

**A NARRATIVE STUDY OF FEMALE FOOTBALL PLAYERS IN
ENGLAND: COMPLICITY, NEGOTIATION AND TRANSFORMATION
IN THE THIRD-SPACE**

By

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ABSTRACT

The general aim of the thesis is to contribute a better understanding of women's football. Literature that looks at women's football falls into the broad areas of governance (Lopez, 1997; Williams and Woodhouse, 1991; Williams, 1994a) and sexualities and sexual identity (Caudwell, 2004, 1999; Cahn, 1994, 1993; Cox and Thompson, 2001; Pfister et al, 1999; Scraton and Flintoff, 2002). Women's football in historical, and to a lesser extent in contemporary terms, is marginalised by a tradition which sustains the notion that playing football is unfeminine. In this context, the problem for this research is how to account for women's experiences in football and then to obtain empirical evidence that will foreground their narratives. The 'third-space' (Bhabha, 1994a:54) is utilised as a theoretical framework to give voice to *non-traditional* voices that can contest hegemonic masculinities. The elements of third-space found in mimicry, disavowal and hybridity correspond to the thematic sections of the thesis related to the research questions; complicity, negotiation and transformation, with the aim of testing the utility of these conceptual devices to instigate critical debate on gender in football. The synthesis of theoretical and epistemological frames initiate a narrative for understanding how margins and exclusion illustrate the variety of ways in which women have forged spaces to play football. Using empirical data gathered from 17 in-depth open interviews with amateur female football players, ages ranging from 18 – 60, emergent themes organised around complicity, negotiation and transformation, focus on topics of governance, friendship networks, identities and mixed-football. These experiential narratives foreground the complex and varied nature of the sample and, importantly, illustrate how the subjective voice contributes to disrupting the grander narrative that maintains gender inequality in football.

Masochism is characterized as a species of vertigo, vertigo not before the precipice of rock and earth, but before the abyss of the other's subjectivity (Sartre, 1972:138).

DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this dissertation constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions or writings of another.

I declare that the dissertation describes original work that has not previously been presented for the award of any other degree of any institution.

Signed

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Catherine Themen". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Signed".

Catherine Themen

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Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study: The General Context

Women's football is an inviting topic of study, not least because women's participation is an under-researched area. Although there are some scattered histories of notable football teams, and brief acknowledgements that account for the longevity of women's spectatorship, overall this doctoral undertaking contributes to a topic that deserves far more recognition. That there is an opportunity to contribute to the topic of women's football, and then to contribute something original is quite telling in itself. For example, women's football enjoyed greater prominence in the media during the 2015 Women's World Cup (ESPN, 2015) and there are increasing numbers of girls and women playing football,¹ yet it is still somewhat under-researched. One might conclude that the research gap is indicative of the lack of interest in the women's game, but the comparatively scarce documentary evidence, which accounts for women's contribution to football, points to entrenched masculine and feminine stereotypes aggregated in cultural discourse. Approximating gender into a binary of masculine and feminine is, for women who have an ambition to play football, a problem. This is evident in the historical marginalisation of the women's game. There is a sense of invisibility that the stories of women's football have not really been told. During the course of this thesis, epistemological and theoretical frames aim to address historical and contemporary disparity, and elicit a narrative that can enable such marginalised voices to be heard.

There is documentation of women playing football, but it could not be considered a coherent body of work, not because women have not been involved, but because hegemonic masculinities are prioritized and men have and do participate in greater numbers. As a consequence, the dominant frame of masculinity and men's football has, to date, been interrogated thoroughly with the many patterns and aspects of taking part covered. The research problem is not that there is insufficient literature, this is patently an obvious opportunity to contribute, but rather the problem statement would be how to research something that is marginal? Despite advances that women's football has made, lingering anxieties regarding women playing football is a basic concern of the research. When browsing some football forums during the 2015 Women's World Cup, the token 'Women's World Cup' thread stimulated expected derisory responses, including the pithily expressed,

¹ An increase of 46,244 to 1,208,558 registered players across UEFA national football associations, although the ratio of male to female players shows that men are still significantly more active than women (UEFA, Women's Football Across National Associations, Report 2014-15).

‘it’ (women’s football), is ‘just not right’ (www.forums.bluemoon-mcfc.co.uk, accessed 29th June 2015). The assumption is taciturn and dismissive, and really synthesises a fundamental concern for this research. Women’s football is ‘just not right’ because it elicits anxieties regarding non-conforming gender identities. Female football players deviate from the norm and in the examples cited throughout the empirical sections of this thesis, their experiences demonstrate not simply marginalisation, but really highlight issues of power and gender stratification that continue to impact on women within the game. More simply, it also displays a lack of understanding of women’s football and of the longevity of women’s participation, which is not limited to interest in major tournaments (an increase in women’s participation followed England’s World Cup win in 1966), nor a product of commercial imperatives emergent in the late 1980s, and the years following the 1990 World Cup (Italia ’90). Holt (1989) for example, noted that longevity underpins the durability of attachments to football, which, despite fewer numbers of players he interviewed, illustrated ‘the extraordinary degree to which [sport] has been promoted privately . . . people have created their own kinds of pleasure through sport’ (Holt, 1989:346).

Current literatures that look at women’s football can be divided generally into two camps. Firstly, there are accounts of women’s football in terms of governance and the organisational aspects of the game, as discussed by Lopez (1997), Williams and Woodhouse (1991) and Williams (1994a). Secondly, there are literatures that focus on gender construction organised around the contentious topic of sexualities and sexual identity. Among the latter, there are good examples of academic writing primarily focussed on the body, and the process of gender embodiment that defines masculine and feminine sports and leisure (Caudwell, 2004, 1999; Cahn, 1994, 1993; Cox and Thompson, 2001; Pfister et al, 1999; Scraton and Flintoff, 2002). The standardisation of a masculine/feminine binary is supported in the experiences of many women interviewed for this research. There were issues of exclusion and sometimes derision, which evidence very broadly a gender hierarchy and sustain the limitations experienced by female football players. The key for this research was to elicit such marginal narratives. By focussing on subjectivities to illustrate cultural variation, contest and change, Bhabha’s third-space was deployed as a theoretical framework to look at women’s football precisely because participants’ experiences do *not* conform to the dominant narrative. In terms of originality, although the institutional production of gender binaries is an important factor that I will be making reference to, the aim was to design a frame capable of accessing non-traditional narratives and capturing a wide range of women’s

experiences. The temporal framework covers a period of approximately 40 years as determined by the age range of participants.

For women who take part in masculine sports such as football, participation can be an exercise littered with challenges. To this extent, the purpose is not to go over old ground and merely re-iterate what is already known, but to interrogate the nature of the challenges that women articulate in pursuit of their ambition to play football. Of course the context is important, and this research cannot seek to understand the challenges without understanding *what* this context is, but when choosing a lens for interrogating gender, one might ask what distinguishes football from other sports? I maintain that football is different because of its cultural prominence and therefore popular placement for extending gender representations. There are a variety of other reasons outlined in Chapter 3 with reference to epistemological and methodological aspects of the thesis, but in terms of setting a general context, because football is a dominant sport (Markovits and Hellerman: 2001:19-20) it sustains a gender binary in the popular imagination, specifically with regard to traditional masculine and feminine stereotypes. As a consequence, the wealth of women's experiences in football are historically and contemporarily marginalized, both structurally and culturally. Therefore, by taking Bhabha's third-space as a basis of critiquing popular discourse that prioritizes the achievements of men's sports teams and athletes (Harris and Clayton, 2002:402), the thesis will develop this theoretical construct in order to understand cultural complexities and the variety of ways in which women's football questions the boundaries of tradition. More generally, the thesis will argue for a better understanding of complexities in football culture *per se*.

The general framework for this research therefore addresses the authority of hegemonic masculinity, and draws on the binary as an exploratory tool to interrogate women's football as a space of cultural contestation. In doing so, the aim is to show difference and complexity, to interrogate how culture changes and synthesises into new and varied cultural forms using the lens of women's football. For the purposes of achieving this aim, gender situated in a binary, is a conceptual focus from which to establish cultural practices that deviate. For women's football, I argue that the binary extends its historicity into a contemporary context, and so the integral purpose of the research design is to manage to draw an alternative, subjective narrative whereby marginal cultures are the focus. In this sense, defining men or women's football for instance, incurs all manner of objectification regarding how football *should* be played. This is apparent in asserting the notion of authentic identities, of aesthetic expressed in tactical systems and national playing styles (Giulianotti,

1999:127-145). The concept of authenticity is somewhat problematic, and for women's football the term does bear resonance. Authenticity is bound up with assumptions that there is a concrete and real, categorical standard. Contemporary critiques of modern football on consumption and spectatorship tend to imbue a romanticised sense that football was superior in the past (Conn, 2013, 2004). But once the concerns of inflated tickets pricing and the sanitisation of contemporary stadia are stripped away, then what we might see is a re-assertion of hegemonic masculine identities (Brown, 2008:349; 2004:176; King, 1999:190). This is the standard of authenticity that solicits anxieties about female football players, circumventing complexity and variation that can give voice to non-traditional narratives. The design of the research that can counteract the ideological authority of hegemonic masculinity and extract a sense of identity for voices which have been historically and contemporarily marginalised, is the topic of the next section.

1.2 The Research Problem

The time-frame that fieldwork interviews cover is 40-years and women's football has made great strides, certainly from the days of only token gestures of accommodating women who wanted to play football under the old Community Programme umbrella of the 1980s (www.thepfa.com accessed 25th July 2015). Yet despite greater scope for girls and women to play football, there are still advances to be made not only in terms of setting a base for sustainable development, but also gaining cultural acceptance. There are more opportunities for women, but it is not *the* definitive problem. The challenge for women is to contest and change gender binaries that sustain conventions regarding normalized femininities and how women seek to *fit in*. Fitting in for women can be situated with reference to structure and opportunities, which are historically and to a lesser extent contemporarily, limited to non-existent. But this only part of the equation, there are also challenges for women because football, being physical, taking part in leisure and public spaces, carries with it connotations about femininities which are valid expressions of womanhood. For women participating in physical exercise, these types of activity disrupt conventional hetero-normative identities. Because hegemonic masculinities are the cultural focal point, football is a place of convergence whereby binary heterosexual gender identities are consolidated. The basis of the research design therefore draws on the theoretical dimensions of Bhabha's third-space thesis to address the research *problem* of objectifying gender. Rather than accounting for that which is already known i.e. football accommodates masculinities but questions femininities, what

this thesis seeks to understand is how do women deal with these conditions and how do they subject it to change?

In order to investigate how women negotiate the conditions of gender, masculinity and femininity are subject to interrogation. In such a way, a binary is an ontological frame, setting a cultural focal point that is subject to contest, and from which narratives of difference can emerge. The research problem for this thesis therefore is to show how there are different ways to *do* femininity (and masculinity). As a gender binary is situated in football then, the third-space is set to develop a more relevant frame that can advance appreciation and development of women's participation by looking at marginal spaces to examine cultural dynamics. The third-space challenges cultural limitations, because it is a space for negotiation and manoeuvrability that test gender conventions. In order to look at women's football in the frame of the third-space, the elements of the investigation are broken down under the following concepts; mimicry, disavowal and hybridity.

1.2.1 Research Objectives

There are greater numbers of men who play football than women, or boys in comparison with girls. This is a basic quantifiable means of illustrating *gender* in football. Gender is also illustrated in development terms. Structural provision is established and better placed to develop players in men's football than women's. With this being the case, it is evident that masculinity has been prioritized historically, and this continues to be the case contemporarily. Moreover, on the basis that playing football is a forum for expressing masculinities, when women do play, participation is often evaluated as being unfeminine. In this discursive matrix, the focus on sexualities or more specifically, deviant sexualities (Caudwell, 1999:401; Cahn, 1993:356) is a narrative that is subject to interrogation and object for study.

Because women's football has been, and arguably still is, considered peripheral to the men's game, the contention of this thesis is that the research design enables alternative voices to be expressed. The subjective experiences of women are therefore fundamental to a critique. To this end, it is not so much the historical location and the social process that have culminated in football becoming predominantly masculinised which is subject to interrogation, but how female football players negotiate the conditions in which they play football. As such, I argue that the challenge is to contest gender binaries, to look for avenues of difference and expressive variation in the margins, so that there is an emergent narrative that can tell a story about women's football. On these grounds, the overarching research question and the contributory objectives of the thesis are as follows:

Research Question: to what extent can the narratives of female football players in England be situated in a third-space analysis?

Research Objectives:

1. In what ways are women female football players *complicit* in reproducing the gender discourses that frame their participation?
2. What strategies of *negotiation* do female football players employ in order to navigate opportunities and structures with regard to player development?
3. In what capacity do female football players actively partake in *transformation* in English football?

