive** in that the **wrong type of body is developed.** Weightlifting is regarded as muscle building regime, and the **media image** of the **masculinized** bodies of female body builders is regarded as being very **unattractive.** However, the females I talked to stressed that building such over developed physiques is very difficult and implied the **artificiality** (drugs) of such bodies. For them the regime produced toned, attractive bodies. (Combating flabby triceps was given as an example). Conversely, they noted that for males, 'big muscles' provides a strong incentive to lift weights. (Weight training field notes).

Many of the interviewees were body conscious; having clear ideas of what they felt constituted an attractive or unattractive physique. In talking about the process of taking up club running, one member of the female runners' focus group noted that the way she felt about her body strongly influenced her choice of joining an all female running club, as she said:

- "I was more at ease joining an all female group, it was more tempting than a mixed club...I wasn't worried about men seeing my blubber running around!" (Female runners' focus group).

Moreover, running was also regarded as providing an attractive physique for females:

- "Some female athletes are breaking into the modelling world, and this is a good thing its [athletic physique] becoming more attractive, **socially more acceptable".** (Female runners' focus group).

The following field notes taken from the same focus group again show how the female runners viewed the attractiveness of the running physique as gendered:

> On discussing the question 'does running give an attractive physique?' the group regards the **male physiques (of the club) to be almost uniformly thin and consequently relatively unattractive.** However, the comparison is made between elite and consequently thin runners and the Linford Christie type of physique, which they find to

be more attractive. There is little or no comparison made between the average male physique and the general physique of the male club runners. However, the comment: **"there are no beer bellies in the club**, with one exception" implies both a recognition and **approval of the healthier shape** of the club's male runners. In discussing the question, they also referred to the lack of muscle size as being regarded by some of the men as undesirable. They also postulated that some of the younger men eat more to try and counteract the thinness that long distance running engenders. (Female runners' focus group notes).

In contrast, the male runners' focus group felt that running did improve the attractiveness of the male body:

- "...Well yeah a lot of people comment on your legs and how attractive they are." (Male runners' focus group).

4.2.2 The healthy body

The positive link between physical activity and health was shared across all the sports studied. Clearly, there was the belief that the physically active body is also a healthy body:

- "I see a Jogger more as someone doing it for their **health reasons** rather than you know for any sort of competitive reasons. Joggers tend to do it...because that's what the **recommended sort of health thing is**? And they do maybe twenty minutes or half an hour because that's what they are supposed to do each week, whereas a Runner is someone who will ultimately want to take part in races I think." (New runners' focus group member).

- "Keeping fit is also part of it as well, you don't come here [golf course] to keep fit, its more like a by-product.... but it is a **very, very good by-product though.**" (Hinksey Heights golf course focus group).

Beliefs about the health benefits of physical activities extended to the families of the participants. This is important, as families are often a good source of support, though such support may wane over time. The following passage is taken from my male runners' focus group notes:

> The overall balance of opinion is that runners generally receive support from their families, especially on initial take up of running, but decreasing over time. Some regard running to be the same as any other hobby, i.e. families provide support encouragement because they realise that it is important to the individual, but with the proviso that a 'balance' has to be struck between family and the hobby. The **fact** that something like running has **health implications** makes it more acceptable. (Male runners' focus group notes)

The following interview extracts support this observation:

- "They [the family] don't mind [the interviewee taking part in running] because they **know it's a good thing because it keeps you fit and healthy**, but they still want you at home." (Male running focus group member).

- "Well my wife is very keen on me coming along, she's quite happy [for health reasons] for it." (Studley Wood golf course focus group).

For the runners there was a strong link between the control of body weight and health. When discussing the issue of whether running was 'good' for you, control of body weight was cited by all the running focus groups as both positive to good health and as a prime motivator for taking part in running. The following interview extracts illustrate the strength of feeling expressed by the interviewees:

- "It's when you put on your trousers and don't know whether to go under your stomach or over the top...and I'm getting close to it so I must keep on running to get rid of it!" (Male runners' focus group).

- "I can eat chocolate etc. without feeling guilty...as I have either gone for a run that day or would do so in the near future." (Established runners' focus group).

All the interviewees clearly recognised that participating in sport effectively changes the body. Moreover, the changes were ones that were 'valued' by the participants. Therefore, the balance between investing in the active-body through participation, and the corresponding rewards in the development of the desired body, is one that provides a strong incentive for the maintenance of long-term participation.

4.3 Preconceptions about being active

As shown above, different sports conjure up different stereotypical body types. However, preconceptions about sports also extend to ideas about the physical regimes involved. These include ideas about the levels of fitness, strength, skill and dedication required for participation to be successful. Moreover, these preconceptions can act as significant inhibitors when thinking about joining a sports club. The following extracts taken from the running club committee focus group discussion on the problem of attracting new members illustrate this:

- "I still think that a large amount of it is the feeling that clubs are **full of elite athletes**" (Running club committee focus group).

- "I was a bagman for years carrying Allison's bag to races and I just **assumed** that because all these people were running around **they were obviously elite athletes.**" (Running club committee focus group).

- "We see it all the time, there's this lady down for the first time tonight who came in saying 'I want to join the club', and it took us ten minutes to get out of her that she had run a half marathon at the weekend...And **she felt she wasn't going to be fast enough to keep up with the runners on a Thursday night**...That's not unusual at all." (Running club committee focus group).

Others also echoed these fears and concerns about the need to be able to perform to certain (assumed) standards when joining a running club:

- "My **biggest fear** when I joined the club was that **I didn't think I was fast enough**, but when I was here and in the middle I was quite happy." (Male runners' focus group)

- "I think there's a little bit of something about **running or any club in fact...You kind of feel that you need to be able** to do something so there'll be a standard within yourself to say **I won't join** my club until I can do this, whatever that standard may be, you may just be able to run a little bit". (New runners' focus group).

- I know for myself wouldn't think of coming along to join the club if I didn't feel I could probably run for at least half an hour whatever. I'd probably do some on

my own first to build myself up to until, -as you say there is a standard, -and then go along and join." (New runners' focus group).

However, the runners regarded the physical regime of golf to be far less taxing:

- "I really think it's just a glorified walk around a piece of grass basically." (New runners' focus group).

- "I can't say it's a sport –it's an activity. A relaxing activity...I don't know why they call it a sport." (New runners' focus group).

In contrast, the golfers I interviewed did not regard physical fitness per se to be a major inhibitor to participation, and neither was a lack of skill. Golf was a game to be learnt and in this respect learning and coping with the plethora of rules, regulations and codes of practice provided the greater barrier to new members. In the following interview extract, the interviewee is describing what is required of a novice golfer before they are allowed out on the golf course. There is a notable lack of reference to fitness:

- "It's fairly standard to either play a round with the professional, or display your skills on a driving range...Quite often clubs will ask you to have a set number of lessons with a professional before you go out. And he does a final check that you have the basic skills of chipping and driving etc. so that you're not knocking half the golf course out!" (M. Vincent)

A major issue with the weightlifters was the strongly gendered environment of the heavy weights room. In the following extract from my observations on how weightlifters approach their training, the sheer physicality of the training regimes produced an overtly masculine atmosphere which discouraged both females and males from taking part:

> The gym environment appears hostile to the uninitiated, and by the body language of the newcomers fitting in to the gym culture is not easy. There is a lot of grunting by the males. There are heavy weights being thrown around aggressively. There is much flexing of muscle and some overt posturing by some of the larger weight trainers. Though there is no animosity shown towards each other, the 'space' belongs to and is possessed by the established lifters. Here in this masculinized environment for the novice safety in numbers applies...It is only the **dedicated and committed** who persevere, the rest "give up and train upstairs" [the health suite]. (Heavy weights gym interview field notes).

In the above extract, the established weightlifters differentiated their activity by the seriousness and dedication with which they approach their training. Those who did not have this 'serious attitude' to training belonged in the health suite. This differentiation of a 'proper' athlete from those who pursued sports more as a leisure activity or fitness regime was also evident amongst the runners. During several informal interviews and some focus group sessions, I asked the runners the question: what makes a runner? A definition proved difficult to pin down, but the consensus view was that a 'runner' was someone who took running seriously enough to join a running club (see chapter 6). Becoming more committed changes attitudes towards physical regimes, as the following extract demonstrates:

- "You're running to keep fit. **You've made this commitment to yourself** to keep fit and when you don't do it, it's almost like **'I've let myself down'**. It's the same thing as going for a run with a friend on a Sunday morning...I'd better go 'cause I don't want to let him down." (Established runners' focus group).

With the golfers, although there was little emphasis on physical regimes there was seriousness in the approach to the role of their bodies in playing golf. That golfers were willing to "sacrifice fitness" for a few shots a round, is evidence of how important their bodies were as a medium through which to play golf. As noted previously, the use of power trolleys in golf is a contested area amongst golfers. As the following extracts show there was tension between the acceptance of trolley use and the resultant implied 'downgrading' of their physical bodies:

- "As golfers age so they start to use trolleys. Young golfers carry their gear, then they start using their trolleys. At 50 they start to use power trolleys and in their 80s they sit in a buggy..."Its more about the game than fitness.

- (In reply)..."Keeping fit is part of it as well, you don't come here to get fit, its more like a by-product...but it is a very, very good by product though..."

- (In reply)..."Are you trying to say I'm not manly enough because I have to use a [power] trolley?" [Said in good humour].

- (In reply)..."There is this thing that 'real golfers' carry their bags..."

Though the above bantering was in good humour the group were uncomfortable with the juxtaposition of a 'sports'man (the group were all male) using a power trolley. The conflict was resolved by legitimising its use through its potential to reduce injury:

- "...Making the transition between a pulling trolley and a power trolley is an injury thing...its easy to get a trapped nerve in the bloody shoulder mate –pulling the clubs." (Studley wood golf club focus group).

With this point the group visibly relaxed though as will be seen in chapter 6 the role of the power trolley proved to be more complex than just a physical aid.

4.4 Physical rewards

With continued participation, individuals experience actual changes (or not) in their bodies. Participation then involves a 'feedback loop' where continuous (re)assessment of the benefits of participation takes place. This is illustrated in the following quote from a female member of the New runners' focus group:

- "Over the last two or three months I've noticed that I'm getting more muscle definition. I'm getting some muscles which I never had before, and you know **I'm quite interested in seeing how my body changes**...I like that and I was trying my swimming costume on the other day because I'm going to be spending five months on the beach in South Africa soon...**so there are sort of nice side effects from running.**" (New runners' focus group)

Participating in sport has then the power to change the way people 'feel' about their bodies, in effect providing incentives (or disincentives) to continue participating. The rewards derived through this changed relationship with the body are, however, not just confined to issues of body shape, but also include an ontological sense of mental and physical well-being, as well as a sense of achievement about 'being' physically active.

4.4.1 A sense of health

For the runners the link between exercise and improvements in physical health were 'real'; they felt that running kept them 'fit and healthy'. The following extract is from

my field notes on the experienced runners' focus group, discussing the question 'is sport good for you?' There was unanimous agreement that it was:

> -Physical Health. The group think that running makes them healthier than the general population. They feel that they are more physically capable than would otherwise be expected. The two examples of climbing stairs and running for a bus were cited as activities where they notice an elevated level of physical capacity. In a similar respect the capabilities of some of the older members of the club provides inspiration for the younger members. It is thought that the capacity of older runners to run at what is regarded as a good competitive pace is indicative of the ability of 'running' to protect against the degradation of physical ability due to ageing. (Experienced runners' focus group notes)

This feeling that running is good for you was echoed by many of the interviewees. The following simple statement was in answer to the question 'why do you run?'

- "To get fit, **feel fitter.**" (Female focus group)

The statement that running made them feel fitter neatly sums up the general experience of the running club membership. Interestingly, in addressing the question of the link between health and running, health was always equated to fitness. Furthermore, none of the interviewees quoted specific facts about their personal levels of health. For example, I had expected the elite runners to quantify their fitness (health) in terms of 'distance' and 'speed' of running, and as being better than 'lesser' runners. For the New runners' running provided a means to get fit, rather than the opportunity to develop as a faster runner. Contrastingly, for the established runners, continued participation provided a means of improving their times (i.e. run faster for longer) rather than a way of 'further' improving their health. Therefore, subsequent to the development of a basal level of running ability there was no sense of a major progression in health. It was therefore the 'act' of running regularly that made all the runners 'feel' positive about their healthy bodies, rather than their standard of running.

Though this depth of feeling about physical health was not present in the golfers, they also recognised that regularly taking part in a physical activity had improved their health. In the following interview extracts, the hilly terrain of their golf course was used to emphasise their feelings about the fitness aspects of playing golf at their course:

- "I'd like to see other golfers walk around this course, it's quite a climb..." (Hinksey heights golf focus group).

- (In reply)..."Especially on this course. I know if I don't come here for a couple of weeks that I'd feel it walking around the course. **So it must be doing something".** (Hinksey heights golf focus group).

For the runners there was a strong link between feeling fit and improved mental health. The following interview extract is from an experienced runner who was describing the way in which running made him feel healthy:

- "...a sense of well-being is in yourself and because you feel that you project it...**as soon as you look healthy you feel better** and therefore people perceive you as being that as well." (Male runners' focus group).

Throughout my interviews with the weightlifters, runners and golfers, the positive affect that participating in sport had on psychological health rated higher than its affects on physical health. The following are passages from my field notes taken during the established runners' focus group and the weightlifters' focus groups respectively:

> **Mental Health.** It is in the area of **mental well-being** that the benefits of running come over **particularly strongly.** Terms such as relaxed, mentally alert, ability to wind down, and coping with stress and work frustrations are all used to describe the benefits of running. In comparison with physical fitness the **psychological benefits of running appear to be far more important** in the minds of the group. (Experienced runners' focus group notes)

> ...in addition, training has positive psychological benefits. The group note that through training **they take a positive approach to their bodies,** and **this feeling of doing something makes them feel better about themselves.** For the women in particular it is a better approach than dieting, in that it is **healthier both physiologically and emotionally.** Training for both the males and the females **enables the individual to take control over his/her body.** However, it is recognised that weight training is not as good for 'losing weight' as more aerobic activities such as running. (Weightlifters' focus group notes)

The following interview extracts support this observation:

- "When I'm feeling low or run down, then going for a run gives me a real boost. I feel more able to **take control** after going for a run." (Female runners' focus group).

- "I was injured for four months and I'm not one of those people who has this craving to go out the door and run –I always have to talk myself into it...But after four months [not running due to injury] I felt more tense, it was harder to relax after coming home from work...it's things like that I miss about running." (Male runners' focus group).

- "I also find if I haven't run for a while I seem to be more miserable." (Male runners' focus group).

4.4.2 A sense of achievement

Sports can also be regarded as goal orientated pursuits. For weightlifters it is lifting heavier weights, runners it is running further or faster, and for golfers it is getting around the course in as few shots as possible. However, goal setting is relative. From world records to running for 30 minutes without stopping, different people aim for different goals. The setting of goals can be complex. The following is an extract from the transcript of the female runners' focus group talking about Lucy's reasons for taking up running:

> **Initially** Lucy's primary reason in choosing running **was to lose weight**; she feels that she has always been too heavy. However, the motivation to achieve this end was derived **through wanting to interact with and get to know her work colleagues better [socialise]** of whom a small group wanted to join a running club. After being invited she chose to join up with them. **When she started running, her family thought that she wouldn't keep it up (she had never done any form of sport before). This she took as a challenge and was determined to prove them wrong**. She then found that she enjoyed the running. For her the lack of competitiveness is a plus point. Though she doesn't feel that she is good at running it still offers her an activity whereby **she can achieve something (just keeping going)**. The fact that running affords her the casual approach to participating (for example, no requirement for expensive gear/clothing) suits her. (Female runners' focus group notes).

For Lucy there were three ongoing goals, keeping her weight under control, developing social relations and maintaining a base level of fitness. For others a sense of achievement was derived through the competitive nature of sport:

- "There are various categories of golfer. Go from the person who wants to play golf for relaxation. These are people who have possibly done other more physically active sports who see a competitive edge in it [golf] and/or are the retired category. There is the bank manager variety who consider it to be a social thing, but also a business thing so they might amalgamate the two together...Though every one wants something different from the sport **there is always a competitive edge to the play regardless** of your particular category or area. –Even some of the retired 65, 70+, they are still competitive." (M. Vincent).

Organised competitions in particular can provide goals, and so serve to motivate participants:

- "What motivates me is the challenge of the big event; the London Marathon. I like running because you have these big runs where you can **see your times**. You can look up in the paper and **see where you come**. It [events such as the London Marathon] **gives you something to aim for. I'm going to aim to do really well in this event or that, this year.**" (Male Runners' focus group)

Similarly, though weight training is often regarded as a passive sport (in that continuous direct competition against others isn't a major component of participating), the setting of goals to be achieved was important for the weightlifters. In the following extract competition not only provided a goal, but also served to structure the weightlifters training regimes:

> Two of the group train to compete...and as such structure their training around competitions. For them the thrill of competing is the icing on the cake and provides additional meaning or purpose to their training; the focus of competition providing a 'structure' for their methodology of training. Consequently, their monthly training itinerary is centred on peaking for competitions. And each exercise and how it is performed is tied into a pre-programmed schedule...For all the group there is the second element to the thrill of winning in that participants constantly compete against themselves. Weight training is unusual amongst sports in that it has strong quantitative characteristics...weight training performance is measured by the amount of weight lifted

> during a session. Relatively speaking there are no external factors such as weather, team performance or luck to add a qualitative dimension...Within the group, this self-evaluation is an important part of the training. However, as the group are morally supportive of each other, information in terms of reassurance and new ideas are also freely exchanged. So, if self-evaluation becomes too introspective (with the possibility of a downward spiral in attitude to training) others are on hand to help guide through the rough spots. (This is particularly important in the early stages of training as initial progress is often slow and therefore disheartening, an effect that is compounded by the novice having little or no experience from which to create a meaningful reference point for their progress). (Weightlifters' focus group notes).

The common thread throughout the above extracts is that a sense of achievement is obtained from a continuous process of self-assessment of body performance. Nevertheless, ideas about what constitutes successful body performances are constructed from 'comparative' perspectives. In the first extract Lucy was comparing the fact that she could now keep going without stopping, something she was unable to do before joining the running club. Similarly, the male runner in second extract was rating his marathon times against others in the same race. A sense of achievement was obtained by placing 'relative values' on these performances. Therefore in the first extract, for Lucy the values attached to 'just keeping going' and 'controlling her body weight' provided her with a sense of achievement. Contrastingly, in the second extract placing value on doing well in big competitions provided the incentive to train. For the weightlifters, placing too much value on unrealistic body performances could have led to a sense of failure about their training (and bodies), in turn acting as a disincentive to training.

All long-term participants in sport are confronted by the biological determinism of ageing that progressively effects physical decline in body performance. This was recognised by the male runners' focus group who acknowledged that a point would come when they could no longer take part in running. This point came not at a particular age but when they were no longer able to keep up and therefore became a "*burden*" on other runners (although they would still be competent runners in respect to the abilities of the average non-running person of the same age). Only at this point would their 'running bodies' have no value:

- "It's not age, it's physical state." (Male runners' focus group).

4.5 The development and possession of physical capital

Engaging with and maintaining participation is premised on the 'values' that individuals attached to the active-bodies. Within our society, body terms such as thin, lean, lithe, fit, athletic, muscled and healthy represent positive and valued traits. Whereas, skinny, fat, flabby, out of breath and unhealthy hold little value; often being negatively regarded as outward signs of (an individual's) failure. As was shown one of the biggest motivators for taking up running is its perceived ability to reduce fat. Participants valued the possession of an athletic and muscled physique. The following observations are from the female runners' focus group in which the question 'what are your opinions about the running physique?' was discussed. Joe was around fifty years old and described herself as a slow runner. She enjoyed the social side of running and did not take part in competitions. The motivating factor for her was the way running made her feel about her body:

> The topic of Joe's legs provides for much amused discussion as she regards them as being large. She makes an important distinction between her weight and her shape. Though her weight is heavier than what she regards as normal, because she attributes the extra weight to the muscles she has developed through running, **the largeness of her thighs is no longer a problem.** To quote: "My thighs always used to be big and fat and flabby but now they're big but muscley." (Female runners' focus group notes)

Joe showed a lot of pride in her changed physique. So much so that she placed her leg on top of the table next to the microphone so I could 'see' her new muscles. This was a clear example of the process of objectifying the body. Through running, Joe's legs had become objects of pride, and were thus valued. Moreover, by attaching values to her body (and these values being shared by others) Joe's legs became part of her 'physical capital' (Bourdieu, 1978). The attachment of these values to the physical-body can directly effect participation. In the following interview extract, Sadie was discussing her feelings about her active-body. I had previously interviewed her as part of the established runners' focus group. However, at the time of this interview she had not been running as part of the Headington Road Runners for approximately one year:

- "Initially one session missed is no problem, but if you continue to miss sessions you start to get out of the habit. **Fear of losing fitness makes you go back.**

But it gets harder as time goes on...and you know it's going to get harder [physically] to get back into it." (S.Jones)

Although Sadie continued to run on her own she did not regard her running as being of the same quality:

- **"I think I ought to go back,** [to the running club] because you tend to push yourself harder when you're running with other people, sometimes its easy to go running by yourself and take it easy, and kind of jog round. **Being in the club means that you push yourself and run better.** I also tend to not run as far as I used to. Then we went on some longer/further runs, and when you're with other people you have to push yourself more and keep up." (S.Jones).

Implicit in these two statements is that participating in running provided Sadie with the fit body, but participating as part of a club her identity as a 'runner' was reinforced. The relationship between mode of participation and 'improved' identity was also demonstrated in her follow up response:

- "Though I think I'm running well at the moment, in fact I'm probably running faster than I have ever run before, **I definitely regard myself as a jogger as I'm doing it to keep fit.** I used to think of myself as a runner when I was at the club...That I think of my running as more of a hobby now does bother me. **I do feel as though I should go back to the club, my running had more status then."** (S.Jones)

The inherent values and/or physical capitals attached to the active-body are further demonstrated by the following extract. In this, the focus group were reflecting on the processes they went through when deciding to take up running and join a running club. As non-runners, they had assumed that runners in a running club automatically have elevated standards of running:

- "I think the thing about running as well is that it's not like taking up a completely new sport like rowing or archery or something where you've probably never done it before in your life, therefore you don't know whether you can do it or not. Most people know whether they can jog for ten minutes from running for buses or whatever...So therefore that's why maybe **you wouldn't think of joining a running club if you weren't some sort of standard."** (New runners' focus group).

In the following interview extract, the male runners' focus group similarly discuss the difficulties of taking up running. Again, the opinion that the possession of a thin body results in higher levels of support from significant others, demonstrated the values that are attached to the active-body:

- **"...If they're thin and don't have much weight they can get more encouragement**...if you're overweight when you start running its actually a very tough thing to do. You have a long hill to climb...You don't get many fat runners. You either start off thin, or you end up thin." (Male runners' focus group).

My fieldwork observations also enabled me to explore the processes that underpin a hierarchy amongst gym users. In many heavy weights gyms there is often a subtle order of deference shown by the users towards each other. This order is based on the possession of physical capital in respect to the size of muscle:

> There is little or no direct competition between weight trainers. Therefore, in order to locate oneself within the gym hierarchy, size and/or amount of weight lifted relative to others is key. **Careful study of the body language of the gym users reveals a constant assessment of others' abilities.** (*Here as an Olympic Lifter I stand somewhat outside this process. Most people can neither match the weights I lift nor master the complex lifting techniques, but neither do I represent a threat in terms of physical size*)...It is clear that **big guys train with other big guys** and intermediates with intermediates etc. Often when someone is lifting a very heavy weight, it will be the novices who stand and watch. (Weightlifting field notes).

The possession of physical capital is not confined to size or shape but may also be realised in respect to physical ability. As demonstrated previously, fitness is not a major aspect of golf, however, skill is:

- "If you are a good player you'll get in the team for **the simple fact that you're a good player and they can't do without you.** No captain is going to throw you out because you don't join in the other things. The fact is that if you play in the teams that's a form of socialising anyway. The other way to do it is to join in with the different types of competition going on. A club will always have various competitions going on...mixed pairs etc. If you join in with those you get seen more and more around the club, and more and more people will get to know you. **You'll always get identified if you're a low handicapper because people will look on the list to see who the low handicappers are.** If you're a

one or two handicapper you'll be surprised to see how many people know you're a one or two handicapper." (M.Vincent)

The problems of joining and becoming integrated into a golf club are clear from this extract. The view that the possession of (body) skills makes joining and participating within a golf club easier was also referred to by the Studley wood golf club's focus group:

- "...That's alright for you, you could go out on this course and play with anybody because you are an extremely competent golfer. But if 'you've got someone with a 28 handicap, he might play with someone playing off a 1 or 2 or 3 he will feel very inferior." (Studley wood golf course's focus group).

- (in reply) "...He won't do it...he wants to know who he's playing with because he doesn't want to let himself down." (Studley wood golf course's focus group).

As with the users of the heavy weights room, the members of the golf clubs tended to organise themselves according to a hierarchy defined through physical ability. In the second of the above extracts, the interviewee was referring to the position of the low handicapper not wanting to play with the high handicapper. The low handicapper risked losing to a lesser player because the lesser player had a greater allowance of shots i.e. s/he could take more shots to go round the course and still win. In losing such a match, the low handicapper risked losing status within the club. (This is similar to the earlier experience of the runner being passed by a 'fat' person). Physical capital in relation to the possession of skills can also influence the process of participating in golf:

- "When you get down to the A group with the low handicap that's when it becomes a little more cliquey as there are less of you, and you are in an elite group when you're down there. Everybody else knows you're in that category. **Other people with higher handicap won't want to play with you because they're intimidated by you.**" (M.Vincent).

The running club similarly organises itself according to physical ability, with the slow, intermediate and fast runners forming respective sub-groups. As the runners physically develop, so they re-negotiate their 'position' within the club's running pecking order (see Chapter 5).

4.6 Concluding comments

The participants in this study were 'aware' of their physical bodies. More than this, they had clear ideas of how their bodies related to the types of physical activities (on offer). From the perspectives of their engagement, the act of undertaking a physical activity had the power to change their bodies. At one extreme, physical activities carry the risk of injury to the body, whilst at the other they give individuals an enormous degree of control over their bodies. As noted, different types of activity were thought to change bodies in different ways. The weightlifters referred to their activities in terms of muscle and toning, whereas the runners referred to theirs in terms of leanness and body weight control. Moreover, the participants of the different sports shared this stereotyping of physique according to activity. For example, it was the shared perception of the runners *and* the weightlifters *and* the golfers that running led to a lean physique.

The second observation was the participants 'objectification' of their bodies. For the participants, bodies were possessions of worth. They invested time and effort to develop and maintain their bodies. For some, the fear of losing their active-bodies led them to maintain participation. They valued their bodies and ranked their bodies in relation to others. Lay knowledges about the effects on body changes informed the choices of sporting activity. Many of the runners took up running to lose fat and to control their body weight because the lean physique was (to them) a valued commodity. The golfers noted that because the low handicap was a rare and valued commodity, the skilled golfer more easily 'fitted in' with other golfers. The weightlifters noted that a promise of 'big muscles' attracted many males to the heavy weights gym whilst those who would rather lose weight and develop the toned body, preferred the gentler regime of the health suite. Moreover, possession of such physical capital made all the respondents (regardless of activity) 'feel' better about their bodies. Importantly, this improved sense of self-worth derived from possessing the active-body was not restricted to the elite athletes whose physical assets were clearly on display, but applied to all those interviewed regardless of standard. The challenge of "just keeping going" provided the novice runner with both a sense of achievement about her body, and the incentive to maintain participation, and as the golfer noted in regards to golf's affects on his body: "its better than sitting in front of the telly". Therefore, the processes of constructing and investing in the physical capital of the active-body had a 'proactive' effect on participation. It made the participants feel

good about their bodies and provided incentives to maintain participation, regardless of standard of play.

Chapter 5: Socialising

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on how the developments of social relationships between participants influence patterns of participation. Very few participants envisage practicing their sport in complete isolation, and having to interact with strangers within an alien environment can be a daunting prospect. This is especially true for those contemplating participating within a sports club or gym. For the uninitiated, entering this unknown social arena raises questions of personal compatibility and efficacy amongst other concerns. However, ongoing participation provides opportunities to develop broader and deeper social ties with fellow club practitioners that serve to foster a friendly and mutually supportive environment in which to participate. Creating these 'social fabrics' places demands and responsibilities on the club members who have to work to maintain them. Each individual has to balance the 'efforts' of maintaining social ties with the resultant 'support' these provide. Moreover, social relationships can be constraining as well as enabling, and as with the development of the active-body, take time and effort to develop. In this chapter, I will demonstrate that successful long-term participation is dependent on how individuals are able to position themselves within the social structure that functions to facilitate participation.

5.2 The importance of social relationships

First impressions of the running club were that the club was less 'serious' than expected. There was a strong feeling of the club being friendly and inclusive. The following extracts demonstrate that many of the runners recognised the existence of these 'misplaced' preconceptions:

- "They imagine a running club to be **full of serious individuals**, and that they are going to be left behind." (Male runners' focus group).

- "The general **perception of the public is that a running club is quite a serious thing**, rather than a fun/social type of activity." (Running Club's Committee focus group).

Similarly, the members of the golf clubs also recognised that sociability is an important aspect of their sport:

- "If you can go into a small group where there's a couple of dozen people and you can sit at the table [in the clubhouse] you think 'oh this is great' and you'll come back here...if you take this club you can **quite easily fit in.**" (Studley Wood golf course's focus group).

- "The **social side** afterwards in many clubs **is as important** as the game itself." (M.Vincent).

Contrastingly, as the following extract demonstrates first impressions of the heavy weights room suggested that it was not a friendly place to be.

> The **gym environment appears hostile to the uninitiated,** and by the body language of the **newcomers fitting into the gym culture is not easy**...Though there is no animosity shown towards each other the 'space' belongs to and is possessed by the established lifters. (Weight training field notes).

This *variability* in sociability between clubs was witnessed by some of the runners:

- "I think from what I've heard, running club (b) you know, **only want members who are very good** athletes and are going to help them compete at county level." (New runners' focus group).

- "With the previous club I was running with I'd been injured, and as there was such a small group of people there...**they just went off and did their own thing at their own level and I was left behind.** So I came here and I could pick and choose exactly who I ran with, and I was never left behind anywhere." (Running club's committee focus group).

For many of the interviewees being 'too serious' proved a strong disincentive to take up sports, whereas the provision of a friendly inclusive atmosphere was regarded as important for attracting members. Studley Wood golf course was a relatively new club and many of the Studley Wood golf course's focus group were present at its inception.

They noted that to get the golf course established the owners had put a lot of effort into creating a sociable, inclusive atmosphere:

- "When the club first opened we used to have some good evenings, (we don't seem to do that anymore). We used to have curry nights, Indian night, sea food nights, it were brilliant, you had to book up weeks in advance or you didn't get in....we used to get together a reasonable amount." (Studley Wood golf course's focus group).

As the following extracts show, the running club's committee focus group also recognised that the club had encouraged the development of the friendly inclusive atmosphere in order to attract new members:

- "That's the positive thing with the club in that we're encouraging this culture to improve amongst everybody, **and doing it together...So we try and set up sessions to accommodate everyone."**

- (And in reply)..."It's a specific decision; certainly when we planned the Saturday sessions, **all the sessions are planned so that everybody can do them".** (Running club's committee focus group).

The view that a good, inclusive social atmosphere is important for attracting new members to a club was therefore a view commonly shared between the runners and golfers.

5.2.1 Starting Participation

The actual process of taking up a physical activity as a beginner is a daunting prospect. Not only do they have to master new physical skills (see chapter 4), they do it within an alien environment whilst attempting to interact with a completely new group of people. As the following extracts show, the interviewees across all the sports studied recognised that it was helpful to initiate sports participation under the auspices of a friend:

- "Initially they look for the social side, as long as they can be accepted socially within the [golf] club. **If they know someone it is a lot easier**, so they can automatically come in on a social side." (M.Vincent).

- " "That's right, one or two have come down with me [potential new members]and it's always I'll come down with you, **they feel more comfortable** than if they've got to walk through those doors on their own." (Male runners' focus group).

For the females, **meeting friends at the gym has helped to break down the social/normative barriers** that preclude females from taking part in heavy weights training. Once they had become part of the 'regular set', the females did not feel ostracised by the males in the gym. In fact, they recognised that they were welcome, and have struck quite a few casual friendships. *(This may be a particular function of the University's environment, but it does fit in with my previous observations of other regular female trainers in municipal gyms).* (Weightlifter's focus group notes).

As the following extract shows, the running club recognised the difficulty faced by new members entering an unfamiliar environment and as a counter measure asked beginners to identify themselves

- "On a Thursday evening we say 'is there anybody here for the first time?' and we expect them to shout out their names so that everybody knows who they are. **I expect that's actually very intimidating for a lot of people."** (Running club committee's focus group)

Once identified, to smooth the integration process the runners then assigned each new members a 'buddy[10]' to look after them on the run. Contrastingly, as the following extract shows, as there is often little social support, for the new member socially fitting into a golf club can prove difficult:

> **"If they are a new member and don't know anybody it is very difficult.** It greatly depends on what their personality is as regards fitting in. Most golf clubs if you go there first thing on a Saturday morning, you would be automatically accepted (it is an open game)...So if you were a new member you could join that group automatically. **Thing is you would have to know who they were to be able to join in...** There are no introductions to new members, there's no shadowing by an existing member to say we do this on a Saturday morning etc... You go to your initial meeting with the club captain, you meet the secretary. **That's it, from there onwards they've forgotten your**

[10] A buddy is an 'artificial' friend to show the ropes to the new member and hence smooth their social integration into the running club.

> **name until you've actually established yourself in the club**...You pay your money and that's it, the rest is up to you. That is one of the biggest drawbacks. It is part of the sheer numbers." (M.Vincent).

Despite these difficulties, for some of the golfers a prime motivation to take up their sport was the opportunity to develop their social life; particularly useful for those moving to a new area or entering retirement:

- "Most of us don't hail from this part of the country, so you can't go out with the people you went to school with. I come from 150 miles up north; Tom comes from London...so we're not native to these parts **and haven't got school friends to socialise with.**" (Studley Wood golf course's focus group).

This was a sentiment shared by some of the runners:

- "I think it definitely adds to your social life because especially if you're new to an area and you don't know many people, **it's a way of getting to know people.**" (New Runners' focus group).

5.2.2 Mutual support

The long-term stability in the patterns of participation was strongly linked to the development of friendships between participants. Social interaction served to provide a mutually supporting network that helped to develop and maintain participation. Within the heavy weights gym there was no formal 'imposed' structure to training. There were no coaches on hand to help with learning and development and no set training times. Individuals were left to fend for themselves. Against this background the members of the focus group had organised themselves into a mutually supportive unit who regularly trained together. The following extract from the transcript of the Weightlifter's focus group demonstrates the importance they placed on forming these relationships:

> Partly a function of the group dynamic, partly a consequence of the group membership, all the group regard that training as part of a group is both more productive and of higher quality than training alone. (*Sid acts as the coach and as such guides the group through*

> *their training, giving individual attention where required*[11]). Generally, training with others provides a better quality of training as each person has access to a colleague who can spot, motivate and advise. In addition, whilst resting between sets, 'others' provide social contact which helps move the session along...all the group recognise that the **social aspect of their training helps them to maintain their participation.** This was especially true when barriers to participation such as cold weather, rain, transport and injury would make it 'easy' for them to forgo training. By keeping a routine and arranging to meet people at the gym some of the group note that they have maintained their participation for longer (and more regularly) than they may otherwise would have. (Weight lifters' focus group notes)

The 'group' aspect of weight training was also clearly observable within the heavy weights gym:

> The relative importance of training within a regular social group can be seen by comparing the habits of those who ostensibly train by themselves. **It is noticeable that lone trainers take longer periods of rest between sets and appear less well motivated.** Additionally those who persist with their training gravitate towards becoming 'associate members' of groups by actively seeking out some form of social recognition from others. (Heavy weights gym observation field notes).

The runners also recognised the importance of mutual support. The following extracts are taken from the male runners' focus group discussion about the social side of their club. They show that social interaction served to provide a sense of belonging and commitment to the running club:

- "Camaraderie...like what you've got after the run, with everybody standing around chatting...**you feel part of the whole**, which is important."

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[11] Within the gym, Sid acted as the "social catalyst" (Klein, 1993:65). Through a combination of his physical size and gentle humour, Sid provided a focal point for other members of the gym, his presence drawing the weightlifters and bodybuilders together who would otherwise be training as disparate units.

- (And in reply)..."It's the success of this club...even where we've got slow runners we still all stay together." (Male runners' focus group).

Moreover, some of the golfers regarded social support important for stabilising participation patterns:

- "I would certainly say a **prime reason for dropping out of golf is not finding a group of players to play with**...therefore turning up on your own on Saturday, finding themselves playing on their own, finding it difficult to get involved in a competition, because they haven't a group to go and play with...In that way it becomes difficult." (M.Vincent).

5.2.3 A safe environment

The social networks that exist within sports clubs contribute to creating a safe environment in which to practise. As demonstrated by the following extract from the new runners' focus group, for many runners training as part of a group made them feel safer than if they ran alone:

- "**I think safety does come into it** in a different way, in that well where I run it tends to be just along paths and so on that are well lit, and when it comes to winter especially you can't go along the roads because the cars just go past too quickly and it's a bit frightening when some of them whiz past. I've only been in Oxford now three years and I don't really know my way around enough to go off road." (New runners' focus group).

Moreover, the following extracts from the female runners' focus group reinforce the importance of the safety aspect of club running. In particular, the shepherding system (see section 5.3.1 below) was seen as a safe way to practise, through which the runners actively looked out for each other:

> All of the group feel more comfortable running with the club than running on their own. A distinction was made that **one or two men in the running group made them feel safe**. However, it **needed a group of at least five women running together to attain the same level of security**...During the winter months the members of the group felt especially vulnerable, and were more likely to try and run with other people than on their own. (Female Runners' focus group notes).

- "The shepherding system is good because it **reduces anxiety.**" (Female Runners' focus group).

The female runners' focus group also felt that for females the club provided a location for the safe socialising with the opposite sex:

> The group think that the club **provides a good (safe) environment for socialising with the opposite sex,** affording the opportunity of making male 'friends' without the worry of predatory males (*my terminology*). **Certainly, the club is seen as a good safe way for women to meet and socialise especially if they are single and new to an area.** Of the group, two note that they had sought out a running club in order to make new friends when they had first moved to Oxford. The third notes that though she is native to Oxford, the club has provided her with the opportunity to meet a greater variety of people (**males** as well as females) than she would otherwise have met. (Female Runners' focus group notes)

Training with others also had safety implications for the weightlifters. High intensity training with heavy weights places the trainer at risk from injury (usually from dropping the weight). Although accidents are rare, the weightlifters' focus group noted that training as part of a group made them feel safer and gave a greater sense of confidence to push themselves harder:

> Training with others is also physiologically safer, in that during the more complex exercises such as squatting, spotters help control the weight which in turn reduces the chance of accidents and injuries. However, the group expressed that having people around made them **"feel safer" and it gave them "confidence to train harder".** (Weightlifters' focus group notes).

Therefore, the runners and weightlifters regarded safety as an important advantage of training as part of the group. This stemmed partly through providing a safe environment to practise in and by providing access to physical support from fellow sportsmen/women. Although the golfers did not directly address the issue of safety, some golfers did express the opinion that part of the choice to practise at a private golf course, as opposed to a municipal golf course, was that at a private course the members would generally follow the rules of play. At a municipal course, the play was perceived to be less disciplined and therefore was less safe.

5.3 The processes of constructing relationships

A club's social fabric is rooted in the 'way' in which its members interact. It is a product of membership profile, prevailing sub-cultural mores and the physical and social spaces that an activity occupies. Although the following passages primarily refer to evidence gathered from my participant observation fieldwork with the running club (see chapter 2), they also include references to both the golfers and weight trainers. Through comparing the evidences, I will show that the nature of the activity they pursued strongly influenced the different mechanisms of social interaction.

5.3.1 Participation practices

Close observation of the way in which the members of the Headington Road Runners interacted showed that there were important procedures and routines that guided the participation process. The following passage taken from my field notes highlights some of these processes:

> The runners generally arrive up to half an hour before the running starts. Though some runners arrive at the sports centre in small groups of two or three, the majority come alone. Once at the sports centre the runners very quickly congregate into small transient groups. The life span of these groups being relatively short, their formation is best described as fluid with different groups continually forming, reforming and disbanding [see below Figure 5.1: Pre-run socialising]. The majority of the groups form through happenstance, though some groups are more pro-actively formed by friends consciously seeking each other out. The majority of conversations that take place within the groups are necessarily short as at this point the runners are in the process of preparing for the

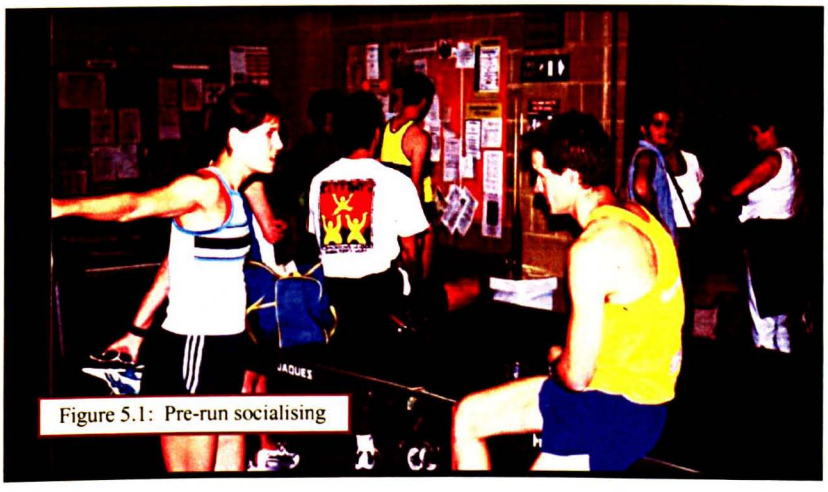


Figure 5.1: Pre-run socialising

upcoming run. Between arriving at the sports centre and embarking on a run most runners are interacting either in a group or in transition between groups. There are very few socially isolated runners and I have **not** observed one person who does not communicate at some point with other runners between arriving and leaving on a run.

After arriving and changing, the runners gather together for the pre-run warm-up, which is led by an established member of the club (usually a coach or committee member). As with many group-orientated sports the warm-up consists of a mixture of gentle jogging, exercises and stretching, with most of the membership taking part. Importantly all classes of members from complete beginners to elite runners take part together [see below Figure 5.2: Warming up] with the warm up being a set club ritual. (Running club field notes).



Figure 5.2: Warming up

Through having familiar routines, the membership participated as an integrated social unit. However, none of the runners proceeded to the warm-up until instructed to by a facilitator. The following interview extract taken from the running club committee's focus group shows that these routines were recognised and maintained by the established members of the club:

- "One of the things I have found quite interesting is...where I've turned up to one or two sessions where they've all just been stood about...they've just stood there

thinking what are we going to do? When I've turned up they ask 'What are we going to do then Bob'? –And I think why me? I'm the newest member here!"

- (And in reply)..."**It's no coincidence they're called sheep.** We had a Garry Larson cartoon on the notice board where all the sheep are stood around and – thank God, the collie's arrived! It's like that on a Tuesday –'Thank God Mark's arrived he'll take the run'."

- (And in reply)..."The other noticeable thing is every Thursday at seven o'clock we start a warm-up which involves running around the hall. If the people who are going to take the stretch/warm-up session don't start running around at seven o'clock, you end up with fifty people stood there hanging around...There's this sort of reluctance...It's not even just running around, start running and **nobody will join you until you shout "Warm-Up" –then there's this Pavlovian response...Every week it happens."** (Running club committee's focus group).

Although the practises were different, the social ramifications due to the different ways of controlling participation were also observable with the golfers. In many clubs, the order of play is on a first come first served basis. However, this risks the creation of cliques as the same players turned up at the same time each week to play together:

- "On a Saturday morning **those [same] groups will predominately meet together.** They may change which groups they play with but they stick together. You'll see them on a Sunday morning in a competition **but they are still in the same groups.** You get those groups in the morning, then you'll get different groups (of the social group or handicap) in the afternoon. Their contact is that they all turn up at one o'clock. Then you get the lone player who plays between the two groups who's trying to see which is the best social group that he can belong to." (M.Vincent).

In discussing the advantages and disadvantages of belonging to their particular club, the Studley Wood golf course focus group noted that their club's practice of booking tee times helped to improve inter member socialising and so prevented the formation of cliques:

- "It's because *here* you have to book a tee time. If you book a tee time you can fit in with anybody, you put your name down then you don't know who you're playing with. **Most clubs don't have a tee time and therefore it gets very**

> **well I'd say cliquey, snobbish**. Four-ball will always play together to the exclusion of everybody else." (Studley Wood Golf course focus group).

In contrast, by not being part of a club environment there was little or no imposed order on the weight trainers. Consequently, weight trainers developed their own individual practices. Some chose to form small social groups who met informally at set times, whilst many trained irregularly, fitting in their training routines around their daily lives. As a result, there was noticeably less development of and emphasis on the social interaction between weight trainers than was observed with either the golfers or runners.

In all the sports studied, the socialising aspect of participation (limited in respect to the weight trainers) continued during the actual playing of the sports. Again, the way in which the activity was practised, strongly influenced the manner of social interaction between its participants. This is illustrated in the following extract taken from my observations of the workings of the running club:

> At first sight for the new runner, embarking on a run appears to be a complex affair. The process starts through negotiation whereby the membership divides itself into sub-groups



Figure 5.3: Group negotiations

> delineated by running standard and type of run to be undertaken. [Above Figure 5.3: Group negotiations, shows this process with the different groups highlighted by coloured rectangles]. The compositions of the various groups though loosely defined historically (that is members gravitate to groups that 'fit in' with their own experience/level; **good runners pick out other good runners to run with** etc.) are subject to who turns up and who is willing to be a group leader for that evening. Hence the process of negotiation. First, the type of run is decided, for example a short fast run, and then who is going to

lead the group along it. There then follows a brief period of renegotiations between groups wherein members of small non-viable groups reposition themselves into larger groups. Final group sizes tend to vary from about five to twenty plus members. This is shown by the coloured ellipses in the below Figure 5.4: Sub-groups leaving for their various runs. (Running club field notes).

The observation that good runners generally gravitated towards running with other good runners is a trait also seen amongst golfers:

- "The majority of the time handicap will be the significant link [within a group]. There is a hierarchical system operating. **Better golfers like to play with better golfers**. There is not much of an opportunity to show how you perform if you're playing with a higher handicapper." (M.Vincent)

The time taken for the running club to organise itself into the sub-groups for the various different runs was around five to ten minutes. This was surprisingly rapid; especially

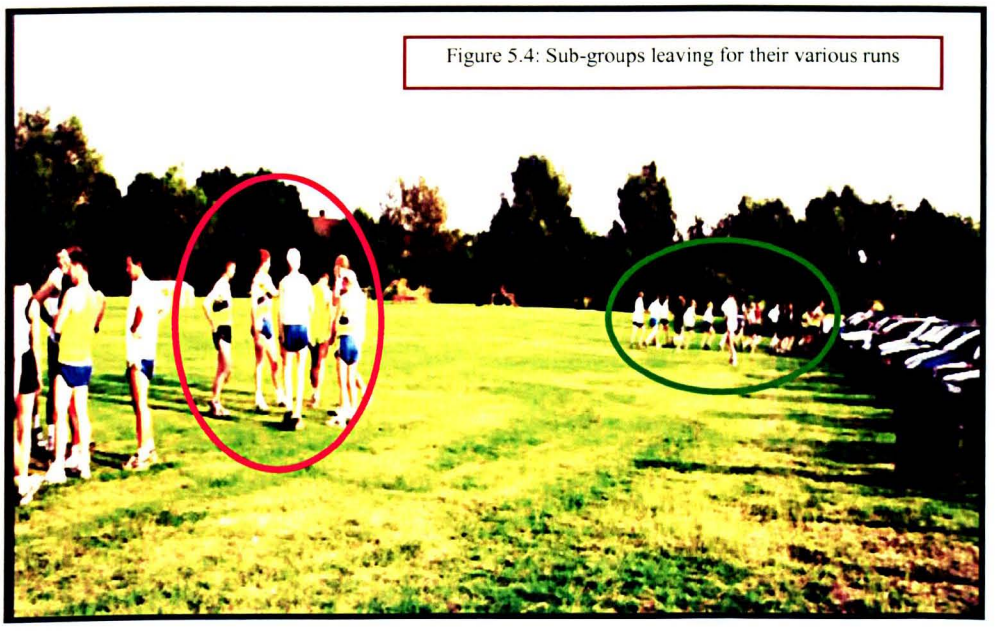


Figure 5.4: Sub-groups leaving for their various runs

considering that up to 150 runners may have been jostling to find the right group at any one time. One consequence of this rapid turnover time was the strain it put on new members trying to negotiate where to fit in.

For the Headington Road Runners, an activity generally envisioned as being 'solitary' was in effect more of a 'group' activity. As the following extract demonstrates, the runners continued to socialise during their running:

> Once the club has organised itself into various sub-groups each group departs for its own run. Some groups depart together and split up at a later stage, others set off on their own from the start. As each group departs there is a continual process of communication to make sure that all who should be within the group are present, and during the run the runners make a conscious effort to look after each other. By predetermining a group's composition its cohesiveness is aided by its members generally running at a similar pace. Any stringing out of the runners is often counterbalanced by a bunching up at road junctions etc. **Regrouping is also aided by some of the faster (established) runners acting as shepherds.** During the run the group splits into smaller subgroups, the compositions of which are fairly fluid. This is partly as a consequence of space (pavement widths limit the number of people that can run together) and of social interaction. **The runners are in constant verbal and non-verbal communication with each other, with conversations ranging from general running to the personal.** Some of the runners remain with their friends throughout the entire run whilst others strike up more casual interactions with different groups as the run proceeds. One or two run by themselves as 'associates' of larger groups. Where group break-up does occur is when faster runners stride out for home, however, slower and less competitive members mostly complete the entire run as part of a group. This social cohesiveness of the large group is therefore largely a result of the way in which the runners participate...
>
> ...this 'cohesive group' aspect of the club's running is most evident on the Tuesday evening runs at Shotover Country Park. The runners do not subdivide themselves into different groups but run as a medium to large group of mixed abilities. The pace at which the run starts is fairly leisurely and initially all the runners are grouped together. However, as the run proceeds, the pace increases and the group starts to become strung out. At this point the more advanced runners peal off and incorporate loops into their routes so that they are continuously rejoining near the back of the main group. The length of these loops varies from about 50 to 200 metres. For example, when crossing a field the slower runners may run diagonally across the centre whilst the advanced runners will run around the edge. At each junction or node a leader points out the alternatives, and through this interaction constantly reinforces club coherence. [The below, Figure 5.5: Routes taken by different running groups, illustrates a schematic view of how these runs are operationalized. The red circles represent the nodes and junctions

at which the runners recombine, the blue route is the shortest and taken by the slow runners, the purple is the route taken by the intermediate runners whilst the green route is the longest and correspondingly taken by the elite runners]. **Though individuals are tailoring their runs to suit their own needs, the meeting at junctions results in the sustaining of a group identity and feel to the run.** (Running club field notes).

Further to this, the social cohesion of the club was reinforced through employing the shepherding system noted earlier. As noted in the following extracts, this system also provided security for both the novice and the established runner:

During this part of the interview the shepherding system is the primary focus on how

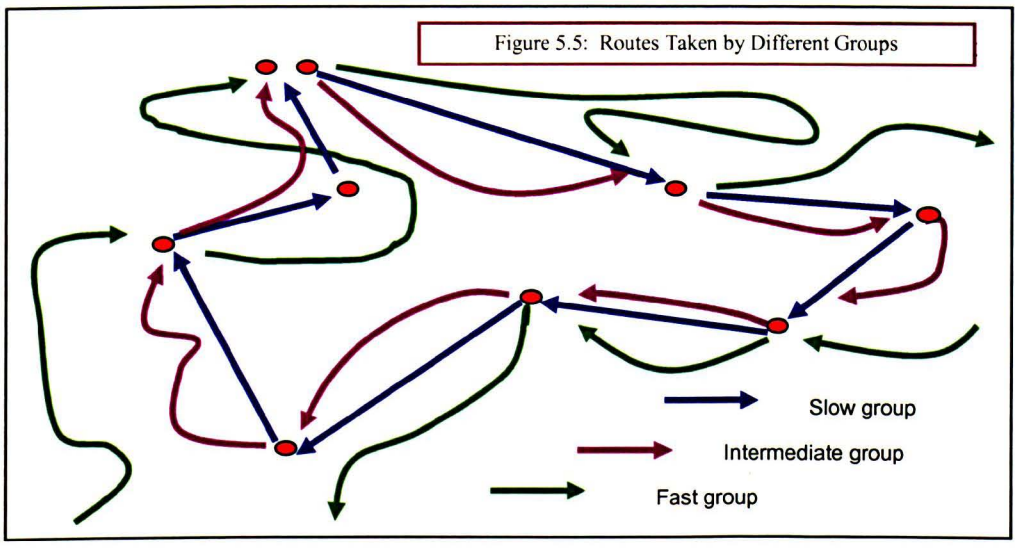


Figure 5.5: Routes Taken by Different Groups

new members are made to feel welcome. However, as in other focus groups, from the way in which the group talked about this system it is evident that **the practise of shepherding runners is seen as being very important to how the club functions for all its members. Even as established runners, during the interview there is strong recognition that through this system runners feel more secure in their running.** That is, if for any reason a runner lags behind on a club run then at minimum part of the group would provide support and ensure his/her safe return. (Male runners' focus group notes)

Though a similar self-help system was employed within the heavy weights gym with the role of spotters, the depth of involvement and interdependency between established trainers and first timers was much less than that observed with the runners. The weight trainers who in general communicated infrequently with other gym users did not mirror

the 'social group' aspect of participation. It was also limited in respect to the way in which golfers play, as during play golfers generally only socialise with their small (maximum 4 member) playing group.

5.3.2 *Post activity socialising*

For the runners, the bulk of their post run socialising occurred in the bar. However, a significant amount of socialising also occurred between returning from their run and getting changed. Importantly, as illustrated in the below extract from my field notes, this resulted in those runners who chose not enter the bar still having an opportunity to socialise and communicate with the wider club membership before leaving the club:

> A product of the different lengths and paces of the separate runs is the continual randomised procession of small sub-groups returning home (along with individual runners who have left their groups and struck out for home). There isn't any set order of return i.e. slow/beginner groups followed by intermediate followed by elites. Once back at the sports centre the runners loosely combine for a 'warm down', during which there is a fair degree of cross communication between individual runners and between



Figure 5.6: Warming down

> members of the different sub-groups. (In the above Figure 5.6: Warming Down, the coloured ellipses highlight the formation of warm down groups outside of the sports centre). The length of time runners remain part of a warm-down group is between five and ten minutes (shorter in winter).

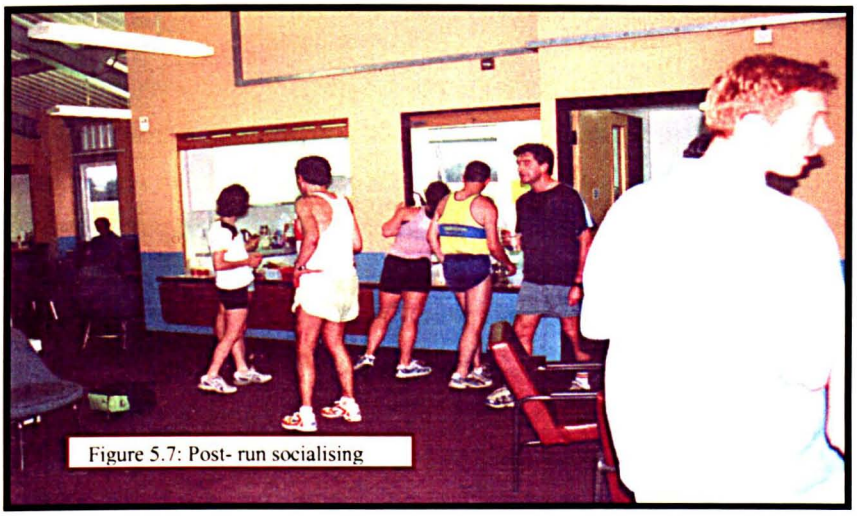


Figure 5.7: Post- run socialising

After warm-down some runners proceed directly to their cars and leave, however, most enter the sports centre to have a shower/get changed. Upon entering the sports centre some runners make for the showers whilst others queue up for a soft drink. Many members make a point of visiting the club's notice board either to read it or to collect the clubs newsletter that is published each month. Again, as the runners enter the building they form transient groups, the natures of which are very similar to those formed during the pre-run rituals. The above Figure 5.7: Post run socialising, illustrates the formation of such a group. Between leaving the showers and proceeding either to the bar or home, an indeterminate period exists wherein the club members mill around the foyer of the sports centre. During this period the club officials make announcements as to future events (both running and social); achievements of runners and teams etc. are formally recognised; presentations made and volunteers for future events requested. These announcements are made in an informal manner that appears to add to the generally good social atmosphere. (Running club field notes)

As shown in the two extracts below, although both the weight training facilities and the golf clubs had bars and informal areas in which to socialise after training, their use was more limited than with the runners:

Though the University's sports centre contains a bar, the weight trainers use of it is limited. Post training socialising is mainly confined to the changing rooms. Most of the training occurs either during the lunch hour or during early evening, straight after work or college. However, there are some groups of friends who make appointments to train together who will socialise afterwards though this tends to more common with the users of the heavy weights gym than with the health suite. (Weight training field notes).

- "There is something very noticeable we think; that is, the people who don't spend money in the club house are the members. The pay and players do -and we can't understand why. We don't know what happens in the mind...we wonder whether the little wife is waiting at home because they're mostly men, but it can be the husbands waiting at home, or the kids need feeding, or they have another pub down the road they meet their friends at. **There does seem to be reticence, they come and play golf and walk straight past the clubhouse and leave.** They are not overly supportive of the club. Nor do they make it easy to keep the prices down...It may be that the members of the club are from a lower social strata and can only afford to play golf to the exclusion of everything else, though I know lots of other clubs have this problem...**They probably won't talk to you before hand and then they come back tired and won't want to have a beer and chat afterwards.**" (M.Brindle).



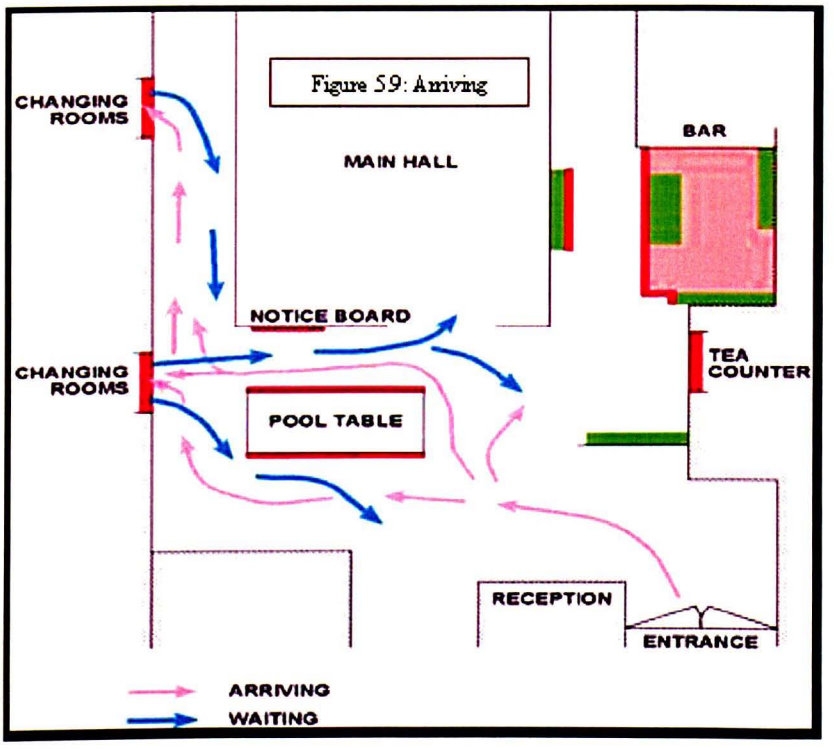
Figure 5.8: Interaction

5.3.3 Space syntax

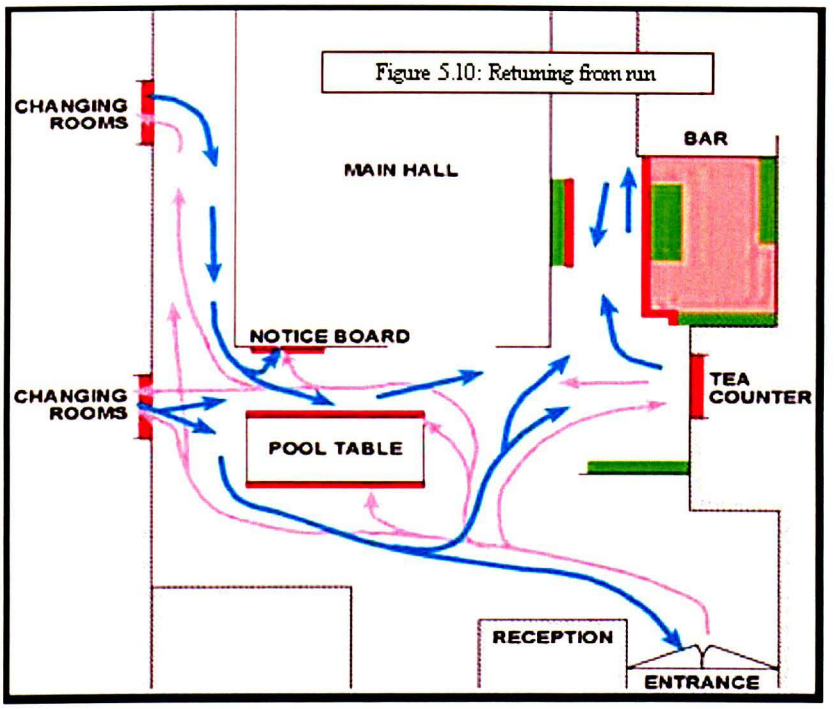
The processes behind social recognition and integration within the running club were not confined to overt interaction between members but were also rooted in the way the club members chose to use their facilities. Space syntax is a theory used to explain how people use spaces (Hamer, 1999). For example, architects use space syntax to help design functional spaces within buildings and traffic engineers us it as an accurate way to forecast traffic flow. Work on space syntax with respect to office communication has

shown that conversations between people occur largely by chance (Hillier, 1996; Hillier & Hanson, 1984). Where spaces are arranged so those encounters are encouraged (e.g. desks placed nearer to central walkways) there is a large increase in conversations between employees. A similar mechanism for facilitating communication between the members of the Headington Road Runners was observable in the way in which the membership used its physical spaces.

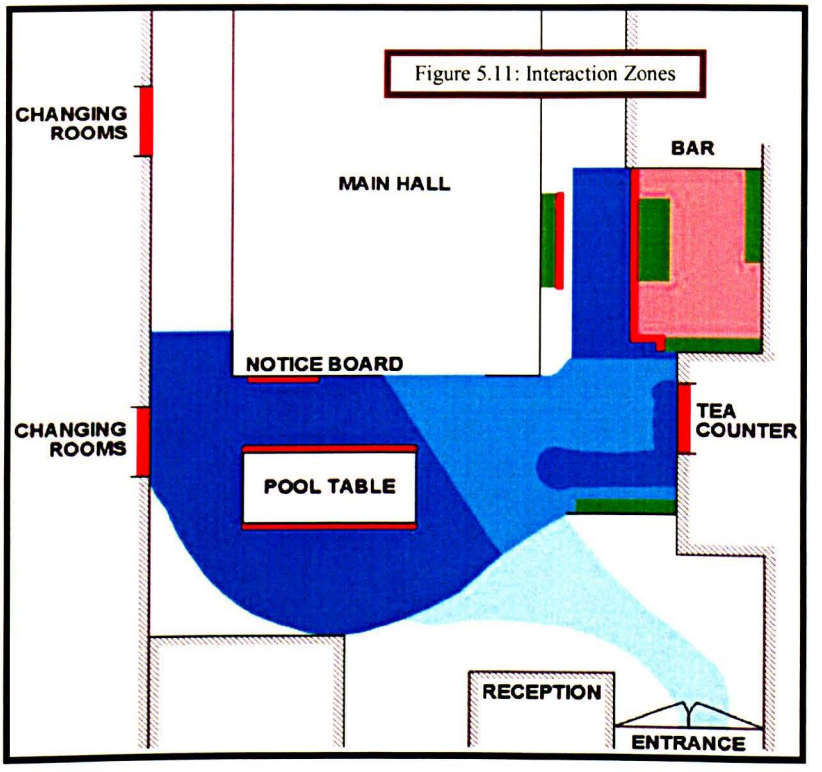
First impressions were that club numbers were slightly too large for the premises. However, rather than leading to conflict over space use, the limitations in available space helped to form a friendly group dynamic by forcing the membership to interact with each other. For example, on returning from a run unless the runner was the first to arrive, s/he had to negotiate passage to and from the showers through a foyer crowded with other runners. In Figure 5.8: Interaction, (above), the runner (highlighted by the coloured ellipse) on returning from his run was forced to seek passage through (and hence interact with) the group of runners who were warming down. The prevailing movements of the



runners created many such sites of interaction. The Figures 5.9: Arriving at the sports centre (above) and 5.10: Returning from Run, (below), both illustrate the routes taken by the runners as they moved around their sports centre.



As illustrated in Figure 5.10: returning from run (above), the routes taken by incoming runners (pink arrows) forced them to mingle with outgoing runners (blue arrows). The result of this was the development of 'zones' wherein club members were forced to interact. In Figure 5.11: Interaction Zones, (below), the areas where the runners



intermingled are shown in blue; the deeper the colour the greater was the number and depth of interactions. The areas of deepest blue occurred at natural bottlenecks. At such points 'networking areas' became established where information was disseminated and distributed amongst the membership (for example, shared lifts to events were arranged and volunteer marshals sought/organised). Moreover, the informal nature of these areas engendered 'inclusiveness' among the runners. An example of such an area is shown in Figure 5.12: Tea Queue socialising, (below). In this picture, runners can be seen queuing for cold drinks after a run (tea in winter). The members complained that they had to wait for up to five minutes to be served; although it was evident that the members often used the time to talk and socialise. Moreover, the makeup of this queue was randomly mixed according to the order of return of the runners. Therefore, members who otherwise would not have crossed paths (elites and beginners for example) were forced to recognise/interact with each other. With sometimes over one hundred members participating (average 60-70) on a club night, this social use of space was important for communications and atmosphere generation. The overall effect was a boisterous, 'happening' and friendly club. If there was adequate space to enable runners to walk 'unopposed', the opportunities for chance conversations would have been very



Figure 5.12: Tea Queue

much reduced.

In the following extract, evidence of the importance of the process of forced social interaction to stabilising of patterns of participating is clear. This is illustrated by an episode linking failing showers and a fall off in club attendance:

> **The showers are also a location where significant socialising takes place:** "There is a lot of banter in the showers as well lots of silly chatter." (Male runners' focus group). Further to this the group expressed the feeling that when the showers weren't working for a couple of months, attendance at the club gradually decreased: **"We noticed it when they were bad because people just used to disappear afterwards...the social side of the club dropped right downhill".** (Male runners' focus group). The general opinion was that because people were leaving straight after their runs and not staying on to socialise at the bar after having a shower (they felt too sweaty to socialise) then the friendly feel of the club began to dwindle, and the club felt 'dead' after a run. **The group noted that after three months the situation got so bad with poor attendance that the club seriously considered moving to another location.** (Male runners' focus group notes).

The following extracts from my field work with weightlifters/trainers show that the process of recognising and interacting with 'others', through the use of space, also occurred with the users of the heavy weights gym:

> The limited socialising that takes place within the gym takes the form of mutual recognition. Weight trainers will great each other with a nod of recognition, **spot for each other etc.** (A weight trainer will know when s/he is accepted when a 'large' body builder asks him/her for a spot) and engage in a brief conversation –usually cursory please and thanks. (Weight training field notes)

> Being part of a group that is social in nature helps them provide both support and structure to each others' training. This support is both physical and moral. For example, **the process of sharing equipment makes accessing the apparatus easier during busy periods whilst providing the trainer with access to moral support** through the social interaction this generates. (Weightlifters' focus group notes).

During busy periods, the weight trainers shared their equipment, while one trainer exercised the other rested and/or spotted. However, this code was not generally practised in the health suite. Here gym equipment was the 'possession' (usually

'claimed' by placing a towel) of the person using it, even when they were resting between exercise sets. Correspondingly, within the health suite there was noticeably less socialising taking place between the participants.

The use of space and its consequences on social interaction was recognised by the proprietors of Hinksey Heights golf course. When constructing the clubhouse they deliberately chose to restrict its size create a better social atmosphere. As the following interview extract shows, they had noticed that many other larger clubhouses were underused and did not have a lively social atmosphere:

- "We have a small clubhouse. **We had great debates about whether we should have a mausoleum of a clubhouse like most other golf clubs have.** We decided against that because we felt that by having a small place, at least in the early days it would help to cut out the probability of cliques. People would have to get to know each other, they would have to rub shoulders together...**we wanted a pub atmosphere** rather than a club atmosphere, because it was not and remains not our intention that this should be a members only club." (M. Brindle)

5.4 Social capital

The value or amount of social capital an individual possesses is proportional to "the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilise and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected" (Bourdieu, 1984: 249). Though the clubs provided an infrastructure to facilitate social interaction, as the following extract notes, ultimately the onus lay with the individual to construct and maintain their interpersonal relationships with their fellow practitioners:

- "Whatever you do within a golf club to **make it seem worth it you've really got to get involved with some form of group.** I can't think of anybody that I have met that hasn't had some form of grouping, whether it be only two or three pals that they come down to play with, they've always had that nucleus of players around them. And that's who they play with. **To be a complete individual is impossible."** (M.Vincent).

5.4.1 Networking

The following extracts are taken from the new runners' focus group discussion on the question '*what makes a good club member?*' It is clear that the group believed that a good club member should invest (time and effort) in the club. Furthermore, by investing in the club the good club member received (social) reward for their efforts:

- "Try and participate in some of the organisation somewhere, help out with some of the stuff. In fact I think if you was to get involved with a particular aspect that you enjoy in the club I think you'd be taken into the club...**they'd appreciate your help and stuff like that...**"

- (And in reply)...I mean you know, the more you do, the more encouragement you get from other people." (New runners focus group)

However, there were also pressures placed on individuals to commit themselves socially. The following extracts taken from the running club's new members' focus group, highlight the 'expectations' that were placed on them to become socially integrated into the running club:

- **"That's where sacrifices in other social areas will have to come** in because they'll probably choose Friday night or Saturday night where you've already got plans or may have had plans and that's where you have to make the sacrifices. And you have to make a decision -do I want to go to this [running club] do? "

- (And in reply)...I felt like that, -what you say about these skittles evenings, -you think of these things and quite often you go along and you're surprised by how good they can turn out. I've actually been to a skittles evening. **I felt like I was really obliged to go to a skittles evening** and it was a really good night, it was really a good laugh...That was just a side thing to do, it just helped the evening along really, because the people I was with they were quite difficult to talk to and so on. But the skittles broke the ice, because you have a laugh at that, you're more able to chat to people." (New runners' focus group)

As shown in following extract, the amount of expected commitment varies according to activity type:

- "When I was at university I took up rowing and that's the sort of sport where you're expected to train five or six days a week with a team of people, and if you don't turn up you're letting them down. And I gave that up because it meant that

> the only social life I could have was with this group of eight people, who I was getting up with at five in the morning to go for a run and training with after university. So that did involve a sacrifice, but I think you know one of the nice things about this [running club] is you know if you want to come once a month no one's going to say where were you last week...if you want to come every week great. And it's as much commitment as you want to make it, and if you want to go home straight after your run that's fine, if you want to stay for a drink that's fine so it's what you want to make of it which is quite nice really." (New runners focus group).

In the above extract, the fact that the runner was allowed the choice of how much effort (investment) to put in made the running club's regime more acceptable than the rowing club. A similar opinion on the importance of being free to choose how much time and effort to put into an activity was also expressed by some of the golfers:

- "We see each other two or three times a week, and we have a chat or maybe a beer...and we enjoy the natter. As long as you're only doing that two or three times a week; you don't want to do it anymore anyway...**you don't see any friends every night anyway."** (Studley Wood golf course focus group).

5.4.2 The balancing of social relations and families

The balancing of different social inside and outside of sports clubs also incorporated issues of family relationships. In the following extract, the golfer was a recent retiree, for him golf friendships had replaced work friendships:

- **"My wife has been very good** over the last fourteen months [since retiring]...all the time she has been very supportive, otherwise what would I do? Sit around eating biscuits and sipping coffee bored out of my brain...**I'd rather come here and bore other people".** (Studley Wood Golf course focus group)

The members of the Hinksey Heights golf course focus group also made the distinction between socialising with the family and socialising at the golf course:

> The group regarded the relationships at the golf club and at home as basically two separate entities. They tended not to use the golf club for socialising with their families. As one person put it **"We'd only talk about golf, and my wife would soon get very bored of that!"** (Hinksey Heights golf course focus group notes).

Similarly, the runners also regarded the social time spent with the family as being separate from social time spent with the running club:

> **Family**: Time can pose a major problem with respect to family commitments. **A balance has to be achieved between the time spent running and time spent with the family.** This may prove difficult when training for an event such as a marathon where the volume of training time required is large. One way of helping to achieve balance is through getting the family involved with running. The entire group regard getting their wives/partners involved with running to be a positive move. However, it is acknowledged that children pose a particular problem. (Male Runners' focus group notes).

> Sadie noted that for her the type of social relationships created within the club were different to normal friendships due to the running aspects. For her the **relationships did not exist in and of themselves but as a product of the shared goal of running.** However, she noted that for others social relationships with other club members was more important and did exist independently of the running. Sadie cited her relatively young age (mid twenties) and lifestyle as possible reasons for the difference. **In particular, she noted that for some who had families and /or were more committed to running [as a sport] the club did represent a social focal point.** (S.Jones interview field notes).

For the runners the issue concerning social time spent at the running club (as opposed to with their family) may have been a consequence of the club not catering for children. However, it was not a major issue, probably due to relatively few of the club's membership having dependent children (see chapter 3).

5.4.3 The rewards

The individuals in this study invested time and effort in developing social relationships with other participants because of the benefits that such social networking engendered. In addition to receiving mutual support (see section 5.2.2) and a safe environment in which to practise (see section 5.2.3) the participants also placed 'value' on their social relationships with the other club members. As noted previously, the clubs were regarded as places where people could go to make new friends. This social aspect of participating in sport is becoming particularly relevant as Britain's work force becomes more mobile. In the following extract, reference is made to individuals sharing houses. This was in

connection with the number of runners who originated from outside the local area and had moved to Oxford either in respect to work or to pursue higher education:

- "Outside the club there is an awful lot of socialising going on. There are groups of people going to nightclubs every week, we go out for meals with people from the club, we organise our own runs outside the club. **People even share houses with people they have met through the club. It's a supply of friends for people.**" (Running club committee's focus group).

As well as the development of social relationships, 'reward' was also expressed in terms of 'recognition' from others. Members of sports club's committees in particular may invest a lot of (unpaid) time and effort into the running of the club. The following extract from the running club committee's focus group notes show that most of the club's committee were happy to invest extra time and effort for their own intrinsic satisfaction:

> The major clue to the motivation behind taking on the responsibility of running the club lies in the mainly **altruistic processes by which most of the group undertook their positions within the committee**. Several of the group note that they were 'roped into' taking on roles within the committee due to a shortage of volunteers willing to take on the work. Others took on their roles because they recognised there was a need to perform set tasks or functions (Running club committee's focus group notes).

This observation is confirmed by the following extract expressed in response to the question *'why take on extra responsibility?'*

- "One of the things that frustrated me when I first came to the club was how things like paperwork, publicity...was done in such a haphazard way. So my first involvement was getting involved with publicising the Headington Five. Then it became publicising the club because it wasn't being done as a job. **You can do an awful lot for the club by taking on a little job and doing it.**" (Running club committee's focus group).