1.2.2 Theoretical Framework: Key Concepts

The ontological frame of the thesis outlined in Chapter 2 accounts for the emergence of a gender binary, therefore setting the object of the research and the context for the study. The gender binary is the dominant narrative that informs women's participation in football. When women's football is marginalised, then the third-space aims to address the problem of the investigation and extract subjective narratives that bring to the fore debates regarding power and gender in football. Bhabha's (1994a) third-space is used to look at the interactions in culture, and interrogate the interaction of dominant and marginal cultures. In the third-space these interactions between marginal and dominant are important because the tensions that emerge instigate cultural critique and contestation. The conceptual elements of third-space that are employed to do this are, mimicry, disavowal and hybridity. These are the conceptual instruments used to look at the empirical data, and are the basis for developing a narrative.

Drawing on Bhabha's (1984) concept of mimicry, I explore gender, making explicit references to this conceptual frame, in order to observe how integral the interactions of social actors are in making culture visible. This is a fundamental question in terms of addressing the object of the study and making evident the action of *becoming* gendered. In football, the body is gendered according to a standard set of assumptions (see Haraway's science as a historical discourse), which assumes that male/female football players (men/women) bear certain essential attributes i.e., which is one's gender at the core. In Butler's terms, her dispute of essentialist theorising is found in her use of the idea of performativity. She argues that there

are no such essential properties and that gender is illusory, maintained by power structures. Butler shows us *how* gender is constructed to affirm particular appropriate physical attributes. Gender is intelligible in this way, such as heterosexual desire (Butler, 1999: 23-24). it is a matrix of essential behaviours that map on to biological sex. If one does not follow this pattern then one is doing gender 'wrong'. Name-calling is one way, and there are notable patterns in the experiences of participants that illustrate this. For Butler, masculinity and femininity are constituted by language (Butler, 1993:232), and gender is an approximation reinforced in citation of cultural norms. The binary of masculinity and femininity therefore supposes the existence of inherent nature (sex/gender) that determines gender, when in reality (for Butler) masculine and feminine are constituted discursively. For instance, there are examples in the empirical chapters when participants are labelled 'tom-boys'. The act of labelling attached meaning to actions that are non-conformist because they are perceived to deviate from femininity; a girl becoming *like* a boy when playing football. In this way, gender can be seen and it is visible in social interactions that sustain cultural dominance in the action of othering. To this extent, the exercise of being feminine is a speech act that imposes gender onto the body in performances (Butler, 1997:402). Becoming gendered in response to discursive speech acts, however, is only a partial account of the processes by which femininity and masculinity are constituted. In order to critique, or re-constitute gender and prioritize cultural complexities for instance, I argue that that the subject position is integral to achieving this aim. Therefore, taking mimicry to situate how culture is made and acted (Geertz, 1973:448), gender is not simply discursive, but something that social actors take part in making. Female football players may reinforce, or mimic, dominant discourse, but rather than perceiving these actions as deviant, of being 'like a boy', it is a means of adapting to the context. Acts of mimicry are conceived of as complicit and illustrate boundaries to the extent that gender can be observed in 'identifiable margins' (Spivak, 1993:55). By setting the ontological frame to the research in this way, participants' reading of their actions takes a subjective position, which illustrates how they negotiate exclusionary conditions. And so the fundamental question that emerges from this setting, asks whether exclusion experienced as a challenge, or a barrier, and is it something that can be overcome and contested?

Having looked at mimicry, disavowal develops the interactions of female football players to contest the gender binary. For Bhabha, disavowal is a response to mimicry. Just as mimicry exposes the boundaries of cultural norms to scrutiny, so disavowal is an abstraction of power and draws attention to the scope of powerful discourses to marginalise non-

conformity. When women play football therefore, these interactions deviate from the binary, and from being appropriately feminine. Deviations are dangerous femininities that offend the norm; they are dangerous sexualities that conflate sex with gender. Dangerous sexualities (Caudwell, 1999:401; Cahn, 1993:356) are exemplified in the stereotype of the masculine woman who plays sport, particularly *men's* sports. Deviating, masculine, women evoke disavowal because they do not conform to the standard of hetero-normativity, and are consequently othered (Bhabha, 1994a:49-53). Many participants, for instance, discussed how they were asked why they were not more 'girly', or in more extreme examples were bullied and excluded. By situating Bhabha's concept in this way, I am interested to understand how female football players manage these conditions. Therefore, the third-space focuses on the point that dominant and marginal converge, and female football players are active in transgressing boundaries of conventional gender in terms of identities. Transgressions are also illustrated more pragmatically where there are limited opportunities to play football. Because football is not a girls' sport, othering is evidenced in gender stratification and can be evaluated by looking at how women challenge exclusion both ideologically and through material practices.

Despite the progressive marginalization of non-standard gender identities and perceived masculine women, Bhabha's concept of disavowal draws attention to context and the boundaries of acceptability. This is a place of intersection because marginal spaces, Bhabha (1994a) argues, are where new and hybrid formations and identities can emerge. In this way, there is latitude in the third-space that encourages non-conformity, and this is apparent in differences and cultural complexities. Marginal spaces challenge hegemonic notions of cultural purity or authenticity, and for women in football this is crucial because binaries sustained by authenticity in cultures i.e. hegemonic masculinities, effectively sustain gender segregation and power. The purpose of the research, then, is to disrupt the binary and seek a more effective way of understanding contestation and cultural transformation that does not diminish women's participation because it is abnormal or deviant. For a subject narrative the marginal position is a critical exercise for advancing contestation, presenting the possibility to change and re-package gender. Hybridity then contends how disruption might be achieved. This is the challenge, to contest derisory perceptions of women's football by setting a frame that can understand football more equitably in terms of being a variety of experiences. Although I advance the argument that binary thinking is embedded in football, where there are margins and difference, hybridity is an important concept for looking to re-interpret gender, even displace it as a way of evaluating women's football.

1.3 Narrative: Epistemological Considerations

The intention of this research is to administer the conceptual frame outlined in the previous sections in order to elicit a narrative and tell a story about women's football. This study therefore involved lengthy interviews so that participants were able to explain their personal histories. Open interviews were the methods by which this was accomplished, foregrounding the narrative of participants' lives. For the purposes of meeting the aims of the research, telling the stories of those lives that have been situated at the margins is about redressing power inequity by implementing a theoretical frame designed to instigate *space* for cultural complexities to emerge. The open nature of the interviews therefore, had to be appropriate for achieving this and for obtaining the requisite empirical evidence for the purposes of soliciting narratives. Interviews were open to encourage a critique of dominant (hegemonic masculine) identities and in this way, they were stories people tell themselves and others about who they are (and who they are not). Yuval-Davies (2006) looks at this as a process of 'being and becoming, belonging and longing to belong' (Yuval-Davies, 2006:201). The assertion of subject narratives is a search for home.

Moreover, as Rutherford explains, the search for a home is a struggle for identity, and the narrative is a way to break conventional hierarchies by contesting the conceptual limitations that underpin binaries and subjecting them to change (Rutherford, 1990:24-26). Empirical evidence garnered from open interviews must fit this purpose to the extent that participants' narrations are a means of resistance. In short, the subject narrative that emerged from open interviews focused on the grounded experiences of women in football in order to challenge cultural certainties. In this way, the protocol of the interview was not set by a series of pre-determined questions, but rather to meet the demands of constructing a narrative from empirical evidence, participants were the guide, the main focus of the story. Participants were asked to begin by explaining how they started playing football. Discrete units of information were not required, instead the storyline of individual biographies were looked at as a collective piece of work to ascertain whether there were common themes that formed a coherent narrative. This narrative is advanced in the empirical chapters. The main thematic structure of thesis is organised around issues of complicity, negotiation and transformation. These three themes correspond to the conceptual frame of mimicry, disavowal and hybridity accordingly in order to bring structures of power into question rather than de-code them (Yuval-Davis, 2011:3). In this way, empirical evidence collected through open interviews meets the demands of the thesis' aims by challenging symbolic power (gender binary) and

structural power (governance and organisation). In this sense, the subject narrative instigates a sense of identity and belonging by bringing into focus contestation and resistance that are situated in marginal spaces, exploring football utilizing different, unique, experiences.

1.4 Scope of the Thesis

The epistemological focus of setting women as research subjects, aims to contest dominant knowledge claims that prioritize hegemonic masculinities in football as the cultural centre point. For the development of narratives, particularly narratives that are purposefully critical, the size of the sample is not such a concern of this study, but the quality of the empirical evidence that is produced. Having explained the theoretical and epistemological focuses in the previous sections, it should be clear that in order to meet the demands of this research, the quality and depth of empirical evidence overrides any concerns about gaining a quantity. Situated knowledge contests dominant knowledge claims, the subject challenges convention and *truths* culturally practiced and authenticated in football because they are organised around a limited understanding of gender. The position of the social agent is to challenge by means of their interactions ‘the god-trick of seeing everything from nowhere’ (Haraway, 1991:189). In this way, the subject narrative is set to draw on the non-conventional with the ‘situated gaze, situated knowledge and situated imagination’ (Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis, 2002 in Yuval-Davis, 2011:4).

Moreover, it is worth noting that the narrative basis of this research is of a specific nature aimed at responding to the research questions. Riessman (2000) notes the diversity of approaches that can be included under the umbrella of narrative and narrative analysis, and thus it is useful to note at this early stage in the research, that the version of narrative that supports this thesis draws from a biographical tradition. The varied nature of narrative research encompasses approaches that determine how events are organised, selected and evaluated meaningfully for the audience they were intended (Riessman, 2000:1). Just as Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis (2002) envisage the situated gaze as the basis of narrative, then analysis of personal experience that privileges the person telling the story (Riessman, 2003:4) means that the narrative is subject to the interpretation of situated events (Mishler, 1995:89) in order to uncover how gender is experienced by participants. The biography of the person speaking is therefore central to this version of narrative, because it tells us about the social world that is familiar to them. In this way, the narrative establishes the scope of the research, although it is one version amongst many. This is an important reminder in

terms of the trajectory of the thesis. The third-space provides a way into revealing the narratives of participants, but it is not the only way. Equally, I employ a particular version of narrative outlined in Chapter 3, but it is important to bear in mind that there are different ways of approaching narrative, and acknowledge that there are different traditions (Czarniawska, 2012; Reissman, 2008, 2003, 2000, 1989; Elliot, 2005; Abbott, 1992, 1990; Hinchman and Hinchman, 1997; Labov and Waletzky, 1997; Mishler, 1985). Summarily, the theoretical trajectory of third-space is an exploration of possibilities, an interrogating framework for potential change when looking at women's participation in football, and 'narrative' is not a general term in the frame of this thesis, but that this one definition of it.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis: Concluding Comments

In summary, this thesis aims to account for the variety of women's experiences of playing football. The theoretical and methodological frameworks were designed to look at difference and variety, rather than re-stating what has already been said and apparent in dominant hegemonic narratives. Dominant narratives strengthen the gender hierarchy that privileges men's football, but by engaging those voices which are marginal as a result of power inequity, this thesis focuses on female football players, because they do make a valid contribution to the complexities and range of experiences that are the sum total of football's narrative. The problem for this research is how, when there is structural and cultural inequality sustained in discourse, should the research be designed to let those marginal groups be heard? In this way, the epistemological direction of the research is the most fundamental facet of the design. Gender in football is a frame of signification about what is appropriate and what is inappropriate. For women who take part in physical activity, specifically sports that are definitively masculinized, then women's football is a lens for intersections of cultural and structural power. This matters in my field of research because on the whole there is not a substantive body of work that accounts for the variety of experiences in women's football. Williams has implied that there is an issue of identity (Williams, 1994a:68). Gathering recollections and memoirs is therefore an integral part of this thesis. Although the main aim is to elicit a narrative, to give some authoritative voice to those experiences that are customarily marginal, it is also important to contribute to the documentation of women's experiences. The contributions of women to this research cannot be understated because of this. Their stories highlight the paradox of women's football, the constant necessity to pioneer their sport and legitimise their participation, because women's

football now, even in contemporary terms, is perceived to be 'just not right'. The organization of the women's game and its cultural representation is still very much informed by the idea of deviant femininity, and I argue that this sustains its marginal position. The third-space theoretical frame I employ during the course of the thesis interrogates this context and reveals the potential to understand narratives that contest this gender convention.