The attitude of the running club's committee suggested a high degree of social inclusiveness between the committee and the membership. They were keen to note that they did not regard themselves as aloof from the membership:

> The committee is thought of as being egalitarian in nature drawing its membership from a wide range of occupations/professions. **The group is keen to point out that**

> **membership of the committee is not reliant upon either occupation or running status but on a willingness to help the club.** A major contribution to this egalitarian makeup of the committee is thought to be a relatively high level of education of the club membership (*a function of the club's catchment area*). (Running club committee's focus group notes)

Moreover, the following extracts confirm this observation:

- "At the end of the day what makes a good committee is that you end up picking people from all different types and walks of life and therefore get a good balance..."

- (And in reply) "...It's quite a good mix, **everybody comes to the committee as a runner, not as an executive or a postman or mechanic**...it's completely irrelevant..." (Running club committee's focus group)

The running club committee's focus group also recognised that by not distancing themselves from the other runners made recruiting members a lot easier:

> Presently there is little problem recruiting members to the committee *(partly as a function of the present members not wanting to relinquish their positions).* However, this has not always been the case as it has been difficult to find people willing to take on the workload, especially amongst female members of the club. **This problem has been addressed by creating a looser structure** to the committee with larger numbers and **less boundaries to the different roles.** (Running club committee's focus group notes)

- "We got people on the committee last year that are contributors rather than workers, and I think that sort of worked quite well. People are now aware that you can join the committee, give your ideas, and not necessarily be a complete workhorse, which in the past has happened a lot. Committee members have been worn down by duties and things like that. So now we try and get people outside the committee involved and give them little tasks to do, it makes life so much easier". (Running club committee's focus group).

By having an open inclusive committee that was an integrated part of the club, they were in a better position to realise rewards for their extra efforts. As demonstrated by the following extract, these rewards were primarily couched in terms of 'social recognition' by the club's membership:

- **"The other members do notice**, not just the committee work, but people who involve themselves and take on tasks. **It doesn't go unnoticed."** (Running club committee's focus group)

The following extract neatly sums up the rewards (social capital) that the committee members received for their extra work:

- **"You are getting a social reward out of doing,** but you are also getting an experience of doing stuff you could probably use in aspects of your work...i.e. **the experience; committee; interacting with people etc."** (Running club committee's focus group).

5.5 Concluding comments

Sports, physical activities and exercise regimes are social activities. They involve social interaction between participants, and as such are socially organised. Furthermore, there is a reciprocal relationship between how an activity is practised and the way participants interact. At one extreme were the weight trainers. Their style of training and the way they used the spaces in the gym (for example claiming apparatus with a towel) resulted in a low level of interaction between participants. In turn, this lack of sociability in their training led to an 'isolation' from the moral and physical support of other participants. Golf is game characterised by the large spaces of the golf course, and as such the golfers predominantly socialised only with their immediate playing groups, rather than as a whole club. Contrastingly, the way in which the runners proactively embraced the social aspect of participating defined the nature of their club. This generation of a network of social relationships was also important to the quality of the participation experience. Amongst the weight trainers, the weightlifters actively chose to train as a sub-group and thought that by doing so they improved quality of their training experience. In turn, the golfers who found it difficult to socially integrate also found it difficult to find partners to practise with.

The 'capital' generated by being socially integrating in a sports club was realised in several ways. It provided a safe environment in which to practise, a mutual support structure, a source for making new friends and it provided for a sense of belonging:

- **"I think that's what keeps people running...if there's that sort of unity in a club**...if you miss a couple of weeks you almost feel guilty –it's like hang on I must go to the club." (Male runners' focus group)

However, the most important aspect of being socially involved with other participants was its stabilising effects on the patterns of participation. The following extended extract is from my interview with Sadie, a runner who took part in the focus group interviews but subsequently left the running club. Though she never regarded her social relationships with the other runners as being important for her running, the final extract demonstrates just how important they were:

- **"We used to share a lift,** one week I'd drive the next David, **this committed me to running at a regular time**. It kind of locked me into training...If I didn't go I'd get nagged. **David was continuously encouraging me to go along**. He knew I wouldn't train properly, that is push myself harder by myself... **Socialising with other runners was never a prime reason for going to the club**. After David left I increasingly found that I chose to go out with my friends rather than go running. **It was never a choice between socialising and running, as I like to run in the morning before work**. Not going to the club meant that I was able to go out with my friends on a Thursday night...Though I think I'm running well at the moment, in fact I'm probably running faster than I have ever run before, I definitely regard myself as a jogger as I'm doing it to keep fit. I used to think of myself as a runner when I was at the club..."

- ..."I think it's about commitment. **When you're at a club you're more committed**. I've kind of fallen out of the habit, but think I will go back...**In letting it slip [attendance at the club] it does result in being kind of psychologically down about not being a runner."** (S.Jones)

Chapter 6: A Sporting Identity

6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the construction of sporting identity. Integrating sports and/or physical activities into a regular and prolonged part of a lifestyle depends on, amongst other things, the ability of individuals to maintain ongoing social relations with other participants. However, as Goffman notes the ability of individuals to maintain these relations is reliant upon their abilities to create for themselves 'identities' that are "appropriate" (Goffman, 1967:107). Thus successful participation demands a synergism that brings together elements of a recognisable sporting identity into the personal identity. The individual takes on the mantle of 'being' a weightlifter, runner or golfer. Moreover, a major component of the personal sporting-identity is the possession of the 'active-body', the possession of which is both important to the participant, and to the processes of participation.

The inspiration for this chapter has its roots in a chance conversation whilst socialising with the runners in the OXSRAD's bar after their Thursday night run. Next to the bar and clearly visible were a group of line dancers; and the runners were discussing whether or not the line dancers were wasting their time as it wasn't "proper exercise". A large section of the group thought they were wasting their time, whilst an equally large number thought that they were not, as "any exercise is better than none". What struck me however was that the runners made no differentiation between the individual line dancers, whereas in reality the line dancers were made up of a broad spectrum of abilities. For the 'older' and 'less fit', line dancing was clearly a physically challenging activity; whilst for others the challenge lay in the learning of steps and keeping time. The runners had in effect labelled the entire group of line dancers as an homogenous group of 'Line Dancers', and were then attempting to allocate an associated (physical) identity to their activity.

The group of runners making this judgement were themselves made up from a wide range of abilities. Murrell and Gaertner (1992:5) suggest that group cohesion is a function of the "extent to which individuals within the group or team share a common

identity such that they perceive themselves as one group rather than two separate units". I was therefore interested to explore whether the runners saw themselves as a collective group of 'runners' (as they had identified the line dancers), and if they did, what was it that made them runners? This line of thought led me to the question that had no easy answer and provided the running club with a perplexing point that fuelled their discussion for many months. That is, *how do you define a runner?*

6.1.1 Active-bodies revisited

Asking the above question provoked thoughtful debate amongst the runners. Initially they decided that a runner was somebody who ran at around 7-8 minute-mile pace. However, on realising that this definition excluded a number of members whom they wanted to be included as runners, the definition was revised downwards to around 9 minute mile pace. Again, however, this excluded some of the older female runners, and so the definition was further revised downwards. Eventually a pace was decided upon that included all the members of the club sitting around the bar area. However, the definition was downgraded to a point where the pace was unanimously regarded as jogging, and as the following extract demonstrates, runners do *not* jog:

- "The guys at work will ask if I'm going for a jog tomorrow night...but I'll say I'm going for a run"...
- (And in reply)..."Yeah, I never say I'm going for a jog". (Male runners' focus group)

After much discussion, no clear definition was forthcoming. However, their attempts included aspects of fitness, commitment, competitiveness, club membership and physique. That they were keen to find a definition that encompassed all the people present (that differentiated them from joggers) implied that the club membership regarded itself as having a group identity (they were all *runners*) and that the identity 'runner' was important to them and thus held value.

The runners took the question of identity to heart and it constantly reoccurred as a topic of conversation within the various focus groups. One important aspect of their definition lay in the possession of certain visual characteristics. The following is an extract from the new runners' focus group discussion of what it means to *be* a runner:

- **"When I see Runners running and they don't look like Runners, I'm sometimes besides myself, I'm perplexed.** How comes they're keeping up?...And I analyse them. I look at their calf muscles, look at their thighs, look at their face and look at how they move their arms. I look at how they're breathing and think how is this happening?" ...

- (And in reply)..."I mean the first race that I ran in and this was only a few months ago –I looked round at some of the people there and they were like, **you know, nearly my mum's age and obviously twice as heavy as me, -plenty of cellulite visible.** So I was thinking I should be able to beat her, and I should be able to beat her etc... And I came like sixth to last and all these women who I had been thinking 'I'll start off with her because I'll be able to match her pace' – ran quicker than me. And like you say, "People who don't run say that people who do run are joggers...But we say that we're Runners."

- (And in reply)...I did a 10k a few years ago and exactly the same thing, there were people **–must have been sixty [years old] at least,** and they were just going down the road and I was struggling to keep with them and I was thinking 'what am I doing here?' but they don't seem to bother and they just keep going." (New runners' focus group).

Although several members had prior experience of running, as a group they had relatively little experience of the running club scene. Their idea of a runner as being young and slim clearly contradicted the reality that runners came in all shapes and ages. Moreover, the fact that such 'non-runners' could easily beat them in races questioned their own internalised definition of being a runner.

Choices in 'actions' are an important component of identity construction. Consequently, the way in which the body is used transforms it into a medium through which "messages of identity are transmitted" (Benson, 1997:123). Therefore, for the runners possessing the identity of runner emerged from the repeated of the act of running. The following two extracts from the male runners' focus group illustrate this process:

- "Mostly I'm not actually aware of the running part. I don't think I'm going running tonight, I just turn up at the club, **it's just something that I do".** (Male runners' focus group).

- "It's not I went out five time this week. It's more like I haven't been out since last Wednesday. **We're always telling each other the last time we should have**

gone out and didn't, rather than we've been out every night this week." (Male runners' focus group).

The emphasis on the negative in the second statement above implied that running had become an integral part of their self-identity, and that choosing not to run was deviant behaviour and out of character. The golfers' method of identifying fellow 'golfers' also used embodied actions:

- "I think in all honesty my wife thinks I am an absolute bore...You play perhaps twice or three times a week. **But you talk golf practically every day don't you? You do**...Very often if you meet somebody and they ask 'how's your golf game?' then my wife thinks 'God I've got to listen through this again!" (Studley wood golf course focus group).

However, the 'stereotyping' of embodied identities also resulted in the creation of psychological barriers to participation. Many of the runners interviewed regarded that the general public viewed the image of being physically active in a negative light. Within the following extracts from the new runners' focus group, the opinion was expressed that the negative identity of running served to deter some runners from participating:

- **"I think some of them think I'm a bit mad really you know**...if we're talking about exercise and I say well yeah I run sort of four miles, six times a week they're kind of like you know 'what for?' 'You're mad!' **'There are better things to do with your time"**...

- (And in reply)... There are time's when I'm almost embarrassed about it, like if I have to go away with work and I'll get up before the other people to go for a run and... they'll know that I'm doing that, and you kind of almost think they're saying **'what's she doing that for?'**...It's like sometimes I would not mention I've been for a run in the morning 'cause you know, **you don't want to be kind of labelled as the exercise bore".** (New runners' focus group)

One foreign runner regarded this negative image of being physically active as having cultural dimensions; the following comment was made in reply to the previous statements:

- That's such an English thing though, because over there [S. Africa] it's like everyone starts running at five in the morning and nobody runs in the

evening...In S. Africa people that you know who don't run have a total understanding somehow because **there everybody does sport or sport's much more acceptable.**" (New runners' focus group).

However, in discussing the same topic it was postulated by the male runners' focus group that negative reactions to being active, was a result of the feelings of guilt on the part of those who were not active:

- "Normally if they make a negative comment **it's about themselves not doing any exercise...**If you talk about it enough with people working close with you, you find that they start to think 'yeh I should do that'...**and then slowly they might even become joggers**[12] or take up something like that." (Male Runners' focus group).

Moreover, as exampled in the following extracts, several of the focus groups expressed the opinion that one of the reasons for the negative image of running was that most people did not understand what it was to *be* active:

- "People either think you're mad and think well why bother, why don't you just sit there and watch TV at night and other people think 'I wish I could do that'. **They don't bother trying themselves –they probably could do it...or wish they could.**" (New runners' focus group).

One member of the group states that other people do not really understand what running is all about and they (the general population) **do not know the difference between jogging and running the marathon.** In this respect all the members of the group firmly regard themselves to be 'Runners' (as opposed to Joggers) and that this identity is important to them. (Female runners' focus group notes).

The following two extracts reinforce the argument that part of the identity of runner was being physically active. The first was made in response to the negative opinions about running highlighted in the second extract above. The second was in answer to the question: W*hat would you miss most if you couldn't run?:*

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[12] The term "might even become joggers" inferred that non-active people were negatively identified by runners as being inferior (physically), and that there was a hierarchy in identity of non-runner, jogger and runner respectively.

- "I think they are the ones with the problem not me. If they want to sit around all day doing nothing then fine, but I'd much rather *be* running than be like that." (Female runners' focus group).

- "If through injury you couldn't run, and you couldn't do anything else that kept you fit, you'd feel **I should be doing something**. You'd ask yourself, do I stop drinking beer? Do I stop eating chips? (Male runners' focus group).

A major element of running was its capacity to control body weight (see chapter 4). Therefore, not only did the last above statement confirm this opinion but it also implied that being a runner also included other embodied lifestyle choices. The following observations and extracts from my fieldwork reinforce this conclusion:

> The group note that being part of the running scene has resulted in a change in general attitudes to lifestyle. A strong consensus exists that **being involved in running tends to focus attention on food, sleep patterns** and to a lesser extend social interactions. In the case of food the effect on lifestyle is two fold. **Firstly, through being part of the running scene the group have become more aware of the type of food they are eating, i.e. they strive to "eat better" to help improve their running.** In contrast to this, the second effect is that running affords a greater freedom of choice (through reduction of guilt) of food type. This is equally expressed by both males and females. (Established runners' focus group notes).

- "Also in this running club and in my last running club **no one smoked and that's got to be a good thing.**" (Male runners' focus group)

- If you had been [out socialising with the club's membership] you might know it's a good time. But if not you don't know because **you just imagine that none of them smokes –they all stand there with a drink or not a drink!** ...But of course if you went out somewhere you normally go out, you know how it's gonna be, it's familiar and you know people. They might smoke, they might drink, they might not like a smoky environment even, but you know what you're going to get." (New runners' focus group).

In the above extracts the 'runner' was identified with living a certain lifestyle. Evidence of this active-body/lifestyle/identity relationship was also present with the weightlifters. The following extract from the weightlifters' focus group illustrates how the sub group of weightlifters 'differentiated' themselves from weight trainers:

> "It's the same for women they think because you lift weights its going to give them big muscles and **they're going to look like men, or women shot putters.** But it's really about shaping and toning and women can build really attractive bodies. But upstairs [the health suite] they just want to lose weight and they think that they can do that quickly. **But most times they just sit around and watch MTV. You don't see them sweat.** " (Weightlifters focus group interview).

From the weight trainers perspective weightlifters trained to develop heavily muscled and masculinized bodies (see chapter 4), whereas from the view point of the weightlifters the 'identity' of a weight trainer was that of someone who was not as dedicated, did not train as hard and was more concerned with body appearance than function. However as highlighted in the extracts below, in contrast to the runners' and weightlifters' active-body approach to identity, the golfers seldom referred to body shape or the active-body when describing a good golfer:

- "It's more about the game than fitness". (Studley wood golf course's focus group).

> There was much discussion over what classifies a 'Golfer'. Though they found it difficult, importantly the group felt they were all Golfers. The key to identity appears to be located in the individual's attitude to a game. If the person actively pushes him/herself to play the game properly then they should be classified as being a golfer...the label of hacker was used for golfers who whilst learning the game were not "quite up to par". (Studley wood golf course focus group notes).

In the last statement above, the 'Hacker' can be contrasted to the position of the Jogger in running. Both were used as derogatory terms. However, whereas Jogger implied lack of fitness, stamina and speed, Hacker mainly implied lack of golfing etiquette:

- "Well you've got your hacker. He's a golfer but we've all seen them. **As long as he puts his divots back it's ok**". (Hinksey Heights golf course's focus group)

6.1.2 The curse of ageing

In general, physical ability declines with age. However, by keeping active some of the older runners managed to retain a high level of physical fitness. Moreover, as the two

extracts below show, this life long participation effect was a source of inspiration for younger runners:

- "I think the oldies are inspirational and that because you sort of think well you know, fifteen, twenty years time we might be oldies –kind of running." (New runners' focus group)

- The nice thing is you get a very good variety of age here as well...the problem is all these older members do keep beating you!" (New runners' focus group).

However, the following extract indicates that standards of ability are internalised and are relative to an individual's viewpoint. In this extract, the fear of losing ability and the associated identity provided this participant with the motivation to maintain her training (see also chapter 4):

- **"You have a benchmark which you don't want to fall below.** When you're training regularly, you fear missing training in case you fall below this level. Once you've left then you know you have to work hard to get back to that level." (S.Jones).

The biological determinism of ageing challenges this active-body aspect of the sporting identity. Where an active-body is integral to personal identity, then ageing forces the issue of corresponding changes in self-identity. As noted by the weightlifters' focus group, weightlifting is a cruel sport, not only it is very hard on the body, but it is also very quantitative in nature:

> Each lifter carries within a base level of performance/ability that is quantitatively defined. Personal, seasonal and competition best are set through attained performance; each training session is easily compared to the last in terms of maximum load and tonnage. Progress can be plotted (literally) on a graph and expected highs and lows planned in. Thus by carrying such information a weightlifter can hold an informed opinion of how their training is progressing; there are little or no excuses to temper poor progress. **Because of this approach each weightlifter is constantly re-evaluating their own and other's performances**, trying out new routines and diets etc. in order to maximise progress. (Weightlifters' focus group interview notes).

The consequences of this are that the affects of ageing on the weightlifter cannot be ignored; it is reflected and recorded in his/her training. Many lifters I talked to

(including several world masters champions) had a base level below which they would not consider continuing weightlifting:

- "When you get to about 65 you rapidly start to decline. As soon as I can't clean and jerk 80kg I'm going to stop. I'll continue to train in the garage but I think then it won't be worth me going to the world championships[13] anymore. **I don't want to look like one of those silly old sods up on stage, creaking about.** That's not what world masters championships are about " (J. Smith[14])

- "I think I'll have to give up going to the worlds this year. My arm is still not right, and I'm not happy about my lifting. I think I'm just going to concentrate on bodybuilding. (S. Abby[15])

Both of the weightlifters interviewed above could lift far more weight than the average fit 25 years old. But it was the relative *decline* in their abilities that made them no longer *feel* like weightlifters. The 'active-body' identity of golf however is more accommodating to the ageing athlete. The following is a comment made by runners talking about golf:

- **"Its a good activity to take up when you retire.** I do play golf occasionally, but its more like a pastime. I play with the brother in law. But yes it's good, a lot of retired people do it, it's a good pastime." (Male member of Headington Road Runners)

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[13] In this respect the interviewee was referring to the world masters championship which is roughly divided into separate age groups starting at 35-40 and finishing at 75+.

[14] Jim Smith was the 1986 world masters weightlifting champion. In this extract he was talking about his future career in weightlifting competitions. To put 80kg in perspective, clean and jerking this amount of weight is equivalent to lifting the average weight male overhead. A feat very few 20 year olds can achieve.

[15] Sid Abby was the 1986 world masters powerlifting champion. At the time of this statement Mr. Abby was squatting a weight that would have won him the world championship for his age group. However, for him this was not an adequate achievement; he preferred to compare himself with powerlifters who were ten years younger. After switching to bodybuilding he won the 2002 all midlands bodybuilding championship at the age of 63, beating the likes of TV Gladiator's Wolf.

This stereotyping of golf as being physically gentler and thus suitable for older athletes was reinforced by the following extracts taken from the Studley wood golf course's focus group talking about the affects of ageing on their game:

- "We would only get things where our bodies are starting to break down, bit of arthritis here, bit of arthritis there, and a bit of furring up around here!"

- (And in reply)...**You're right there you just have to get over the age thing**...God I've come round to using a power thing![power trolley]" (Studley wood golf course's focus group).

From the above extracts, the way in which golfers accommodated the ageing process was a lot more congenial than the weightlifters. The golfers foresaw an old age where the propping up of the active-body with physical aids (e.g. power trolleys and buggies) was acceptable. This in turn implied that the active-body was not as important to being a golfer as was the strong body is to being a weightlifter.

6.2 The club and the team

A shared sense of identity was a common feature with the golfers and runners. Similarly, even though the sub-group of weightlifters did not belong to a formal club, they still preferred to practice as part of a group:

> Partly a function of the group dynamics, partly a consequence of the group membership, all the group regard that **training as part of a group is both more productive and of higher quality than training alone.** (Weightlifters focus group notes).

The following extract taken from the male runners' focus group illustrates that for runners being part of a group also helped them practise their sport. The replies were made in response to the question: *how important for you is becoming a member of a running club*?

- **"From a running point of view it helps motivate you**...at least once a week if all else fails you've got a good excuse to go out (running)...

- (And in reply)..."I don't think I'd still be running if I was doing it on my own"...

Further evidence for the importance of the development of a group identity is contained in the following extract taken from my notes on the interview with Miss Jones:

> In addition to a self-identity, membership of the club also offered a **collective-identity.** As Sadie describes it: "**A feeling of belonging**". The feeling of being part of a group with a common goal (running) did add value to her running, and made the running experience more enjoyable. This was reinforced when representing the club in fun runs etc. (S.Jones interview notes)

At both the golf courses I investigated, there was a group of retirees who played together on a weekday when the courses were emptier. The focus group at Studley wood golf course consisted of senior men who ostensibly met up on a Tuesday afternoon to play together as a group (see chapter 2). As a group, they regarded themselves to be a club within a club, and noted that being part of this playing group was more enjoyable than playing as part of the wider club:

> The group I was interviewing regarded themselves as a **club within a club** as they met regularly twice a week at a set time, and "**being oldies**" had their own **separate identity.** This sub-group identity was clearly important to them and helped to give them location within the wider club membership. It is also a prime reason why they continue to practice at the club. Made in reply to an answer to a previous question about the problems of mixing with other golfers (i.e. "I do think it could be lonely, the better the golfer you are the less lonely you'd likely you are to be") the following statement says a lot about the importance of social capital: "**Our group surmounts all of that, it no longer becomes a consideration, because you feel at ease with any of the seniors irrespective of whether you're a seven handicapper or thirty.**" (Studley wood golf course's focus group notes).

The existence of such sub groups of retiree golfers is common. At the Hinksey Heights golf course a similarly successful 'group of retirees' was recognised:

- "On a Monday and Tuesday morning we do get a **group of senior members** who meet up, play, and go out and come back sit and have a cup of tea and sit and chat. They're very happy." (M. Brimble).

6.2.1 Team membership

The importance of being identified as part of a group was evident in the role that teams played within the running club. Moreover, team membership was associated with being competitive. The following extracts from the new runners' focus group refer again to the issue of what defined a runner. In them, being a sportsman/woman is linked to being competitive:

- **"A runner might want to progress.** A jogger would never want to progress, They're just plodding along..."
- (And in reply)..."**Yeh I suppose it's a competitive thing isn't it.** As a 'runner', most runners want to kind of enter races and it's about competing either against themselves or against other people. Whereas a Jogger you're not actually competing against yourself or anyone else, you're just plodding along doing your own thing." (New runners' focus group)
- A runner is someone who ultimately will want to take part in races I think." (New runners' focus group).

At the time of interview, road running was different to most sports in that competitions did not normally require team captains to pre-select teams. Teams were in effect self-selecting as the first (x) number of runners[16] from a club past the finishing line constituted the team. The main consequence of this was that clubs could field as many runners as they liked in competition. However, despite not going through the process of being 'picked for the team' all the runners interviewed regarded themselves (irrespective of standard) as representing the club when they entered races and put their club colours on. For example, as the following extracts show, none of the female runners' focus group viewed themselves as being 'elite' athletes, however, they described with pride entering races and representing their club:

> All the group members express an element of pride in being part of the Headington Road Runners and in wearing the club colours. They find the uniform makes them **'feel part**

[16] Depending on the type of race. For example, this could be the first four women or the first ten club members irrespective of gender.

of the group'. It also enables them to identify and interact socially with members of the club whom they don't really know...Regarded by the group as being important to the club, having a **successful team helps to give the club a focal point**. The entire group express pride in how well the club performs in competition and enjoy being associated with success. However, pride in winning is very much secondary to the affinity the group feel with other members of the club taking part in races and fun runs etc. For example, that the club is capable of producing a large turn out to running events is seen in and of itself as something to be proud of. (Female runners' focus group notes).

- You look around you and you see all these people from the same club. **Its great to think that you're all there representing Headington Road Runners**. And you talk about it afterwards. It's all part of it [being a member of the club]." (Female runners' focus group).

The strong collective identity, visible amongst Headington Road Runners members was noted by other clubs in the local region. The following is an extract from a conversation about running with a work colleague who was a member of a rival club:

- "[In competitions] Headington Road Runners are very well represented...They are a very strong club...**They all turn up in their club tracksuits**, whereas we just have our basic running kit...They are also very competitive. They have some very good runners." (Anon).

The golf clubs also had their representative teams, a place in which had to be earned. Moreover, as shown in the following extract from a telephone interview with a competent female golfer, a place in the golf team carried kudos:

- "I'm a seven handicap and there aren't many of us [women with low handicaps] you know. So I'm always being invited to play at other clubs. Because I've got a low handicap a lot of clubs want me to join so that I can be on their team. It's part of the fun of golf –being on a team and getting to travel around to other courses. You get to play at some very nice places." (Mrs.A, informal telephone interview)

As (with the rare exception of the Baxter trophy[17]) there were no weight training competitions, the issue of team selection did not arise with the weight trainers. In this case competitiveness was restricted to competing against oneself or others in the gym:

> Detailed self-monitoring of training is common amongst the established trainers. Several of the bodybuilders/weightlifters carry a training diary that lists the exercises, sets, reps and amount of weight lifted. These training diaries are used to monitor progress (as well as constant comparison against others in the gym)...Careful observation also shows a degree of narcissistic behaviour in that most weight trainers will train directly facing a mirror often checking out their physiques. (Heavy weights gym observation notes)

For the weightlifters, identity was obtained through lifting heavy weights. For the weight trainers, it was gendered muscularity (heavy for males and leanness for females) that conferred identity. Whilst for both the male and female bodybuilders it was size of muscle and muscle definition that identified a successful body builder. (This aspect of 'elite' identity construction is further explored in chapter 7).

6.3 Concluding comments

For the committed runner, golfer or weightlifter, participation became more than recreation. It became part of their identity. Their sporting identity related to the embodiment of an active lifestyle, the product of a physical identity and a sense of belonging. It was an identity recognised and valued by other participants. Being part of a group added legitimacy to their participation. And as the following interview extract demonstrates, legitimacy was derived through being 'identified' by significant others:

- "The good golfer will always have the upper hand on who he plays with. He can pick and choose. But money will follow a good golfer. No doubt about it,

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[17] The Baxter trophy is a team competition for Olympic lifters situated in the S.Midlands. It is held once a year for teams of three lifters. However, out of the entire S.Midlands region there are usually only around 4-5 clubs represented in the competition. Moreover, these teams are wholly comprised of weightlifters, the Olympic lifts being too difficult and specialised for weight trainers to compete at.

> because again it's a case of being seen with the right golfer. **The only thing above that is to be picked to play with the captain or picked to play with the professional."** (M.Vincent).

Possessing this physical/group identity was also important because it allowed the participants access to support from likeminded individuals who understood and knew what physical activity was about; other participants. Furthermore, as the following extract shows, recognition support and encouragement by participating peers was more important and more meaningful than support (or opinions) from non-participating peers:

> In respect to physical capital gain/possessed through the capacity to 'run', value added through external recognition is diminished when that running doesn't take place within a running environment. The sense of physical achievement is reinforced by completing a run as part of a group (due to access to reaffirmation feedback loops from other runners). That is, an individual's standing as a 'runner' adds weight to their opinion. Outside of the club, it is more difficult to share a sense of achievement with those who are not regarded as 'runners'. Non-runners' opinions about running are much less important precisely because they're not runners. (S.Jones interview notes).

However, it was self 'identification', as being active, that had the most important consequences for success of participation. This sense of identity was always related to the relative performance of the individual. As the following interview extract illustrated, possessing the 'active-body' identity can make or break participation:

- "When you get to about 65 you rapidly start to decline. As soon as I can't clean and jerk 80kg I'm going to stop. I'll continue to train in the garage but I think then it won't be worth me going to the world championships anymore. **I don't want to look like one of those silly old sods up on stage, creaking about. That's not what world masters championships are about ".** (J. Smith).

Chapter 7: Sub-cultural Identity

7.1 Introduction

Each sport or physical activity has a sub-culture that provides participants with the knowledges necessary to engage and practise. These knowledges include the appropriate use of symbols that are used to identify a sub-culture (for example dress codes), and an understanding of the importance of following mores that define how participation is to proceed. It is through the appropriate use of 'props' and practices that individuals achieve a social identity within a sub-culture (Goffman, 1969). This chapter explores the different cultural practices that are associated with weightlifting, running and golf. Furthermore, in this chapter I will demonstrate that an activity's sub-culture is reproduced, reinforced and developed through successive cohorts' adaptation to, and adoption of, existing cultural practices.

7.2 Membership profiles

By being active, the possession of the active-body becomes an integral part of the sportspersons self-identity (see chapter 6). However, no one physical activity is universally suited to all participants. Different types of activity suit different types of people, being a weightlifter is different to being a runner, which is different to being a golfer.

7.2.1 Socio-economic identities

For the participants in this study economic considerations had an influence on decision making in relation to the type of sport or physical activity to pursue. As illustrated by the following extract from the new runners' focus group, the low financial cost of joining a running club was thought to be a positive incentive for taking part in running as opposed to other more expensive sports:

- "If you've not done any sport it's a good one to start with because joining a health club or taking up sport involves a huge financial outlay. If you decide after two weeks it's not for you then you've blown a lot of money, whereas running –most people probably buy/have a pair of trainers...even if it's just a general item of clothing. So if they did it for a week and think 'oh I can't keep this up', they've not actually lost anything." (New runners' focus group).

Furthermore, the costs of maintaining participation in running was also low, which meant that finances weren't a disincentive for the runners who wanted to progress and put their running on a more formal footing:

- "Yeah I mean it's cheap as well, you don't need that much equipment, and it's a local thing, and there's a great variety of different types of running you can do. Cross country and even road running. So I don't think you'd get bored." (New runners' focus group).

The costs of weight training in public (municipal) gyms were also relatively low and did not constitute a significant financial barrier for the weight trainers. However, the weightlifters' focus group thought that the cost of membership of private gyms was prohibitively expensive. With costs at the lower end at around two hundred pounds per annum, membership of such clubs was viewed as elitist:

> Cost [of training at Brookes] is not an issue, charges are £60 a year membership plus £1.25 per session[18]. The cost of training three times a week is relatively inexpensive. **This is not regarded as the case with private health clubs which the group perceive as being both expensive and elitist.** In addition, the facilities at these clubs often are no better than those at Brookes. Furthermore, the group think that **such gyms tend to frown upon the use of heavy free weights.** (Weightlifters' focus group notes).

Similarly, the costs of belonging to a golf course were felt to be expensive (and prohibitive) by the weightlifters *and* as the following extract shows by some of the runners:

- I think that money would be much more of an issue with other sports; it is much less so with running. **I know if I was to take up some other sport like golf or**

[18] 1998 figures

anything like that which is quite expensive, my wife then would start complaining. She's quite happy with me running because it's cheap. But I'm sure if I said I fancy doing this, and it did cost quite a bit of money then she might have reason to complain about spending too much." (New runners' focus group).

However, the opinions about affordability were relative to the personal circumstances of the participants. As is seen in the following extract the members of the Hinksey Heights golf course's focus group thought that their membership costs of around £450 per annum, were not expensive:

- **"We're not expensive and we have a good course here.** I'd like to see some others play this course [referring to the degree of difficulty of the course]." (Hinksey Heights golf course's focus group).

The issue of money however was not reducible to just the 'affordability' of participation. It also involved subjective assessments of the 'worth' attached to participation[19]. The following extracts clearly show that for the runners, the costs of practising with the Headington Road Runners were worth it:

- "For the nominal amount that we pay for the club, to get the camaraderie, the facilities **–I've never heard anyone say for my eighteen pounds [a year] I'm not getting much."** (Established runners' focus group).

- **"I think they [the club] already provide more than I would expect actually.** I think like a monthly newsletter and stuff -eighteen pounds, when you think about what that buys you knows if you go out shopping it's virtually nothing." (New runners' focus group).

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[19] During my interviewing of the running club, the club's committee were contemplating whether to raise the cost of membership by £10 per annum to cover increased affiliation fees. They were concerned that such a large increase would put off new members, and that established members would find the new rates of £28 per annum financially prohibitive. The cost of a decent pair of trainers started at around £50, illustrates how assigned value is relative.

The above extracts referred to the value for money the running 'club' offered. However, there were also important additional (non-financial) values provided by the perceived benefits of 'running':

- "I'm also a member of a gym which does cost me £250 a year, so I think even if running was a bigger investment –if I thought I was going to do it every day then I'd be prepared to make that sort of investment, because I think the motivating factor for me is as I've said **being able to eat when I want and stuff. And that to me is more important than maybe having to fork out for trainers or to join a running club.**" (New runners' focus group).

The value judgements made in regard to the costs of participation was particularly prevalent in choosing which golf course to join. As was seen in chapter 3 the membership costs vary markedly between golf courses. As Oxford offers a broad choice in courses, so the golfers have to make a judgement about how much they are willing to pay to play. This decision process in turn was related to balancing the perceived worth of both the club and the participation:

- "There seems to be that there is this perception that the more money you pay the better are the facilities. But it doesn't necessarily work that way." (M.Vincent).

As the following interview extracts show, this sentiment about the perceived relationship between costs and quality was verified by the Studley Wood golf course's focus group trying to rationalise the costs of their membership fees and the quality of the course's facilities:

- "Yes it's good here. The course is good, better than a lot of courses..."
- (And in reply) ...It's relaxed and you've got everything you need really. There are better courses but on the whole I like playing here..."

In the above discussion, the general sentiment was that Studley Wood was a good course to play on, provided everything that the golfers required, and was 'worth' the costs of membership. Later on in the interview however, I asked the group to evaluate the membership of a rival but more expensive golf course. The following extracts from their resultant conversation says much about the process of evaluating the 'worth' of club membership:

- **"Well their facilities are better.** If I could afford it I would go there but I can't..."
- (And in reply)..."**Yes their course is better,** and well you know the club house; it's quite nice down there..."
- (And in reply)..."I wouldn't join that club particularly **but it would be nice to be able to afford to go to a club like that".** (Studley Wood golf course's focus group)

This consensus was at odds with what they were saying earlier about their own club's facilities comparing favourably with the more expensive clubs. Given this apparent contradiction I further explored their reasons for wanting to belong to the other club with the question: *Throughout this interview you've said that the facilities at this club compare well with the more expensive clubs around. But now you're saying that they don't?*

As the following extracts show, this question caused a degree of good-natured consternation as if I'd caught them out:

- "Well they do have a gym which we don't..."
- (And in reply)..."But you don't go to the gym that you belong to..."
- (And in reply)..."Ah, but I could save myself £400 and *not* go to the club's one." (Studley Wood golf course's focus group).

The ensuing conversation implied that it was the **status** of the other club that made membership there appear desirable. However, there was no evidence of 'conflict' between wanting to belong somewhere else and playing at their own club. It must be stressed that the golfers in the interview were happy with their golf course, and they enjoyed and valued their relationships with the other members. Membership of the other club represented more a 'wish list' rather than a conscious need. In respect to choice of golf course there appeared to be a 'natural order,' an observation supported by the following interview extract:

- "Money wise with most clubs you need a lot of money to get started with anyway. You've got your joining up fee, your membership fee, and from there onwards etc. I'm not sure how many people actually look to see what the real facilities of the club are in comparison to other clubs...**I think the middle to**

> **lower class players (in the class system as such) would probably look at a club and say I'll join this club because it's the local one, and not worry about it ...Those with money would probably look around it as a status symbol, where's the good club? That one must be it because it is the most expensive.** Not always, I wouldn't say that was a 100% correct, but certainly those looking for a status symbol would look at the cost of the golf club, because status goes with price and not with the facilities." (M.Vincent).

In the extract above, the link made between price, quality and 'belonging' inferred a degree of identity by association. The Hinksey Heights golf course's focus group also made this link:

- **"There are those who think that they are better players because they belong to a posh expensive club**, but really here it's a hard course, and yes it's more about how you play rather than where you play. I mean I'd like to play there [referring to a more expensive golf club] but won't be better at it [golf]." (Hinksey Heights golf course's focus group).

7.2.2 Socio-economic issues

As the following extracts show, both the runners and the golfers *thought* that their clubs contained members from a range of social (class[20]) backgrounds:

> On asking about the membership profile (in relation to class differentiation) all of the runners question viewed the membership **as being constructed from a wide range of social backgrounds.** However, I am a little suspicious of this, as **I have heard no regional accents amongst the membership. In addition, all the interviewees example the (same) postman and line worker (at Rover) as representations of the 'many' working class members.** (Running club participation observation notes).

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[20] For the purposes of this thesis I am using Bourdieu's representation of class, in that "one can carve out classes in the logical sense of the word, i.e. sets of agents who occupy similar positions and who, being placed in similar conditions and submitted to similar types of conditioning, have every chance of having similar dispositions and interests, and thus of producing similar practices and adopting similar stances." (Bourdieu, 1994a:113).

- "It's not too expensive, and well it's good really. **There are all sorts here.**" (Studley Wood golf course's focus group).

In reality, the lower social classes were under represented in both the running club and the golf courses[21] (see chapter 3). On questioning the new runners' focus group about class differentiation between the membership of running clubs and golf courses they were divided in opinion:

- "No [in respect to class differentiation between running and golf] because we've got some quite wealthy and influential people at this club actually...
- (And in reply)...**I definitely think there is a class difference.** Not so much a class difference but 'they' would think that there is a class difference. 'Cos I know some people who are in quite **exclusive golf clubs** and ...the way they talk about it!" (New runners' focus group).