As has been explained, the present body of literature on women's football falls broadly into two categories, firstly of historicity and governance, and secondly of performance, the body and sexualities. Therefore, in the sociological field of gender and football, and football in general, the third-space is an original approach because it instigates contestation of the gender binary, and importantly, questions long-standing gender categorisation embedded structurally and culturally in football. In this way, the third-space is a theoretical frame that challenges convention. It is not sufficient to conceive of *men's* and *women's* football for example, this is simplistic gendering, but it is important to look beyond these confines. As has been noted, there is a range of range of academic literature that currently exists on the subject of football, concerned mainly with men's participation, be it with regard to players or supporters. Contributing to this body of literature, and forming a perspective for women's football, therefore poses a challenge. The purpose of the thesis is to adopt a strategy that not only creates space for these voices to be heard, but also disrupts convention that undermines them, labelling them *new* or *inauthentic* because they are women's voices. For example, there is some longevity to the presence of women's participation in football that undermines the notion that it is new, or fashionable, or satiating politically correct contemporary manoeuvres within the Football Association to make the game more available to women and girls. It may be in lesser numbers than men, but there is a pattern of consistent participation, illustrating the historical existence of women's football. Whilst this may be the case, in order to examine and contest gendered power in football, the most significant aspect of this thesis is derived from its theoretical trajectory, because it contributes a way of seeing that has not been applied to women's football in order to elicit their voices. Certainly for women who play football, their participation is of political value because it brings into question issues of power and sets to challenge convention i.e. how does one encourage more girls and women to play football? In this way, the purpose of the theoretical third-space frame is an innovation that aims to prioritise female football players' experiences in order to challenge marginalisation and more equitably perceive women's participation.

1.5.1 Outline of Chapters

In the next chapter, I address relevant literature in the field. Accounting for marginal stories requires a different approach epistemologically and theoretically. I therefore, begin to lay the basis of the research design outlining the relevant concepts of Bhabha's third-space thesis, drawing on the ontological frame that sets a gender binary on football. I outline the conceptual basis of mimicry, disavowal and hybridity that underpin the empirical chapters. Having set the theoretical groundwork, I move onto the methodology in Chapter 3, and explain the epistemological structure of the research design and account for the focus on narratives before moving on to the empirical sections of the research. Importantly, I begin this explanation of the research design with a reflection on my own role as a researcher, and use this to explore epistemological challenges of giving voice to participants' experiences and incite debates about gender and women's football more generally.

Chapter 4 is a bridging chapter, presented in order to show how the empirical evidence presented in the thesis connects to the theoretical framework elaborated in Chapter 2. The purpose of this chapter, which connects the key concepts of mimicry, disavowal and hybridity to the empirical work in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, draws on themes that were the most common across transcripts. It has not been included as an addendum so that there is a mapping of thematic structure and corresponding research questions that constitute each empirical chapter. This necessary illustration of integrating theory with empirical evidence is included in order to ensure that the empirical chapters remain narratively focussed, and meet the overall purpose of the thesis.

Chapter 5, *A Narrative of Complicity: Mimicry and Cultural Adaptations in Accounting for Gender in Football*, looks at how women's active participation in football is contributory to the composition of masculinity and femininity. This is essentially an exploration of how 'knowledge' about gender can be observed in football. Throughout this chapter, examples of cultural interactions are utilised to examine participants' early experiences of playing football (informal space) and illustrate women's marginalisation in institutional contexts (formal space). To further this narrative, mimicry is subject to interrogation with extracts taken from both single-sex and mixed-sex football matches. In such a way, examples of football matches will contextualise cultural practices, or adaptations, which women make to the football environment and reproduce, or adhere to a dominant narrative. Thus, subject narratives are termed complicit.

In Chapter 6, *A Negotiated Narrative: Locating Disavowal and Contestation*, there are two main thematic strands. Drawing on the dual utility of Bhabha's mimicry as illustrated

in the reactive disavowal (Bhabha, 1984a:126), rather than interrogating mimicry as replicating hegemonic masculinities in complicity, the discussion is focuses around how female football players disrupt gender binaries. In temporal terms, it was notable that cultural contestation (disruption) emerged across the age range of the sample. There have been changes in football governance for instance, the poor structural development dating from the late-1960s to the markedly more inclusive strategies of the present are symptomatic of structural transitions, and these changes are examined in examples presented in this chapter. Importantly, the focus of Chapter 6 is to show how women have negotiated systemic exclusion and to understand the manner in which they have sustained their participation despite these conditions. Negotiation was evident friendship and social networks that asserted a strong sense of identity, and there were examples of managing expectations and career mobility.

Chapter 7, *Examining Hybridity: Transformation, Creative Spaces and Emerging Women's Football*, develops the synthesis of mimicry and disavowal in order to examine hybridity. Chapters 5 and 6 were premised on the tension that underpins Bhabha's mimicry, and how mimicry and disavowal work to emerge in narratives that comply with dominant cultural practices, but at the same time also assert a challenge. In synthesising these two facets of Bhabha's third-space, Chapter 7 argues that although participants' experiences highlight some quite fundamental development issues, these non-traditional or marginal spaces i.e. of women's football, encourage differences and cultural change. The problem of marginalisation is examined because there were discussions of simply learning to play football. Emergent in many participants' interviews were anxieties that illustrate historically poor development i.e. not having sufficient opportunities to become competent football players. How women overcame this challenge was interesting, and Chapter 7 explores ways in which gender certainties might be contested and positively transformed taking extracts from experiences of playing single and mixed football. The final section of this chapter looks at contesting gender binaries to understand how developing football players would be more effective if based on assessing competence, rather the conventions that privilege hegemonic masculinities. This chapter looks at ways that participants contest established certainties about masculinity and femininity, and how women's football contributes, in a broader way, to football culture(s), its variations and ultimately transformation.

Chapter 2 - Review of Literature: Ontological Debates and Theoretical Orientation

2.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the principal themes that emerged from key literatures relevant for this study. While such an exercise is necessarily selective, I wish to utilise the review to bring to the surface pertinent theory that will frame the thesis. Although reference is made to important historical patterns and trends that are indicative of the roots of gender differences in English football, the main purpose of this literature review is to foreground theoretical contributions that resonate with the research questions. Therefore, this study is an exploration of contest and transformation, and I will be making extensive reference to Bhabha's (1994a:54) third space to develop and advance debate about gender in English football. The layout of this chapter is broken down in the following way. I firstly outline the ontological frame of this thesis in order to understand *why* it is that women's stories have not been told to a wider audience. Secondly, with this being the case, I then ask *how* one might reasonably elicit marginalised narratives that can articulate women's experiences in football. This question is addressed with reference to the main components of the third-space, interrogating its theoretical utility for setting a frame in which cultural complexities and non-traditional narratives emerge.

Although this thesis refers throughout to binary masculinity and femininity, this is not done in order to strengthen gender duality, but rather to develop a framework in which it may be broken down. How do female football players contest this duality and initiate the potential for cultural transformation? Drawing on the concept of mimicry to foreground gender, I look at how female football players negotiate boundaries to the extent that they might be complicit in confirming masculinities and prevailing discourse in order to fit-in, but at the same time also transgress conventional femininities that can problematize gender. In terms of problematizing gender then, the concept of disavowal explains the tension that underpins mimicry (or complicity), which is prevalent in stereotyping and ambivalence. From this context, the final section subjects gender to critique, specifically contesting it as a duality, by drawing on the concept of hybridity. Having interrogated gender with Bhabha's concepts of mimicry and disavowal, hybridity then examines the prevalence of cultural transformation and the potential of women's football to contest binary masculinity and femininity. To what extent can transformation and hybridity be seen, and to what extent do female football

players' experiences incite not only contest of the gender binary, but also subject it to re-negotiation? Overall, the aim is to contribute a better understanding of how gender can be reshaped in a football context, and reflect cultural contests and complexities with greater clarity.

2.2 Developing a Theoretical Framework: A Question of Ontology

The theoretical focus of this thesis initiates debate around how gender is constituted in English football as told through the experiences of female football players. It is a useful starting point to consider how a narrative might look if women are asked to outline their experiences of playing football. How are cultural contests understood by taking subjective experiences? In Bhabha's third-space, the way to elicit these voices is to locate the ontological frame and test institutional narratives with subjective critique. In subject/object interactions when the dominant culture comes into contact with the marginal in the third-space, this interaction is fractious. I look at this relationship employing a gender binary, and although the main aim of this research is to create a frame in which cultural complexities are paramount, the binary is a conceptual tool with which to instigate contestation. Consequently, this section will draw attention to gender and look at Bhabha's spatial epithet for setting an ontological debate. As the thesis is developed, the intention is to unpick this binary.

The context to this research extends beyond the citation of detailed facts e.g. comparable numbers of men and women who play football, this only tells a partial narrative and does not account for variation that does not fit into a binary. The focus for this chapter is to interrogate the hierarchy that prioritizes hegemonic masculinities. For female football players this context is important, because women's participation is judged in the frame of discourse that maintains gender conventions.. Such a process of literature searching is necessarily selective, because although the research draws attention to pivotal events in the development of social structures (Mills, 1959:144), it is more important to understand how gender is practiced playing football. For instance, during the course of looking at literature that contributes to this review, the question of how to most effectively locate football in a historical sense was an initial issue. In setting this frame, the intention was to understand how gender intersects with the contemporary experiences of female football players. The original task set sought to explain the gendered dimensions of English football culture and although many of these literatures are cited within this chapter, in order to maintain the focus of the

research, this historical component is not extended beyond setting a frame that will facilitate a clear understanding how football is gendered.

2.2.1 The Institutional Narrative: Locating Gender

Connell has argued that boys *learn* how to become men when entering into relations with organised institutions (Messner cited in Connell, 1995:35). The institutional basis of a gender binary in football is arguably underpinned by the legacy of muscular Christianity, evident in discursive rigorous masculinities consistently encouraged in public schools (Winner, 2005:9-10). Moreover, Williams (1994a) questioned why there is a ‘peculiarly English expression of contempt for women who play football’ and why this has never been satisfactorily explained. Perhaps it stems from the origins of Association football and its public school foundations, specifically the privilege extended to masculinities that are arguably advanced by historical transitions as the game emerged in an organised form and a mainstream aspect of popular culture (Giulianotti, 1999:155; Winner, 2005:10; Williams and Woodhouse, 1991:7). For example, football’s growth as a common working class activity in industrialising modern Victorian and then post-War society (Williams, 2003a:29; Cahn:1994:8; Walvin, 1994:44) also had utility for encouraging healthy activity for children (boys), with subsequent inclusion on school curricula. Although there is some anecdotal evidence to show women’s participation (Williams, 2003a:26), football has traditionally been a demonstration of masculine *rites de passage* (Fishwick, 1989:60; Walvin, 1994:40). In an ontological frame of binary gender, the notion of an erotic economy arguably impacts upon women’s football to the extent that female football players are stereotyped, they are positioned as typifying deviant physical femininities, which are a counterpoint to non-physical decorative and ‘conquered’ femininities (McLintock, 1995:29). Colonial discourse was reflected in football, Walvin (1994:15) cites for example that ‘sports, disciplined games’ integral to the development of ‘late Victorian and Edwardian manliness [and] was proof of British superiority’. Football propagated hegemonic masculinities and this was advanced in the teaching of gendered physical movement. Of course the colonial narrative is one that also encompasses football in a variety of ways. The relationship between Muscular Christianity, (white) colonial identities and the propagation of rigorous masculinities emerges in analyses that critique contemporary stratifications that emerge not just in terms of gender, but importantly of race too. McIntock’s (1995) work is interesting precisely because she notes the domination of the colonial to impose upon gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity. Although this thesis is focussed on gender, it is important to note that these narratives have been subject

to discussion in terms of men's football (Cleland and Cashmore, 2013; Saeed and Kilvington, 2011; Burdsey, 2004; Back, Crabbe and Solomos, 1998). They have not however been featured in mainstream critiques of women's football, though some research does exist (Ahmad, 2011; Scraton et al, 2005).

In such a way, 'cults of physicality' (Shilling, 1993:110) practiced in football underpin masculinities and usefully illustrate how gender is acquired and learned in an environment that facilitates a masculine/feminine binary. In contrast to the contrived masculine heterosexuality emergent in public schools, there were appropriately feminine physical activities (Hills and Croston, 2012:598). For example, girls were encouraged to take part in sports through which feminine qualities would be displayed, such as gymnastics and netball, or female admissible sports associated with balance, flexibility and grace (Houlihan, 2008:133; Caudwell, 2004:131). Such a context is revealing, because it exposes the conditions by which gender is embodied (Kahn, 2009:33). Young (1990) for instance, argues that in the context of physical education, physical deportment is not of a natural disposition, but something that is achieved through instruction and learning how to use one's body.

In softball or volleyball women tend to remain in one place more often than men do, neither jumping to reach nor running to approach the ball. Men more often move toward a ball in flight and confront it with their own countermotion. Women tend to wait for and then react to its approach, rather than going forth to meet it. We frequently respond to the motion of the ball coming towards us as though it were coming at us, and our immediate impulse is to flee, duck, or otherwise protect ourselves from its flight (Young, 1990b:146).

If this discourse is therefore extended into a contemporary context (Harris and Clayton, 2002:402), for English football, expressively rigorous masculine physicality impacts on women in ways that it would not do for men. For instance, playing football is a place of synthesis that equates being physical with being masculine, the antithesis of course being that it is perceived to be unfeminine. In order to meet the demands of femininity then, anxieties may become apparent in the attitudes of girls and women with regard to taking part in physical exercise, and consequently influence the decisions they make about the kinds of sports that they participate in, and in physical education more generally (Hills, 2007:320).

The extent to which a dominant hegemonic masculinity continues to define the sport assumes gendered continuity. The historical foundations of public school football, which underpin associative regulation, assume an immutable, peculiarly English, physicality, but it

is a historical construct that is transitional and sensitive to change. The singular ‘hegemonic masculinity’ therefore presents this research with a definitional problem. Although is a useful heuristic around which to organise women’s experiences of football and then contest its endurance, we should also acknowledge the precarity of the concept and equivalent femininity. Connell makes this very point, it is erroneous to talk about masculinity in the singular, but rather acknowledge the complexities within such categorisations (Connell, 2005: 845). In terms of the aims of these thesis, which is to not only elicit a narrative, but also subvert such categorical gendered notions, the progression of pluralisation i.e. masculinities and femininities, has much more currency in contemporary discussions of gender. What the use of the term hegemonic masculinity does allow this thesis to do is firstly address issues of power. Connell (2005) encourages use to engage in this way and critique theoretical discourse that treats men and women as pre-formed categories. I argue that, in football, categorisation extends from associate origins (enshrined in the FA), and has bound women’s ambitions to play football. The idea of hegemonic masculinity and femininity (the binary) is a starting point, but only a starting point. In mimicry, the idea that gender takes a categorical, hegemonic, which for women football players is something that shapes their experiences in that they contest such discourse, highlighting the intersections of power on their participation. The pluralisation of masculinities draws us towards the problem of categorisation, that there are multiple complexities within categorisation, which tell us much about power not only in the relations between men and women, but also power between groups of men i.e. the idea of subordinated masculinities (Connell, 2005:829). It brings ‘hegemonic masculinity’ under scrutiny, it is precarious and tells us much about how gender is constructed and what football players themselves do to manoeuvre and ultimately change it.

The ontological basis of this research then, draws on subject/object interactions to debate gender. To elicit a subjective critique of the institutional narrative therefore, women’s experiences are integral to observing gender. How women situate themselves grounds their experiences relative to a broader context and contest ‘dominant knowledge claims’ (Harding, 1991:149). For instance, I encouraged participants to tell me about the world as it has shaped itself through their own accounts of playing football, and is the basis from which to extend the production of a narrative underpinned by an experiential ontology (Smith cited in Travers, 2001:137). The historical marginalization of women’s football is a narrative in itself as experiential subjective stories can account for, and explain, gender. Although stories might include instances of exclusion or frequent derision, this research draws on the subject position

as a basis for making visible alternative narratives that show how women have negotiated and found spaces to play football.

In the sense of forging a space, the narrative is a collection of experiences, but also cohesive in expression because they are illustrative of patterns of resistance. In accounting for the underlying persistence of women's football, the subjective narrative is illustrative of change over time (Hinchman and Hinchman, 1997:xvi), and from a marginal position then, female football players act as critical commentators *in situ*, so that such social action is intelligible. Czarniawska argues that 'we are never the sole authors of our own narratives' (Czarniawska, 2012:4-5), what then, do women's stories tell us about social action and power in football? Narratives generated from the position of female football players are antithetical to 'institutional' narratives that exclude female football players from the conversation. Stories are observable in experience, facilitating understanding of the social world (Benney and Hughes, 1956:138). Productive prejudices (Gadamer quoted in Prasad, 2005:33) make visible *what* women's stories tell us about gender stratification, and the contrasting ways that masculinities and femininities are constructed (in football). In such a way, a subject narrative reveals a great deal about the arbitrary nature of binary gender, and this is therefore the starting point for setting a theoretical frame.

2.3 Positioning the Third-Space: Integrating Theory and Empirical Evidence

In order to respond to the overall focus of the thesis and advance understanding of women's football, the theoretical frame is designed in such a way as to draw on subject experiences that may undo gender. For the purposes of integrating theory and empirical evidence, the third-space (Bhabha, 1994a:54) is the main focus for this section. I will identify and outline key aspects of the third-space specifically to interrogate gender in women's football, and to ascertain the narratives that emerge. The subject narrative is purposeful for meeting the overall demands of the research, because women's football is arguably a productive space for differentiation that bring dominant gender discourse, in the guise of a masculine/feminine binary, into question. Women's football is a space that incites the emergence of critical stories from the margin, which reveal how women have forged spaces of expression and consistently negotiated ways in which to participate despite cultural and structural exclusion. It is a good point therefore to question how creativity and persistence can instigate debate on the omnipotent character of hegemony, which in football authenticates hegemonic

masculinities. The broad purpose of the research after all, is to test the ‘third-space’ as a frame in which to understand cultural complexity, and Connell (2008:61) explains it thus:

It (hegemony) means ascendancy within a balance of forces, that is, a state of play. Other patterns and groups are subordinated rather than eliminated. If we do not recognise this it would be impossible to account for everyday contestation that actually occurs in social life, let alone for historical changes in definitions of gender patterns on a grand scale.

Gender characterised in a binary is hegemonic, and it prioritizes masculinities. In an environment such as this, it is difficult to hear women’s voices. Yet the position of marginality, that is the exclusion of women in structural and cultural terms, is so important for provoking debate on the nature of power sustained by a gender binary. Marginalisation is situated knowledge and at the basis of an experiential ontology. Such experiential knowledge can arguably subject the institutional narrative to change (Haraway cited in Code, 2005:181), because ‘strong objectivity’ (Harding cited in Travers, 2001:37) aims to give power and a sense of coherence to marginal groups by drawing on stories of contest and negotiation whereby new, hybrid, spaces may emerge and cultural transformation be encouraged. In order to confront questions of power and gender in sport, it may be argued that any given text is subject to negotiation (Sandvoss, 2005:6; Fiske, 1989:168). In this thesis, empirical fieldwork therefore draws on stories from a marginalised place to interrogate the third-space. Historically, female football players have been excluded, and they continue to face obstacles in contemporary terms, but theirs is a critical position that is central to contesting and subjecting this gender hierarchy to change. Bhabha’s third space is broken down into three main components, which are the basis for empirical investigation. Mimicry, disavowal and hybridity are explored in the remainder of Chapter 2, and these three elements correspond to the thematic sections of this thesis as they relate to the research questions; complicity, negotiation and transformation, the purpose being, to test the utility of these conceptual devices as reference points to instigate critical debate on gender in football.

2.3.1 Mimicry: Ambivalence, Stereotyping and the Colonial Condition

Mimicry in the context of women’s football can be conceived of as affirmation. Engaging in physical interactions sometimes emphasise, and strengthen, hegemonic masculinities prioritised by established cultural practices in football more generally. For instance, adherence to mainstream cultural practices, becoming ‘one of the lads’ by appropriating some

of the least attractive aspects of boorish lad behaviour, for female football players, might be considered regressive (Whelehan, 2000:49-51). However, such acts of compliance in the context of women's football illuminates the boundaries to the extent that gender can be observed. As Spivak explains, 'cultural identity is thrust upon one because the centre wants identifiable margins, claims for marginality assure validation from the centre' (Spivak, 1993:55). Mimicry is an exercise in location, acknowledging the cultural focal point sets the context from which to interrogate points of similarity and opposition. For instance, in Bhabha's third-space, ambivalence is premised on conflicting emotions of the colonizer towards the colonized. Ambivalence is the essential component that creates conflict, because this emotional encounter is unstable, it is never quite certain and reactively asserts power and authenticity in the creation of the stereotype. The vilified image of the female athlete embodying masculine qualities for example, remains emblematic in the sporting arena. It is a disparaging figuration, and is known because it is illustrated in female football players' experiences, explained by the persistence of the narrative that demonizes dangerous female sexualities. The butch lesbian label is applied frequently, and indiscriminately, to non-conforming female athletes (Caudwell, 1999:401; Cahn, 1993:356). It is a discourse that propagates anxieties, and which simultaneously may undermine the participation and achievements of female football players.

Bhabha's ambivalence is drawn from Freud and the co-existence of 'two classes of instincts' (for Freud these are sexual instincts, *eros*, and death instincts, *thanatos*), in order to demonstrate the duality in colonial discourse. Mimicry is ambivalent because it is both desired and derided (Childs and Williams, 1997:124). The colonial (objective) identity therefore expresses desire, fetishizing its subject. The colonized vacillates between delight and fear, or contempt in the way that Freud imposes the fear of sexual difference to fetishize the superiority of the male sexual imperative. Femininity in a Freudian sense is perceived as deficient because of the absence of a fallous. Femininity is othered and feared, but by the same token also a source of curiosity. In such a way, Bhabha places the colonial condition in a matrix that may manifest in anxieties of difference, of skin colour for example, the fear and curiosity about the unknown gives the colonizer an affirmation of completeness. In short, such ambivalence is a validation of cultural authenticity i.e. what is real and *proper* and what is not.

The space of the other is always occupied by an *idée fixe*; despot, heathen, barbarian, chaos, violence. If these symbols are always the same, their ambivalent repetition

makes them signs of much deeper crisis of authority. This means that just like Freud's theory of the fetish, the stereotype is there to cover a fear – to negotiate a crisis of authority by the reaffirmation of the unruly, and therefore threatening native, who justifies his dominance (Childs and Williams, 1997:129).

Bhabha's stereotype draws on Freud's fetishization of sexual behaviour to explain the fear of something that is unknown and of not being there. The sense that mimicry is incomplete is illustrated in the stereotype because the response of the colonizer is one of anxiety, which in effect means dominant cultural identities are visible. For Spivak, this interaction between dominant and subordinate cultures and identities is a process of ascertaining where margins are (Spivak, 1993:55). As mimicry applies to this research, when dominant cultural practices are confirmed i.e. when participants replicate hegemonic masculinities, narratives are termed complicit. There are ways that their experiences of playing football conform to a conventional masculine/feminine binary, they mimic.

The interaction between the dominant and marginal is so important for highlighting the tension incited through deviant cultural practices. The duality inherent in mimicry is a strategy for approval i.e. becoming like something in order to ascertain validation, but it is 'almost the same, but not quite' (Bhabha, 1994b:86). Mimicry is therefore ambivalent because it emerges in fantasies of menace, which for female football players may create tension with regard to displaying normalised sexualities within the context of football (Adams, 2013). Football is an influential social environment in this way, and affects the experiences of female football players because it creates a cultural dilemma when performances (Butler, 1997:402) deviate from objectified heterosexual femininity. Where deviations occur, the stereotype is a tool of conquest and subordination as it works to impress compliance and acceptance by creating anxieties centred on cultural abnormalities. This is an important point that resonates in this thesis because the colonial condition is located in at least two places at once for both the colonizer and the colonized. Colonial, dominant, identity can only be recognized in relation to the other because in this relationship the colonizer locates and confirms its identity i.e. what it is not. The stereotype therefore underpins mimicry, and a complicit narrative is tethered to the shadow of the colonized. The colonial condition is subsequently, a study of subjectivity and consciousness, of fantasy, desire and neurosis. In short, it is a state of flux and conflict, and conflict arises out of ambivalence towards the colonized subject.

Female football players may be stereotyped as a mannish (female) athlete (Cahn, 1993:354) because physicality symbolizes masculinity. Such a negative construction focuses on deviancy. The stereotype arguably extends pressure to conform to conventional (hegemonic) femininities in order to compensate for deviating into perceived non-heterosexuality (Cox and Thompson, 2001:17-24). Social anxieties in the case of Caster Semenya for instance,² are exemplified by her failure to conform to binary convention. This was sufficient justification for the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to conduct a series of demeaning gender verification tests. Similarly, Dutee Chand³ was found to have high levels of testosterone and was consequently barred from athletic competition. However, the hyperandrogenism regulation, which was administered by track and field's governing body, the International Association of Athletics Federations, was overturned by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in July 2015. The CAS ruled that this regulation was ambiguous and in definitional terms unclear. As the basis for ascertaining athletic advantage this regulation could therefore not be used to ban female athletes from competition. For the purposes of this research, such cases highlight the neat categorical manner in which sports divided on the basis of one's sex has limitations, and fail to account for gender plurality. To this extent, biological indicators are a default position upon which hegemonic masculinities and femininities are approximated (Buzuvis, 2011:38; Cahn, 1993:62; Caudwell, 1999:401). It is important to understand that knowledge about gender (in football) is constructed, and women's marginalization is the culmination of historicity and precedence. Mimicry illustrates how one becomes gendered. Rather than one's gender identity being determined in a sex/gender matrix, mimicry instead underlines how it is made, constructed in social interaction, which thus, illustrates how important the third-space is for contesting binaries. Haraway has explained, 'part of the reconstruction of gender is the remapping of biological sex. Biology itself is a historical discourse, not the body itself' (Haraway, 1989:290). Although not diverting into a lengthy discussion about the body, it is nevertheless useful to consider that there are knowledge hierarchies. Knowledge about gender prioritizes masculinities and femininities on the basis they are absolute, which therefore homogenises

² Mokgadi Caster Semenya is a South African middle-distance athlete, born 7th May 1991. Following her victory at the 2009 World Championships, questions were raised and Semenya was subject to a series of 'gender verification' tests by the International Association of Athletics Federations. The IAAF explained that the motivation for the test was to determine whether she had a "rare medical condition" giving her an unfair competitive advantage.