What is interesting in these two extracts is that although there was a difference in opinion about class differentiation, in both, golf was regard to be an activity of the wealthier classes. This association between golf and class differentiation has important implications in respect of the stability of participation. The following extract reaffirms the earlier observation that 'natural order' matches the appropriateness of a course with the financial means of the individual:

- "In setting up this club we wanted to create a fundamentally non-elitist golf club. To do this we made sure that we are not overly expensive. We want to encourage as many people as possible to join, but we also have to cover our costs. Most people don't recognise how expensive it is to run a golf course". (M.Brimble).

In the following extract, the interviewee was talking about the formation of cliques that occurs in a significant number of golf clubs. The extract illustrates that perceived social class plays an important part in the process of socialisation at golf clubs:

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[21] The lower classes were well represented amongst the weightlifters interviewed. However as the weightlifter's focus group totalled only 5 members this cannot be taken as representative of all weightlifters.

- "You've got a period of possibly three or four hours of close contact with that person and therefore conversation is basically an accepted part of the game. Therefore, quite often you've got groups who have social links outside of the game so that it gives them something to talk about...**Yes I would say to a point on a class level...you certainly get that [class differentiation]. You have managers; also living location makes a difference**, -that makes a network location. Schools, holiday locations or holiday villas. They might own shares. You name it there are loads of conversations that come up. **They all become linking points as regards to what they all do.** What you've got there is something to talk about, that brings them all together...**It doesn't take long to find out what other people do.**" (M.Vincent).

However, developing social relationships with other club members is important for stabilizing patterns of participation (see chapter 5). The above evidence, therefore further demonstrates the importance for golfers of finding an appropriate (level of) club at which to practice.

7.2.3 Sub-cultural symbols

Icons within sports are normally associated with high profile sport stars. Each sport has it's own star and those of weightlifting, running and golf are particularly prominent. For example, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Paula Radcliff and Tiger Woods respectively 'represent' weightlifting[22], running and golf. Through their successes, they have become media icons. The prominence of sporting icons was regarded by some of the interviewees as a source of encouragement to participate. As the following extract shows, younger people in particular are inspired by icons:

- "There is also the younger variety who join [the golf course] because they **see the icons on television.**" (M.Brimble).

Other 'symbols' have also come to represent different sports. The loaded barbell is now synonymous with building muscle and the trainer represents running and fitness. When

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[22] It is more accurate to refer to Arnold Schwarzenegger as representing the activity of bodybuilding. However, to the general public weightlifting and bodybuilding are indistinguishable.

designing the Hinksey Heights golf course the proprietors were particularly concerned about the type or character of clubhouse to build. Part of the problem was that the course was to be constructed on a farm:

- "There is a feeling abroad with some people who have come here that this **is a farm with a golf course rather than a golf course on a farm**...We are consciously considering how to make the farmyards look less like farmyards. **If only it makes people think it is a place with greater credos.**" (M.Brimble).

In the following extract, the interviewee was discussing the values fellow golfers had attached to the course he played at. It became evident that golfers regarded the quality of their clubhouse to be very important and would opt to *change* courses if necessary. Moreover, the extract also illustrates how the golfers had become *identified* by the course they played at:

- "My golf clubhouse was ready to fall down at any point. It was being patched up left, right and centre. So to go to other clubs could have benefited me. I know various people who did move to other clubs, and found themselves unable to actually socially integrate, because they were always know as the members from 'the other club'. Even one guy who was a 2-handicap golfer couldn't get in. They all knew him. He put it down to that he was threatening the established hierarchy in the club. The better golfers knew he was a county player, and he was ostracised because he was identified as being too good." (M.Vincent).

In a similar vein, to add kudos to the Hinksey Heights golf course its proprietors had considered building an expensive, iconic clubhouse:

- We have a small clubhouse. **We had great debates** about whether we should have **a mausoleum of a clubhouse like most other golf clubs have.**" (M.Brimble).

This 'disproportionate' want of golfers in respect to clubhouses was also recognised by the proprietor of the Studley Wood golf course who noted that many of their golfers wanted a "bigger" and "grander" clubhouse. Furthermore, their ideal size was far larger than their needs, and the cost of building such a clubhouse would have put the fees up beyond their reach. Of the three sports studied, the importance of the appearance of buildings mainly applied to golf. It is noticeable that many well-established golf courses have 'grandiose' gates at their entrance. Whereas issues of security might dictate their

use, their appearance has more to do with establishing a professional 'image' for the course. Again, this kudos aspect of golf course design was noted by Mr. Brimble who also noted that though Hinksey Heights golf course had good facilities with comparable greens 'culturally' it had a way to go in order to establish itself:

- "The only thing we need now to make it a really good course is about a hundred years." (M.Brimble)

A second golfing symbol is the golf buggy. In chapter 4, I showed that the use of power trolleys was synonymous with both ageing and the limited active-body aspect of participating in golf. However, for some of the interviewees, possession of a power trolley also represented a show of personal wealth. The following extract from the Studley Wood golf course's focus group highlights the different and contested opinions about the use of power trolleys in golf:

- "It's [the power trolley] also an indication of wealth really because..."

He was interrupted with the indignant reply:

- "Wealth! Wealth!

Sticking to his guns, he continued:

- "Of course it is. You guys have got to go and pay £200 for a power trolley."

Subsequent to the last comment there followed an indignant (but generally good natured) melee. Having broached dangerous ground the group quickly decided to move the conversation on by asking me if there was anything else I wanted to talk about. However, the original person who objected to the wealth comment quietly made the following final statement:

- "£200, I bloody well paid £400 pounds for mine. (Studley Wood golf course focus group transcription notes).

This iconisation of the power trolley as an object of wealth was also noted by the Hinksey Heights golf course's focus group. Though the majority of the golfers at this club did not use power trolleys, it was expressed that for some more wealthy golfers the power trolley may be viewed as an object of wealth:

(In contrast to Studley Wood) the issue of the power trolley and their associated status symbols was not readily present. It was noted that "at other more expensive clubs power trolleys were sometimes seen as status symbols". Here however, they were seen as something to use when you get older –"**if you have the money**". (Hinksey Heights golf course focus group transcription notes).

7.3 Cultural practices

Where the sub-cultural mores of practice are particularly prevalent, they can instil 'institutionalised' behaviour that is 'symbolic' of an activity. Such practices include codes of dress, etiquette and rules that dictate the ways of practising.

7.3.1 Dress codes

Part of the process of fitting in and being socially accepted amongst other participants includes the adoption of appropriate attire. The Weightlifters (and bodybuilders) tended to dress down for training. As the following extract from my observation notes shows, this practice was derived from taking a functional approach to training:

> **The established lifters tend to wear loose, well-worn and scruffy dress.** This is because the iron bars are generally dirty, the lifters sweat a lot, and the mechanics of training is hard on clothes. They also tend to wear two layers of clothes, removing the outer layer only after they're warm and sweaty. The 'use' of the weightlifting belt is interesting. Established and competent lifters tend to only wear the belt whilst they're lifting very heavy weights. For a belt to work it has to be done up tight[23] which then is uncomfortable during normal training. **Trainers new to the heavy weights room view the belt as a *symbol* of being a weightlifter** and therefore tend to wear the belt all the time, which as a result may set them apart from 'real' weightlifters. (Weight training observation notes)

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[23] Weightlifting belts are used to help support the back during the lifting of heavy weights. They do this by increasing the inter-abdominal and inter-thoraxial pressure. Ideally they should not be used when lifting lighter weights as wearing them is counter productive to muscle development in the lower back.

Further evidence of the role of the dress codes as a 'screening mechanism' is contained in the following extract whereby the weightlifters' focus group thought that the more formalised dress codes of private health clubs were prohibitive:

- Several of the group note that they feel at ease training in at the sports centre. Being part of a weightlifting group enhances their experience, i.e. all the group would find it hard to train in a modern fitness club (The High in Oxford's city centre was mentioned) in that the culture there would be too constraining. **The females in particular thought that training in such a place puts too much emphasis on dress codes etc.** (Weightlifter's focus group notes).

In direct contrast, an appropriate (formalised) dress code was important (and welcomed) by the golfers. Initially the proprietors of the Hinksey Heights golf course for philanthropic reasons decided not to impose a dress code on the course. However, instead of broadening the appeal of the course to people who may not otherwise have contemplated joining, it appeared that the no-dress code served to alienate some existing and potential members (that is, it did not fit in with their perceptions of belonging to a golf course):

- "When we started [the golf course] my brother in law was definitely non-elitist. He was particularly **keen that we shouldn't follow the old mores of dress and all that**. We like to have this feeling that people can come and play here, and not feel uncomfortable **from whatever surroundings they come from**, because Oxford in particular is a very mixed cultural society. We hung on to that, despite all the advice given to us by Pro's and other people. **In fact we now have a dress code and it is interesting because everything has settled down. People think it is a much nicer course.** People are dressing properly now. The reaction is ever so positive, very very for; to a point now where even my brother in law accepts now we should have done it a lot sooner. **Actually we think it's driven quite a lot of people who came to the course in the early days away, rather than to make them feel more comfortable.**" (M.Brimble).

Moreover, as the following extracts from the Hinksey Heights focus group show, the imposition of a dress code was emphatically endorsed by the members:

- "It's a good thing really [dress code] well you wouldn't play football without boots and shorts. And tennis you wear your kit for that. **You come here now and dress properly and it's all part of it really...**"

- (And in reply) ..."It's all part of the etiquette. The way you behave and the rules. Like he said footballers wear the right kit. You have to wear the appropriate clothes for the activity you're doing. It's the same with golf..."

- (And in reply) ..."Wearing the right clothes doesn't make you a better golfer but it is part of playing. I have my smart going out clothes and my golfing clothes. Lucky my wife does all the washing!.."

- (And in reply) ... **"Some places can be a bit silly, expensive.** But here it's ok. It is better now we have a dress code. It looks, feels better now. **As he said it's part of playing in a club."** (Hinksey Heights golf course's focus group).

This last statement shows that adherence to the dress code instilled a sense of belonging and shared identity. Having a dress code was an important part of 'being' golfers.

The running club also had a dress code but as with the weightlifters it was defined through its functionality. Quality trainers helped to prevent injury, shorts and running shirts kept the runners cool. However, as the following interview extracts show, the wearing of the team colours made the individual runners feel *part* of their club, that is they *became* Headington Road Runners, rather than just runners (see also section 6.2.1):

- "In something like the town and gown[24] when they see a group of you all with your vests on they [other non-club runners] tend to notice you more." (Males runners' focus group interview).

- "When you go to fun runs or something, you look around to see who else you know. You look for the kit [club's running dress], and there'll be people who you don't know but you can go and talk to them because you're from the same club. And in the run you can find someone to run with because they are from the same club." (Female runners' focus group).

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[24] An open local road race between the residents of Oxford against the University of Oxford.

7.3.2 Etiquette

The general rules of participation laid down by the various sports' governing bodies serve to make participation and competition both feasible and enjoyable. There are also supplementary rules of participation that are particular to individual sports clubs that also serve to further define the culture of a sport as practised locally. These supplementary rules also include customs that are culturally defined by the practices of the participants. As noted previously in chapter 5 (section 5.2.3), the Headington Road Runners employed the shepherding system whereby the runners were supposed to look after each other on their runs. The following extract from the interview with the Running club committee's focus group shows how their rules of conduct were 'voluntarily' created and sustained by the practices of the runners

- "We're at the stage where we haven't got enough people to cover all the session, so you get these odd ones that are unaccounted for. I joined the club eight years ago there was no coaching, no structured sessions to really speak of. **People just turned up and people took it in turns to shepherd. So that was what you did, you all got together and someone said 'let's do something'.** I suppose its changing now because we're structuring it more, but we're not quite fully structured." (Running club committee's focus group).

However, the imposition of these voluntary codes (and structures) also produced a source of conflict by placing constraints on the way some of the runners people would have preferred to practice:

- "We have attracted quite a lot of new members over the past few years, and I can't quite work out whether that's because we offer more sessions where people just come and run and not have to contribute. **It's only a perception, but we do seem to have a lot more people who aren't willing to take runs and things like that** [act as shepherds]." (Running club committee's focus group).

Participation etiquette for the weight trainers was mainly limited to 'please and thank you'. Where access to equipment was limited, they shared equipment, spotted for each other (see chapter 5, section 5.3.5) and respected the safety of other gym users. Older

Olympic lifters who trained before the advent of rubber weights[25] tended not to drop weights but lower them to the floor under control; a practise not generally adopted by the weightlifters using modern rubber weights. Although a safe practice, it was one that sometimes caused consternation in some other users (and gym proprietors), but rarely led to complaints.

In contrast to weight training, participation etiquette was *very* important to the golfers as the following interview extract shows:

- "Also the other side of it is the etiquette and the rules of the game which are deemed almost more important than the ability to play. With most clubs if you don't know the etiquette you'll be frowned on more for not knowing the etiquette and basic rules than for not being able to play." (M.Vincent).

The pressures experienced by some golfers in respect to the following of normative rules of participation are illustrated in the following extract. The club being described was essentially divided according to age and gender into separate playing groups. This part of the interview also highlighted that the expectations of behaviours were related to the personal location within a golf club:

- "The club I was a member of there was essentially three clubs within the club, senior members ladies members and the general club itself. Quite often they didn't mix. Certainly there was the ladies side of it and that was it. There were mixed competitions but they were definitely frowned upon, and if you played in one of those you had to be fairly strong minded to get yourself out of the trouble it could cause. -Although the captain and secretary would be involved and play in it. Because they were that sort of level in the club they could get away with it. If you weren't married to one of them in the lady's section and put your name down voluntarily that was a different matter altogether. I did it because it was

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[25] Originally, the weights used for weightlifting were made entirely of steel and if dropped damaged the floor. Modern (specialised) weights for weightlifting are made from rubber and so may be dropped without damaging the floor. As the weight lifted can be in excess of 200 kg, being able to drop them is a positive safety factor; although the associated noise can be startling for other gym users.

good fun. It was enjoyable, but you had to be strong enough to say who cares?" (M.Vincent).

This extract shows that for male members of the club, participating with females was frowned upon unless you were the club captain or you were married to the female.

7.3.3 Club structures

Sports clubs are frequently characterised by their formal 'committee' structures. Although both the running club and the golf courses studied had formal committee structures, they operated in markedly different ways. The committee structure within the Headington Road Runners running club was very open. Although the committee controlled the way the club was organised, the committee members did not regard themselves as being 'separate' from other club members but rather as a necessary extension:

- "How many people who are not on the committee would start the running around the hall? –**Very few...**
- (And in reply)..."I see the main point of the committee is in moving things on, making sure that the club doesn't stay doing the same things that it did last week, this week. It needs people to get together and decide if it needs to do something different." (Running club committee's focus group).

Moreover, the committee was keen not to alienate themselves from the other runners, and to get them involved in sharing the organisational work of the club:

- One of the big dangers is that either you get a chairman that becomes all powerful or a committee tries to run and do everything. I think that this is a recipe for disaster. With committees I'm always in favour of having open meetings whereby the club membership can always come along..."
- (And in reply)..."I think the other important thing is to actually get other members to take on jobs. I think it's better if the committee can offload as many jobs as possible to the non-committee members". (Running club committee's focus group).

In the Headington Road Runners, all committee meetings were open, with any member of the club welcome to sit in and observe. Logistically, this was made possible by the fact that most of the club membership did not want to be involved with the committee:

- "Do you think the rest of the club know what we do though? I don't. We just 'happen' to administrate the club..."
- (And in reply)..."Isn't it the nature of most club memberships that they just don't care" (Running club committee's focus group).

For the runners being a committee member was not regarded as being in a position of privilege. The runners became committee members more for altruistic reasons:

- "Most people who end up on the committee experience that it is a really good club to join. You get the feeling that there is this dynamic motion about it, that if you have a good idea and you want to do something about it, and you're prepared to put the work in, it will happen. **So you step forward and do it...**"
- (And in reply)...**"It's something part of my nature really, it's sort of the person I am.** I put myself forward to become the membership secretary. For a start I was slightly led astray because Joe said it was easy, its not actually very easy...I've got skills now that I didn't have because I'm more computer literate". (Running club committee's focus group)

As the following interview extract shows, the committee members thought they were generally rewarded for their (extra) work in terms of appreciation from club members (see also chapter 5):

- "People get thanked publicly..."
- (And in reply)... "Yeah, people do, and they're quite genuine about it. When you stand up and announce, you know 'well done for somebody organising' you'll often get a spontaneous round of applause which is quite remarkable really." (Running club committee's focus group)

This open character of the Headington Road Runners' committee may not have been be representative of all running clubs, but it serves to highlight cultural differences between running and golf. As illustrated by the interview extract below, golf course committees are generally much more formal. Places on the committee are viewed as positions of

privilege and a degree of cultural deference towards committee members and club officials appears to be required of the membership:

- **"To get into the committee was a little bit of a status thing**. People enjoyed being in the committee because you were up there with the higher echelons within the club, **you became a respected member of the club.** Age didn't matter, but whether you knew the previous captain was a good move, and how well you got on with him. That's basically the same in any club. First of all you become the vice captain then you automatically become the captain...**to know the captain and to be a good friend of the captain is a good move.**" (M.Vincent).

The running club's committee viewed themselves as servants of the club. They viewed themselves as being in a position to implement change both at the behest of the membership and for the good of the club. To achieve this end they made themselves readily available to the membership. Throughout my research period, several members of the committee were always on hand to provide assistance, and were usually seen in the bar after the runs actively socialising with the membership. Their openness was valued (and encouraged) by the committee members:

- "If you sit out in the bar then people will just talk about things...you can guide people to talk about issues. If you go out and talk to about three or four of them about a particular issue within the club then people will pick up on that..."

However, as the interview extract below shows, access to a typical golf course's committee is generally not so open:

- "Certainly the club secretary would have overall importance...because he is the person who is keeping it going. It is courtesy to see the club captain to see about anything you want to do...in all of the clubs I have been involved in they had a structure where from the committee you go to a committee member to discuss any problems you felt needed to be raised...in this way if you had an issue that needed bringing up **you had a point of contact that didn't end up bothering the captain. Quite often people feel intimidated to discuss changes.**" (M.Vincent)

In contrast to the running club whose members were almost ushered onto the committee, at golf courses the process could be a lot slower:

- "The first thing to do if you want to get to the top of the club is to know and get on with the committee. The second move is to get on the committee. **To get on the committee is the ultimate** really to see your way to the top of the club, stay on there for two or three years...and you can bet your boots the captain will come out of that committee...it is very much a long term thing, you certainly won't get to the top of the club in a year or two...you **could be looking at six to ten years.**" (M.Vincent).

The above extract refers to there being a long timescale in respect to becoming involved with the running of a golf course. The interviewee implied that participation patterns in golf were generally stable, but also implied that the rate of change within golf courses was correspondingly slow. His following comment reaffirmed this:

- "As a playing opposition a high handicapper may not present much of an opposition, but socially in the actual hierarchical status of the golf club, **they could be a threat to you because they have clout with the committee. etc.** They may be well respected well known and **nothing ever changes in a golf club.** Once something is set in its format that's the way it carries on. **That is probably one of the biggest social stumbling blocks of any golf club is that things very rarely change.**" (M.Vincent).

Recompense for taking on the role of committee member in golf was more tangible than with the runners. As well as the kudos attached to the position there were also additional unseen privileges:

- "Basically to be a member of a committee **you'll get a number of all sorts of unseen privileges as such.** You'll automatically get selected for the teams that play other clubs, which gives you the chance to play at other courses. You'll normally find that committee members are between scratch to 20 handicap...unless they have been a member for a very long time and their experience is valuable. **Being captain of the team means that other clubs start to recognise who you are**...you get to play the game that's the important thing and that's the nice thing is that you get to play at different places and it costs you nothing to do it."

In contrast to the runners and golfers, the weight trainers did not constitute a formal club structure. Though they regularly practiced at the same gym, they had no officials to organise their participation. Some weightlifters do belong to formal weightlifting clubs

but their numbers are relatively small in comparison to the total numbers of individuals who train with weights.

7.3.4 The special case of the handicap system

Throughout my fieldwork with the golfers a frequently quoted characteristic of golf was that their handicapping system allowed for players of all abilities to play together on an equal footing[26]. Handicapping provided the structure around which the playing of golf is operationalized, and this system should have reduced discrimination between good and bad players. However, as the following interview extract shows the handicapping system in reality serves to *separate* players along handicap lines:

- "I think everybody defines themselves as a golfer, but they also define themselves as a category. **A handicap would therefore give them that category.** They'd deem themselves as a good golfer a mediocre golfer or a poor golfer...Under ten handicap, between ten and twenty and twenty and above would certainly be the three main categories -would be how someone determines how they perform on a golf course... On a social thing it depends on what your occupations was...Therefore if you have a common link through work experience or are on the same managerial level, or any social level then you find people will link onto that, so therefore you can say that handicap doesn't necessarily make any difference...But the majority of the time handicap will be *the* significant link [within a group]. (M.Vincent).

The following extract from the Hinksey Heights focus group supports the above observations about the handicap system. The extract shows that the way in which the golfers applied the handicap system created a culture that separated the club into 'handicap groups' rather than one large playing unit. The comment also shows that it was the values placed on being identified as a low handicapper that provided the mechanism for segregation:

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[26] The handicap is essentially an allowance of shots, the worse the player the greater number of shots s/he is allowed to take

- "They do play together [low handicappers]. **And they don't want to play with a high handicapper as, if they are having a bad day then they risk losing** and they don't want to [be seen] to do that. (Hinksey Heights golf course's focus group).

7.4 Gender and ethnicity

Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to have undertaken an in depth exploration of gender and race within the activities studied, sub-cultural identity in respect to both does have important implications in respect to the patterns of participation. The first and most obvious location for gender to affect participation is within the sport of weightlifting. Comparative observations of the health suite and heavy weights room showed that whilst females were well represented in the health suite they were under represented in the heavy weights room. The following field note constructed from observations of, and interviews with, the weight trainers indicates that the heavy weights room was viewed as a *masculinized* environment. Moreover, it was an environment that was gendered through the practices of the weight trainers and lifters who use it (See also chapter 4 section 4.3):

> ...Here in this masculinized environment for the novice safety in numbers applies. **All of the female lifters I have talked to train here because they were invited to by others who helped to break down the psychological barriers to training in a male orientated activity.** However, most of the females found that once they started to train regularly then **"they [males] go out of their way to be helpful".** What was required to **'fit in' was a positive commitment to training regardless of being male or female.** Once the initial fear of training in the heavy weight room passed the charged atmosphere made for better training... (Heavy weights gym field notes).

It was interesting that once the female weightlifters had passed beyond the stereotyping of weightlifting as a 'male' activity they then found little gender discrimination from the way males practice their activity. The following passage is reconstructed from my personal training log. The incident referred to highlights how assigning a gendered identity to an activity can have a strong affect on participation patterns:

> Miss (x) came to see me today to apologise for not continuing weightlifting. It is a shame and she was obviously distressed about her decision. Apparently, her mother

doesn't like her lifting and thinks that she will get big thighs. I tried to explain that she won't, but she couldn't be convinced. Interestingly her boyfriend was annoyed about her giving up training and asked me to try and convince her to continue! (M. Austin, personal training log)

To put the extract in context, prior to the Christmas break the weightlifter I was referring to was ecstatic about reaching the qualifying standards for the British weightlifting championships.

In contrast to weightlifting, the playing of golf was organised according to gendered perceptions of women's abilities to play golf. The following extract taken from my interview with Mr. Vincent shows how males often regarded golf played by women as separate and secondary to their own:

- "There are very few young females playing the game, it would most certainly be middle aged to retired women, who have settled down in their lifestyles. And they play during the week because they have the opportunity, they have that social and financial ability to be able to not work and therefore be able to play during the week. **Therefore, again they'd have their own groups, where they play within those groups**...Men if they went out on a social game on the Saturday morning they would keep to themselves. **The blokes would play then the women would play**. Some clubs still don't allow women on the golf course on a Saturday morning. They have to wait until Saturday afternoon. In some cases females pay less than the males do. That is the reasoning behind it and that's why they don't have election rights etc...**It is a genuine reason. It's one that some clubs are happy to keep because it keeps it as a male dominated club**. Some female sections in some clubs have made sufficient noises, asking for the same rights. The answer is can you pay the same? In some of the sleepier clubs, the females are happy to do it because they don't want to play on Saturday. The majority of clubs are now coming round to all members paying the same.... Things are changing fast where women are now working where they don't have that so called leisure time whereby they can pop out during the week after lunch to play a round of golf. **Things are starting to change but it is taking a long time to do it.**" (M.Vincent)

Although I would be hesitant to conclude that at the time of interview, all golf courses were as discriminating as implied by the above extract, the number of practicing women golfers is much lower than males (see chapter 3). Consequently, due to the pool of

potential women interviewees being small I found it very difficult to access female golfers to verify the gendered nature of golf.

As with the weightlifters, the way in which Headington Road Runners practiced their sport was not organised in gendered ways. The different running groups (as described in chapter 4) were instead constructed around ability. The following extract from the female runners' focus group discussion on the question *are there differences in the roles undertaken between the sexes at the club?* supports this observation on the non-gendered operationalizing of running:

> It is generally thought that both males and females are relatively equal in standing within the club, with friendly rivalry between the sexes especially with the teams. (It is noted that in the past there was a female president in office for two years (*cited as an example of equality*)). **In this respect, the group thought it important that there is a strong female contingency in terms of both numbers and standard, and this helps maintain the profile of the female runners.** A couple (and one in particular) of males are cited as chauvinistic, though it doesn't cause any friction as there is **no associated discrimination.** However, it is pointed out that the females take pleasure when the said males are passed by the more elite female runners. *(Said in good spirit and not indicative of underlying conflict).* (Female runners' focus group notes).

The Headington Road Runners had a strong contingency of women runners. However, at the time of interview, this was not the case nationally and the club's committee were very aware of the paucity of females wanting to take up running:

- "I think its partly because the committee are aware (of the problem)...because a lot of the local clubs have this **real deficit when it comes to women runners.** I think that's one of the clubs strengths...**it's not only local its national...We are very much aware of it and all the decisions that are taken, are taken purposely to support [women] and to make sure that doesn't happen in Headington...**"

- (And in reply) ..."That's been reflected in the results as well". (Running club committee's focus group)

7.4.1 Childcare provision

None of the clubs studied had crèche facilities. However, the merits of providing such facilities appeared to be one of a 'chicken and egg' problem. That women were under represented made the provision of crèches financially injudicious. Counter to this was the view, given that childcare responsibility is disproportionately a women's preserve, the provision of a crèche may have led to an increase in female participation. The results from the questionnaire (see chapters 2 & 3) showed that the number of runners with dependent children only made up a small proportion of the total club membership. The dilemma of childcare provision was therefore well founded. The issue of childcare provision within the running was recognised by the club committee's focus group:

- (And in Reply) ...If you had children, would you necessarily be a runner?"
- (And in reply) ... "You wouldn't join a club, you'd fit it in when you could [i.e. not as part of a running club]...and that wouldn't necessarily be at the same time every week..."
- (And in reply)..."We have two members we never see for precisely that reason, Hillary and Sue...they run at odd times." (Running club committee's focus group).

The focus group also noted that childcare provision is *rarely* provided for throughout the sport of road running:

- "I am not aware of it in the general running/racing community, it is quite rare for a race to provide a crèche"."

However, the focus group did note that other sports take a different attitude to childcare:

- "In orienteering there is always a crèche at their events, and there are events laid on for the toddlers...it is much more a family thing, a completely different culture".

The female runners' focus group elicited a slightly different response to the question of childcare and female running:

> **It is acknowledged that children could provide a barrier to participation,** but that most people who are passionate about the sport **generally find a way to look after the**

children. For example, a couple who belong to the club take it in turns to attend club meetings.

The provision of a crèche is an idea that hasn't really been addressed even though the club has a significant female membership. **There is both capacity and a perceived need.** As one group member puts it, if the club were to advertise the availability of a childminding facility then perhaps more females and/or people with children would be interested in joining. However, concern is expressed that the club is primarily a running club and that **childminding is outside of the scope of the club**, and any such scheme would be open to abuse from 'non runners', (clarified as people who would just go for a 'jog' as a way of escaping the kids). Though there is some disagreement over this, and it is generally agreed that some form of childminding scheme would be good for 'Runners' with children... After consideration, they concede that the plight of young parents may be worth further consideration. However, it is also noted by the group that when children need looking after then many of the club members are willing to lend a hand especially if they were not running themselves due to injury etc. (*I have not however seen strong evidence of this in practice*). (Female runner's focus group notes)

The issue of childcare therefore appeared to be confined to the problem of identifying whether or not there was a pressing need to provide facilities. From the interviewees' responses it was clear that there was not a strong family orientated culture within the running club (and running general). Running was seen as a leisure activity that occurred outside of the family, and issues of time constraints due to childcare were resolved before choosing to participate (or, conversely, precluded women from participating). This also appeared to be the case for weightlifting and golf.

7.4.2 Ethnic minorities.

Oxford is diverse and contains a broad range of ethnic minorities, many of whom are located within the catchment areas of the clubs studied. However, exploring the relationship between participation, ethnic background and activity subculture was rendered impossible as none of the activities had significant numbers of identifiable members from ethnic minorities. None of the clubs went out of their way to recruit ethnic minorities, but neither did they actively discourage participation. I asked the running club committee's focus group whether there was any policy regarding recruiting

from ethnic minorities. The following extract illustrates that ethnicity was not an issue simply because in general those from ethnic minorities did not participate in running:

> The group are aware that the issue of racial/ethnic division does not arise as a result of the very poor representation of ethnic minorities within the club. They cannot explain why there is this under-representation. However, it is noted that **such under-representation is a trait that occurs throughout the sport of road running and is not particular to the club.** (Running club committee's focus group notes).

Similarly, the golfers I interviewed recognised the under representation of ethnic minorities in golf and the 'fact' that in general people from ethnic minorities did not take part in golf. The proprietors of both courses studied thought that there was an untapped local market but neither had clear ideas or future plans for recruiting ethnic minorities.

7.5 Knowledge and language

Taking up and becoming involved in an activity involves developing knowledge about that activity. The most obvious is knowledge rooted in the physical skills that characterise an activity. For example, how to hit a golf ball or how to lift a heavy weight is physical knowledge. The basics of this form of knowledge may be learnt through coaching, but as was noted from the weightlifters' focus group, it is only developed through active practise:

> **Lack of specialist knowledge is a barrier to training.** Heavy weights training is centred around free weights exercises and these **require more specialist skills.** There is not a coach on hand (hence the importance of Sid), and so all the group note that **getting started with respect to knowing what to do is more difficult than would be expected in a health suite.** Development of weightlifting skills is then dependent on the individual repeatedly practising which takes time which (coupled with lack of coaches) often is a disincentive to continue with the sport. (Weightlifters' focus group notes)

In respect to sub-culture, dissemination of knowledge about how the sport is played is often related to the way in which coaching is organised. As is noted in the above extract, access to knowledge in weightlifting is limited. Within the health suite and the heavy weights room there were no resident coaches. Though there were 'access' courses run by the University's sports centre (similar to many municipal gyms), they were limited to

rudimentary information about to getting started. Information on how to progress from the basics was dependent on accessing knowledge nested within the experiences of a limited number of established lifters/trainers. As these people often only trained with other established weightlifters, dissemination of knowledge about weights amongst potential weightlifters was limited:

> **Novice trainers are careful whom they approach for information.** They appear too embarrassed to ask the really big guys, so look for someone who appears knowledgeable (comportment and physical ability are used as key indicators) but aren't too threatening. **It is clear that big guys train with other big guys and intermediates with intermediates etc.** Often when someone is lifting a very heavy weight, it will be the novices who stand and watch. (Weightlifting field notes)

As noted previously, good golfers also tended to play in pre-arranged groups according to standard. Therefore again the novice had limited access to information about to develop their game. (Although there were professional golfers on hand, their knowledge had to be bought). The following interview extract about knowledge transfer illustrates how good players distanced themselves from lesser players and so restricted the lines of communications between different groups:

- "Category A players certainly wouldn't go to a category C player and ask for advice (or to a category B player) but they would look beyond that and either go to their own professional or seek a professional somewhere else and go to them for advice. **I always went outside of the club for advice."** (M.Vincent).

In contrast to weightlifting and golf, information about running was freely exchanged between participants of different standards. Culturally within the running club, part of the development as a runner, was the development of coaching skills. With the shepherding system, the more experienced runners were *expected* to lead runs and communicate with the other runners. Moreover, as the following interview extracts show, a significant minority of committed runners attended coaching courses and acted as a source of knowledge about their activity:

- **"From the coaching side which is more what I contribute,** I get a lot of satisfaction out of it because...if you've done a session like tonight everyone goes like I really enjoyed that, it was really good...**And you see people coming**

to all your sessions and you see them improving and they thank you."
(Runners committee's focus group interview).

However, knowledge also involves understandings about the ways in which a sport is played. Obviously, this varies from club to club as the culture of the participatory environment changes. As with physical knowledge, knowledge about sub-cultural practices is generally learnt through practise[27]. For example, the appropriate sharing of equipment in weight training and the formalised warm-up and subsequent sub-division of runners into appropriate running groups were cultural practices learnt through interacting with other experienced practitioners:

- "I think it's also due to the fact that there are more sessions offered where they are told what to do. Like we do Tuesdays at the track and Saturday mornings where **we set them up and tell them what they do**, and... I think they expect just to come and be told. And then you get the odd sessions at other times of the week **where we don't get involved and then they're sort of lost."**
(Running club committee's focus group)

However, full understandings of a club's practices are only achieved through active participation. The following of the cultural mores of golf participation was so important that both the golf clubs ran occasional training sessions and/or quizzes specifically on the rules of playing and etiquette (A situation further complicated by each golf course having its own unique set of rules of play and additional sub-cultural mores).

7.5.1 Sub-cultural language

Language is one way of defining sub-cultures. For example, in the following extract, the language used in the final sentence reinforces earlier observations about the gendered bias in a masculinist golf culture:

- **"The name of 'the stud room' says it all really."** (M.Vincent)

Fitting in and participating therefore also involves learning how to use appropriate language. In the following extract from the weight lifters' focus group, the lifter is

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[27] This is also part of the process of socialization into a club (see also chapter 5).

describing his training routine. Though the language used doesn't appear overly specialised, within the highlighted colloquialisms there is nested a body of knowledge mainly obtained through experience:

- "Currently I do the **split routine**[28]. Back and biceps on Monday, chest, shoulders and abs Wednesday. Legs Friday. Standard stuff really, you know **increase the weight and drop the reps**, usually about four exercises per **body part**". (Weightlifters' focus group interview).

In the following extract, the interviewee demonstrated (through his easy command of sub-cultural language) his standing in golf. The extract also demonstrates the interplay between language use, sub-cultural mores, identity construction and the process of learning how to fit in:

- "On the social side it would be **poor etiquette** to go to someone and call them a **hacker**...but the case is that person would **identify themselves** as being a hacker. **They'd learn the terminology**, they'd pick it up from somewhere along the line **and realise 'ah that's me as well'**...but everyone would be **called a golfer**. **The handicap system literally identifies** where you are in your ability." (M.Vincent).

7.6 Concluding comments

In the previous chapter, I showed that the act of being active becomes an important part of an internalised identity; the runners regarded themselves as 'Runners' and not joggers. However, the 'physical' aspect of identity construction is limited. For the runners the 'act' of joining a running club was part of the construction of their 'running' identity. Thus, identifying oneself as participating with others who participate was an important interactional aspect of self-identity construction. Furthermore, development of social

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[28] This routine separates agonist from antagonist muscle groups. Thus each body part gets a weeks rest before it is retrained. Training legs can be particularly intensive as it involves large muscles. By placing legs on a Friday the weightlifter allows an extra days rest for general recovery. Body part refers to a general area of the body rather than a specific muscle and the four exercises referred to differentially train all the muscles that make up that body part.

relations was also dependent on the participant being able to fit in with the other practitioners; an important factor of which was cultural compatibility. Choices in type of sport therefore also included perceptions of sub-cultural compatibility. For example, some golfers chose their golf club as a way of social climbing and then experienced difficulty in becoming established within their club, as they did not possess appropriate cultural capital.

The processes of cultural integration are complex and actual sub-cultures can differ from those expected. Although weightlifting has strong associations with a masculinized sub-culture, in practise (as long as women take their training seriously[29]) the way in which weight trainers practise was *not* sexually discriminating. This was in direct contrast with golf, which would (physically) appear to be more suited to women but whose culture in practice was more discriminating. Furthermore, each of the sports studied had sub-cultures characterised by the mores of practicing, the use of specialised language and the presence of icons or symbols. In this respect, the findings from the fieldwork are supported by Goffman's concept of the use of "fronts" in creating a social identity (1969:32). Through the process of socialisation the participants learned to follow appropriate customs of participation, they adopted appropriate dress, learned to use appropriate language and created for themselves a sense of shared identity and belonging (See section 7.2.3).

The importance of sub-cultures in respect to the patterns of participation lay in the 'values' that individual participation ascribed to them. Although some of the golfers would have liked to join a more expensive course (due to perceived cultural kudos) they *still valued* being part of their own club. They placed such values on their game that they adopted the cultural identities of being golfers even when they were not playing. Similarly, the runners thought that the important aspect of their running club was its culture of inclusiveness. Again, their values about being identified as part of their club drove them to maintain and thereby perpetuate the club's cultural practices.

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[29] Males who take a casual approach to training also find it difficult to integrate themselves into the gym culture.

Therefore, where there is cultural incompatibility between the individual and the sports club the process of becoming integrated can be difficult. However, where sporting sub-cultures are compatible with the expectations, wants and needs of the participants, the outcome can be a positive one. Under representation of those from minority ethnic groups and from the working classes is clearly a result of the complex factors working together. Perceived 'cultural incompatibility' may be one feature of this complex of factors.

Part 3: Discussions and Conclusions

Introduction to part 3

Part 2 showed that the act of participation is influenced by concerns relating to the body, the development of social relationships and to considerations regarding the sub-cultures of different activities. In Part 3 the works of Bourdieu, Goffman and Giddens are used to theorise the findings from the research focusing on the processes behind the act of participation in sports and physical activities.