³ Dutee Chand is an Indian professional sprinter, born 3rd February 1996. She was barred from competing in the 2014 Commonwealth Games. The Athletic Federation of India stated that hyperandrogenism meant Chand was ineligible to compete as a female athlete.

the binary. In this way, heteronormativity underpins gender segregation and circumvents the progression of gender plurality for inclusivity, and ways of encompassing different modes of participation in physical activity. Just as Haugaa Engh (2011) discusses, when gender conflates to sex, such a relationship corresponds to roles and behaviours that display appropriately hetero-normative/feminine/female. Therein lies the crux for female football players, because playing football is constructed as neither female nor feminine. Importantly, as the earlier sections of Chapter 2 has explained, it is a perverse context because female football players transgress the margins of acceptability into behaviours that masculinise, even de-gender women.

Heteronormativity regulates not only sexual relationships but also the roles, behaviours, appearances and sexualities of, and relationships between and among women and men. Moreover, heteronormative discourses normalise a particular relationship between sex, gender and sexuality that posits woman/feminine/heterosexual (and man/masculine/heterosexual) as a natural order from which variance is considered a punishable deviance (Haugaa Engh, 2011:138).

Arguably then, institutional narratives antithetically position masculinity and femininity by diluting cultural complexities and in the case of football, diverse competencies and skills may become excluded. For example, with the colonial condition, overtly physical masculinities located in the origin of public school football emerged in a definitive typology (Wilson, 2013; 2008:26, 39; Giulianotti, 1999:5, 127-145; 2009:32-38). The aesthetics of English football that prioritised physicality arguably extend into a contemporary forum, to the extent that physicality was ranked as *the* most effective and advantageous pursuit of participating competitively. Further to this, Young has discussed strategies that involve the scaling of bodies (Young, 1990:122-155). Scaling privileges bodies in relation to a hierarchy, in this case, displays of competence or status. Moreover, scaling privileges idealised (masculine) physicality, it creates order (Hills, 2007:327) and exemplary categories therefore sustain gender separatism. For example, anxieties emerge in mimicry when situated in football illustrate the extent to which playing football is considered to be de-feminizing for women (Paton, 2014). For female football players, physicality diminishes one's femininity and is demonstrative of how mimicry can be utilised to understand the unease that emerges as a result of women's transgressions into masculine spaces.

This is a fractious context and I maintain that because of the dominance of the objective cultural centre, women are compelled to adapt. From this basis, the subject

narrative advances understanding firstly, to look at how gender is constituted in football. Secondly, the subject is the basis for looking at how women test gender binaries that circumvent cultural homogeneity, and can elaborate into a critique that focuses heterogeneous cultural practices instead. Women engaging in a process of negotiation and transformation can actually assert the value of the marginal position, because women may both comply with, and contest gender as it is normally practiced in a football context. Marginal space accordingly is a place of struggle, subverting dominant identities. Cox and Thompson infer as much in their discussion of the enjoyment that is ascertained when engaging in physical activity, in football.

The players expressed a sense of joy in their physical capabilities that had developed through soccer. All had confidence in their bodies in running, jumping, executing skilful movements and using physical force to overpower their opponents. The women were aware of how this contradicted commonly held assumptions that athletic prowess, competitiveness and physical contact were essentially masculine traits (Cox and Thompson, 2000:7-11).

Cox and Thompson argue here that women's experiences of playing football highlight the tension aroused by the female other. Yet despite the apparent anxieties, mimicry is not always subsumed into mockery or caricature, but is an adaptation. Mimicry therefore has a dual function. Mimicry illuminates where there is cultural exclusion by highlighting gendered boundaries. It is a point integral to this research. In mockery and caricature, complicity provides a context in which gender can be seen. If it can be observed, as it can in cultural practices, by this reasoning it can also be challenged. Fanon's discussion of the colonial encounter, for instance, is also a study of masculinity (Loomba, 2005:137). The colonizing white man and effeminate non-white man, Fanon uses as a metaphor to argue that colonial masculinity is used to define other effeminate colonized masculinities (Gandhi, 1998:99). So such gendered intersections are recognizably performed in football and the veracity of the physical (hegemonic) masculinities bred through public schools. Gandhi (1998) further argues how hegemonic (physical) masculinity was symbolic of Empire, and this discourse fortified gender binaries. Physical and assertive masculinity is contrasted to the passive feminine symbolised in colonial discovery narratives of conquered lands.

[McLintock] argues that the masculinity of empire was articulated, in the first instance, through the symbolic feminization of conquered geographies, and the erotic economy of colonial *discovery* narratives (Gandhi, 1998:99).

In forms of mimicry, this discourse and pre-eminent physicality is embodied within the context of women's football. As my empirical data shows, female football players both comply, and comment on, the dominance of hegemonic masculinities. They may reproduce dominant cultural practices, but at the same time also deviate from hegemonic femininities. This is the contradiction that underpins mimicry, and it is demonstrative of the extent to which football culture(s) are constructed in grounded interactions. Female football players engage with dominant discourse and are adaptive. Engaging in this way illustrates how the sex/gender binary is not a fixed condition, but one that is dynamic, shown in participants' experiences in making culture. Because female football players deviate from the norm for instance, by adapting and doing something different, they contest the ideological link that exists between masculinities and football. In this way, football is an active space, it is a disputed territory in which female football players both comply and deviate from dominant discourse. Participants comply by reproducing dominant cultural practices, but deviate by not conforming to hetero-normative femininities. This is the tension that underpins mimicry, and is important in showing how agents are active in making cultures. For women's football then, finding a resolution between compliance and deviation emerges in ambivalence, and resulting disavowal (Bhabha, 1984:126; Childs and Williams, 1997:129) has definite implications. In development terms, the implications could be manifest in limited prospects, lacking the distinct advantages of professional arrangements that exist in men's football, because football is not something that women should do. In the following section therefore, disavowal is the conceptual basis from which I progress the idea that female football players, and their marginal status, is a productive space from which to disrupt gender and look for spaces whereby women's football can improve and advance a development framework.

2.3.2 Disrupting Gender: Negotiating Feminine Deviancy and Disavowal

Just as mimicry illuminates cultural boundaries, its conceptual relevance is the first step to illustrating how colonial identity in the third-space is inconsistent (Childs and Williams, 1997:129). Colonial identity is inconsistent because it is ambivalent towards the non-colonial. Because ambivalence is expressive of conflicting emotions, when dominant and marginal aspects of culture meet there is a disruptive potential. Disavowal for instance is a response to the stereotype, and it has been argued that female football players are effectively othered, because these are non-conforming identities. Building on the foundations of mimicry, Bhabha's (1984) concept of disavowal advances this argument and disrupts gender binaries.

If in the ambivalence/stereotype duality for example, a tension emerges which does question the legitimacy of a dominant colonial objective identity, then a situation exists that is negotiable. Bhabha's disavowal is a useful exploratory concept for examining practices and the prevalence of negotiating strategies, and is a contributory feature of unpacking how agents at the margins challenge cultural dominance. In the context of women's football it is a concept that draws tangible responses to deviations, particularly that female football players are perceived to compromise their femininity, which is subject to scrutiny as a consequence. In this way, the tensions that emerge in disavowal focus on borderline cultures, and cultural contests become apparent and emerge in non-traditional cultural practices.

The sign of the inappropriate intensifies surveillance (Bhabha, 1984:126) on female football players. This is evident in disavowal and social shaming of non-traditional femininities (Haugaa Engh, 2011:12), as illustrated in the previous section. Yet, there is another way to look at cases of feminine deviancy. Disavowal also highlights gender transgressions that test the boundaries of cultural limitation. For instance, anxieties regarding women and football can result in marginalisation, culturally and structurally. Women's participation in football is othered because it is abnormal. The other is situated in a marginal space, and the margins draw on differences to bring into debate questions of power. A gender hierarchy is supported by knowledge based on one's sex, symbolised in the binary. When deviations occur, as it does with female football players, then disavowal works to stereotype and marginalise women (Bhabha, 1984a:126).

A key aspect of this analysis is to develop an argument that can look at issues of power, and Foucault's explanations of how power works to regulate the body would seem to lend themselves well in this regard. But the contrast between Bhabha and Foucault is interesting. As the thesis aims to examine a way into which to disrupt gender conventionality, it is Foucault's focus on the effect of power that is one the reasons for which this thesis did not frame using this analysis. For example, Foucault's work on the body could underpin the examination of gender in football whereby the docile subject has no capacity for resistance and is subject to the power of the State. In this type of subjectification there is a dual process, operated via external regulation, as well as internally, and a way in which individuals make themselves subjects (Foucault, 1973). This underpins to some extent the subject/object relationship which frame the ontological trajectory of thesis, but which are used very differently by Foucault and Bhabha. For Foucault this type institutional surveillance mediates a normative body and regulates individuals to the extent that they are subject to the state. Just as Foucault claims that state power regulates ourselves, our bodies, through normative

discourses i.e. about gender, masculinity/femininity, sexuality, such self-monitoring and self-regulation reduces the need for the external imposition of power to modify our actions. This can be seen in Foucault's use of the idea of avowal, or acceptance, which illustrate the decision to draw on Bhabha's avowal instead.

Foucault's concept of avowal further adds to the discussion of power and its maintenance. In contrast to Bhabha's disavowal, Foucault maintains that power is sustained in and beyond agency or structure because it is legitimized through the actions of social agents in the process of avowal. Avowal is an open declaration, or an acknowledgement of a breach, which requires the perpetrator to voluntarily constitute one's actions (Foucault in Brion and Harcourt, 2014:2) thereby affirming a social infraction. This suggests that power requires consistency and the social agent to make a conscious choice to accept wrong-doing as in a speech act or 'oral declaration' (Foucault in Brion and Harcourt, 2014:15), and this is a crucial distinction from Bhabha's concept of disavowal. For instance, rather than affirming a gender breach by acceptance, female football players can actually disassociate from, and consciously transgress, objectively defined boundaries. In short, boundaries of acceptability can be disrupted, and are therefore negotiable. In disavowal, the colonizer determines a breach, which is progressed by othering. Acceptance on the part of the social agent i.e. female football players, is not essential as it is with Foucault's avowal. Disavowal is a progression of cultural verification. Yet, this is more a function of creating visibility, and although disavowal illuminates dominant cultural practices, agents' acceptance of their deviance *per se* is not a determining factor. Displacement occurs in the environment of women's football, because they are non-conforming by falling outside of cultural convention.

Having discussed at length the application of disavowal to the placement of gender binaries in football, and the assertion of cultural norms, we might also look at the more pragmatic applications of the concept to flag up participants' strategies of negotiating exclusionary, non-feminine, environments. Breaking out of conventional domestic roles and into a public domain that has traditionally been dominated by men, is still a very real part of women's lives, and can be an integral facet of female football players' experiences (Haugaa Engh, 2011:139). With women's football, the sporting context is a break with convention in this way, and further adds to a critique of prevailing discriminatory anxieties about women's participation in football. Breaching private/public segregation is negotiable, and participants discussed at length some of the issues that were specific to them in terms of balancing a feminine social role and taking part in a perceptibly physical masculine one. Examples of spatial segregation highlight the structural realities of making transgressions into masculine

spaces, with participants having to manage the conflict of private domesticity and public participations. Although a study of conventional, frequently inequitable, relationships, Bhabha's disavowal highlights exclusion, but also situates the potential to contest convention and the creatively negotiating strategies that participants might employ in order to combat exclusion. Disavowal situates negotiation, and in doing so incites challenges to the binary.

In a binary, identities are conceivably oppressive, as illustrated by hegemonic masculinity and femininity, but in the third-space they are configurations of power that can be disrupted. Bhabha argues that the binary is a blunt instrument, particularly in his criticism of Said's orientalism. For Bhabha, dualism is actually a point of departure for understanding the dynamics by which culture changes (Childs and Williams, 1997:122). Therefore, disavowal is the conceptual basis by which Bhabha theorizes about cultures as opposed to culture, and a point at which to ascertain differences that deviate from a binary frame. In this way, binaries do over-simplify cultural production i.e. east/west, colonizer/colonized (Rutherford, 1990:21), but it is an important point of reference. As Gandhi explains:

Post-colonial theory recognizes that colonial discourse rationalizes itself through rigid oppositions such as maturity/immaturity, civilization/barbarism, developed/developing, progressive/primitive (Gandhi, 1998:34).