This concluding part consists of four chapters. The first of these (chapter 8) provides a reflexive account of the research process. In using a qualitative methodology, a major component of the fieldwork was the process of becoming *accepted* into the (participation) lives of the different groups of individuals I was studying. Consequently, many of my experiences as a researcher mirror the experiences of those individuals who seek to join and become part of a sporting sub-culture; I too was going through the processes of joining and being accepted. Chapter 8 is included at this point to provide further information about the research process that helps to contextualise the conclusions drawn from the data generated.

As already noted, the processes of participation are complex. In order to tackle this complexity, I have therefore presented my conclusions as three interrelated chapters. The first of these, chapter 9, uses Bourdieu's constructs of forms of cultural capital and social habitus. In drawing on Bourdieu's work within this chapter, I demonstrate that the process of participation *cannot* be reduced to a rational choice of balancing the wants and needs of the individual against the opportunities as presented by the different types of sporting activities on offer. Rather I will show that participation is enacted through interplay of physical (in terms of the body), social and sub-cultural capitals. Chapter 10 then draws on Goffman's work on the development of social identities, and explores how different forms of capital are in turn related to the development of a social identity within sub-cultural groups. The concluding chapter (chapter 11) consists of two parts. The first of these re-examines the conclusions drawn in the previous two chapters, in the context of the position of the body within Giddens' conditions of 'high modernity'. The

second part of chapter 11 concludes with a review of the findings of this study, and suggests implications of policy and areas for further research.

Chapter 8: A Reflexive Account of the Research

8.1 Introduction –my role as a sportsman

In their work, Mauthner and Doucet note, "the 'problem' arises through the recognition that as social researchers we are integral to the social world that we study" (2003: 416). Methods of research and data analysis are not catalytic in the pure sense, generating data and knowledge whilst remaining separate to, and unaffected by, the research process. They are shaped by the researchers who developed them, and then further shaped by the researchers who employ them (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003; Bryman, 2001; Edwards & Ribbens, 1998; Klein, 1993). Using qualitative methods to generate data resulted in a good deal of social interaction between me and the individuals I was studying. Obviously personal biographies affect the character of social discourse (Birch, 1998:175). Moreover, this affect has particular relevance as sport was, and continued to be, a significant part of my personal biography prior to this study. This chapter presents a reflective account of the research process, and how my role as researcher influenced the shape and form of data generated. In presenting this account I also provide an insight into the mechanisms through which I formed a social identity amongst the various sub-cultures I was investigating. Furthermore, these experiences are important as they mirror many of the experiences of the individual participants as they similarly sought for themselves an appropriate social identity within their chosen activities.

Prior to this study I had been fortunate to enjoy some personal success in sports that will have affected the research in a number of ways. Firstly, the research question clearly emanates from my own personal biography and interests. My 'insider' knowledge as a sportsman/athlete will also have affected how I constructed and planned the research, how I asked (and phrased) questions and most importantly how I was placed by those I interviewed.

8.2 Amongst the weight trainers

Before beginning my doctoral research, I was a weightlifter, coach, an academic training in a university gym. I had a shared history with many of the users of the heavy weights room. Therefore studying and asking questions of my fellow trainers was not an alienating action as it may have been had I not been a weightlifter, and the gym been typical of a municipal facility within a working class area. Furthermore, as I was *known socially*, issues of trust did not lead to suspicions about my work. The stereotypical images of steroid abuse and narcissism plague bodybuilding subculture[30] (Klein 1993) and make some participants suspicious about the motives behind questions. My social location appeared to remove the danger of *misuse* of data that otherwise could have provide barriers to the interviewer/interviewee relationship. That I knew the rules of the game meant that the interviewees were apparently open and free with their opinions and life stories about training. Moreover, having advised (and been seen to advise) some of the larger bodybuilders about their training regimes put me in the privileged position that I could explore issues surrounding body image without risking interviewees becoming defensive. They knew that I shared with them a belief that building muscle was more than narcissism, that they weren't freaks and that their chosen sport was 'legit'.

In addition to my acceptance amongst the gym users the topic of my investigation also helped the interviewees feel comfortable about the information they were divulging. Though the remit of the research could stray into the issues of drugs and extreme bodies, such issues did not warrant more than cursory exploration[31]. Of more interest were

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[30] I had direct experience of this when after being drug tested out of competition by the sports council rumours spread that I must be on steroids "otherwise why would they test him?" Despite passing several such drugs test and being open about the whole procedure, I only found out about the rumour 'second hand' from a friend. Notwithstanding the burning curiosity about whether I trained clean, gym etiquette dictated that openly discussing the subject of drugs remain taboo.

[31] Contrary to much mainstream opinion, within our society 'drugs in sport' does not present itself as a major concern for the day to day practising of sport. Whilst they are present, their use is hidden from view. Similarly, with musculature there are few extreme bodies on view within gyms and for the population I aimed to study obtaining such bodies was not the prime object of training.

issues of gender, family, work and health etc. Again, my identity and friendships amongst the weight trainers helped, though it was sometimes difficult to focus the interviews in the ways that I had wanted as many of the stories behind their training tended to drift into the mechanics of training (especially routines and injury[32]). Moreover, in recruiting volunteers, a simple and somewhat cursory explanation about researching for a Ph.D. appeared a sufficient reason for taking part in the interview. Even the outside members of the gym who had little or no experience of research seemed to feel that they had a useful contribution to make.

8.3 Amongst the runners

I first became aware of the impact of my identity on my research during the participation observation of the runners. I was at ease talking amongst athletes, and was fortunate in that the gatekeeper to the club was the husband of a close friend. Moreover, the gatekeeper was well liked, respected and had a prominent position within the club's hierarchy. Therefore, though a little daunting, my integration into the running club did not appear to provide a major problem. However, a chance conversation early on in my investigation of the runners led me to question my personal identity as a researcher *and* sportsman. As noted in chapter 2 the runners decided that they were all runners (regardless of standard of running) because they *belonged* to the running club. Although this provided me with an important insight into one of the key processes behind participation, it also alerted me to the effects of my own personal identity. I had been accepted and invited to join in with their running precisely because I 'looked' like I belonged. Had I been overweight with an unfit countenance, I may not have been as readily accepted amongst the runners. As with the weight trainers my physical self had helped to break down the barriers between researcher and the researched.

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[32] Part of the identity of being a weight trainer is caught up in the type of training routine followed, the constant struggle to build muscle, and a sufferance that is grounded in a multitude of different injuries incurred. Much of social discourse therefore tends to gravitate to one of more of these subjects. A similar situation occurs in most sports that I have been involved with!

During my participation observation of the runners, my own preconceptions about running standards within running clubs (and my novice stance in regard to this sport) had an important influence concerning how I presented myself amongst the runners. Not being a runner, I was concerned that I may struggle to keep up. I therefore tended to underplay my abilities during conversations, which in turn led to an incidence where the influence of my physical body on the research process was highlighted to me. After completing my first run with the club's 'intermediate' runners, I was accused of being economical with the truth about my running abilities. As the following exert from my research diary shows, at the time I put the incident down to concern about my trustworthiness as a researcher:

- After completing the run, one runner commented that I'd lied about my ability as a runner. He seemed rather annoyed that I'd passed him on the return straight. This raises an interesting issue –how does my presence influence how others relate to me? Will this affect future interviews? If so how? That this person took time to engage me on this matter highlights the importance of being *seen* to be honest. (Personal PhD diary/notes)

My conclusions from this incident reinforced previous thoughts about using focus groups as a research tool[33]. On reflection however, the incidence had less to do with honesty and more to do with issues of physical identity and the way I had positioned myself as a novice. Competitiveness is an important component of many sports. Who beats who can lead to either a reinforcement of personal identity or a forced re-evaluation. From the perspective of the other runner, not only was he beaten, but also a person he had been led to believe was a poor runner (me) beat him; and this must have rankled. Clearly here I had made the mistake of making a valued judgement of physical ability that was at odds with those of some of the individuals that I was studying.

[33]The reasoning behind this was that with the focus group dynamic the data generated was less likely to be influenced by my personal presence, if only as a result of numbers.

8.4 Amongst the golfers

Data from the golf clubs was collected using structured interviews (both face to face and telephone) and focus groups. This meant that I avoided having to undertake golf lessons in order to 'fit in' with the golfers[34]. However, the issue of embodiment was manifested in a different context. During the fieldwork with both the weightlifters and the runners, dress code was dictated by the activity. Scruffy gym clothes for the weightlifters, shorts and running vest and/or jeans with the runners depending on whether I was running or interviewing in the bar afterwards. With the golfers I was to conduct the interviews within the various clubhouses. That I was keen to present myself as a *professional* researcher made me reflect on my personal dress code and comportment. Up to this point, though rigorous, I had conducted the fieldwork in a relaxed and easygoing manner. This had appeared to work well as it allowed the weightlifters and runners to relax and feel comfortable during the interviews. With the golfers however, I anticipated that they would expect and thus be comfortable with a more formal approach. I therefore decided that smart-casual dress was more appropriate. As the following exert from my research notes show this insight provided useful in the next phase of the research:

- There was a high proportion of executive cars in the car park, more so than the running club –indicates higher average income? Glad I took Betty [the Spitfire]. That I subconsciously took her indicates that image and dress is important –how important is it? Re-look at dress code for runners and weightlifters –where do class and sport boundaries cross in terms of dress and identity? On entering the club house there was a poster on the window next to the door showing the correct dress code for a golfer. Poster was 'bought' therefore might be common at all clubs. Prominent position indicates the importance of dress code? Does *imposition* of such codes lead to conflict? Does it deter new members and/or is it normatively expected and why? (Personal PhD diary/notes)

Choosing the *right* dress code for researching the golfers was similar to being physically fit when researching the weightlifters and runners. Being dressed properly I *felt* that I fitted in with the golfers. Not being self-conscious about my appearance meant that I was more relaxed about trying to 'pass' as an insider. Moreover, by being attired according to *expectations* I seemed to significantly reduce the risk of alienating myself from the interviewees. Furthermore, by personally being more relaxed I was better

[34] Previous (and somewhat limited) attempts at playing golf had proven rather unsuccessful.

placed to put the golfers at ease with the interview process. Consequently the golfers appeared to be less guarded about divulging information about themselves than would have been if I had dressed as an 'outsider'.

8.5 The ontology of sport studies

Although my research was clearly important and interesting to me, I had concerns that the participants might feel that the research focus was of little value in the 'real world'. For example whilst the weightlifters appeared to share my enthusiasms (possibly because of a shared history and passion for weights), this was not the case with all the runners. For example, although most of the runners 'appeared' genuinely interested in my work, one voiced particular objections. The following quote is taken from my personal PhD diary:

- "I don't believe you. You must be joking, this can't be a PhD. You can't get a PhD from sitting around and chatting. No way is this worth a PhD. What is the point?" (Ishmael Bahabedy)

Not only did Ishmael believe that my qualitative research methods were weak (not being based on *hard quantitative* facts), but that the whole subject of sport's sociology represented mediocrity. For him, 'real' research into sport should be firmly based in the faster, stronger, higher aspect of sports. Scientifically measuring sports performance warranted his time and efforts, sitting around and chatting as he saw it did not. This questioning of the ontology of my research was also evident when, after explaining that I proposed to conduct interviews, many of the runners asked for copies of 'the questionnaire'. As the following extracts from my personal PhD diary show, absence of a questionnaire confused some of the runners:

- Tonight again I was asked for a questionnaire. It definitely seems to be important –expected. Do I need to provide one? If so why and what should it ask?... Given that I'm expected to provide a questionnaire, it wont harm to provide one. Keep questions short, two sides A4 at most.
  i. Quantitative analysis of club members
  ii. Provides context for chapter 3
  iii. Re-learn ms access
  iv. Check confidentiality (ethics etc) and data stored on computer

v. Provides a means for ice breaking

(PhD diary/notes)

The last point noted above was to prove particularly relevant. The act of distributing the questionnaire provided a method by which I was able to introduce my research and myself. Through this point of reference, I felt I was able to engage the runners in discussions about my work and in doing so seemed to assuage doubts about becoming involved in the interviews. After several weeks of distributing and collecting the questionnaire, I in effect became established amongst the runners. This undoubtedly helped in recruiting volunteers for the focus groups.

The proprietors of the golf courses after initial contact from me agreed to act as gatekeepers for accessing golfers. They appeared to see opportunities for accessing ways to increase the membership of their clubs through participating in the study. However, although the golfers seemed interested in the work, the logistics of generating enough members to form focus groups proved difficult. On reflection, this may have partly been due to the difference in time spent establishing myself. Due to time constraints, I had little opportunity to locate both myself and my work with the golfers. Consequently, I had to rely on the gatekeepers to 'supply' volunteers for the focus groups. The efficacy of this was variable. Custom dictated that I conduct my work through the clubs' captains. Within one club, the close relationship between the proprietor and the membership resulted in the captains being well informed and interested in my work, which in turn provided interested members for the focus group. However, within another club, getting to meet the captains proved difficult; my work clearly was not a priority in their busy lifestyle. Without the active support of the captains, generating 'volunteers' for the focus groups was impossible. However, within the same club the retired (5 day) members essentially formed a club within a club[35], but without the formalised position of a captain. As a result, having direct access to the

[35] The five-day members essentially consisted of two groups separated by gender and who played on separate days. The male group was easy to approach and enjoyed to chance to talk about their interest. The females however, being far fewer in number and rather disparate, proved too difficult to organise into a focus group (see also 1.4 gender issues).

retired members meant that generating interest and hence members for a retired members' focus group was surprisingly straightforward.

As noted within one club the proprietor took particular interest in my work and organised volunteers for a focus group from a cross section of the clubs membership (including the male and female captains). The focus group proved successful generating a quantity of interesting and informative data. Once engaged, the golfers became enthused and seeing a purpose to the work, were keen to participate. In contrast, one 'upmarket' golf club refused to take part in the research and would not allow access to their membership. The reasoning behind their refusal was that my research might have interfered with their corporate clientele's playing. Clearly to them, the value of my research did not warrant the 'commercial' risk. As noted in my research diary this view of my research was not a major concern as the club represented a small (financially) elite category of participant whose experiences of participation were not easily comparable with those of the runners already interviewed:

- Contacted (club c) –not interested in my work as it does not fit in with the running of their club. Proprietor is concerned that my work will interfere with their **corporate** clientele. Without the support of the management there is little point in pursuing this club therefore:
  -Concentrate on the other two [golf] clubs
  -Drop idea of interviewing at an elite expensive club –Time constraints etc. does not warrant the data from what is essentially a small minority subsection of golfers.
  (PhD Diary/notes)

8.6 Gender issues

Gender as an issue in sports participation is well documented (see chapter 4). Although sports are patterned in gendered ways, I did not set out to directly explore gender influence on participation. However, in recognition that gender issues have important implications to participation processes I had planned to separately explore male and female participation. The full implications of the effect of my 'maleness' and my somewhat naive planning of the research did not become personally apparent until I started planning the female focus group with the runners. My role as coach had for me

'masked' the effects of gender on my relationships with the female weightlifters. Although I had interviewed them separately (as well as part of a *mixed* focus group), I was unaware of any change in the interview dynamics as compared to interviewing male weightlifters. This could have been partly due to my own insensitivity and partly due to our mutual familiarity (and insider status) breaking down barriers. With the running club, I had personally conducted the informal interviews with both the male and female runners. However, I recognised that the female focus group in particular may have been influenced by my position as a 'male' moderator. On asking whether the group would feel more comfortable with a female moderator, the group thought that it was more important to have a facilitator whom they knew than a female whom they did not. At the time I was persuaded that I should moderate the group, however, with hindsight my 'maleness' may have contributed to the low turnout for the group. However, the members of the group did not appear intimidated by my maleness. Moreover, they appeared to enjoy what felt like the 'confrontational' element of a male moderator interviewing an all female group. This seemed to be related to the non-controversial nature of the topics explored, and the time I had previously spent interacting with the club.

The issue of the relatively low numbers of female participants in the activities under study first became apparent when trying to find female volunteers amongst the golfers. Moreover, it was the lack of female golfers that first highlighted the *invisibility* of female participants. Amongst the weightlifters I had direct access to female participants due to my role as coach. Although there were significantly fewer female weightlifters, I did not perceive this as a major issue due to the gendered nature of the sport (in my experience lifting heavy weights and/or building muscle was not appealing to females). However, I had anticipated that the male/female ratio within my focus groups would reflect this imbalance. The fact that I was able to obtain sufficient females for a fifty-fifty split came as a pleasant surprise. This was my first evidence that the *way* that female weightlifters trained alongside the male weightlifters was not overtly gendered, and the mores of practice did not present ongoing barriers to female participation. Anecdotally, because the females felt secure enough in themselves to be a part of a mixed weightlifting focus group talking about the experience of weightlifting meant that they felt *part* of the gym culture. Moreover, the way in which the focus groups presented themselves as an isotropic whole rather than an agglomeration of separate male and

female groups supported this impression. I therefore had concluded that barriers to female participation in weightlifting occurred prior to participation. My observation of the relatively large number of females who practised body toning in the health suite reinforced this view of female participation.

Within the Headington Road Runners, the women comprised approximately 40% of the membership, and the way in which the club (and its runs) were organised brought me into direct contact with the female membership. Here again the way in which the runners practised their sport was not overtly gendered. Who ran with who was dictated by running standard rather than sex, and as such, the different self-organised running groups were predominantly mixed. In contrast, within the golf clubs the females tended to restrict their playing (and socialising) to other female members. Despite the existence of the handicap system (which should equalise out differences in both competency and capacity) the way in which golfers practise their sport appeared highly gendered. On reflection, that I was *male* exacerbated their invisibility, but at the same time made my access to the club relatively straightforward. On entering the golf clubs I was immediately confronted by male golfers. Moreover, they were easy to access because being male I appeared to fit in with their particular sub-culture. Female golfers were not visible (or an issue) because they were not part of the male game, and therefore within my interviews they became 'overlooked'. Male views on female golf were restricted to the opinion that female golf was separate from male golf as the women were generally not interested in competition, rarely played 18 holes and they tended to keep to themselves[36]. Whilst the clubhouse was open for use by female golfers, it appeared that that their use of the facilities was limited. Although this observation seems to support the isolationism of female golf, it may have been purely a function (in a mathematical sense) of limited numbers of female members.

On approaching the female golfers, from their body language it became immediately obvious that I was the outsider entering their territory. I could not establish the same

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[36] Interestingly an elite female golfer who specifically chose to play with men in order to get a "proper competitive game" later shared this devalued view of female golf. I have also experienced the similar opinions with elite female weightlifters and volleyball players.

rapport with the female golfers as I had done with the males. The cumulative product of the lack of female golfers, the gendered nature of golf and my own maleness produced barriers that made accessing female golfers difficult. Had I not been actively interested in the participation of female golfers their relative invisibility may easily have been overlooked[37]. On reflection, had I started from a female perspective, I may have regarded the gendered nature of golf plus the relative abundance of male golfers as oppressive to the female game. Rather than viewing female golf as invisible I may have concluded male golf as being 'overstated'.

8.7 Concluding comments

In all the three sports studied my own identity as a sportsman helped facilitate the research process in respect to the development of the research questions, access to participants, analysis of data generated and the writing up of the findings. Being identified as someone who shared knowledge and understanding of a topic and was physically active appeared to help facilitate access and generate trustworthy data. Furthermore, this embodied aspect of 'fitting in' and developing a social identity was partly engendered through my previous experiences as a recognised practitioner in several sports. Having experienced the process of taking up sports and interacting with other participants seemed to ease the research process. At the outset, I felt that I knew what to expect, and importantly felt I knew what was expected of me as a researcher, although this was not always the case. On reflection my own physically active history influenced the research process in a number of ways.

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[37] The relative invisibility of the female golfer within the golf club is a product of the segregation of female and male golf, the historically gendered mores of participation, and the paucity in female players. Though the situation is changing, the relative high costs of some clubs precludes large female membership due to the gendered imbalance of both income and leisure time.

Chapter 9: Cultural Capitals and Participation Practices

9.1 Introduction

This chapter draws upon Bourdieu's concepts of different forms of cultural capital. Bourdieu developed cultural capital as a mechanism to rationalise cultural practices that cannot be attributed solely to economic differences (see chapter 1). On writing on the different forms of capital, Bourdieu notes that "...the structure of the distribution of the different types and subtypes of capital at a given moment in time represents the immanent structure of the social world, i.e. the set of constraints...which govern its functioning in a durable way, determining the chance of success for practices" (Bourdieu, 1984a: 242). From this perspective, sections 8.3 and 8.3 explore how Bourdieu's concepts of physical and social capital are expressed within sports, and how their constructions in turn relate to the processes of participation. As was seen in chapter 1, each sport or physical activity has its own sub-culture defined through both its historic, socio-economic development, and its current location in society. Section 8.4 investigates how such subcultures are reproduced and developed by the current practices of participants, and how the reproduction of these practices in turn influence differences in the patterns of participation between the different physical activities studied. The final section 8.5, explores how the different forms of capital can be converted and interchanged within the fields of practice, and so demonstrates how Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital can be used to rationalise the different processes that lie behind the patterns of participation.

By employing Bourdieu's theory of the development of cultural capital I will demonstrate that the process behind the patterns of participation is *not* reducible to a simple rational choice of whether or not to participate[38], but is instead constructed from the interplay between a range of different concurrent processes that are both personally, socially and culturally situated.

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[38] As will be seen in chapter 10 this has important considerations in respect to developing policy.

9.2 The development of physical capital

Bourdieu argues that "most of the properties of cultural capital can be deduced from the fact that, in its fundamental state, it is linked to the body and presupposes embodiment" (Bourdieu, 1986: 243). Similarly, on writing about the relationship between sport and social class he also recognises the importance of the body: "it is the relation to one's own body, a fundamental aspect of the habitus, which distinguishes the working classes from the privileged classes, just as, within the latter, it distinguishes fractions that are separated by the whole universe of a life-style" (Bourdieu, 1978: 838). However, in this respect the capital that is possessed in and of the body is only partly accredited to the physical capacity of a body. Concerning the physicality of sports, Bourdieu differentiates between classes in that he regards the working classes as viewing the body as *"instrumental"* and the privileged classes viewing the body as an *"end in itself"* (Bourdieu, 1978:838). By way of example Bourdieu uses the trends in choices in sports noting that the working classes tend to choose sports that are more physically confrontational and that represent paths for upward mobility, whilst the privileged classes tend to choose sports that emphasise control over the body (Bourdieu, 1978; 1988).

However, in so positioning the body Bourdieu tends towards an oversimplification of the interrelationships between individuals, their bodies and the patterns of participation. For example, Bourdieu states that sports for the "professions" and the "well established business bourgeoisie" is primarily a location for the accumulation of social capital: "in the extreme form it assumes in golf...sporting activity is a mere pretext for select encounters or, to put it another way, a technique of sociability like bridge or dancing" (Bourdieu, 1978:839). This severely underplays the physical dimensions of social interaction within sport. As was shown in chapters 4 and 7, the possession of body skills was highly valued by golfers and that through their adoption of the handicap system the golfers were *separated* by their different physical skills; the good golfers tended to associate mainly with other good golfers. Furthermore, the assumption that for the working classes sports represents a vehicle for upward mobility is a commonly misplaced myth (Riess, 1990). Although there are numerous examples of working class

sportsmen[39] who have achieved financial success through sport, and though professionalism may be high on most children's wish list, most non-gifted participants are not so naive as to regard sport as a way of making substantial profit[40]. The majority of participants view sport as an amateur pastime. None of the weightlifters[41] I have interviewed (including commonwealth and world champions) regarded their sport as a mechanism for social mobility. Similarly, the following extract from the running club committee's focus group shows the latent knowledge that sport generally does *not* provide a means for income generation:

- "From the coaching point of view I certainly took on the doing the coaching course as sort of a view to perhaps in five or six years time of getting some money out of it. Perhaps but extremely unlikely." (Running club committee's focus group).

Shilling (1991), writing about Bourdieu's concept of physical capital argues that the importance of "the physical" is too great to be regarded as a component of cultural capital and instead should be regarded in its own right as being central to human agency (Shilling 1991: 654). In respect to the interplay between human agency and participation in physical activities, the results from my fieldwork concur with this central positioning of 'the physical'. Moreover, in this context, physical capital can itself be further sub-categorised into various aspects relating to possession of the 'active-body'.

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[39] I use the gendered term sportsmen here as to date there are few visible working class females who have become wealthy through sport. However, I acknowledge that this situation is slowly changing with the increasing commercialisation of female sports such as athletics.

[40] A frequent criticism made of Bourdieu's work is that it denigrates working class culture (Robbins, 2000:121). However, my criticism at this point lies in the context that life long participation patterns bear little relation to the promise of *continued* financial reward. This applies equally across all classes and to 'retired' professional athletes.

[41] A sport traditionally the preserve of the working classes

9.2.1 Health and the active-Body

The epidemiological evidence that participation in physical activities is beneficial for health is undeniable (see chapter 1). Much of the health industry has centred on the commodification of the body. For example, improved health is now frequently 'measured' in terms of cost savings for the state and improved productivity of the individual (Fitzclarence, 1990). With the 'healthy body' ideal pervading our society,[42] individuals are constantly confronted by the link between exercise and improved health. In respect to the impact on the patterns of participation, it is the *values* placed on the active-body that are important. For the weightlifters, runners and golfers, the active-body was synonymous with the healthy body and the healthy lifestyle (see chapter 4). Moreover, much of the support they received from family and friends was rooted in the belief that exercise was good for their health. The act of pursuing the active-body therefore represents a physical investment in the body. The subsequent possession of the active-body provides the *valued* return of a healthy body. In this respect, the active-body can be regarded as possessive of a 'health' facet of physical capital.

By being physically active, the individual becomes aware of the physical body and so is conscious of how physical activity in turn leads to control over the body. The body becomes an object, a commodity to be possessed and developed, and physical activity becomes a component of Giddens' concept of the 'body project' (Giddens, 1991). However, the relationship between exercise and the healthy body also includes the 'diet' factor (see chapter 4). The mechanism behind this relationship lies in the strong association between body shape and health (see chapter 1). A body devoid of excess fat is viewed as *the* healthy body -a desirable commodity. Due to this perceived link between food and body shape, many individuals try to gain control over their physical bodies through using restrictive calorie diets (Brownell, 1991). Again, this process can be rationalised in terms of investing in the physical capital of the body. By investing in a controlled diet, the lean and valued healthy body is obtained. However, such diets are difficult to sustain and their efficacy is questionable, which can lead to a conflict between the individual and their body (Powter, 1997). However, there is also the 'belief'

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[42] In this respect, it is ironic that the UK currently has the highest rate of adult obesity in Europe.

that by being physically active, body weight (and shape) can be controlled. It was seen in chapter 4 that many of the runners used running as an independent way of controlling their bodyweight. Exercise allows a degree of *freedom from guilt* over lifestyle choices[43]. Thus, being physically active improves the relationship with the body, and possessing the active-body empowers the owner to be proactive with, rather than reactive to, their body.

9.2.2 The attractive body

As Bourdieu notes, physical capital can also be ascribed to the attractiveness of the body: "the sports market is to the boys' physical capital what the system of beauty prizes and the occupations to which they lead –hostesses, etc– is to the girls' physical capital" (Bourdieu, 1978: 832). However, this gendered approach to the values attached to the physical body is today rather anachronistic. With the adonisation of the male body (see chapter 1), the values that are attached to the 'attractive' body currently apply to both female *and* male bodies, and both the male and female runners thought that running gave them an attractive physique (see chapter 4). However, as the changing representations of the 'desirable' body throughout the history of art chronicles, the desirable body is dependent on prevailing cultural tastes (Flyn, 1998). As the various physical activities on offer have dissimilar body development potentials, cultural tastes in body type can encourage different modes of participation. For example, the runners (both male and female) viewed running as a good way of keeping slim, whereas weightlifting was seen as a way of building muscle. Both body types can be seen as desirable, but appeal to different groups within society.

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[43] Interestingly the removal of the guilt factor over diets in turn led to many of the runners (and weightlifters) adopting better diets. In regarding their body's as projects for development, food became viewed more as a fuel, and as such, many of the runners and weightlifters had a greater tendency to choose better 'fuels' for their bodies. This was also facilitated by being exposed to an environment where knowledge of the healthy lifestyle is normatively exchanged.

9.2.3 The mastered body

Physical capital also relates to the possession of physical control or mastery over the body. At its simplest, this relates to elevated basal fitness. For the weightlifter this represented the possession of strength, for the runners it was being able to keep on running without having to stop, and for the golfers was being able to concentrate on their game for 18 holes. Possession of physical abilities provides a reward and an incentive to continue participating. This form of physical capital is internally measured in relative terms. Although there was no overt competition amongst the weight trainers, they competed against themselves –to see their bodies develop, and only surreptitiously measuring themselves (more so with the body builders) against other bodies. The ultimate external recognition of this form physical capital is expressed with competition trophies, symbolic of the mastery over the body *and* the elevation of the physical body above that of ones opponents. It was notable that many of the runners defined the runner as someone who would want to participate in competition. They ranked themselves according to distances and the times taken to run these distances, in effect giving form to the physical capitals of their bodies and so quantifying their running identities.

Bourdieu notes that the accumulation of the embodied state of cultural capital costs time that must be personally invested (Bourdieu, 1984a: 244). But, as noted in chapter 4 it cannot be banked, its maintenance requires continual reinvestment. This is a sobering realisation to be made by all participants, and one that frequently leads to a premature[44] disengagement from sport. All participants are also confronted by the process of ageing which is the unwavering nemesis of the accumulation of physical capital. Counterintuitively the physiological affects of aging can also be an incentive to train, as training can represent a 'remedy' whereby the loss of physical capacity (capital) can be staved off. In chapter 4, it was seen that the physical abilities of older runners proved inspirational to the newer members of the running club. However, ageing is the ultimate master and it was seen in chapter 6 that the ageing bodies of the weightlifters resulted in

[44] Within the context that for improved health participation needs to be maintained throughout the lifecycle -including old age.

them no longer competing, as through their perceived loss of physical ability (capital) they no longer *felt* like weightlifters.

The 'physical' component of physical capital also includes the possession of body skills. This body-skill component was demonstrated by Torvill and Dean's ice dance routine in the 1984 winter Olympics. They thrilled world audiences with their interpretation of Ravel's Bolero, and Olympic gold measured their demonstration of physical style, grace, strength and elegance. Different sports have differing emphasis between skills and capacity. In the three activities studied, running is most biased towards physical capacity, golf is most biased towards body skills whilst weightlifting lies somewhere in between. That physical skill can be realised as a form of physical capital is illustrated by the use of the handicapping system in golf (see chapter 3). The handicapping system in effect quantifiably labels each individual golfer according to the skills they demonstrate. It was seen in chapter 4 that golf memberships tended to sub-categorise themselves into three groups according to handicap and that playing was frequently operationalized around such differentiation. Good (low handicap) players played with other good players, poor players played with other poor players. This labelling and differentiation according to body skill occurs throughout the practice of most sports. The big (muscled) weightlifters and trainers tended to train with other big weightlifters and trainers, whilst the runners also segregated themselves into groups according to ability. In many respects, this differentiation is derived from a functional approach to practising. Physically weak weightlifters cannot safely train with strong weightlifters, and slow runners cannot keep up with fast runners. However, the example of the golfing handicapping system in operation alluded to the fact that differentiation according to the possession of physical skills is more than just a function of sporting practice. The possession of physical skills *is seen* as a positive asset in and of itself. The following extract examples how the possession of such physical capital is treasured:

- "I'm now 7.6, I was 7.4 [handicap]. But I had a bad game...it's so easy to go down, but to get back up [to a lower handicap] it's a lot harder. **But I do want to get down to playing off 5 before I reach sixty.** It's too late now to get to scratch, but do I want to get to 5." (Mrs A, informal telephone interview)

9.2.4 The cumulative physical capital of the active-body

For the committed, being physically active becomes a major constituent of self-identity (see chapter 6). In turn, physical capital in the sporting sense represents the result of the efforts invested in the body. Therefore, a large part of being identifiable as physically active and possessing the active-body can be equated to the possessing of physical capital. The stronger, faster, healthier and leaner the active-body, the greater is the possession of physical capital. Further to this, is that the different types or shades of physical capital described in the above sections are not mutually exclusive but are instead mutually contributory. The fit body is also seen as being the healthy and attractive body, and visa versa. The compounding affect of the possession of physical capital through the active-body has strong implications in respect to the motivation to both take up and continue participation in physical activities. The following interview extract demonstrates that the 'side affects' of delivering additional forms of physical capital serve to further motivate and reward:

- "I took up weightlifting with Sid and Poly to get fit. Now I'm interested in competing. **So now it's like two things but I want to try and compete**, just to see if I can. So I'm still training here [heavy weights room] but I'm also training there as well [more specialised powerlifting club]". (Anon[45]).

Therefore, in assessing the physiological benefits of an activity it is the *potential sum* of all the different forms of physical capital that should be considered, rather than any one particular aspect.

9.3 The development of social capital

Social capital is derived through the access to resources relating to social relationships with significant others (see chapter 1). "The volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent thus depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively

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[45] The female weightlifter being interviewed here initially trained as part of the weightlifters who formed the weightlifters' focus group. However, shortly after this interview she left the group to pursue powerlifting.

mobilize and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected" (Bourdieu, 1984a: 249). Like physical capital the possession and development of social capital has important implications regarding the processes of participation in sports and physical activities. The literature suggests there is a body of evidence connecting the support of significant others and the maintenance of sports/exercise adherence (Gregson & Colley, 1986; Anderssen & Wold, 1992; Carron, Hausenblas & Mack 1996) and as will be shown the results my fieldwork support this observation.

9.3.1 Social capital and the support of significant others

The development of social relationships can impact on the patterns of participation even before participation takes place. The female weightlifters felt that the masculinized environment of the heavy weights room acted to discourage females from taking up with free weights (see chapter 5). It was also noted that the bustling atmosphere in the foyer of the OXSRAD sports centre prior to the running club's runs could be intimidating and bewildering to the novice runner unused to participating within a running club. In both cases having access to friends already located within each sport provided a way of combating (buffering) the insecurities around undertaking a new activity within a potentially alien environment. During a discussion on the recruitment of new members to the Headington Road Runners by the club's committee's focus group it was noted that a large percentage of potential members contact the club and appear keen to join, but never show up. However, it was also noted that a large percentage of those who do show up already know someone at the club (see chapter 5). Similarly, the female weightlifters felt that meeting friends at the gym helped them to take the first step towards participation in weightlifting.

This unintentionally 'hostile environment' factor was recognised by the Headington Road Runners who took specific steps to counter its affects. By first identifying and then assigning a 'buddy' to new members, they were in effect providing the new member with direct access to social capital. Although the relationship between the novice and the buddy was an artificial construct, in practice it acted in the same fashion as an 'established' social relationship. By providing someone whose primary role was to freely communicate with the novice, the novice had easier access to key knowledges and

support. They could ask otherwise 'embarrassing' questions about sub-cultural practices within the club, they were provided reassurance that they wouldn't be abandoned in the middle of a run if they fell behind, given assistance if they got injured, had someone to socialise with; in essence provided with all the resources that friendships normally confer.

Establishing a social location within a sports club provides an increase in breadth and depth to the network of connections that can be mobilised. Taking the sporting career of the novice runner as an example, the initial period of participation was spent learning the logistics of participation at the club and developing new relationships with other club members. After a period, the now established runner had increased his/her cache of social capital above that of the novice runner. The 'buddy' had been supplanted by a personalised social network. Instead of being allocated a running group, the runner now had greater choice of whom to run with. The runner was now also able to access more specialised information by knowing who to approach (for example, team captain about future competitions or a coach about injury management) and was able to call on others for favours (such as lifts to and from training). Hence, by becoming socially integrated into the club the runner gained greater access to support for their chosen activity. Within the focus groups' discussions about the advantages of belonging to a running club (as opposed to running alone), both female and male runners regarded the running club as providing greater safety and security, as well as access to new friends and a 'supporting' structure (see chapter 5). All these are direct manifestations of the exchange of social capital and have important consequences regarding the patterns of participation:

- "It is noticeable that when new members join the club, those that take the time to go to the bar after running and mix socially are far more likely to continue, whereas those new members who go straight home after running tend to give up a lot sooner and after six weeks are not seen again." (Established runners' focus group).

9.3.2 Exchanging social capitals

Individuals have to 'work' in order to accumulate social capital. As Bourdieu noted: "the reproduction of social capital presupposes an unceasing effort of sociability, a continuous series of exchanges in which recognition is endlessly affirmed and

reaffirmed" (Bourdieu, 1984a: 250). Within amateur sport, the exchanges of services[46] seldom involve financial transactions. Club captains, secretaries, coaches etc. are unpaid positions and require volunteers to fill them. As was demonstrated by the running club committee's focus group, motivation to undertake such responsibilities (and their associated work loads) is often rooted in altruism:

- "Yeah I think that's true the ones that do care generally end up on the committee at some point." (Running club committee's focus group).

The rewards for the undertaking of the extra work lie partly in the intrinsic satisfaction of achieving personal aims[47] and partly in social recognition from significant others. In the case of the running club, the committee members expressed their pleasure in the positive responses and support they received from the rest of the club's membership. Such undertaking of extra responsibilities in ways that are 'recognised' by others has the potential of increasing the level of personal cache of social capital. Notably though, it is the recognition by others that is the key to the realisation of social capital. One of the main complaints by the committee members is that they often felt as though the club membership were not aware of their increased 'efforts' (see chapter 7). Sub-culturally, within the running club the position of the committee did not afford a particularly high level of kudos. The role of the committee member was seen more as chore than as a position of privilege, and consequently recruitment of volunteers to undertake the extra work often proved problematic. However, within golf the sub-cultural position of the committee was regarded somewhat differently. Here being a member of the committee *was* regarded as a privilege (see chapter 7). Bourdieu notes that cultural goods (as opposed to material goods) can only be consumed by apprehending their meaning (Bourdieu, 1984a; Brubaker 1985:757). Within the context of golf, the deference shown towards the position of the club captains etc. was a consequence of the 'values' attached to such positions and is evidence of Bourdieu cultural capital in practice.

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[46] With the obvious exception of the role of the resident professional at golf courses (see chapter 3)

[47] This can be compared to the intrinsic satisfaction associated with pursuing hobbies.

The contrast between the positions of golf clubs' committees with the Headington Road Runners club's committee was highlighted in chapter 7, section 7.3.3. Clearly the position of the committee member within golf carries with it greater social capital than does the same position within running. However, this is also reflected in the amount of work (or investment) required to obtain committee membership. Within the running club, anybody who was willing was almost automatically promoted to committee member. Within the average golf club, the process is far more arduous. As noted in chapter 7, it takes years to establish a position golf club's committee, during which time the individual must develop their social location within the club through networking (as demonstrated within the above extract). That is, within golf the possession of social capital, as well as providing access to the support structures noted previously, also acts as a form of gate keeping to the positions of privilege.

The reproduction of social capital also continuously takes place on a more mundane level. From the outset, individuals are inculcated into the sub-cultural practices of each activity that effectively imposes social interaction between participants. For example, the running club warmed up as a single unit, golfers played within sub-groups, and the weightlifters arranged to meet at the gym. In chapter 5 it was seen that the design of the OXSRAD's sports centre coupled with the numbers of runners enforced social contact; to avoid social contact literally placed the individual runner out in the cold. However, despite such structuring of practices, the accumulation of social capital still requires work. For example, the runners had to commit themselves to regular participation in order to retain friendship ties, the better runners were *expected* to shepherd running groups, golfers had to find themselves a group to practise with, and weightlifters spotted for each other. The efficacy by which individuals create their cache of social capital is therefore related to the way in which activities are (sub-culturally) practised, the personal possession of social skills *and* the efforts undertaken to socially integrate. For example, it was seen in chapter 5 that people who found it difficult to socially integrate could in turn find it difficult to participate as part of a sports club.

In physical activities where the mechanics of participation are not as dependent on social interaction, the ability to accumulate social capital is not so critical. Certainly, weight

training and running (and to a lesser extent golf[48]) can be practiced solitarily. However, the findings from the runners and weightlifters interviews strongly point towards the participation 'experience' being enhanced by the establishment of social relations with other participants; that is, by being a member of a club or group. Support from fellow practitioners is dependent on the exchange of social capitals, and those individuals who are able to (and make the effort to) accumulate social capital through the development of social networks are therefore apt to receive greater mutual support for their participation. Consequently, participation patterns as well as being influenced by processes of the accumulation of physical capital are also influenced by the potential for the accumulation of social capital.

9.4 Habitus, symbols and sub-cultural capital

On writing about sporting practices, Bourdieu states "class habitus defines the meaning conferred on a sporting activity, the profits expected from it; and not the least of these profits is the social value accruing from the pursuit of certain sports by virtue of the distinctive rarity they derive from their class distribution" (Bourdieu, 1978:835). As will be shown, this provides an important perspective from which to analyse some of the mechanisms that drive choices in types of sports to pursue.

9.4.1 Cultural capital and golf

Bourdieu's construct of class habitus can be usefully applied to understanding the patterns of participation in golf. The following is an extract from the new runners' focus group discussion on the *differences* between golf, *golfers* and running:

- "They see being a member of a golf club, you know some people aspire to be members of certain golf clubs. Whereas like about running and telling your mates or people you work with 'oh I'm going for a run tonight' it doesn't have the same ring as 'oh I'm off for a game of golf". (New runners' focus group).

[48] Due to demand on facilities, golf is normally played as part of a group. However, during quiet times and at municipal golf courses the lone golfer can be observed.

The rest of the group did not dispute the statement; there were no rallying cries to defend the cultural position of running as being of the same or greater value than that of golf. The matter of fact way in which the statement was delivered and then not opposed is an example of one tenet of Bourdieu's concept of habitus and cultural capital in action. As noted by Brubaker cultural goods "differ from material goods in that one can "consume" them only by apprehending their meaning" (Brubaker 1985:745). In the above extract, the (higher) value ascribed to playing golf exists because the entire group understood (and conferred with) the elevated position of golf over running within our society. By being given this elevated status, golf has a correspondingly greater potential cache of cultural capital. Memberships of golf courses are widely regarded as status symbols; golf is seen as a way of social climbing, and as a sport for the privileged. However, the position of golf as a preserve of the privileged classes is under threat. In recent years, there has been a plethora of new privately owned golf courses opening. The result of this is an erosion of the exclusivity of golf membership. Within a competitive industry chasing a limited market, 'exclusivity' is counter productive. Membership costs are falling and this is opening up golf to players from the lower socio-economic classes. The cost of belonging to Hinksey Heights for example, equates to around four pints of beer/week. Despite this, the uptake of golf by those from the lower socio-economic classes is currently still very limited (see chapter 3). This is as direct consequence of the effects of the habitus in that the doctrine "not for the likes of us" (Bourdieu, 1985:728) precludes the working classes from contemplating undertaking what they see as an *exclusive* pastime such as golf. The situation is further (purposefully?) perpetuated by golf clubs not targeting such groups, and the relatively poor provision of municipal courses (see chapter 3).

There is now a range in choice of golf courses open to the prospective golfer (see chapter 3), and in general, golfers tend to opt for the best that they can afford. However, the definition of what constitutes 'best' is controvertible. It was shown in chapter 7 that there is an unofficial pecking order to golf clubs according to cost. It is generally assumed that the more expensive the club then the better is the course and the facilities. However, this is not a linear relationship and the law of diminishing returns applies. The members of the Studley Wood golf course expressed a desire to belong to a more expensive golf club even though the facilities at their own club were more than adequate. The cost-return equation in respect to the value of membership only applies if the

cultural capital of a club is taken into consideration. That is, golfers are willing to pay extra to belong to a club that has an historically greater 'cultural capital'. For example, as noted in chapter 7 section 7.6.3, the Hinksey Heights course was (almost) by self-definition towards the bottom of the cultural pecking order of local golf clubs. Its facilities were comparable to more expensive clubs, but its status was not. Further to this, as is shown by the following comment, kudos associated with belonging to a course can be independent of quality, as within golf, the price of membership is often a marker of *identifiable* status:

- "There is this question in our minds that attractiveness for golfers might relate not only to the facilities, but funnily enough possibly even in the price they feel they ought to pay in order to be recognised as belonging to a place of quality". (M.Brimble)

The air of exclusivity can also be constructed through the selective use of spaces. Golf courses are large establishments, they foist themselves on the local landscape, they are usually entered through large imposing gates (see chapter 7) and their clubhouses are symbols of cultural standing. Interestingly, when choosing which course to belong to the status of the clubhouse is important even though it was seen in chapters 5 and 7 that such clubhouses tend to be under used as social venues.

9.4.2 The body and cultural capital

Bourdieu regards the relationship to one's body as being a fundamental aspect of habitus (Bourdieu, 1978:838). He goes on to note that through the differences in the relationship to the body the working classes are distinguishable from the privileged classes (Bourdieu, 1978). He notes: "On one side, there is the *instrumental* relation to the body which the working classes express in all the practices centred on the body...and which is also manifested in the choice of sports requiring a considerable effort, sometimes of pain and suffering (e.g. boxing)...On the other side, there is the tendency of the privileged classes to treat the body as an *end in itself* (Bourdieu, 1978:838).

This dichotomous view of the relationship between the patterns of participation in sport and the cultural position of the body is increasingly outmoded within the rapidly changing conditions of late modernity. As Shilling notes "the body is becoming less of a given, and more of a phenomenon of options and choices" (Shilling 1997:67). If we

strictly apply Bourdieu's mechanisms of cultural capital and class habitus to predicting patterns of participation then there should be a clear observable distinction between the membership profiles and motives of the three sports studied. However, this is not borne out in my research findings. For example, the weightlifters and weight trainers studied came from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds (i.e. from porters through to surgeons). Observation of class differentiation from the way in which they interacted with their bodies *and with each other* is tenuous at best. The only evidence to differentiate socio-economic background was through their respective uses of language. Similarly, though I found no evidence to dispute that working classes are under represented in golf, for the golfers interviewed, motivation was primarily rooted in 'competitiveness' and beating the opponent (supposedly not a trait associated with the body practices of the privileged classes). Therefore, assumptions rooted in class 'relationships' with different types of sport are not wholly predictive or understanding of the current patterns of participation in sports. In turn, pigeonholing the motives behind participation according to socio-economic background is also too limiting, and a more diachronic approach to understanding body practices is required.

Within late modernity, the body is becoming a commodity to be developed and possessed. The successful body is packaged as a conveyor of the active-lifestyle (Fitzclarence, 1990) and the possessor of good health. Concurrently, the embodied state of cultural capital is becoming increasingly drawn away from issues of comportment and orientated more towards the aesthetics of the physical-body. The changing attitudes to the female physique demonstrate shifts in cultural perceptions of the valued body. Traditionally the valued female physique is one that is measured by its 'attractiveness' to men, with muscularity and athleticism being symbolic of the masculinized or butch body (Dean, 1986; Hargreaves, 1986). However, both the female runners and weightlifters valued their muscularity (see chapter 4), and as was also shown in chapter 4, the female athletic physique is becoming increasingly accepted and valued within our society by both males and females.

As noted above, the active-body is strongly associated with the healthy body. Even the retiree golfers (the least physically active of the participants studied) clearly recognised the health implications of walking around the golf course and the resultant increase in value of their active-bodies. During the discussion about the relative advantages of the

more expensive golf club by the Studley Wood focus group, it was noted that the 'other' club had a gym (see chapter 7). Although discussion of the gym was couched in terms of being a healthy pursuit, the primary purpose of visiting a gym is to build muscle (traditionally seen as a working class pursuit). That a gym can belong to and be part of a golf course is testament to the increasing cultural standing of the 'muscled' body. By implication the embodied state of cultural capital in relation to the active-body currently also includes a narcissistic element of body shape[49] -even for retiree golfers.

The culturally located values that are currently attached to the possession of the active-body have strong implications for patterns of participation. The desire for some golfers to undertake a second, more physically active pastime in order to better achieve the benefits of an active-body is partly understandable because practicing golf is not regarded as being overly, physically intensive. However, weight training was also practised by some of the runners, and weightlifters will go running to lose weight. A motivation behind such multi-participation patterns is the desire to mould the body into the culturally defined ideal. Despite the increasing acceptance of the athletic physique for women noted above, there are still gender related differences in our culturally defined ideal shape, as Bordo notes "this "layer" of gender-coded signification, suffusing other meanings, overdetermines slenderness as a contemporary ideal of specifically *female* attractiveness" (Bordo, 1990:101). Chapter 4 showed that one of the main disincentives for women taking up training with weights is the (false) preconception that weight training builds an overtly muscular physique. Contrastingly, one of the main incentives for males is the (misplaced) preconception that by weight training they are able to quickly build muscle. Elements of gender-typing of body ideals were evident amongst the runners. The act of regular running leads to the development of the lean physique, but some of the (male and female) runners saw the overly thin physique as being unattractive in males. It was suggested that some of the male runners were

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[49] The current cultural standing of the narcissistic body is also evidenced by the recent growth in relatively expensive health clubs whose primary aim is to create the toned/shaped body as well as the healthy and fit body.

concerned that running produced the over thin body and consequently ate more to compensate (see chapter 4). I must emphasise here that the desire to construct the ideal body is only a constituent part of the process behind the patterns of participation; it is not an overriding factor[50]. In the context of body development the inter-relationships between gender, body development, the physical capital element of cultural capital and choice in physical activity is complex. However, that a significant minority of each group of weightlifters, runners and golfers chose for body developmental reasons to also participate in other physical activities should instead be regarded as evidence of the increasing range of resources that are available for constructing the modern body. This observation that the cultural position of the body is currently one of choices and options is in line with Giddens' view that within late modernity the body is increasingly becoming a project for development (Giddens, 1991).

9.5 Conversion of capitals

Bourdieu argues that economic capital is at the root of all forms of capital, and that in effect they act as a 'disguised' form of financial capital (Bourdieu, 1986:252). Bourdieu further notes that "labour-time" can be used to measure the forms of cultural capital and that converting one form of capital into another involves the expenditure of labour-time (Bourdieu, 1986:253). Within the context of professional sports, this approach to understanding participation patterns can be easily rationalised. Here, labour-time is invested by significant others in the constructing of a cache of physical capital of an athlete, with the conversion to economic capital occurring only after sufficient physical capital has accrued. For example, parents will invest time and effort in their offspring, providing equipment, transportation to training and competitions, diet, encouragement and a home; the child will work to accumulate appropriate physical skills. In this manner, a form of (sporting) cultural capital and habitus is transferred from generation to generation. Incidentally, this construct goes some way to explaining the existence of

[50] With the exception of extremist body builders –see Klein (1993).

sporting dynasties such as the Khans[51] of Pakistan. After a period of time the child becomes good enough to turn professional and translate their physical capital into a wage. However, for the majority of participants sports and physical activities represent an amateur occupation, and the economic capital at the root of the other forms of capital is not as easily rationalised. Bourdieu also notes that "the more the official transmission of capital is prevented or hindered, the more the effects of the clandestine circulation of capital in the form of cultural capital becomes determinant in the reproduction of the social structure" (Bourdieu, 1986:254). As will be shown below, this reasoning of principles provides a powerful insight into the processes that lie behind the observable patterns of participation in sports and physical activities.

9.5.1 The conversions of physical capital

In the extrinsic sense and within the context of participation on a local amateur level, the value of physical capital lies in its exchangeability for other forms of capital. The first of these is social capital. As demonstrated in chapter 6, sports and physical activities are embodied activities. Those individuals who seek to participate with others do so through their active-bodies, it is the active-body that provides *the catalyst* for social interaction. Furthermore, as with possession of social capital, it is a process that starts even before participation takes place. In chapter 4, it was seen that many potential runners would not countenance participation within a club environment before they had achieved a certain (self defined) level of physical competence. Similarly, access to a golf course is usually confined to golfers who possess a golfing handicap, and those golfers who do not have a handicap are often required to demonstrate a basic level of competence before being allowed out on the course. Therefore, the possession of a basic level of physical capital acts as the gatekeeper to participation.

Possession of physical capital continues to act as a gatekeeper to social capital after a regular pattern of participation is established. Chapter 5 showed that whilst weightlifters, runners and golfers all communicated socially with each other during

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[51] The Khans of Pakistan are a family of professional squash players who dominated open play from the 1950's to the 1990's.

training, the composition of the social-groups tended to be based on relative levels of physical ability. That is, good players practice, and by implication socialise, with other good players. In this respect, physical capital directly broadens the access to social capital due to sub-cultural 'values' that are placed on physical abilities. Being physically competent often provides access to sports teams and competitions that in turn provide additional loci for social interaction. There is however, a bias in regard to the direction of social interaction. Due to the kudos (and resultant pecking order) assigned to the possession of physical skills, good players can fraternise with lesser player, but, as noted in chapter 5, it is culturally much harder for novice or low skilled practitioners to socialise with the elite.

It is the values that are placed on physical capital that provide the mechanism for the second form of capital that physical capital can be exchanged for, i.e. 'sub-cultural' capital[52]. Within sports clubs the positions of privilege and power (club captains, presidents etc) are normally reserved for those who have demonstrated a degree of physical competence within their sport. It was seen in chapter 7 that the better runners were expected to take on the role of shepherds, and it was also noticeable that within the heavy weights gym deference from other gym users was partly derived through being physically strong. The mechanism of exchange of physical capital for sub-cultural capital is most clearly seen within golf. The following extract shows the complexities of the interchange of capitals:

- "You may often find that some of the middle class players who want to be seen as being at a good club would probably look for an expensive one. That's a personal thing, it may well be out of their means but the fact is they may feel that they are a better golfer because they are at an expensive club. But the fact is they may well be socially excluded because they are not at the same class level as everybody else in the club. Unless they are a good golfer then they will be accepted. Its a crazy situation. If you are a good golfer then money doesn't

[52] I use the term sub-cultural capital in order to distinguish between cultural capital that exists primarily within the context of the local sports club and the cultural capital that exist in the broader sense of our western society.

> matter too much because money will always want to play with a good golfer". (M.Vincent)

Within this extract the values that are placed on being a good golfer i.e. the possession of a cache of physical capital, directly serve to replace cultural capital due to personal socio-economic status. Furthermore, such is the sub-cultural value of elite players that they are often poached by other golf courses. The reasoning is that through offering reduced or zero fees in exchanged for having elite players as part of their membership profile, the courses in turn increase their own sub-cultural standing within the local golfing market.

9.5.2 The conversions of social capital

People demonstrating physical competence often fill the positions of privilege within sports clubs. However, closer examination shows that such positions are rarely conferred *only* through dint of physical ability. While it is also rare for the physically maladroit to achieve high social standing within a club, access to a cache of social capital is often key. As previously noted the establishment of social networks often acts as a gatekeeper to the positions of privilege. However, these social networks also provide access to knowledge. This can either be in terms of 'internal' knowledges that are constructed through personal experiences, or in terms of external knowledges that are embodied within relationships with important others. For example, within the group of weightlifters Sid was (mutually) assigned the role of patron by the others because they respected his knowledge and experience about weight training. But, they also knew that if they wanted to progress their sport further Sid had the *contacts* to enable this. Similarly within the running club, there were those who were regarded as 'important' figures not because of the positions they held but because of their knowledge, contacts and deference shown by significant others towards them. Thus through the development of social capital, individuals have the opportunity to elevate their cultural standing (and hence cultural capital) within a club. The possession of contacts can also help in the initial stages of taking up a physical activity. As noted in section 8.3.1 above, knowing someone who already participates can play a constructive part in the process of taking up a physical activity. Many prospective participants feel they have to be physically competent before they can start participating. However, by knowing someone already participating this perceived requirement is much reduced as the confidence provided

through being physically competent is substituted by the sense of security provided through the social relationship with the contact. In effect, the requirement for physical capital has been supplanted by the possession of a cache of social capital.

9.6 Concluding comments: The interplay between capitals

Within this chapter, I have demonstrated that through the process of participating in sports and physical activities, individuals have the opportunity to accumulate caches of different forms of capital. If these different forms of capital existed in isolation from each other then participation in sports could be rationalised in terms of investment and reward. That is, individuals would participate for specific and clearly identifiable purposes. However, such reductionism is far too simplistic, as it does not account for the interrelationship between, and the interchangeability of, the different forms of capital. Therefore, due to the interrelationship between the different forms of capital, the process of participation should instead be regarded as directly related to the *product* of the development and possession of physical, social *and* cultural capital. Figure 8.1 provided at the end of this chapter is a schematic summary of the interrelationship between the forms of capital and the process of participation. Within this diagram, the arrows give examples (within the context of participation in physical activities) of the ways in which the different forms of capital are interdependent. Consequently, if an individual chooses to position themself at any one extreme, for example, just to make friends (i.e. bottom left of the triangle –social capital) they cannot do so without regard to the development and possession of the other forms of capital.

Above all else, participation is an embodied process. Through participation individuals develop their relationships with their bodies, be it their physical and active-bodies or their cultural bodies. Furthermore, within the conditions of late modernity the cultural 'values' that are attached to the body are subject to change as the position of the body within society changes. Currently the thin, fit, active young and synonymously healthy body is regarded as possessive of high cultural capital. However, as tastes in the body changes, so do the perceptions about what type of physical activity to undertake. As was seen in chapter 4 the current taste regarding the muscular physique encourages males to body build but not women. The act of participation is therefore best described as a permutable process that involves the continuous interplay between the ongoing and

developmental wants and needs of the individual, and the ability of an activity to meet those needs in the context of changing perceptions of the active-body within society.

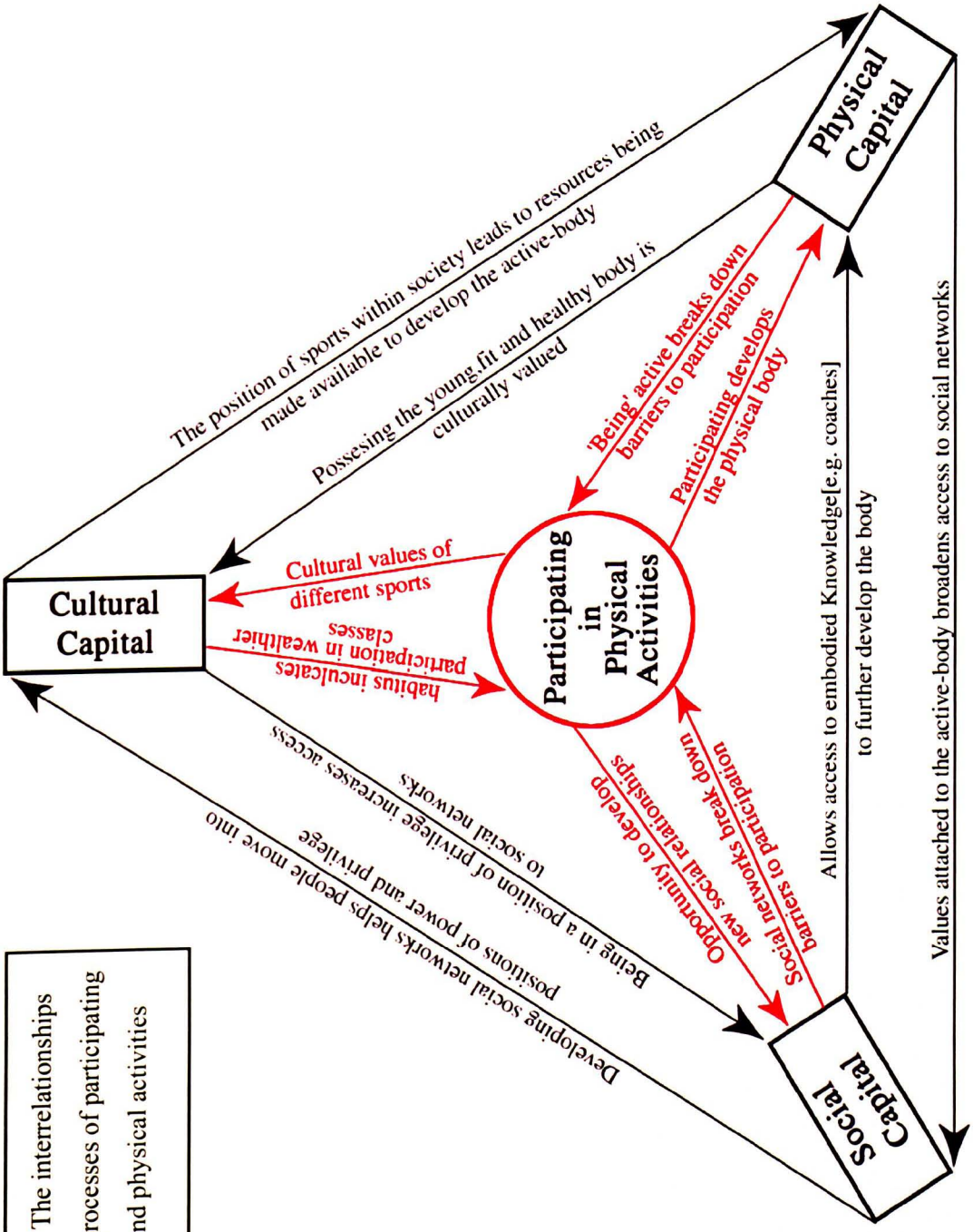


Figure 9.1: The interrelationships between the processes of participating in sports and physical activities

Chapter 10: Sub-cultural Identities and Participation

10.1 Introduction

In Chapter 9 it was demonstrated that the processes by which individuals 'chose' to become involved in physical activities and sports can be rationalised in terms of the accumulation of, and interplay between, the different forms of cultural capital. Although this explains the reasoning and processes behind the whys of sports participation, the hows of participation also need to be understood. As noted in chapter 5, very few participants envisage practising their sport in complete isolation. Participation in sports by its nature involves interaction between participants. That is, in order to participate individuals must become members of groups whose common aim is to create a social environment that supports and reinforces long-term participation. Drawing mainly from Goffman's work on social identity, (Goffman 1967, 1971a, & 1971b) this chapter explores how individuals construct and possess as a dimension of their self-understanding a sub-cultural identity that is compatible with the dominant social environments in which participation takes place. This chapter will also show that it is through possession and/or development of the forms of cultural capital and the corresponding construction and possession of an acceptable sub-cultural identity that is the *key* mechanism by which participation is enacted, and patterns of participation maintained. A major emphasis in Goffman's work is that individuals are restricted in the images of self that they can portray by the restrictions that are imposed by the dominant social order (Lemert & Branaman 1997: xlvii). Moreover, Goffman theorises that individuals posses a range of identities from which a judgement is made about which best suits the expectations of a given audience (Karp & Yoels, 1979: 75). In this vein, key to integration (socialisation) into sporting subcultures are the processes by which identity construction is managed and maintained, and identity confirmation by other members of those sub-cultures reinforced (Donnelly and Young, 1988: 76).

Goffman notes that "during interaction, the individual is expected to possess certain attributes, capacities and information which, taken together, fit together into a self that is at once coherently unified and appropriate for the occasion" (Goffman 1967:107). How

well such identities are created and maintained is indicated through the degree of recognition and confirmation by others (Goffman 1971; Hockey & James, 2003). In respect to the developing of an identity that is compatible within sporting sub-cultures, from the first encounter individuals pick up clues about what is expected of them in terms of facets of identities they are expected to portray. As Goffman notes: "given their social identities and the setting, the participants will sense what sort of conduct *ought* to be maintained as the appropriate thing, however, much they may despair of it actually occurring" (Goffman, 1976:205). As was seen in chapter 5, many of the participants felt awkward and nervous when they first encountered the social environment in which they were expected to participate. Indeed the *fitting in* of new members into the running club was seen by the committee as a special point of concern, so much so that they took active measures to ease the transition of new members into club runners. That individuals do persist and establish for themselves a sporting (social) identity amongst participating others, demonstrates that mechanisms exist by which acceptable social identities are created.

10.2 The active-body identity

Participation induces changes in the physiology of bodies, and this process of body transformation induces changes in the embodied dimensions of identity. Participants in sport are instinctively aware of how participation is an embodied process (see chapter 4), and this awareness extends to conscious knowledge of the changes in personal identity that participation instils. That is, through participation individuals come to *feel* differently about their physical selves. For example, it was shown in chapter 4 that participants valued the changes in physique that participation engenders. The following interview extract was used to illustrate both the awareness and implicit pride that some participants took in their athletic physiques:

- My thighs always used to be big and fat and flabby but now they're big but muscley." (Female runners' focus group)

For the possessor, the progressive change in physique from flabby to muscley represented a positive change in their physique and corresponding body identity. However, this statement also says a lot about the development of the runner's self-

identity and the *audience* to which that identity was being projected. To the outsider the thighs remain big, and for many women in western cultures this is *not* seen as a desired state. Importantly however, the statement about muscley legs was made in the context of a focus group of female runners. That is, the audience for this statement was a group of individuals who shared an athletic physique[53]. In reply to the question "why participate?" the weightlifters, runners and golfers 'reactive' replies were: "to get fit", "feel fit", "loose weight", "keep the weight down", "get strong", "build muscle", "enjoy being active" etc. The common thread running throughout these is that all the replies implied that (positive) embodied identities could be created through participation[54].

10.2.1 Physical identities, differentiation and integration

In creating a new social identity the individual recognises a knowledge of their membership of a group (or many groups), and the differentiation of the identity of that group from other groups. That is "the construction of social identities is an intra-individual consequence of one function of stereotypes, positive differentiation of ingroups from outgroups" (Howard, 2001:99). Here the focus group research (see chapter 2) highlighted the group aspect of identity construction. For each member of the focus groups there were essentially two audiences[55]. The first, as noted above, was the fellow members of the focus group. The second being that each individual was also their own audience, as Goffman notes "the performer comes to be his own audience...Presumably he intracepts or incorporates the standards he attempts to maintain in the presence of others so that his conscience requires him to act in the socially proper way" (Goffman 1971:86). Certainly each focus group presented an apparently united

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[53] In this context my own physicality as a weightlifter served to reinforce the group identity as one associated with the collective possession of athletic physiques.

[54] At no stage during my fieldwork was participation represented in a negative light. For example, in relation to health, participating was never presented as a burden only tolerated in order to maintain health (see chapter 4).

[55] My position as facilitator could be argued to have created a third audience.

front when discussing the interview topics. Though there were disagreements (sometimes strongly made) between interviewees, with one exception there were no *dissenting* voices. It was clear that when discussing the questions posed, the individuals within the focus groups were often choosing to locate their answers within the dynamics of the group, so as not to be seen as outsiders to the group. For example, using the term 'we' and often looking for confirmation from others within the group that their replies, though not necessarily applicable to all present, were acceptable to all present. The one exception was where one golfer described the purchase and use of power trolleys as a "status thing" (See chapter 7). The overt moral indignation shown amongst the group towards this statement implied that such 'outspoken' criticism of the culture of golf (especially in front of an outsider) represented a breaking of a moral code, and was thus deemed deviant behaviour -the group were quick to gloss over this indiscretion. Moreover, the unanimous solution to the conundrum of the use of power trolleys as being there to prevent injuries, demonstrated the degree to which the golfers preferred to present the identity of the golfer as grounded in the physical as opposed to wealth and social status.

Within the process of socialisation into a sporting sub-culture, this *act* of being physically active serves as an identifier for social inclusion. Within the masculinized environment of the heavy weights room, contrary to common belief, social acceptance by those who *use* the heavy weights was *not* gendered. It was instead dependent on being identified as dedicated and committed to proper training, regardless of gender (see chapter 4). However, there are caveats to this process. The handicap system in golf served to differentiate golfers according to physical ability; membership of a golf club provided a generic identity of golfer, but handicap served to further differentiate that identity of golfer into golfers of a certain standard. During interaction within the field of play, participants are morally obliged to possess physical capacities (as well as social and cultural attributes) that are compatible with their fellow players (Goffman, 1967:105). It was seen that the running club operationalized itself around the capacity of its members to self-select running groups that were physically compatible. Similarly, within the heavy weights room the 'big guys' ostensibly trained with other 'big guys'. Within the participation arena performances of the body can very quickly either support or reject the claims made by individuals. Thus exaggerated or false claims from the slow runner or weak weightlifter are quickly exposed, when s/he fails to adequately compete

with their follow competitors. Fear of ensuing embarrassment from not being able to keep up with a particular running group, or not being able to load a heavy weight results in many participants under playing their abilities when first integrating into a new club. It was noted by the organisers of the running club that it was often difficult to accurately establish the running abilities of new members who consistently underplayed their physical abilities[56] (see chapter 4). Indeed, I was also guilty of this when I first joined in with the runners during the data collection phase of my research. Within golf the handicap serves as a marker for the authenticity of personal claims to golfing ability. Even so, some choose to manipulate this system[57] so that their official handicap under represents their true ability. Given the derogatory title of "bandits", these individuals gain an unfair advantage in competition whereby they receive a disproportionate allowance of shots. As with the runners and weightlifter, stigma attached to such false claims can lead to social ostracism amongst fellow players.

As a consequence of the ease by which false claims about physical ability are exposed, social integration requires participants to demonstrate physical compatibility with a group of other practitioners. The ability to choose a club that represent an appropriate standard of play is therefore important for the stability of participation patterns. For example, many of the Headington Road Runners thought that the other local running club was only suitable for serious (and/or elite) runners, and through its level of competitiveness did not provide a friendly atmosphere for the social[58] runner. Hence within the other club the social runner would be ostracised due to either their lack of running standard or 'seriousness'. The Headington Road Runners themselves were in a fortunate position in that the size of their club, and the way in which they used their spaces (see chapters 3 and 5), enabled them to effectively form several clubs *within* a

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[56] Interestingly I followed this scenario during my participation observation of the running club. Fear of not being able to keep up meant that I chose to position myself as a novice runner (see chapter 8).

[57] For example, to only submit their cards for grading after poor rounds.

[58] As was shown in chapter 5 the runners regarded themselves as belonging to a predominantly social club.

club. Thus, the elite and serious runners could find a group to practise with, *and* the slower and/or social runner could also find a group to practise with. Moreover, this mutual segregation served to diffuse possible sites of conflict over who the club should serve, and allowed the club to have the dual identity of a 'running club with a social problem'.

10.2.2 Developing a sub-cultural identity

Goffman uses the term 'front' to describe how individuals employ expressive equipment during their performances (Goffman, 1971:32). Front comprises of both setting and personal front. Setting refers to the physical characteristics of the location within which a performance takes place, whereas personal front refers to personal attributes that are directly associated with, and carried by, the performer (see chapter 1). Of the three physical activities studied, the use of fronts in the process of constructing a cultural identity was most clearly visible in the way the golfers approached their sport. The setting within which golf was played comprised a plethora of material paraphernalia such as clubhouses, grandiose gates and power trolleys, the combination of which served to construct a cultural identity for the courses. The more expensive and grandiose the course the greater the kudos it ascribed to its members. There is in this context a reciprocating relationship between the course and its membership. The expensive course attracts only those members who can 'afford' its fees, and by so restricting the membership, the identity of the club's membership is in turn reinforced and perpetuated by the collective cultural standing of the individual club members.

For the golfers, personal fronts were embedded in the mores of participation *and* in personal attributes. For the golfers, a 'golfer' was someone who both understood the mores of participation and *importantly* adopted them as part of their playing style. Here being able to conduct oneself properly was a key to being socially accepted. Socialising within a golf club often centres on topics of conversation that could be seen as indicators of class (see chapter 7). For example, conversations surrounding work, holiday choices and area of residence can all reveal the personal possession of cultural capital. The importance of such personal fronts is also noted in Woodward's (1997) work who comments that the construction of identity is relational and that "difference is established by symbolic marking" (1997:12). Thus, for the prospective participants who bring little

possession of personal cultural capital, the symbolic markers of their cultural background they (unwittingly) portray through their dress, demeanour and personal histories can lead to social inclusion or isolation.

In contrast to golf, the setting of the running club had few physical attributes that differentiated or identified its members. On entering the sports centre the runners could have been embarking on a variety of different activities. The roads and spaces in which participation takes place, unlike a golf course, do not symbolise their activity. However within sport, symbols of difference can be signified through more personally adopted markers. For example, both the running club and the weightlifters had symbolic markers that were indicators of identity. The Headington Road Runners had a uniform that differentiated them from other running clubs and provided them with a sense of club identity and unity (see chapter 7), and the way in which the weightlifters used (or did not use) the weightlifting belt differentiated them from weight trainers. Rituals and organisational structures that shape the acts of participation also served the runners and weightlifters as symbolic markers of identity. The runners did not run until they met in a certain place, warmed up together and divided into suitable groups (see chapter 3). Similarly, the weightlifters 'chose' to share their equipment, and to spot for each other, whereas the weight trainers tended to train as solitary units. Embodied symbolism also includes the use of language and of comportment. Each of the sports studied had their own unique (and defining) colloquialisms and mannerisms by which their participants communicated. All these symbolic markers have to be understood and assimilated in order to establish an acceptable social identity; the novices may displays their lack of experience through their nervous countenance, whereas established participants portray their established identity as a member of the group through competency in their social interactions with other participants.

10.2.3 A collective presentation of the team

Donnelley and Young (1998) note that identities are created for two audiences, those outside of the sub-culture and those within. Earlier Goffman had observed that "the objective of any team is to sustain the definition of the situation that its performance fosters" and in order to do this controls the flow of information through the "over-communication of some facts and the under-communication of others" (1971:231).

When conducting informal interviews with the running club, the importance of maintaining the 'ingroup' was evident when the members of the running club tried to resolve the different identities of 'runner' and 'jogger'. The runners at first placed the division purely within the bounds of physical competence. That is, those who are good enough at running attained the title of runners. However, this also differentiated the club into runners and joggers, which is contra to their preferred collective opinion that the club consisted entirely of 'runners'. Although the runners struggled to define a runner, it is important to note that they strove to find terms of reference that encompassed the *whole* club. Not to do so would have risked excluding some runners and thence the labelling of the club as primarily a *social* all-inclusive running club. The conundrum was resolved by allocating a 'missing' component of the jogger's identity in the fact that they did not belong to, and therefore did not follow, the embodied practices of the running club[59]. However, as noted above, the assimilation into the running club was dependent on the individual runner being physically competent enough to participate appropriately. This stark contradiction was repeated with the golfers who collectively were keen to point out that the handicap system served to balance ability, whereas it clearly divided players according to competency. These examples show that to be part of the club (team) meant adopting and extolling key identity traits of the club's sub-culture. However, they also show that constructing a social identity within a sport is bound up with the dualism of developing both physical identity and sub-cultural identity.

10.3 The relationship between the forms of capital and the construction of sub-cultural identity

The link between the construction of different caches of cultural capital associated with practising sports, and achieving social identity, is one that allows us to theorise human action in respect to sports participation. Social integration within the club is reliant on

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[59] Though joggers may be physically fit, they did not 'belong' to the running sub-culture. Those who made the *effort* to assimilate themselves into the sub-culture of the running club were runners; those that did not were joggers

the individual maintaining enough coherent evidence to support a projected self-identity that is compatible with other participants (Goffman, 1967). What constitutes acceptable evidence is dependent upon the values that are attached to the evidences by the audience. For example, running shorts and vest that are acceptable signifiers of a running identity would be unacceptable if worn on a golf course. Thus, different types of front can be interpreted as possessive of varying degrees of cultural capital according to the nature of the individual/audience relationship[60].

10.3.1 A linking of physical capital and social identity

As shown in chapter 4, physical attributes that are associated with different sports can also represent forms of physical capital. The runners 'valued' their lean physiques that were the by-product of running, and the weightlifters noted that the 'desire' to possess muscles enticed people into the heavy weights room. However, the possession of physical capital also serves as a gatekeeper to the development of social relationships with other participants. As shown above, despite being an all inclusive social running club, in order to maintain participation the runners had to present to the club a basic level of physical fitness. Without this required level of fitness, the participant risks social embarrassment through becoming a burden on other runners. Whereas most clubs will tolerate a level of physical incompetency whilst the novice develops basic skills, a prolonged incompatibility of physical ability levels inevitably leads to conflict and disengagement[61]. However, physical capitals take time to develop and this creates a 'scarcity' in their supply, which in turn serves to further elevate their value and enhance the identity (value) of the possessor. Thus the golfer who presents a low handicap to a new golf club has much less difficulty fitting in than a golfer with a high handicap, provided they can sustain evidence of their physical prowess during play. Within

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[60]For example, the wearing of a particular brand of sports shoe may be viewed as portraying a status symbol by some, and a waste of money by others

[61] The base level of physical ability expected of the novice runner at Heading Road Runners was to sustain a gentle run for approximately 40 minutes. Below this level there were no compatible runners with which the novice could participate

weightlifting, evidence of physical capital is embodied in the large musculature of the successful weightlifter, whereas for running it is displayed by the lean physique. In all cases it is rare to see participants who overtly display evidence of the possession of physical capital but do not share a social identity with participating others.