In a discursive matrix that codifies sports performances on the basis of sex categorization, binary stratification can similarly be critiqued. Marginal voices are a critique of the binary that places gender in a frame of cultural certainty, and so the problem, if it can be referred to as such, is the binary itself. The masculine/feminine binary for example is arguably an artefact, an arbitrary construct that is sustained in broader culture, but the margin is the place of its undoing. Dualist categorizations from which non-traditional femininities are considered to deviate are situated at the margins. Although stereotyping deviant femininities may emerge in disavowal, the marginal place as Rutherford argues, actually solicits conceptual critique. 'In the hierarchical language of the West, what is alien represents otherness, the site of difference and the repository of our fears and anxieties' (Rutherford, 1990:10).

Encounters at the margins in such ways are disruptive and unsettling, and are a way of breaking and dismantling hierarchies. In the margins, Rutherford discusses the strangeness and sense of displacement that pervades strategies that seek to find a sense of belonging, or home. It is a struggle for identity and a metaphorical schizophrenia bound up with finding a sense of belonging, which displace cultural certainties that underpin binary categorization.

Moreover, displacement is an attempt at finding a location by seeking existence in a space that can transform conventionality and encourage newly emerging identities, multiplicities, social relationships that extend beyond the binary (Rutherford, 1990:24-26). The post-colonial spatial metaphor, conceived by Bhabha, is therefore bound up in the margin as a site of resistance and poses questions regarding discrimination and anxieties.

In the third-space, disavowal is a response to cultural deviations, as Bhabha understands it, because it is directed by a fear of the unknown. In this way, it is a concept that questions authority because it importantly asserts that culture(s) and all its nuances and complexities, changes and transitions, are more effectively understood if subject narratives are prioritized. Critical reflections on women's experiences can displace and/or replace ascribed identities (Ikas and Wagner, 2009:2), research into female football fans has shown as much (Fozooni, 2008; Goig, 2007; 1999; Cere, 2003; Coddington, 1997). Therefore such spaces can be conceived of as liberating, creatively encouraging the reconstitution of gender, at the very least, contesting the persistence of binary opposition.

They do get something out of being in a minority. It is a way of liberating themselves from all those bugbears that a male society has imposed upon them: frailty, vulnerability, a sense of familial responsibility. This feeling of strength – of empowerment – is a dominant theme that runs through many women's accounts of going to football (Coddington, 1997:57).

In order to disrupt gender categories therefore, or at the very least bring to the fore debate about how gender is constructed in football, women's experiences draw on the relationship between subjective experience and objective categorisation (Harding, 1991:151-152). Coddington (1997) for instance, has asked the question of whether women's experiences of participating in designated masculine spaces (Massey, 1994:185) culminates in an increased sense of empowerment. For all intents and purposes cultural transgressions may disrupt gender, which foregrounds a critical component of the third-space conceptualised in terms of hybridity. Although minority (women's) voices are excluded in broader narrative, grounded actions that are found in marginal and non-traditional interactions, suggest that there is greater complexity than is represented in prevailing gender discourse. Football is played out in contested settings (as was noted in Chapter 1) and in order to look at transformation and flows of cultural exchange and change, the following section draws on the concept of hybridity.

2.3.3 Hybridity: Narrating Unheard Stories

If mimicry's effect is not to change but camouflage and disavowal highlights non-traditional, deviating cultural practices, then hybridity in marginal cultures develops on the basis of differentiation and cultural transformation. Mimicry may elicit disavowal and highlight where there is inequality, but hybridity is a place of contests, synthesis and resolution that is productive for encouraging the emergence of new identities. In sum, hybridity breaks down the duality of the coloniser/colonised relationship. For Bhabha, because colonial power is anxious, i.e. the clear distinction between coloniser and colonised is never stable, it is dependent on the assertion of difference and superiority. In such terms, how coloniser and colonised interact demonstrates patterns of resistance. Bhabha notes for example, moments when the coloniser is less powerful and there is resistance through the active agency of the colonised, usually through violent struggle. The space opened by anxieties, dangerous female sexualities for instance, are indicative of how binary gendered identities are sustained by anxieties of difference, non-traditional, non-conformist interactions. The subaltern voice is therefore crucial, 'the voice of oppressed peoples falling outside of histories of colonialism'; hybridity is therefore ambiguous and opens up the mixed nature and impurity of cultures (Huddart, 2006:1-6).

For women's football, hybridity draws on experiences located outside of familiar cultural forms (masculinity in football). Interactions in this context are then best understood as renegotiating culture by transgressing gender norms that deviate from fixed gender binaries, and becoming a site for contestation. Mimicry is a practical adaptation, a way to acquiesce and contextualise the prevalence of a dominant institutional (masculine) narrative. Although stereotyping and ambivalence may emerge in the derogatory masculinizing of women that are considered to be non-conforming femininities, it is also an interactive process that encourages differentiation to emerge. Cultural transformation is premised on grounded actions in marginal spaces that challenge gender hegemonies and undermine claims to cultural purity and notions of authenticity. For a subject narrative the location of culture is on the borderline, in-between familiar cultural forms. Hybridity emerges in these non-traditional spaces. For women's football, the marginal subject can be critical, presenting the possibility to disrupt and re-package gender.

How disruption might be achieved is the challenge. There have been some studies into mixed football and physical education (Hills and Croston, 2012; Hills, 2007), and it is intriguing to understand how this might work in the context of hybridity for achieving the broader aim of this research. Mixed football entails hybridity because it is a non-traditional

context that can be a positive forum for challenging gender convention. Binary thinking is embedded when it comes to physical education in sports, and in football, the Teresa Bennett vs. The Football Association (FA) case for instance, set this legal frame.⁴ Although this was intended to foster gender equality, Section 44 of the Sex Discrimination Act (SDA) had exemption clause that has disadvantaged women, because when referring to activities where strength, speed and physique are important, it was used to sanction the banning of mixed competitions and the basis on which Bennett lost her case on appeal from the FA. But Hills and Croston (2012) believe that there is potential to re-interpret gender difference, facilitated through the provision of mixed sports and football.

The argument, however, still rests on a foundation of binary thinking that reconfigures within group capabilities while reinforcing difference. The disruption to normative understandings of gender in PE could be further reinforced by highlighting examples of female and male capability in a broad range of activities, identifying female as well as male sporting success and considering ways that experience and opportunity contributes to gender differences in ability (Hills and Croston, 2012:599).

For understanding hybridity, theoretically de-gendering the problem of masculinities bearing a natural partnership to football is a debate that has been advanced in some studies on mixed-sex football (Hills and Croston, 2012) and gendering physical education in general (Evans, 1989; Stidder, 2000). In the studies that have been conducted so far, it has been found that it provides more opportunity to contest *preferential* bodies, and also to acquire the requisite physical capital, or more clearly, to become competent at playing football (Hills, 2007:319). The mixed gender trials conducted in the 2007-8 season eventually culminated in the age-cap for mixed sex football being extended to 14-years, with the report concluding that mixed football would offer girls better opportunities for skills development (Hills and Croston, 2012:591-605). Studies into mixed-sex physical education and football raise two important issues. The strategies that might be employed to better understand hybridity as a way of contesting gender inequity can be situated in the context of firstly institutional governance, and secondly, direct grounded interactions.

⁴ In 1978, the parents of 12-year-old Theresa Bennett took the English FA to court for not allowing girls to play mixed football in a local league. Bennett lost the case, but the FA changed its rules in 1991 to allow under-11 mixed football (the English Schools Football Association (ESFA) also included girls' football in their legislation). Notably, this was 15 years after the Sex Discrimination Act (SDA) took effect. What the Bennett case highlighted was that in order for education to make football (and sports in general) more accessible, change in legislation was required.

In terms of institutional governance and development, to facilitate contestation i.e. a system of grass roots development, there have certainly been advances in women's football (White, 2014). Moreover, having progressed to the semi-final stages of the 2015 Women's World Cup, the success of the England team could be offered as evidence of inclusive governance strategy, although there are still significant obstacles to be overcome. Therefore, although it is to the benefit of women's football that development has moved forward, the fundamental contention for women playing football is to challenge gender stereotypes. Hybridity is particularly prominent in studies of mixed-football because the subject narrative is situated in a context that enables female football players themselves to directly confront and re-package gender, advancing the rationale that a gender binary can be fractured by grounded interventions. In short, women's football, certainly in mixed-football, could challenge the rigidity of the gender binary and historicity that extends into contemporary football. Bhabha explains it thus:

The intervention of the Third Space enunciation, which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, destroys this mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code. Such an intervention quite properly challenges the historical identity of culture as homogenising (Bhabha, 1994a:54).

In order to engage the concept of hybridity, the ways in which women negotiate a space to play football, can be manifest in narratives that demonstrate complicity or objectification of gender. Yet at the same time, in seeking to make space for women's stories, female football players transcend and challenge the negative relationship between femininity and football, because they defy conventional standardisation. This chapter has already inferred that the dialectical partnership between masculinity and femininity is too categorical for understanding contest and transformation. In another way, sex categories can be unclear, and reducing into a determined masculine/feminine matrix excludes diffuse experiences (Buzuvis, 2011:37). In much the same way, a gender binary in football is underpinned by historical precedence, and such a rudimentary division symbolises the relationship that conflates hegemonic masculinity with competence. Summarily, the ontological construction of gender in football depreciates the status of women's football and consequently 'others' and marginalises different narratives. I argue then, that the subjective position of female football players is the most effective way to produce a critique and makes space for women's critical commentaries.

It is clear that the Sociological football literature has, and does, deal mainly with masculinities and male participation in football. Although there is literature dealing with women's participation (Hills and Croston, 2012; Fozooni, 2008; Goig, 2007; Caudwell, 2004, 1999; Cere, 2003; Scraton et al, 1999; Coddington, 1997; Lopez, 1997; Williams and Woodhouse, 1991), it is minimal in comparison. Nevertheless, for the purposes of advancing the concept of hybridity, there is an interesting sub-text underpinning the main body of literature. There are undercurrents of differentiation, cosmopolitanism (Petersen-Wagner, 2015:70; Giulianotti and Robertson, 2004:545), spatial and temporal complexities, and these experiences are intrinsic to football and cultural practices (Giulianotti, 1999:127 and 141-142). It is a narrative of transition and heterogeneity, which for this research, is very important for understanding the contribution that female football players make to football cultures and the fabric of experiences. Football is played out in contested settings, and this is a context, which I argue, has theoretical utility for understanding how women's experiences can be based in a frame of cultural change and variety. The cultural margins where women's football is located can be a space of radical openness (hooks, 1990:149). The originality of this thesis, therefore, lies in designing a research frame that can draw on marginal voices and open gender (in football) up to debate. In the contexts of mixed-football, in terms of the value that participants placed on their own abilities as football players, and in terms of how the women's game is perceived, the challenge to the conventional was very pronounced. The research design and the narratives that follow seek to encompass difference, variety and ultimately change, based on their experiences.

2.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to theoretically orient the study and to provide a framework through which the research question and research objectives can be addressed. There are a number of important issues that have ontological and theoretical relevance for the thesis. I firstly explained the ontological foundations of the research, making reference to the emergence of a gender binary in order to progress a critique of perceived gender certainties in football. For female football players, the institutional narrative can be disparaging and trivialise women's participation. The purposes of this was not to evaluate the historical emergence of football as a principally masculine team-sport, but to locate the precedence of hegemonic masculinities emergent with the establishment of football as a popular sport. From the trappings of English public schools and Association football through to the development

of football as a popular working class pastime, this context was outlined in order to show that there is a gendered legacy, and this extends a dominant gendered narrative into a contemporary context. Having explained the ontological context, the theoretical utility of Bhabha's third-space was discussed as the basis for eliciting difference and unorthodox narratives. In order to show this critique, three key components of the third-space were identified. This sets the frame for supporting the epistemological and empirical analysis in the chapters that follow.

Mimicry foregrounded a masculine/feminine binary to the extent that we can see gendered boundaries when participants were complicit in maintaining the dominant gendered narrative. In mimicry there is a disruptive tension prevalent in stereotyping and ambivalence. Stereotyping and ambivalence are the responses of the dominant (object) culture to mimicry (subject). In complicity i.e. showing the dominant narrative for what it is i.e. a caricature, female football players transgress conventional femininities. In disavowal therefore, emergent anxieties that underpin identities that do deviate from the cultural centre is marginalised into otherness. In order to find a sense of what it is like for women who defy the gender binary, disavowal may mean displacement, but by being displaced, non-traditional spaces encourage contests that can break the logic of otherness (Rutherford, 1990:22) and challenge discrimination.