The time factor in the investment and subsequent development of the physical capital also helps to explain the increase in personal worth of a social identity assigned by one's peer group as compared to an assigned identity by non-practising others. The 'outsider' has little experience of what constitutes physical capital, and at best can only make an educated *guess* at what is a good or bad performance. However, fellow participants *know* the time and efforts required to become good at a sport and so are better able to differentiate the levels of physical competencies. Thus, to be acknowledged as a 'sports'person by participating others (i.e. an informed audience) adds to a sense of ontological security generated by the physical identity of the active-body.

10.3.2 A linking of social and sub-cultural capital to social identity

As Goffman notes "the individual is linked to society through two principal social bonds: to collectives through membership and to other individuals through social relationships" (1971b:188). It is through these social relationships that individuals can create for themselves a social identity that marks them as part of a collective or group. Lemert and Branaman (1997:xlvii) note that one of the major ideas put forward by Goffman was that the ability of an individual to maintain an (acceptable) self-identity amongst others is the degree to which they have access to structural resources. If we now return to Bourdieu's social capital, the development of social relationships with other competitors serves as capital (structure) that can be drawn upon to develop and maintain a social identity. As Bourdieu (1984, 1986) recognised, social capital is achieved through being part (member) of a group. For example, it was noted that to get on a golf club committee it was *advantageous* to know the club captain (see chapter 7). However, comparison of golf and weightlifting reveals that there are variations to the social dimensions of sporting activities. Many of the golfers regarded golf as an

important location for making friends[62]. Furthermore, it is also widely seen as a location for social 'contacts' (Bourdieu, 1978) and as an activity that is suitable for those in retirement as the social network developed at a golf course serves to replace the social networks lost at the workplace. In this context part of the cultural identity of golf is that it provides a means through which social capital (networks) can be developed. Conversely, the individualised activity of weight training is not seen as a social activity. None of the weight trainers viewed the gym as a primary location for socialising. (And incidentally neither did the runners or golfers view a gym as a resource for developing social networks (social capital)).

Within sports, social identity and social capital have a reciprocal relationship. Developing an accepted social identity amongst participating others provides a location from which social networks can be developed, and from developing these networks social capital is accrued. Conversely, having access to social capital provides a structure through which a social identity can be created. It was seen that many new members of the running club joined because they knew somebody at the club. That is, through a prior relationship they had access to a small cache of social capital that helped them through the initial phase of joining and becoming accepted and socially integrated. However, this leads us to question which comes first in the relationship between social identity and social capital. For those prospective participants who possess neither social capital nor an established social identity as a sportsperson to draw upon, developing friendships and becoming integrated into a new sports club can be difficult. It was shown in chapter 5 that many prospective golfers fail to become integrated into a club (and consequently leave) because they lack the resources to develop an appropriate social identity.

A structural resource that individuals can employ to help develop a social identity is that of personal cultural capital. As shown above (see also chapters 7 and 8) some golfers found it difficult to socialise within the more expensive golf courses as they had little

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[62] An opinion shared by the runners. It partly stems from the increasing mobility of the labour market within high modernity effects a severing of life long childhood friends. In this respect, Sports clubs represent a resource for developing a social life when moving to a new area.

common cultural ground (capitals) upon which to build social relationships. Personal possession cultural capitals can provide the individual with the 'tools' to access social networks[63] that help identify the individual as being part of the 'ingroup'. For example, an established golfer joining a new course brings with them a handicap, a dress code and specialised knowledges that serve as symbolic markers (cultural capitals) of a social identity that is broadly compatible with the expectations of the members of the new club. Through the possession of such capitals, the newcomer is less likely to socially alienate themselves through bad or inappropriate practice. That is, in Goffman's terms they will be able to give a convincing performance. In addition, in sport physical capital through its *potential* also serves as a form of sub-cultural capital. Being identified as someone who has the potential to become a good player can significantly ease the integration into a club. In this respect, it is usually recognised that there is less investment required from the club in order for the individual to integrate and develop the necessary dimensions of an accepted social identity. Here a broad history of participation in sports helps to develop the basic body skills required to develop particular body skills of specialised sports. For example, most sports develop a basal level of fitness required to gently run for the 40 minutes required to join in the novice group within the Headington Road Runners.

10.4 Concluding comments, the relationship between social identity and participation patterns

Using Goffman's theories of social interaction, and Bourdieu's construct of the forms of cultural capital, we can see the ways in which each physical activity has an associated sub-culture that is constructed from physical, social and cultural components. In turn these are reproduced by the collective actions of the individuals participating. The imposition of these collective actions in turn serves to define attributes, capacities and acts that are expected and appropriate (Goffman, 1967). Through adopting and

[63] By adding to the effects of habitus noted in chapter 8, the lack of these tools provides a further explanation as to the low take up of traditionally leisure class pursuits by the lower social classes.

internalising the constrictions that are imposed by the sub-culture, individuals who *choose* to participate and *choose* to continue to participate in turn develop a sense of personal sub-cultural identity that is a direct by-product of the processes of participation. As Aristotle noted 'we are what we repeatedly do' and as was shown in chapter 6 by regularly participating, *being* physically active becomes part of a lifestyle and for the participants an intrinsic part of their self-identities. The possession of an active-body also provided a positive enhancement to self-identity. Even where the level of actual physical activity was relatively low, incorporating some level of regular physical activity as part of a lifestyle led for most participants to the positive realignment of their body as being identified as an 'active-body'. Moreover, enacting a sporting sub-cultural identity serves to enhance further the physical sense of body-identity. This was seen in the runners' views of being runners as opposed to joggers, and in the corresponding enhancement of physical identity subsequent to engaging participation in running as *part* of a running club.

Although developing and then possessing the physical capital required to produce the active-body is *the* central tenet around which a social identity amongst participating others is created, other factors are also important. Possession of social capital provides the individual with access to social networks (resources) that can help in the creation and maintenance of the acceptable social identity. In turn, possession of cultural capitals serves to provide symbolic markers that evidence the possession of an appropriate sub-cultural identity that underpins much of the social identity of the individual. Moreover, appropriate cultural capital can also provide the individual with the tools needed to carve out a social identity. Even though the process of constructing these identities is complex, participants *do* recognise their existence, and a sense of a shared social identity amongst participating others is clearly important. It was clearly shown in this study that the weightlifters, runners and golfers who persisted, developed for themselves *valued* social identities within their sub-cultures. Moreover, these identities provided the individual with a sense of belonging and, crucially, access to mutual support from fellow participants. Those runners who became socially integrated into the club were more likely to exhibit stable participation patterns than those who remained on the periphery. Desires to develop particular embodied identities also have broad implications for differences in patterns of participation. Some golfers associated the act of belonging to an expensive club as conferring the identity of *being* a better golfer. Similarly, some

runners and golfers also frequented the gym, precisely because weight training offered a different component of body identity development.

Developing a social identity amongst participating others is constructed from physical, social and sub-cultural related elements. None of these elements work in isolation; each is entwined and dependent on the other. In order for individuals to develop for themselves an appropriate social identity amongst participating others they must develop for themselves caches of cultural capitals. It is these capitals that provide the tools for creating appropriate elements of an accepted social identity. Moreover, where individuals are able to create for themselves an appropriate social identity amongst participating others, then the patterns of participation are likely to be successful and stable. The participant comes to value being, and then continues to invest in being, a weightlifter, runner or golfer. Where the acceptable dimensions of an appropriate social identity of runner, golfer etc. are lacking, or there is a mismatch, sites of personal conflict may arise and the personal uptake of an activity is likely to be poor and/or disengagement from participation is likely to occur.

Chapter 11: Conclusions

11.1 Introduction

This qualitative study of participation in sports and physical activities has shown that the processes behind the act of participating are complex. Part 1 of this concluding chapter unravels this complexity to provide a sociological explanation of the act of participating. This is achieved through drawing together the conclusions regarding the application of Bourdieu's concepts of the forms of cultural capital (chapter 9), and the processes of developing a social identity amongst participating others (chapter 10). Part 2 concludes this study with an overview of the work undertaken for this study, a report on the implications of the findings for policy, and recommendations for further research.

Part 1: A sociological exploration of participation

11.2 Introduction to part 1

The act of participating is not a static phenomenon. It is an ongoing system of exchanges between individuals, a dynamic equilibrium that meets the evolving needs of the individual participant, and the expectations of the other members of the subculture with whom participation takes place.

11.2.1 Choosing to participate

Giddens notes that central to the structuring of self-identity is "reflexively organised life-planning" (1991:5). Moreover, how people interrelate to their bodies is an integral part of this reflexivity, with the body representing an action system of options and choices (Giddens, 1991). Giddens further notes that the current trend towards a narcissistic approach to body appearance is evidence of "a concern lying much deeper actively to

'construct' and control the body" (Giddens, 1991:7). Although Giddens has been criticised for placing the boundaries of the body away from nature and into culture, thus overstating the degree of control that individuals can exert over their bodies (Shilling, 1993:185, see also chapter 1), Giddens' view of the body as a 'project' to be developed provides an insightful means by which the *motivations* behind participating in sports and physical activities can be rationalised. Certainly, the link between being physically active, possessing the active-body and thus *control* over the body was demonstrated in the research findings. It was shown, even with the novice runners with little physiological knowledge, that exercise is *known* to burn off excess calories, and is thus a mechanism through which body weight can be controlled. Furthermore, physical activity also represented opportunities for the control of health, body shape, and fitness (see chapter 4), as well as social interaction (see chapter 5), and improved cultural standing (see chapter 7).

Although physical activity in and of itself can represent a positive lifestyle choice, it was notable that the cohort of participants contained very few from the lower socio-economic classes. This observation concurs with the general under representation of the lower socio-economic classes in many sports (see chapter 1). Importantly, this under representation was largely unnoticed by the participants in this study. Both the runners and golfers thought that their respective clubs had a broad 'spectrum' of members representing many factions of society. In actuality, none of the clubs had many working class members. Significantly, the invisibility of the working classes[64] meant that the club's memberships were unaware of a need to target these groups as an untapped pool of prospective participants. In respect to class differentiation, the major barriers to participation lay 'outside' of the sports clubs and within the location of sports within our culture. For example, in relative terms, the cost of running with the Headington Road Runners was negligible; they were situated within easy walking distance of working class communities and had a clearly visible presence through their runners practising in the streets. Yet, the club failed to attract members from these communities. Contrastingly, although slightly more expensive in costs than running, the heavy weights

[64] A similar and parallel situation existed with the invisibility of individuals from ethnic minorities within the clubs.

gym did have a significant working class presence. The acceptability of pursuing physical activity therefore is subject to the interplay between the socio-economic location of individual participant, and the types of activity on offer. That is, each sport or physical activity has *value* due to specific meanings that are attached to it by the participants, and wider society. These meanings are a product of social history of the sport and the current position of all sports (see chapter 1). For example, the runners noted that going to the running club did not have the same 'ring' as to going to the golf club.

Within our cohort a differentiation in choice on the type of physical activity to undertake is therefore expected. Partly rooted in an understanding of biological determinism and partly rooted in what each sport represents, an individual will choose an activity they foresee as suiting their (differing) needs. For example, it was seen that the runners thought that running was good for controlling bodyweight; the weightlifters thought that their sport was good for developing strength; the golfers thought that their sport was good for making new friends. Moreover, a further dimension to our cohort's prospect of body control relates to body shape. Different types of physical activities offer different types of body shaping. Currently the lean, fit and young body is regarded as being attractive and of high value, and such values are becoming less gendered in both males (Phillips & Drummond, 2001) and females (Duncan, 1994) desiring the ideal body shape. However, the gendered *preferences* in choice of physical activity supports the findings from the literature review that desirable body 'shapes' are gendered and are subject to change over time. In this respect, leanness is associated more with the female physique and musculature with the male physique. Clearly gendered stereotyping of ideal body types has important implications for patterns of participation, and given sufficient numbers we might expect our cohort's choices in sports to reflect this. For example, it was seen in chapter 3 that the health suite contained a greater proportion of female participants than did the heavy weights gym. However, the gendering of desirable body shape is generally expressed as biases in choices, rather than in absolutes. Many of the female runners expressed pleasure in the muscle tone that running produced, and some male bodybuilders noted that they ran in order to keep a leaner physique. A consequence of physical activities not being mutually exclusive, is that some of our cohort will 'cherry pick' activities to serve what Giddens would call different 'body projects'. Hence the observation that some golfers would also have liked to have access

to a gymnasium at their golf courses (see chapter 7). This *reasoned* choice in physical activity in effect shows that under the conditions of late modernity *for some* the body has become increasingly objectified, and that the choice to exercise represents a key component of Giddens' reflexivity of the self (Giddens, 1991:77).

11.2.2 Starting participation; creating a social identity

In his work 'Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method', Blumer (1969:8) notes that "human beings in interacting with one another have to take account of what each other is doing or is about to do" (Blumer, 1969:8). Clearly for our cohort the foremost action they *expect* to undertake is some form of physical activity. Uncertainness about the exact form of participation understandably leads to insecurities about the physical self. It was noted by the running club's committee that the misunderstandings of the club's general running ability was the major inhibitor to new members joining the club. In this respect, the reflexive presentation of self as physically active (albeit sometimes underplayed[65]) serves as an identifier for social inclusion (see chapter 10). That is, for members of the cohort to 'fit in' present themselves as individuals, who are, or *would be* physically active. Certainly, it was seen in chapter 10 that the possession of the active-body was the central tenet around which a social identity amongst participating others is created.

The first task for our cohort then is to create an active-body identity that is compatible with the subculture in which they have chosen to participate. However, developing the *acceptable* active-body includes elements of physical, *and* social *and* sub-cultural capital (see chapter 9). That is, the culturally acceptable, active-body identity, constructed through being physically active is further qualified through its social and cultural

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[65] It was noted that some new runners underplayed their physical abilities, either through misunderstanding of the true level of running within the club, or as a safety measure form being placed in a overly good group and then embarrassing themselves when their own running proved inadequate.

elements[66]. The golfers noted that to *be* a golfer required the adoption of practices defined through their sub-cultural mores of participation. Appropriate bodily comportment was similarly important for the runners who *expected* fellow runners to shepherd each other; for example to wait at road junctions for slower runners to catch up (see chapter 4). Moreover, none of these elements exists in isolation to the others, but combine to create an overall pattern of practices that serve to define how participation is to proceed and through adoption by our cohort reproduce the sub-cultural practices of different physical activities.

11.2.3 Continuing participation

As was shown in chapter 10, through processes of continued participation the individuals of our cohort develop for themselves a social identity within their respective participating groups. They learn what actions are expected of them and through reproducing these actions so reproduce the sub-cultures of which they are now an integral part. However, as Goffman notes, for these personal identities to be sustained requires recognition and confirmation by others (Goffman, 1971; see also chapter 9). Unfortunately, by the very nature of sports, possession of physical capital (a key marker of the active-body identity) requires *continuous* investment. It was seen in chapters 4 and 6 that physical capital cannot be banked for future use. Without physically training muscles rapidly atrophy, leading to the loss of the active-body and thence the active-body identity. For example, it was seen in chapter 6 that amongst the runners part of the motivation to maintain regular running was the knowledge that, even after a short absence, getting back (physically) into running was difficult; the longer the absence the more difficult it is to restart. For the cohort, the requirement of continuous physical investment in the body is linked to increased ontological security about the physical self.

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[66] The requirement of the active-body to be more than just a physical object is seen with cultural attitudes towards what sport stars should represent. The current controversy over behaviours of some professional footballers shows expectations that their active-bodies should also represent 'moral' bodily practices, i.e. they should not display lascivious or bacchanal behaviour, nor cheat in the field of play (cf. Maradonna's hand of God incidence). For some, such behaviours spoil the identities of sportspersons and by association bring the 'game' into disrepute (Lines, 2001).

Rooted in the strong association between exercise and health, the weightlifters, runners and golfers recognised that by participating they were doing something 'positive' about their bodies' well-being. Moreover, this security was further reinforced by their experiences of participating, as by being physically active they 'felt' healthier, both physically and mentally. Participating in sports made them fitter and/or stronger, helped them to relax and cope with stress, and importantly improved their sense of self worth. Furthermore, this sense of ontological well being about health was expressed across the participation spectrum, from beginners through to elite athletes (see chapter 4).

As with the active-body, the social and cultural elements of the maintenance of a social identity also require continuous reinvestment. Clubs and teams that have poor social communications between its members risk becoming dysfunctional with little social cohesion (Widmeyer, Carron & Brawley, 1993). Similarly, poor group cohesion can often lead to low rates of individual adherence to physical activity (Carron, Widmeyer & Brawley, 1988). For example, the runners and golfers valued the social identities of their clubs, but also recognised the need for the members to invest in the social side of participation. The runners invested time to socialise in the bar after training; the golfers organised themselves into social groups to play. Contrastingly, the way the weight trainers chose to train apart and to limit the sharing of equipment, created the relatively 'lifeless' feeling to the health suite as opposed to the more inclusive atmosphere of the heavy weights room (see chapter 5). As was shown in chapter 10, the reward for investing in social relationships (social capital) involves access to social networks (resources) that act to support and reinforce the maintenance of a social identity. Similarly, maintenance of sub-cultural capital requires continuous investment. Appropriate kit has to be bought, fees paid, and meetings attended etc (see chapter 7). The symbolism that a club kit can represent is emphasised in Blumer's observation that "human interaction is mediated by the use of symbols, by interpretation, or by ascertaining the meaning of one another's actions" (Blumer, 1969:79). Thus not to (continue) to wear the right kit, or to conduct oneself according to the expected practices of the sub-culture, risks alienation and loss of a shared social identity. A good example of this was seen with the issue of the dress code at Hinksey Heights golf club. The playing of golf is associated with cultural elitism and attracts members who want to associate themselves with that lifestyle. Hinksey Heights golf club, by not introducing a dress code, did *not* confer the elevated social location that is normally expected from

membership of a golf course (see chapters 7 and 9). The simple addition of a dress code in effect then provided its members with an elevated cultural standing. However, in so introducing this dress code at the members' behest, *all* the membership were then required to adhere to this code when playing on the main course. The reward for adopting and maintaining the sub-cultural mores of an appropriate dress code was the elevated cultural standing of the course, and by association, its membership. To not adopt this sub-cultural practice the individual would jeopardise the sub-cultural standing (and identity) of the other members, and thence, their own identity within and connection to the club.

11.2.4 Changing participation; the reflexive self

As shown in chapter 10, the development and possession of caches in the forms of cultural capital, provides the members of our cohort with the tools to create a social identity amongst other participants. Moreover, the possession and use of these caches provide symbols and evidences of the validity of the social identity members of the cohort would claim for themselves. However, the mode of participation does not stay static over time but changes as individuals progress through the participation cycle. For example, as individuals develop from novice to experienced participants, so their wants and needs change. The ways in which they interact with other participants is therefore also subject to change. The shepherding system of the running club noted above is a good example of this progression. New members were shepherded by experienced members; by inference, the progression from new to experienced member concurrently induced changes in *expected* behaviour i.e. to be a shepherd rather than shepherded. Thus, there is also a progressive change in the predominant characteristics of the social identity that can be claimed by the participants. For example, in most golf clubs only after an extended period of membership are golfers 'allowed' to seek and claim for themselves an identity of committee member; an identity that then has to be maintained through attending meetings etc. (see chapter 7). Consequently, integral to a change in social identity is the change in *types* of cultural capitals required to sustain its validity.

In chapter 9, it was shown that different forms of cultural capital do not exist in isolation from each other but are strongly interrelated, with Figure 9.1 illustrating how the process of participation is contingent upon this interrelationship between capitals. Moreover,

this figure illustrates how undertaking different roles within a sport's sub-culture requires a different balance in the possession of the forms of capital. However, as Giddens postulates, the self is not broken up into multiple selves with no inner core of self-identity, but that the "maintaining of constants of demeanour across varying settings of interaction is one of the prime means of whereby coherence of self-identity is ordinarily preserved" (Giddens, 1991:100). This is an important insight in respect to the maintenance of a social identity within sports' subcultures. It was shown in chapter 10 that the running club valued their group identity of *runners*. Although the club consisted of captains, committee members, novices, elites, males and females, none of these roles (or identities) negated the possession of the central social identity as a runner. Thus, when individuals undertake a new role within a club, they do not automatically shed the old one, but may choose to blend the two. For example, within the running club some individuals go on to become elite runners and, due to their performances, are recognised as such by other members of the club. Contrastingly, other elite runners also take on responsibilities as coaches (see chapter 3), and in doing so they do *not* separate themselves entirely from the other elite runners but develop a dual identity of elite runner and coach. However, to sustain this dual identity the elite runner must also develop caches of cultural capital in addition to the physical capital needed to maintain the standard of elite runner[67]. In effect through the ongoing process of participation, the participant contiguously undergoes a reflexive negotiation of their position within figure 9.1. Returning to the analogy of the participation cycle of the cohort by way of explanation, one member of the group may join a running club as a way of making new friends. (It was seen in chapter 5 that both the runners and golfers recognised that sports clubs presented a locus for the creation of new friends when moving to a new area). Initially locating themselves at the bottom left of figure 9.1 they will work at creating social relationships with other members of the running club by socialising in the bar after training. However, in parallel to building social capital, through training they will also start to develop their physical bodies (physical capital). After a period through social interaction with other members of the club they may be coerced into taking part in a

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[67] In this case *knowledge* in respect to: coaching running, competition formats and institutional frameworks etc.

friendly local competition. On successful completion they may reflexively decide that the physical rewards through further developing the active-body are worth further investment[68]. Consequently, they may then decide to attend some coaching sessions, and do some extra-club training. In effect, through concentrating on building their physical capital they are repositioning themselves away from the bottom left and more towards the bottom right of figure 9.1. After a period, life circumstance may change, whereby a re-evaluation of their commitment to elite running is contemplated. For example, it was noted by many of the runners that family and work commitments constituted major inhibitors to participation. For reasons of time and possible lack of success at the elite level the runner may then decide to stop competing and settle on keeping fit. After a further interval, they may find that they have more time to devote to running and recognising a need, undertake more responsibility in the running of the club. With the cultural capital gained from experience of participating, they may then undertake a coaching role in the club, moving themselves towards the top of figure 9. Finally, due to effects of ageing they may relinquish their roles as coach and again run just to keep fit and socialise, moving themselves back down to the bottom left of the figure 9.1.

It must be stressed that this reflexive change in how individuals chose to participate is normally a gradual process that occurs on an instinctive almost subconscious level. Many of the changes above occur as what can be seen as a 'natural progression'. The transition between the different types of role is often aided through the exchange of information between participants in regard to the 'suitability' of the different types of roles undertaken. It is helpful here to return to Goffman's theorisations of the self. Goffman notes that individuals have a self that is constructed out of multiple, loosely-integrated social roles, and that when one of these roles can no longer be sustained they are helped to a resignation to the fact through social relations with others (Goffman, 1952:461). For example, the running club contained many former elite runners who remained an integral part of the running, and were *valued* for their experiences and not

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[68] For example, all participants of this study noted that they valued the health benefits of taking part in physical exercise, whilst some also noted that they 'enjoyed' the success in races that was achieved through being better than the competition.

ostracised for their decline in performance[69]. (It was notable how often these runners provided a social node through which interaction between members of the running club was catalysed).

11.2.5 Disengagement

As shown in chapter 10, central to the creation of a social-identity amongst sporting sub-cultures is the possession of the active-body. However, also noted in chapter 10, maintaining of the active-body identity requires constant re-investment in the physical, social and sub-cultural capitals of the body. Consequently, for the participant the choice to participate represents a continuum of evaluation of the total of the investments put in against the rewards (in terms of the physical, social and sub-cultural capitals) received. Importantly this equation is evaluated against the *total* rewards received. As shown above, the individual continuously develops and redevelops their social identity throughout the participation cycle. Hence, in the above example as the participant moves from being the social runner to the elite runner, then on to the cultural runner and back to the social runner, so their *expected* rewards would follow the same cycle. But, the interrelationships between the different forms of capital results in a blurring of the boundaries between the rewards received. Hence when the runner chooses to concentrate on becoming an elite runner, the values attached to this identity results in an elevated standing (additional cultural rewards) within the club, as well as the physical capital gained from being a better runner (see chapter 10).

The most obvious location where the imbalance between investment and reward can be seen is with the effects of ageing on the body. As the cohort of participants age they will invariably find that it becomes increasingly hard to maintain the physical body. Initially the decline of the body may be delayed by more or better training. However, the point will come wherein despite the efforts of our athletes their bodies cannot take their place

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[69]Clearly this is not universally the case. Membership of international sports teams is wholly dependent upon physical ability. Due to competition for places, poor performance quickly leads to disenfranchisement from the spheres of international sport, although some may return as coaches at a later date.

amongst other, younger members of their clubs. Therefore, at some point, to save personal embarrassment the members of our cohort will no longer claim the identity of being physically active and so disengage from participation. For example, it was seen in chapter 6 that Mr. Smith foresaw a time when he would loose his identity as a weightlifter. For him the signifier was a 'clean and jerk' of less than 80kg as this weight represented the boundary between the identity of weightlifter and "silly old sod". At this point he would save himself the embarrassment and quit. The other side of this is that the overly good or competitive participant can also be misplaced within a club's sub-culture[70]. Here investment in the wrong type of club will restrict the *expected* progression of the participant along their personal participation cycle. In this case, the participant may choose to disengage participation at one club, substituting it for participation at another club where the facilities, coaching etc. are better suited to their needs.

The imbalance between investment and reward does not reside exclusively in the realm of physical capitals. It can also occur in the social and cultural realms. For example, one of the major inhibitors to playing golf is the inability to create friendships with other golfers (see chapter 4). Similarly, some of the runners who were on the committee complained that the amount of work required in running the club made them question why they continued to do it. Again it must be stressed that due to the interrelationships between the forms of capital, the reflexive evaluation of the investment-reward equation is undertaken in respect to the total of the investments undertaken against the total of the rewards received. Where the rewards are sufficient, then the individual is likely to undertake the efforts required to maintain their chosen sub-cultural (and thence social) identity. However, where there is insufficient return, or where the acceptable social identity cannot be maintain, then disengagement is likely to occur.

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[70] There is an ongoing debate about the place of competition in mainstream sports within our culture and whether teaching competitive games (and hence behaviour) is appropriate in schools. Whilst overt competitiveness in children is not acceptable for some, perceived lack of national competitiveness within the global arena is not acceptable for others.

11.3 Summary to part 1: The reflexivity of the participation cycle

For each member of our cohort, the act of participation in sports and physical activities is one that is embodied. Participation occurs with and through engaging the physical possibilities of the body. In consequence, participation can be summarised as the following cycle:

i. Participation occurs by using the physical body, and through using the physical body the active-body identity is developed.

ii. In developing an active-body identity, the individual creates for themself the possessions of caches in cultural capitals that serve to provide the evidences required when seeking the active-body identity.

iii. Through possessing the active-body identity, the individual is then able to create a social identity for themself within the social and physical environments in which participation takes place.

iv. Possession of this social identity then provides access to a social framework that serves to support the individual in their continued participation

v. Inability to create or maintain the active-body identity results in a loss of social identity which in turn can lead to the loss in the access to the support networks that are provided within the social and physical environments in which participation takes place. Ultimately this can lead to the disengagement from participation

It must be stressed that the actual processes of participation *are far more fluid* than the above bullet points would suggest. Moreover, as the individual is required to constantly reinvest in their active-body in order to maintain their active-body identity the process of participation instils an ongoing reflexivity of the physical self wherein the equation of the investments against rewards are reviewed. On an almost subliminal level each time the participant packs their golf clubs, pays to enter a gym, buys a new set of running shoes, or drags themself away from the television on a wet winter's night to train, the equation is reassessed. Moreover, where the total rewards from possessing the healthy,

fit, and culturally valued active-body exceed the required investments to create and maintain it, then participation is likely to be continued.

Part 2: Concluding Discussion

11.4 A review of the work presented

This thesis is set against a backdrop of rising rates of obesity, a population whose lifestyles are increasingly sedentary and continued policy initiatives by the Government to promote individual responsibility for health. The strong epidemiological evidence linking the positive effects of exercise participation to improvements in physical and mental health is compelling. Furthermore, the government regards the development and possession of the 'active-body' as a central tenant of its current and future health policy in respect to the health provision for the nation (Department of Health, 1999a). The link between being physically active and the possession of the healthy body is also one that is recognised by a significant proportion of the population[71]. The evidence from this thesis indicates that, (for those in the position to choose to participate), under the conditions of late modernity, the body can represent an action system of options and choices[72] (Giddens, 1991). Yet despite the generally accepted relationship between exercise and the development of the ideal healthy, fit and attractive body, the overall trend in participation rates in sports and physical activities is in decline. Moreover, where participation is an integral part of an individual's lifestyle, continued participation is not

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[71] However, the wide recognition of this connection in itself does not lead individuals into adopting regular exercise. This incongruent position is evidence that participation in sports is more complex than this rational relationship would suggest.

[72] Circumstantial evidence in the observed absence of members of lower classes and ethnic minorities alludes to participation in mainstream physical activities not being part of this action system.

guaranteed. There are many external influences that can combine to inhibit participation, not least of which is the biological determinism of ageing.

Sports and physical activities are principally embodied activities. In regard to this, the works of three social theorist were identified as being particularly informative. Firstly, the works of Bourdieu (1978, 1986, 1988, 1994a) were used to explore how the development of the active-body, through participation, relates to the possession and realisation of different forms of cultural capital. Secondly, the works of Goffman (1952, 1963, 1967, 1971a, 1971b) have been used to show how selves are performed, and that in choosing to participate individuals develop a sense of personal sub-cultural identity that is reinforced through the possession of elements of an acceptable social identity amongst participating others. Finally, the work of Giddens (1991) has been used to explore how under the conditions of late modernity, the development of the active-body can be seen as integral to dimensions of reflexivity of the self. Although Bourdieu's theories have been criticised for over emphasising the effects of class on individual actions (see chapter 1), Bourdieu's sub-categories of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984a) provided a powerful working framework for the theory generation phase of this research. The findings that emerged from the fieldwork and data analysis mapped the areas relating to issues of the development of physical, social and sub-cultural capital. Additionally, a fourth area relating to the construction of a sporting identity was added to the framework to take account of the strength of findings generated from the data in this area. The process of constructing social relationships between participants was seen to relate to the construction of an active-body identity. In turn the construction of this embodied identity strongly influenced how individuals created for themselves a social identity amongst fellow participants. Through becoming an integral part of the social fabric of a sports club the participants gained access to support structures that of themselves further engendered participation. These social structures provide the individual participant with a sense of security and safety; access to specialised knowledge from significant others; and a mechanism to operationalize their participation. Importantly, these structures provide the participant with a sense of belonging and a context for the development of interpersonal relationships. The findings of the research manifestly identified that the establishment of social relationships between participants had a positive influence on long-term participation, with those

participants who make the effort to become socially involved generally participating more regularly and for longer.

The findings of the research also show that through participation in a sport or physical activity, a reflexive sense of the physical self develops with the possession of an active-body. Aspects of self-identity are constructed partly from the physical, and partly from the sub-cultural development of identity. The physical aspects of the active-body are achieved through the possession of specialist body skills, coupled with the by-product of changes in fitness and/or body shape, whereas, the cultural aspects of the active-body relate to the historical position of being actively involved in sports within our society. That is, being physically active currently has positive associations of health and fitness within contemporary society. Each sport has in addition its own cultural standing, which is reflected in the differentiation in 'values' attached to the different types of sporting identities. Being rooted in the development and maintenance of social identities within sub-cultures, each club has its own set of rules and mores that prescribe how its members are *expected* to practice their activity. Dress codes, club colours, sports kits, language and participation practices serve to develop and define these identities, in turn providing the participant with a sense of belonging that helps to legitimise participation. Furthermore, the possession of such sub-cultural identities is *valued,* and it is the values placed on possessing the active-body and thence the sub-cultural identity that provides the incentive to take up and continue to participate in sports and physical activities; it was seen that disengagement from sport risked a loss of this active-body identity. Runners who no longer run at a club become joggers, and weightlifters who cannot compete become weight trainers. Consequently, fear of the loss in the values of the active-bodies can serve to delay disengagement from sport, but it can also serve to inhibit a return to practicing as the participants feel that it takes twice as much work to regain a lost identity than it is to retain one.

With the exception of golf for the retired, sports and physical activities are generally not presented to the public as primarily 'social' activities. However, all of the participants valued the social relationships they had developed through being part of a sports club. Furthermore, this study presents compelling evidence that the development of social relationships (identity) between participants provides key networks that help to support long-term participation. This finding is supported by the recent work of Macphail,

Gorely and Kirk (2003) who show that the process of socialisation into sport is an important factor in developing and maintaining young people's involvement. However, this study has shown that the development of the social fabric of sports clubs is dependent on both the character of the activity undertaken, *and* the physical environment within which participation takes place *and* the social actors who people that environment.

11.5 Implications for policy

This study set out to explore the processes of taking up and participating in sports or physical activities against a backdrop of increasing government interest in promoting healthier lifestyles. The changes in the ways we live that characterise late modernity coupled with the increased emphasis on individual responsibilities for lifestyle choice provide a challenging context in which to develop policy for the improvement in participation rates; policy generated to improve the uptake in physical activities must take account of individualised need and the complexities of the processes of encouraging and maintaining participation. The importance the Government places on promoting healthier lifestyles through physical activity is reflected in the notice that the office of the Deputy Prime Minister released on the 4th September 2003. The notice highlighted that the grassroots of sports are to be boosted through providing community amateur sports clubs (CASCs) with an opportunity to claim mandatory rate relief of 80% (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2003). Part of the document contains the following quote from local government minister Nick Raynsford:

- "This is great news for sport, and will I believe, give a real boost to sports at grassroots level...The teenage athletes of today could be the gold medallists of tomorrow's Olympics –perhaps even the London Olympics of 2012. *But just as important is encouraging wider public involvement in a range of sporting activities, which is good for people's health and well-being.*" (Nick Raynsford, 2003).

Although this document identifies the government's belief in the health benefits of physical activities, it also demonstrates a fundamental lack of understanding of the complexities of the processes of participation. As shown with the experiences of running struggling to recruit from the lower socio-economic classes located in the

neighbouring housing estates, economics in itself is not a major barrier to participation. Moreover, a reduction in membership fees[73] of running clubs would not significantly change this position (and may even serve to discourage some potential golfers). However, the statement from Nick Raynsford does illustrate a major inhibitor to participation, that of identification. Sports and sports provision are often promoted with one eye on international success at events such as the Olympics. This reflects dissociation between sports provision and 'exercise' as part of a healthy lifestyle[74]. However, in reality the limitations in respect to the logistical organisation of practices at grassroots level means that sports and physical activities have to simultaneously cater for both.

The juxtaposition of sport and exercise creates barriers even before participation starts. The portrayal of sports as a medium for creating the successful body has the affect of polarising body identities. The fit, lean, attractive and *healthy* bodies of top athletes have come to represent 'body ideals' which in turn denigrates the overweight, unfit and increasingly 'normal' body. The following passage is taken from Edwards & Imrie's paper on the values of disabled bodies, and is used to illustrate how perceptions of what is an 'able' body is not confined only to those labelled as dis-abled:

- "Others felt likewise in conceiving of their bodies as inferior to their able-bodied counterparts, because of the ways in which social encounters reaffirmed their 'de-valued' selves. For instance, in commenting on their body image, one respondent noted that 'there are disabled people scared of going to able bodied places as they feel they can't compete." (Edwards & Imrie, 2003).

From the vantage point of the 'non-sporty' looking to take up a form of exercise they have to use their 'inferior bodies' to compete with the more able-bodies of established participants. The runners in particular noted that even good standard joggers were inhibited from joining the running club because they *felt* that they would not be able to

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[73] CASCs are already eligible for a mandatory rate relief of 80% if they register themselves as a charity. In many respects, this proposal in effect represents an easing of paperwork rather than significant new money.

[74] The continued controversy of selling off school playing fields emphasises this division.

compete with runners. There are however, many small local sports clubs whose standards are compatible with the novice and non-sporty but their roles in sports provision are frequently sidelined by the image of sports being activities for elite bodies striving for high goals. The second inhibitive aspect of identification is captured in Bourdieu's concept of habitus (Bourdieu, 1994a). Here, as a consequence of the 'not for the likes of us' scenario, the historic patterns of participation are likely to be reproduced in successive cohorts. Therefore, where participation in physical activities is not an integral part of a sub-culture, then persuading people to take up sport is rendered more difficult[75]. In creating policy to encourage the uptake of sports and physical exercises, the government therefore needs to address what these activities *represent* to the prospective participants. Only when individuals perceive themselves to be 'compatible' with the activities on offer will the uptake in sport and physical exercise improve[76].

In recent years the provisions of sports facilities have centred on the development of large sports complexes whose business is to sell practising time to participants. In economic terms, there is little profit to be made from people standing around and socialising. Although such complexes cater well for the established and more elite participant, they do not engender a sense of belonging and are not conducive to meeting the needs of the more casual and social participant. The very people who the policy of health promotion through exercise is aimed at are the least likely to 'identify' with going to a large sports complex as a leisure time pursuit. Furthermore, this study has shown that adherence to sport is strongly linked to creating a social identity amongst other participants. In this respect, those individuals who, through personal history, are least likely to participate are the ones who would benefit most from the supporting structures

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[75] The message extolling the virtues of exercise is almost always delivered by those already possessing lean fit bodies. The numerous overweight politicians are conspicuous by their absence from these campaigns. This has the effect of reinforcing the belief that exercise is not a suitable leisure time activity for the unfit.

[76] Further evidence to support this conclusion is found in the recently published paper by Wright, MacDonald and Groom (2003) who found that young people's choices in sports are restricted by cultural constraints relating to socio-economic conditions and identity associations.

provided by participating in an environment that encourages the construction of a social identity and a sense of belonging.