Finally, having developed the instrumental properties of the theoretical frame in order to prioritise cultural critique, Chapter 2 moved on to hybridity and the subjective voice of female football players in order to break down and ultimately re-negotiate a binary. The margins are a space of critical contestation whereby cultural practices or identities may be brought into question by female football players' interactions, contesting claims to authenticity, or cultural purity, that fixes gender duality. This was done with reference to a mixed-sex football context and some pertinent studies, but most importantly, it is the prioritising of the subject voice, which will be utilised to incite cultural contestation. In Chapter 3, I outline the research design to show how the grounded experiences of women serve to shed light on the contests and conflicts present within English football. How is it best to elicit stories from those voices that have historically been marginalised? It is an epistemological question that will be examined in greater depth in Chapter 3, and soliciting a narrative constitutes a fundamental aspect of this stage of the research as much as exploring relevant literature concerning gender.

Chapter 3 - Methodology: Research Design

3.1 Introduction

The preceding Chapter outlined the ontological frame and theoretical dimensions of the ‘third space’ that underpin this research. Having detailed these aspects of the thesis, the methodology for this study is therefore designed to give voice to stories that will contribute a narrative account of women’s experiences in football. Researching women who participate in traditionally masculine settings presents a series of methodological challenges (Poulton, 2012:2). In looking at the variety of women’s experiences there are a number of issues that underpin the research design, and the objectives of this chapter are as follows. This chapter firstly considers the epistemological basis of the research, which is indexed to both my own broader position as a researcher, and that of my research participants. This is the first part of the research design, which is aimed at inciting debate on gender in football. Secondly, the discussion is organised around the empirical facets of the study and the content of interview transcripts in order to debate gender (accounted for in Chapter 2). Utilising the critical voice of participants to identify the organisation of power in football underlines the research design. Prasad, for instance, emphasizes the importance of the critical voice, particularly when interrogating issues of power and exclusion, as stated, he ‘stresses the importance of layering a text to reveal whose interests it serves and whose it does not’ (Prasad, 2005:363). For example, extant literature discussed in Chapter 2, raises to the surface gender discourse prevalent in popular sports such as football. Empirical interview data is engaged in order to question the extent to which there is contestation and complexity that disrupts the gender binary in football, interpreted through the subjective experiences of women. This leads into the chapters that follow in accordance with the thematic structure of complicity, negotiation and transformation, which correspond the three research questions and theoretical components of third-space; mimicry, disavowal and hybridity.

In the following section, I explain my placement in the field of research. Visiting my own position as a researcher was an exercise in reflexivity designed to situate the research design, and understand how a subjective piece of research can enable research participants to tell their own story. Drawing on the subject to instigate a critique demonstrates how important open interviews were in this research for uncovering individual narratives. As explained in Chapter 2, these are stories that have been excluded, and the aim is to give a voice to these experiences. The final sections of this chapter will then outline key stages of

transcript analysis. The components of analysis will make reference to the individual narrative and biography, the temporal dimensions of narrative, and the process of drawing themes in a cross-case analysis. Overall, the chapter considers how these themes relate to the research questions and will constitute the foundation of the empirical chapters that follow.

3.2 Research Design: Epistemological Considerations and Narrative

Having set an ontological frame, the epistemological direction of this research takes subject narratives as the basis for expressing cultural contestation, hybrid emerging identities and ultimately transformation. Female football players are critical commentators that assertively focus on attaining insight into structures of power (Harding, 1991:119) in football, symbolised by hegemonic masculinities and femininities. Critical properties of subject narratives are commentaries, which draw on the relationship between object (gender in English football) and subject (female football players). As McRobbie (1991:64) has explained, no research is carried out in a vacuum because the questions we ask as researchers are historically informed. In football, historicity lends a sense of authenticity to masculine cultural practices, but this research interrogates how women's experiences make apparent limitations of this, and instead claims that there is not a natural fact of *doing* football as it *should* be done. There are experiences which are unconventional and do not conform to ontologically objectified gender. These experiences therefore illuminate figurations (Hargreaves, 1992:162), which are dominant in masculinist ontology (Hartsock, 1983:231). Accounting for complexity and cultural change in football from a subject perspective is therefore laden with cultural certainties about women, and femininity, in football. English football is the lens through which to examine femininity (and by default also masculinity). One point of interest to this research then is how, as individuals, female football players throw conventional gender discourses open to debate.

In a frame of objectified, culturally acceptable femininity, a critical subjective position takes a standpoint in order to look at power relationships (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000:222-224, Harding, 1991:275-284). In this research, the subject is drawn from women's stories to make visible the dimensions of inequality defined in popular sports such as football. In such a way, the aim of subject narratives bring to bear social process and cultural agendas e.g. gender in football, making them available to scrutiny and therefore attaining a level of objectivity that is beyond the scope of conventional (masculinist) sociological methods (Harding, 1991:149). Football in situ indicates how female football players are subject to

power/knowledge gender relations (Rubin, 1975:199) yet may actively contest gendered discourses, contributing to transformation and alternative interpretations of cultural texts (Smith and Riley, 2009:114). As Harding states:

Women's different lives have been erroneously devalued and neglected starting points for scientific research [] human lives are not homogenous in any gender-stratified society [and] using women's lives as a grounds to criticise the dominant knowledge claims can decrease the partialities and distortions in the picture of nature and social life provided by the natural sciences (Harding, 1991:121).

Consequently, it is important to utilise the critical reflexivity of women's subjective understanding in context. For example, Chapter 2 argued that within the ontological frame the objectification of gender distorts and hides women's experiences. Although women's participation in customarily masculine public forums may well be othered, what is most revealing through the situated experience is how they make sense of, and negotiate this context. In turn then, it was useful to reflect on my own position as a researcher and consider the reasons for undertaking such a piece of research. Whilst conducting this research I kept a reflective journal, and in now examining my own position as a researcher, this recording of the research process has really brought to bear the iterative exercise of a doctoral undertaking. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) suggest reflection is crucial as a means to continuously work on becoming a better researcher, and a journal provides a focal point for this activity (Watt, 2007:85). Whilst I have been occupied with the acquisition of research skills, keeping a research journal has helped on maintaining the focus of this of research, and what it was intended to achieve. In the design of the research, therefore, my starting point is a reflection and the basis of understanding the importance of narrative in achieving my research aim. The formulation of methodology is explained through the issue of researcher and interviewee reflexivity in the next section.

3.2.1 Placement in the Field: Researcher Reflexivity

In order to communicate a clear sense of women's belonging in football, and articulate a sense of tradition (Williams, 2003a:68), reflexivity is a means with which to engage both researcher and research participants. The relationship between reflexivity and method underpins the choice of open interviews (or unstructured). Social action is situated, by drawing on participants' experiences for the purposes of understanding claims (regarding gender) made by dominating knowledge paradigms (Harding, 1991:149). As such, researcher

reflexivity is the initial point from which method is developed in order to look at *what* is happening and *how* it is happening (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000:502). I begin by looking at my role within the field and consider my position as a researcher as the basis for understanding research design and the importance of the subject position.

My own interest in football began at a very young age and is an important factor in my decision to research into a sport that has retained an interest into my adult life. Yet my choice of research topic, while it is driven by an academic desire to address an area that remains relatively untapped, is also informed by my misgivings about having little knowledge with regard women's football, despite having played the game and despite being a football supporter since I was old enough to recollect. This in itself is perhaps indicative of my own unconscious complicity with a culture which does not recognise that the English game is full of complexities, and is best exemplified by my own experience as a football fan. As a regular match-attending supporter of Manchester City Football Club, home and away during my late-teens and twenties, it was my experience as one of only four females who were part of a large group, predominantly (not surprisingly) male, who travelled to watch our team every weekend. This informs a large part of my own understanding of football. There was a conversation before one home game when one of my (male) friends said that I was 'okay' and like 'one of them' because I did not go to Player of the Year events, or obsess over particular players. I was 'okay' because I was not like 'that', like a girl. The inference was complimentary, but on reflection was possibly the worst insult to my own position as a football supporter. To have my status as a football fan validated only in relation to the authentic male supporter is symptomatic of the intensity of a conventional gender binary inherent in football. In reflecting on my position now as a researcher, my own participation was informed compliance to these cultural norms, and equally a failure to recognise that experiences within football are contestable.

Drawing on such experiences brings to bear an apparent complicity. Whelehan has argued for example, that when women participate in perceived masculine cultural activities, they sometimes might adopt dominant patterns of social behaviour (Whelehan, 2000:49-51). For example, the recognition of my own compliance to definitively narrow gender constructs may be discussed relative to my own qualitative data. To what extent do women also legitimate gender binaries in football? For example, during the course of the pilot interviews, some participants discussed the practicalities of women playing on smaller pitches as a means of opening the game up to more women. The assumption that women are better suited to playing on a smaller playing area, is based on an assessment of the women's game informed

by a broader cultural narrative that foregrounds a tension, or incompatibility, between athleticism and femininity (Cox and Thompson, 2000:7-8). I understand this argument when reflecting on my own position as a researcher and female football player. Therefore, in order to initiate a critique of gender binaries that frame women's participation, the exercise of reflection illuminates the ideological link between masculinity and football. It is important to reinforce the point here, because reflections draw on the subjective voice, and the grounded experiences that enable this research to locate gender boundaries.

The subject voice, as participants are given the opportunity to reflect on their experiences, focuses on how women engage in football and make sense of their own participation. For instance, there is a level at which there are shared experiences and common attachments to football, but how could my experience on some levels possibly equate with those of my male friends? Certainly, as a child I had cried when my father could not get us into a game versus Liverpool at Maine Road because the ground was full. Equally, it is doubtful that as a 17-year-old, any of my male friends had to leave a crowded terrace in the middle of a game because the close proximity of a middle-aged stranger thought that this was licence for him to become uncomfortably intimate. These experiences illustrate both the communal bonding experienced by any football fan, but also the uncomfortable realities of hegemonic masculinity and the objectification of the feminine other in this culture. Invoking researcher reflexivity is a fundamental part of this research, and suggests that the issue of bias related to subjectivity may be used to produce a critical account of gendered cultural practices in football. Locating participants in situ is fundamental to understanding complex experiences. Given the marginal position of women in English football, it is necessary for the research design to prioritize these dissident voices, and therefore adopting a subjective ontology overrides issues of bias and external validity as issues of central concern. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) discuss this point, 'those who pursue a deconstructionist path are less likely to worry about bias and more likely to be concerned with voice and text, key issues in representation' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000:229).

Given my experience as both a player and supporter, how this might impinge on my own role as a researcher is noteworthy. The issue of access to my research subject was not problematic. There were ample opportunities to attend women's football matches as a player or spectator, and my own experience gave to my position as a researcher an empathetic understanding with my research subjects. However, crucially here was my most fundamental problem. My own biography enabled me to attain a level of *verstehen* with my subjects, having been in the position of the female other. However, having insider knowledge (Denzin

and Lincoln, 2000:227) also ran the risk of being coloured by preconceptions when the empirical data was examined. In order to create a critical account of women's experiences as football players, the question that emerged was how best to achieve a balance between my own views and my participants' subjective understanding of football? Dorothy Smith explains how an experiential ontology can bring into question the social world (Smith cited in Travers, 2001:137). In order to attain a level of understanding that enabled my empirical data to articulate narratives that contribute to understanding the variety of women's experiences of football, emergent identities and fundamentally, to disrupt gender, I was required in some degree, to take a step back in my role as a researcher. As Harding (1991) goes on to explain:

It begins research in the perspective from the lives of the people on the 'other side' of gender battles, offering a different view from the 'winner's stories' about nature and social life which men's interpretations tend to produce. [] It starts research in the lives not just of strangers or outsiders but of 'outsiders within', from which the relationship between outside and inside, margin and centre, can be more easily detected (Harding, 1991:150).

Critically, the development of a methodology began by reflecting on my own situation as a researcher and was not a hindrance to the articulation of a narrative. For instance, a subjective epistemology drawing on women's experiences, demonstrated the importance of the research design that encompassed difference and alternative narratives, contesting inevitabilities about gender. Haraway argues for instance, that the generation of knowledge is subject to cultural practice. Gender in football for instance, is categorised and consequently objectified to the extent that it is observable in grounded interactions. As Haraway goes on, interactions standardize or stabilize definitions because they are underpinned by meaning making scientific practice that claims to assert an absolute truth (Haraway, 1992:6). Chapter 2 explained privileged knowledge hierarchies, and Haraway's critique of the precedence given to such objective knowledge has some foundation in the pre-eminence of hegemonic masculinities in football. In focussing on women in football, although masculine cultural practices are privileged as authentic, these categorical definitions also are helpful for illuminating the complexity of human experience and the social world. The binary highlights where there is disparity and exclusion, where there is adherence to gendered discourse, or complicity, and also change. This way, the subjective aim is to convey what exactly is going on and how it is experienced, and assert that categorised masculine and feminine are far more complex than broader cultural representations indicate. Culture is acted, it is visible, but in

order to understand it, one must have access to the appropriate codes (Geertz, 1973:53). Therefore, interpretation of cultural texts stems from what Gadamer terms productive prejudices (quoted in Prasad, 2005:33). In critical theory, this is to make use of the tendency to use the productive elements of researcher biography.