If participation in sports and physical activities is to be widened and maintained, then the different needs of potential participants must be addressed through a more critical appreciation of the complexities of participation. In this study, a sense of belonging has been identified as a key determinant of (prolonged) participation. This is not necessarily achieved through the building of large, alienating and potentially inhibiting complexes, but rather through smaller venues. This study has shown that the physical spaces can significantly influence the way in which participants interact with their sports and with each other. It was noted that some golf courses choose to build mausoleums of clubhouses that are under used by their members, whilst the often cramped spaces used by the runners in this study had a positive effect on their club's social integration. Thus, as well as flagship sports centres, the diffusion of some sports into smaller, community based facilities needs to be addressed. Smaller venues are well placed to provide participating environments that are less intimidating to the new participants, and can develop a stronger sense of belonging and importantly social identity amongst participants.

11.6 Recommendations for further research

Through developing an understanding of the mechanisms behind the processes of participation in sports and physical activity, this study has provided a framework with which explore patterns of participation within our society. Yet there are areas that specifically warrant future study and which may form part of postdoctoral work. During my fieldwork I only directly encountered two individuals from ethnic minorities, five clearly identifiable participants from working class backgrounds, and with the exception of the running club[77], an observable lack of female participants. The paucity in ethnic

[77] As noted in chapter 3 the Headington Road Runners have a disproportionately high female membership in comparison to similar running clubs, though they still represent only 43% of the clubs membership.

minority participants cannot be attributed to local demographic considerations as Oxford has a significant population of various ethnic minorities (see appendix 4). The under representation of participants from the lower socio-economic classes may be attributed to the types of sports studied not being compatible with the traditional pastimes of working class cultures (e.g. football). However, given the rapid changes in society associated with the conditions of late modernity the continued absence of such groups from an activity such as road running raises specific questions regarding the position of sports within such cultures. Similarly, the observed gender bias in participation rates raises specific questions about whether there are specific inhibitors to women participating. In what ways are values and meanings ascribed to different sporting activities gendered?

Given that this study was centred on the experiences of individuals located at specified clubs, practising what is a narrow range of activities, the generalisability of the findings need to be contextualised against the broader background of sports within our culture. Is the lack of participation by ethnic minorities and women a result of local conditions and influences, or nationwide phenomena? Similarly, are the observed relationships between the forms of capital associated with possession of the active body framed by the specific sports studied? Or can they be applied in the context of all sports?

11.7 Concluding statement

The purpose of this study was to conduct an in-depth exploration of the processes and mechanisms involved in participation in sports activities, and specifically, engagement in the activities of weightlifting, running and golf. The study has produced rich data grounded in individuals' experiences from which theory has been generated. A range of research strategies involving participant observation, focus group and in-depth interviews were employed, the findings from which show that the processes and mechanisms of participation are complex and inter-related. The arguments put forward demonstrate the complexities of participation, central to which is the construction of the active-body. It is the construction of the active-body that provides the medium through which participation is enacted and a social identity amongst participating others achieved -it is much harder to seek social inclusion whilst sitting on the sidelines.

In this study, Bourdieu's concepts of different forms of cultural capital have provided a powerful tool with which to disentangle the complexities of participation. Of particular relevance are the concepts of physical and social capital. Physical capital relates to the physical properties of the body, and undertaking sports and physical activities includes investing in the physical capital of the body through improving for example, aspects of health, fitness, body shape and athleticism. Social capital involves access to social networks. In relation to participation, this consists of the values of the social networks, interactions and friendships created, and the access to the supporting structures that being part of a social network affords. In addition to physical and social capitals, this study recognises an additional form of sub-cultural capital. This is a measure of the values placed on the membership of a particular sport's subculture and is born out of the social and historical position of sports within society[78]. The possession of the different forms of (body) capital then provides *evidences* to support the claims of the active-body identity that serves as a gatekeeper to the development of social identity within sporting sub-cultures. This study has found that it is the development and maintenance of the social identity within a sport's or physical activity's sub-culture that is the *key* determinant to a successful participation cycle. However, as this thesis shows, development and maintenance of social identity is contingent upon *continued* investment in the active-body. As it is the possession of a social identity that provides the participant with access to the support structures that exist within the social (and physical) networks found within the different sports and physical activities, the value of maintaining the active-body is *realised* in the values of these structures. Thus failure (through choice or otherwise) to develop and maintain the active-body identity can result in a lack of social identity and hence the loss in the support networks such identities afford. In turn the absence of these support networks risks a short and unsuccessful participation cycle.

This thesis makes a significant contribution to problematising the dimensions of participation in sports and physical activities. By bringing together the different practices

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[78] It is also a measure of the cultural values that are placed on the possession of the different types of active-body. For example it was shown that some males value the muscles that weight training builds, whilst some women value the leanness that running helps maintain.

of weight training, running and golf, and using the theories of Bourdieu, Goffman and Giddens to develop understanding, this thesis has shown that the reflexive construction of the physical self through the possession of the active-body serves as an 'identifier' by which a social identity amongst participating others is conferred. Moreover, through the possession of a social identity, individuals derive a sense of belonging, which in turn engenders ontological security about the physical self that serves to stabilise the long-term patterns of participation. It is the possession of the social identity that makes weightlifters out of weight-trainers, runners out of joggers, and golfers out of hackers.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire

The following is a copy of the questionnaire distributed to the members of the Headington road runners. The original was distributed as a double sided A4 sheet.



Profile of Amateur Runners who Belong to a Running Club



Introduction

The following is a questionnaire designed to provide a profile of the different types of people who are members of a local amateur running club. Could you please answer all the questions that are relevant to you, and feel free to ignore any questions that you do not wish to answer. Your answers will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. The results of the survey will be used as part of my research into participation patterns within local sports.

Please circle the answer that most applies to you

Section 1: About Your Sporting Habits

On average how many times a week do you go running with your club?	Over 3	3	2	1	Under 1
On average how many times a week do you go running with other members of your club, but not on normal club meetings?	Over 3	3	2	1	Under 1
On average how many times a week do you go running on your own?	Over 3	3	2	1	Under 1
How long have you been a member of the club?	Under 12 Wks	12 Wks-1 Yr	1-3 Yrs	3-5 Yrs	Over 5 Yrs
How do you travel to club meetings? (circle all that normaly apply)	On Foot	Cycle	Public Transport	By Car	Share Lift
How far on average do you travel in order to attend a club meeting?	Under 1 Mile	1-3 Miles	3-10 Miles	Over 10 Miles	
What standard of runner do you regard yourself as?	Back of Pack	Middle of Pack	Front of Pack		

Section 2: Associated Activities

Do you represent your club in competition?	Yes	No			
How often do you take part in social activities organised by your club?	Never	Sometimes	Frequently		
If you regularly take part in other sporting activities, please name the activity, and circle how often you take part:-					
Activity	No. of times a week you take part				
.....	Over 3	3	2	1	Under 1
.....	Over 3	3	2	1	Under 1
.....	Over 3	3	2	1	Under 1
How long have you regularly taken part in sport/physical activities?	Never	Less than 1Yr	1-3 Yrs	3-5 Yrs	Over 5 Yrs

Section 3: Reasons For Taking Part In Sport

The following are a list of reasons for why people regularly take part in sport or physical activities. Please indicate how important you feel each reasons is by giving it a mark out of ..

	Unimportant		Neutral		Important
To keep you fit and healthy	1	2	3	4	5
To improve/maintain an attractive physique	1	2	3	4	5
As a way of socialising/meeting people	1	2	3	4	5
Competition/personal achievement	1	2	3	4	5
Enjoyment.....	1	2	3	4	5
Coping with stress	1	2	3	4	5
Part of a weekly routine.....	1	2	3	4	5

Section 4: Sporting History

Starting from your childhood and using block capitals please write a brief history of your involvement in sport in the space below:

.....

.....

.....

.....

Section 5: Personal details

The purpose of this section is to help to categorise your answers to the above questions. Again any answers you give will be treated with the strictest confidentiality, however please feel free to ignore any questions you do not wish to answer.

Surname: ..... **Initials**: ..... **Gender** : Male Female

Age: Under 18 18-25 26-35 36-45 46-55 56-65 65+ **Lifestyle**: Single Couple

No. of Offspring..... **No. of Dependants**.....

Employment Status: Unemployed Part-time Full-time Housewife/husband Student Retired

If Employed State Nature of Employment.....

Further research

The majority of my research will be centred around interviews with small groups of people. The interviews themselves should last no longer than 1 hour and be fairly painless! If you would like to be part of a group please provide a contact address or number in the space provided, or contact me either through your club or at the address below:

Contact Address/Number.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Mark Austin
SCES
Oxford Brookes University
Gipsy Lane
Headington
Oxford. OX3 8QL
Tel: (01865) 483369 Work (01865) 435896 Home

Comments

If you would like to give any comments you think useful please use the space below:

.....

.....

.....

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

The following is an example of the questioning route guides I used to help facilitate both the semi-structured interviews and the focus group sessions. The questions act as an aid memoir and as such were not repeated verbatim. The times indicate relative weightings that are to be allocated to each topic.

Interview Guide: Running Club Focus Group

Introduction		Introduce yourself + Research
↓	5 mins	Get permission from interviewees to record and quote their responses
		Check tape recorder is working
Identity:		What makes a runner?
↓		Why Running not another sport?
	15 mins	Why belong to a running club?
		What makes a good club runner?
		Is there a minimum standard of club runner?
		Define a jogger
Active-bodies:		How often do you need to run?
↓		Issues of health?
	20 mins	Issues of fitness?
Socialising:		Do you fit in with other club members?
↓		Social life?
	15 mins	Social functions of the club
		Support from significant others /family/friends/ work
Costs:		Travel
↓	5 mins	Fees
		Kit/competitions
Misc.		Most enjoyable aspect of running?
↓		What would stop you running?
	10 mins	Attractive physique?
		Other sports + why?
Conclude:		Time for additional thoughts/comments/information
		Thank interviewees for their time

Appendix 4: Demographics of Oxford

The below Table A4.1: Ethnic Group, refers to the demographics within the Marston Ward, Oxford, which is the main catchment area for the Headington Road Runners Running Club. The statistics are derived from the 2001 Census and are published by HMSO online. They can be viewed at:

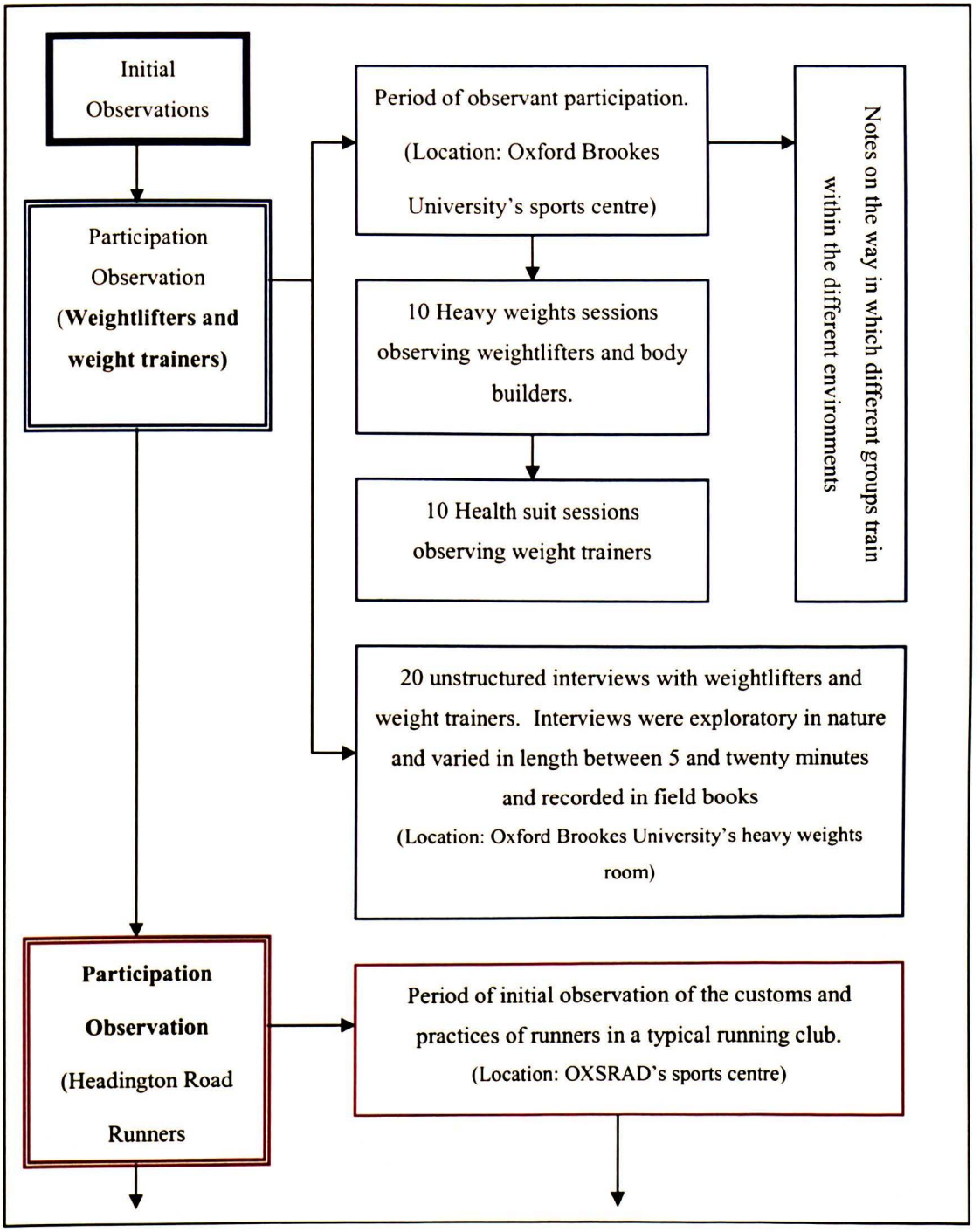
hhtp://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/areaprofileframes.asp?T=A&AID=188334&TID=1&PC=OX3ONQ (accessed 09:10:2003).

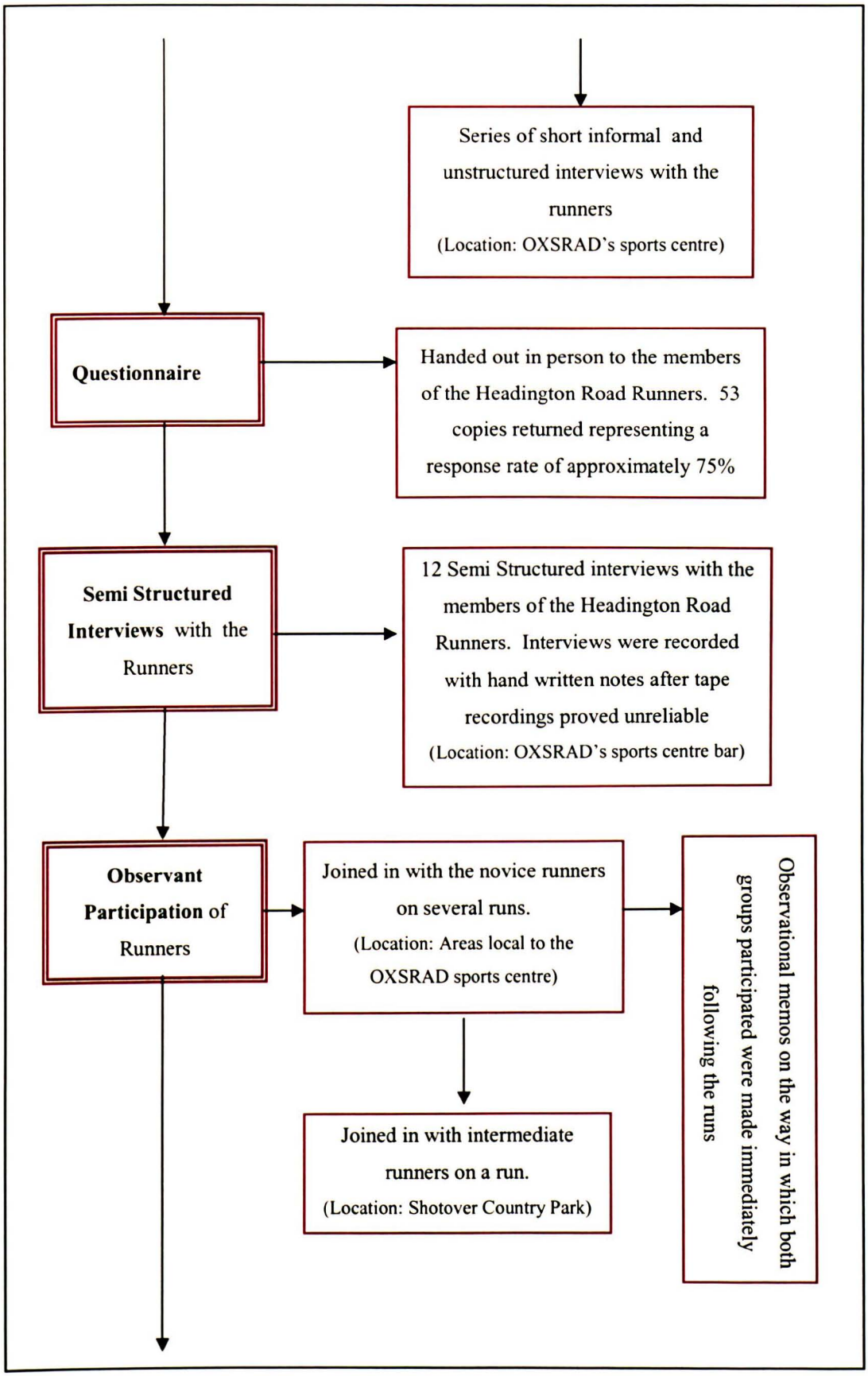
Ethnic Group (%)	Marston	Oxford	England
White	89.2	87.1	90.9
Of which White Irish	1.8	2.2	1.3
Mixed	1.4	2.4	1.3
Asian or Asian British	3.8	4.8	4.6
Indian	1.7	1.7	2.1
Pakistani	1.1	2.0	1.4
Bangladeshi	0.4	0.6	0.6
Other Asian	0.6	0.5	0.5
Black or Black British	1.2	2.5	2.1
Caribbean	0.2	1.2	1.1
African	0.8	1.0	1.0
Other Black	0.1	0.2	0.2
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group	4.4	3.1	0.9

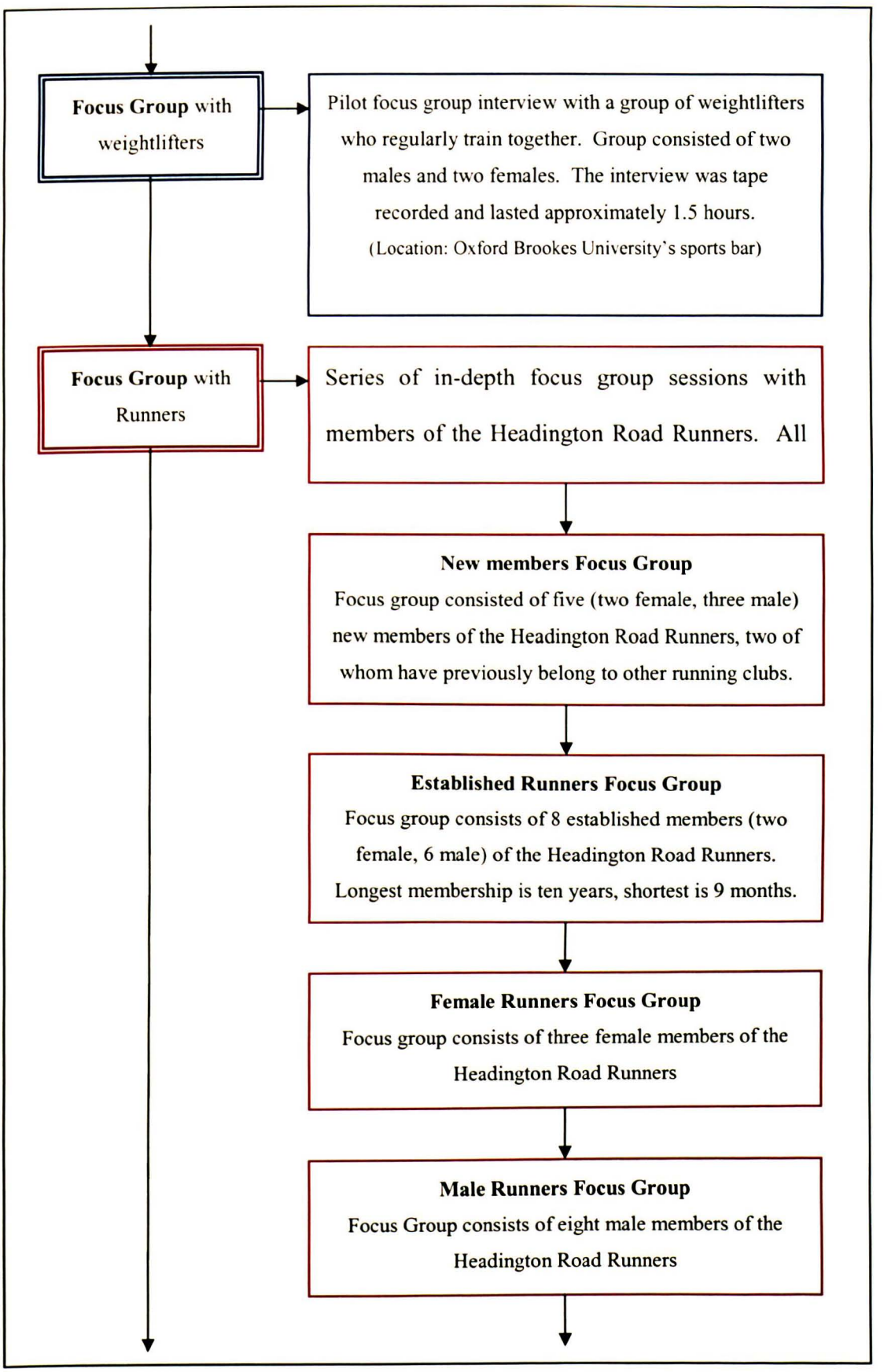
Table A4.1: Ethnic Group

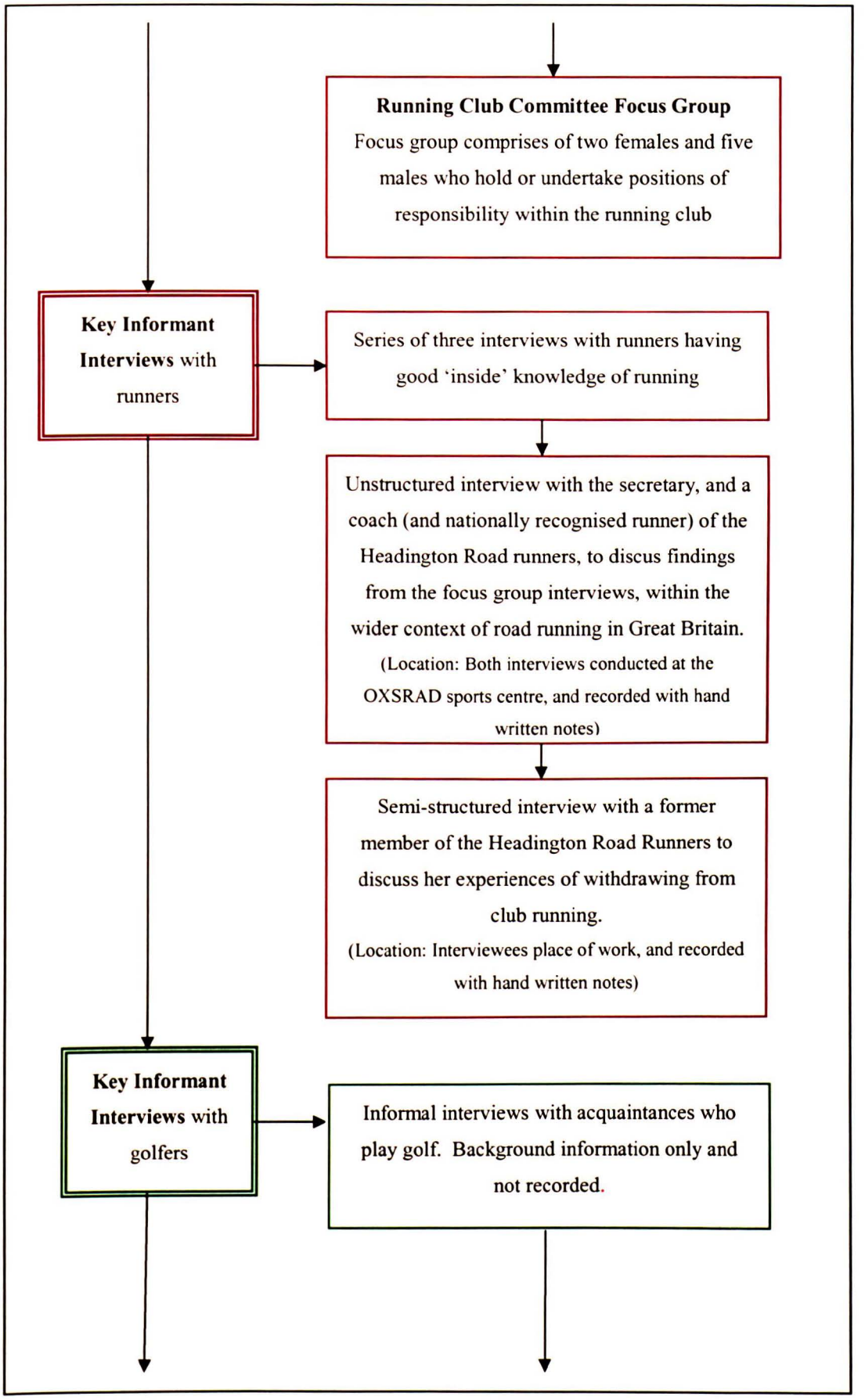
Appendix 3: Research Audit

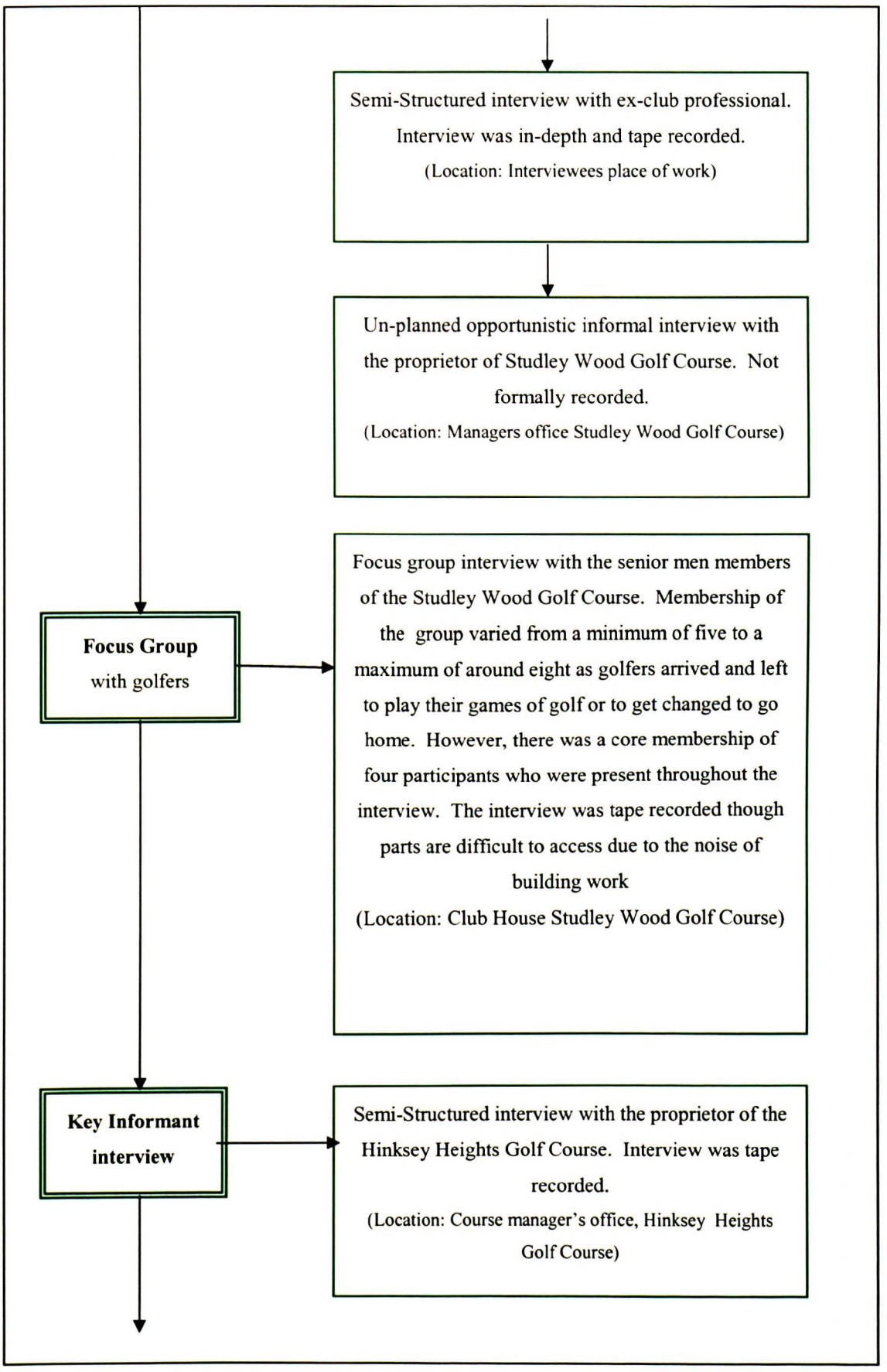
The following flow diagram is a chronological account of the fieldwork undertaken for this study. The text boxes are colour coded according to type of physical activity studied. Blue represents fieldwork conducted with weightlifters, red with runners and green with golfers.

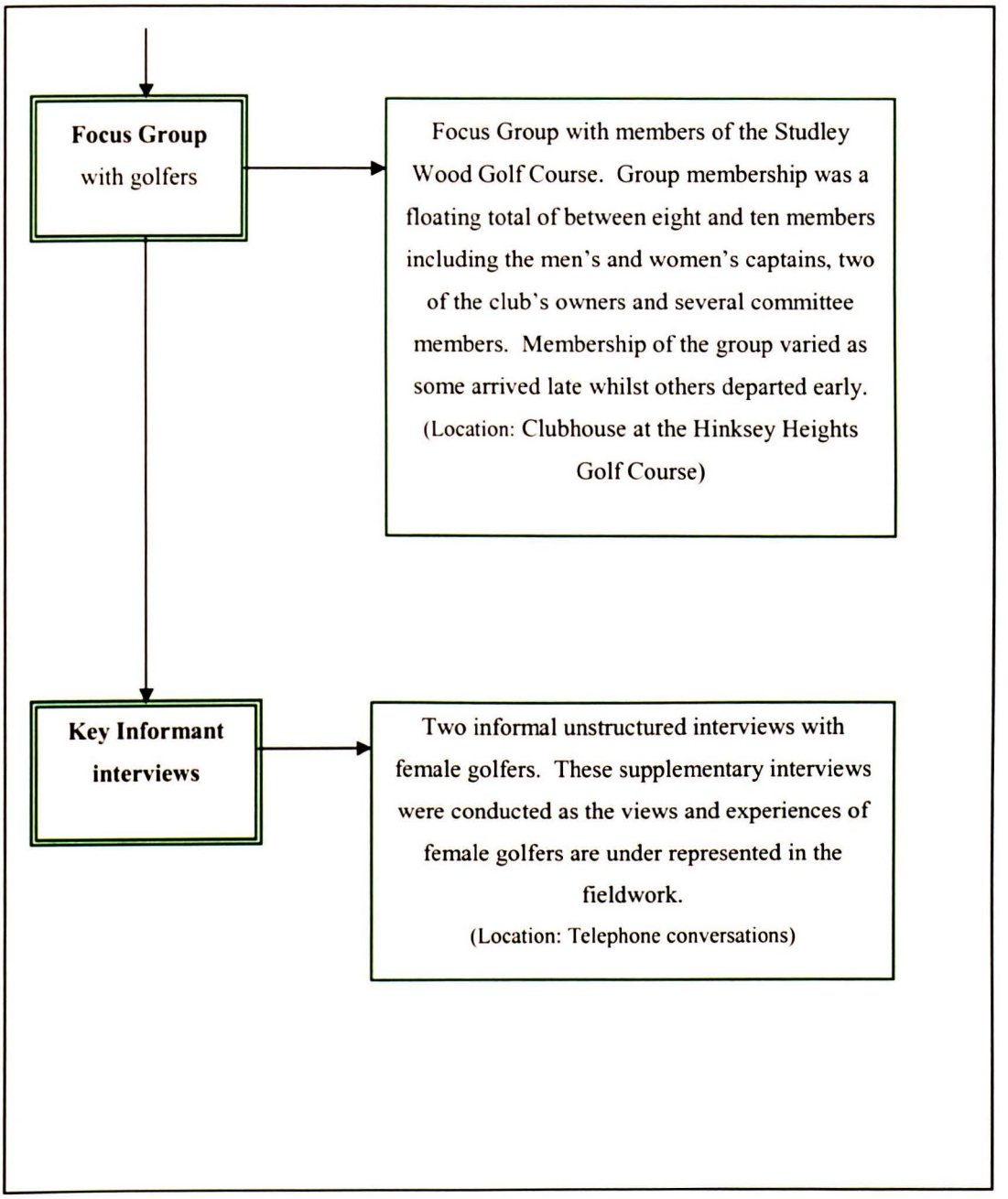



Series of short informal and unstructured interviews with the runners
(Location: OXSRAD's sports centre)
Questionnaire
Handed out in person to the members of the Headington Road Runners. 53 copies returned representing a response rate of approximately 75%
Semi Structured Interviews with the Runners
12 Semi Structured interviews with the members of the Headington Road Runners. Interviews were recorded with hand written notes after tape recordings proved unreliable
(Location: OXSRAD's sports centre bar)
Observant Participation of Runners
Joined in with the novice runners on several runs.
(Location: Areas local to the OXSRAD sports centre)
Joined in with intermediate runners on a run.
(Location: Shotover Country Park)
Observational memos on the way in which both groups participated were made immediately following the runs


Focus Group with weightlifters
Pilot focus group interview with a group of weightlifters who regularly train together. Group consisted of two males and two females. The interview was tape recorded and lasted approximately 1.5 hours.
(Location: Oxford Brookes University's sports bar)
Focus Group with Runners
Series of in-depth focus group sessions with members of the Headington Road Runners. All
New members Focus Group
Focus group consisted of five (two female, three male) new members of the Headington Road Runners, two of whom have previously belong to other running clubs.
Established Runners Focus Group
Focus group consists of 8 established members (two female, 6 male) of the Headington Road Runners. Longest membership is ten years, shortest is 9 months.
Female Runners Focus Group
Focus group consists of three female members of the Headington Road Runners
Male Runners Focus Group
Focus Group consists of eight male members of the Headington Road Runners


Running Club Committee Focus Group
Focus group comprises of two females and five males who hold or undertake positions of responsibility within the running club
Key Informant Interviews with runners
Series of three interviews with runners having good 'inside' knowledge of running
Unstructured interview with the secretary, and a coach (and nationally recognised runner) of the Headington Road runners, to discus findings from the focus group interviews, within the wider context of road running in Great Britain.
(Location: Both interviews conducted at the OXSRAD sports centre, and recorded with hand written notes)
Semi-structured interview with a former member of the Headington Road Runners to discuss her experiences of withdrawing from club running.
(Location: Interviewees place of work, and recorded with hand written notes)
Key Informant Interviews with golfers
Informal interviews with acquaintances who play golf. Background information only and not recorded.


Semi-Structured interview with ex-club professional. Interview was in-depth and tape recorded.
(Location: Interviewees place of work)
Un-planned opportunistic informal interview with the proprietor of Studley Wood Golf Course. Not formally recorded.
(Location: Managers office Studley Wood Golf Course)
Focus Group with golfers
Focus group interview with the senior men members of the Studley Wood Golf Course. Membership of the group varied from a minimum of five to a maximum of around eight as golfers arrived and left to play their games of golf or to get changed to go home. However, there was a core membership of four participants who were present throughout the interview. The interview was tape recorded though parts are difficult to access due to the noise of building work
(Location: Club House Studley Wood Golf Course)
Key Informant interview
Semi-Structured interview with the proprietor of the Hinksey Heights Golf Course. Interview was tape recorded.
(Location: Course manager's office, Hinksey Heights Golf Course)


Focus Group
with golfers
Focus Group with members of the Studley Wood Golf Course. Group membership was a floating total of between eight and ten members including the men's and women's captains, two of the club's owners and several committee members. Membership of the group varied as some arrived late whilst others departed early.
(Location: Clubhouse at the Hinksey Heights Golf Course)
Key Informant interviews
Two informal unstructured interviews with female golfers. These supplementary interviews were conducted as the views and experiences of female golfers are under represented in the fieldwork.
(Location: Telephone conversations)

Appendix 5: Studley Wood Golf Course Competition Diary

The table below illustrates the competition diary for Studley Wood Golf Club for the month of May 2003. The competition diary for the club is normally posted both at the club house and on the web. It may be viewed at:

http://www.studleywoodgolf.co.uk/compdiary.htm (accessed 24/02/03).

Competition Diary

Date	Fixture
01/05	Senior1/4 Challenge
03/05	Shaws League v Tadmarton (a) Concord Trophy v The Springs (h)
06/05	Men's Midweek Medal
07/05	Ladies Grand Prix
09/05	Seniors v Hadden Hill (h)
10/05	Shaws League v Ellesborough (a) Ladies' Grand Prix Men's Stag Rnd.1
11/05	Men's Medal Mixed v Chiltern Forest (h)
14/05	Ladies v Parasampia (a)
16/05	Seniors v Wrag Barn (h)
17/05	Founders Cup Concord Trophy v Parasampia
18/05	Men's Stableford
20/05	Men's Midweek Stableford
21/05	Ladies Stableford

Date	Fixture
23/05	Ladies bronze v Oxford
24/05	Ladies Stableford Men's Stag Rnd. 2 Men v Magnolia Park (h)
25/05	Ox. Trophy @ Kirtlington
30/05	Ladies v Stowe (a)