From the position of research participants therefore, the productive elements of biographies are means with which to disrupt broader common understandings of gender set in opposition by a gender binary. The subjective experiences of female football players were an alternative to the grand narrative of masculine football because their experiences problematize its definition and challenge dominant institutional discourse. In order to understand how women negotiated such conditions in terms of their contemporary participation, open-interviews were used to allow participants to tell their stories.

3.2.2 Sample

The sample used was a purposive sample of 16 interviews (17 women, two of whom were interviewed together) with female football players from aged 18 to 60. Given my background in women's football, I have maintained some of the networks from my days as a player. In the process of drawing together a sample, this was invaluable. It allowed me to gain access to potential participants, who then gave me further contacts. In such a way, theoretical sampling lays to claim to collect data in a relevant way (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:229) and it is dependent on 'what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what is at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility' (Patton, 1990:184). As such, my past contacts, many of whom are still playing for leisure or have taken up roles in a coaching capacity, have proven to be a resource which put me in reach of participants who were still relatively new to football, and uncovered diverse experiences and perspectives in the sample. Depth in narrative approach was the main consideration in determining an appropriate sample size. That a 'critical mass' can only be achieved in terms of quantitative numbers suggests there is no other way to produce meaningful research. Narrative depth maintains that quality is equally purposeful for interrogating issues that were important for participants. This was the main consideration in collating the sample for conducting interviews that did not constrain quality, but told the story of each participant.

To assemble the sample, I recruited participants from my own connections and friendship networks maintained from playing football during my late-teenage years, through my twenties. The choice of participants was not strategically directed based on specific characteristics such as age, ethnicity and class, but only that they were women who had

played, and in most cases were still playing football. This is because the broad aim of the research was to find a way of drawing out experiences that had not yet had the opportunity to voice, and that the trajectory of the research design was to evaluate a way 'marginal' voices became central in order to evaluate the efficacy of the third-space for achieving this aim. Poulton (2012) has discussed the difficulties in accessing sample populations as a woman when researching into men's football and the basis of this argument to some extent is very relevant for the sampling strategy. The issue might not be about access to the field and to research participants, but it is about a research design that can articulate a sense of identity, belonging amongst the myriad of experiences and struggles for identity and the collective dominant discourse of 'masculinities' on the other. After initiating the first few interviews and securing participants through long-standing networks, the recruitment of further participants often came through word of mouth and snowballed, and data analysis the prominent issues that emerged from participants' experiences. Themes that did present themselves were a reflection of the concerns of participants, and although issues of age, race, class, ethnicity, did not feature strongly, these could be a basis for future research and a targeted sampling strategy in the recruitment of participants. There are only a handful of articles that address concerns of race and ethnicity in women's football (Ahmad, 2011; Scraton et al, 2005), and issues of class and age have not featured at all, so there is more work to be done. Nevertheless, the sample underpinned transcript analysis, conducted with the conceptual typology of mimicry, disavowal and hybridity.

3.2.3 Ethical and Legal Considerations

Ethical consent was granted by the Department of Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology Ethics Committee, at the University of Liverpool, April 2013. There were no significant ethical implications that had to be addressed given the nature of the research and the demographic characteristics of the research group. All participants are female who have either finished their playing career or are still playing. Because all participants were over the age of 18, there were no legal considerations with regard to parental consent. There were, however, issues regarding the consent of participants and the confidentiality of data, as cited in the British Sociological Association's (BSA) ethical statement. In the first instance, consent from participants was sought prior to conducting the interviews. In order to maintain adherence to the relevant ethical considerations, participants were given a full explanation of the nature of the research prior to each interview. Explaining the nature of the research was done on first contact with participants, sending information via email, and again verbally with

each respondent, affording the participant opportunities to withdraw at any point. The principles set out in BSA ethical guidelines (principles 34 -37) cover issues of anonymity, privacy and confidentiality. For example, statement 34 and 35:

The anonymity and privacy of those who participate in the research process should be respected. Personal information concerning research participants should be kept confidential (Consideration 34, BSA Statement of Ethical Practice:2004).

The identities and research records of those participating in research should be kept confidential whether or not an explicit pledge of confidentiality has been given (Consideration 35, BSA Statement of Ethical Practice:2004).

The interviews were anonymized by way of pseudonyms in order to maintain confidentiality. After transcription, participants received their transcript and had a period of 3 weeks to look it over. The opportunity to revisit topics covered in interview allowed participants to decide whether there was any information contained in the transcript that they do not wish to be included in the research. Following this period of reflection, recorded copies of interviews were deleted and the transcripts stored on a password protected PC and PDF documents where they are only available to the researcher.

3.3 Conducting Research in the Field: Reflexivity and Exploring Open Interviews for Narrative Development

Having reflected on my own role as a researcher and examined the epistemological basis for taking a narrative stand, this section examines the integral purpose of open interviews in the research design. The principal area of investigation during fieldwork interviews was to examine how gender is constructed in the context of English football (the objective construction of gender), and how this intersects with women's participation. Williams (2003a) reasons that women's oral histories are important because although quantitative evidence shows increased participation, qualitative evidence reveals previously hidden stories.

There is a pressing need to collect and analyse artefacts associated with women's football if we are to establish and communicate an autonomous sense of tradition (Williams, 2003a:68).

As explained, the method of open interviews locate women's active experiences in football, and although this in some part restates old truths, making these truths observable through narrative equally subjects them to examination and potentially reclassifies them (Clifford, 1988:129). In the production of local knowledge, as Denzin states, subjective accounts reveal the 'working of the world' (Denzin, 1997:56). Moreover, as van Maanen (1998) has argued, to ascertain a written representation of (a) culture, or cultures, interviews make them visible 'through its representation' (van Maanen, 1998:1-3). Therefore, in order to engage participants in telling 'their story', the narrative is underlined by the narrator's position. In such a way, the interview may be viewed as a performance, and the position of the narrator is a fundamental facet of understanding.

Thinking again about reflexivity as an on-going strategy, as my position as a researcher began by taking into account my biography, embedding the researcher into the research design draws on subjectivity as a critical tool in the production of a narrative. Making visible people's stories, the subjective position of the researcher facilitates access to marginal communities, and encouraging participants to reflect in interviews informed their direction that they took. Such a strategy of wilfully using the reflexivity of participants, and my own reflexivity to encourage expansion on points of interest, elicited the types of data that might the subject bring into question the object of my study. This was an epistemological issue, gathering the type of 'evidence' that would meet the aims of the research and contest historically established claims about what gender 'is'. Embedding subjectivity within the research design uses the researcher to reflexively 'make space' in order to access society and culture through interviewees' interpretations of the world and their emergent narrative (Elliot, 2005:39). Drawing on personal biography shows interactions between the interviewee and institutional contexts, and it is a frame in which narratives are 'produced, recounted and consumed' (Elliot, 2005:38). Moreover, the person telling the story is the most important facet of gaining insight into marginal lives. Who are the main protagonists in a story, for example, and what precedence are they given in the recounting of a story? This performance in interview is integral to analysis, but it is not an analysis of the performance between interviewer and interviewee. What is important is the participants' recollection of experiences. Marginal actors are positioned centrally to the narrative, stories that might be considered acts of defiance (Riessman, 2008:59) or resistance narratives draw on the reflexivity of participants, because they are

the person articulating the experience. In this way, open interviews are a method for letting the data 'tell its own story' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:108).

It is therefore worth stressing the value of open interviews for capturing dynamic cultural processes. Clifford and Marcus (1986) explain how in grounded actions we might pose critical questions and illuminate cultural boundaries that exist in class, culture, civilisation, race and gender (Clifford and Marcus, 1986:3). Participants' biographies, the stories that they chose to divulge, are really a study of everyday life. In order to reveal the sense and meaning that people make of their surroundings through local interpretations (Atkinson et al, 2001:237) and interactions in everyday contexts, the method of open interviews appears relatively unstructured. Yet for narrative research, local knowledge aims to illustrate a more accurate representation of (women's) reality (Clough, 1992:74), by taking the conversational nature of the interview interaction as its starting point for enquiry (Hester and Francis, 2003:36). The open interview instigates a challenge to pejorative and dangerous femininities that are perceived to occur when women play football, as in mimicry (Bhabha, 1984). In order to challenge the pejorative, and attain *verstehen* by drawing on insider knowledge (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000:227), open interviews organised around women's common sense reflections on playing football.

As Spivak (1993) has argued, the voice of the sub-altern contests the grand narratives of colonial historicity. Alternative voices illustrate how subjects' lives are so often misrepresented and clumsily translated when explained from the perspective of the coloniser (Spivak, 1993:55). Reflexivity, or reflections on one's own grounded experience on football in an interview situation, therefore, is at the base of these critical explanations (Harding in Denzin and Lincoln, 2000:230), thus demonstrating how the research design can illustrate cultural complexities.

To enact or operationalise the directive of strong objectivity is to value the other's perspective and to pass over in to social condition that creates it []. To look back at the self in all its cultural particularity from a more distant, critical, objectifying location []. Strong objectivity requires that we investigate the relationship between subject and object, rather than deny existence of, or seek unilateral control over this relation (Harding, 1991:151-152).

Just as Devine and Heath (1999) discuss the role of women in the home, where there are 'normative' rules that govern behaviour and obligation providing family support (Devine and Heath, 1999:15), reflexivity facilitates actors' capacity to examine the ubiquitous nature of

social context. Similarly, in the context of football, patriarchal configurations (Hargreaves, 1994:162) are illustrative of rules that govern gender. Taking the reflexive nature of interviews and the experiences of research participants, the narrative makes gender visible and therefore observable. In short, this method highlights the relationship between gendered culture and the situated action of participants that evidences existing social conventions (Fielding, 1988:2). In further developing open interviews, some key questions emerged. Firstly, how can this method facilitate the voices and experience of marginalised, non-traditional, women's participation and secondly, to what extent does subjectivity contest hegemonic masculinities in dominant cultural practices? Pilot interviews were conducted to evaluate the method and develop the research questions for the main study.

3.3.1 Research Questions

Prior to the main study, two pilot interviews were conducted. These were semi-structured interviews organised around a series of topics such as governance, funding, opportunities and perceived barriers, selected as a result of their prevalence in the present body of literature. The purpose of using such a clear thematic structure was intended to encourage participants to directly talk about gender. However, during the course of these interviews, the relative rigidity of a semi-structured approach became apparent. As a result, I considered that this method might not be suitable for the main series of fieldwork interviews. For instance, in order to generate meaning and the significance of events within the narrative, participants were asked to speak about perceived barriers and recollect any memorable moments playing football. Rather than elicit exemplary responses that these questions had intended, participants tended to close up and seemed unable to remember when directly asked. What did emerge when participants were given space to direct the discussion was that they were willing to engage and contest disapproving or negative reactions they often experienced when playing football. In short, participants did not perceive barriers as such, but actively emphasised the positive aspects of their experiences, and engaged in challenging exclusion and pejorative discourses about women's football more generally.

The primary function of the fieldwork was to attain the grounded experiences of female football players, spoken in the subjective voice. Considering the interaction between interviewer and interviewee directed a change in method (Mishler, 1999 cited in Elliot, 2005:21), which would listen to excluded experiences. Given the emergence of discussions that centred on the contested nature of gender during the pilot process, led to the adoption of open (narrative) interviews and set a situation that would inspire more depth and discussion

directed by the participant themselves. The opening of interview space engaged participants more freely and there emerged tales of contests that unsettled gender binaries (Cox and Thompson, 2000:7).

For the main study, questions that were focussed on specific topics i.e. development and perceived barriers, were put to one side. These were often the focus of prompts in the form of sub-questions during interviews, but only when the participant engaged in these topics themselves. Interviews for the main study began by asking participants about when and why they started playing football. Clarification on points of issue were sought when they emerged, and as such, interviews were much more open than those conducted for the pilot study. This appraisal of method was perhaps the most significant influence on the broader study. Sixteen interviews varied from 35 minutes in length as the shortest and 150 minutes as the longest.

The interview should bring out the specific *elements, which determine the impact or meaning of an event for the interviewee*, in order to prevent the interview from remaining on the level of general statements (Flick, 2002:75). [my emphasis]

Emergent issues in the piloted interviews were used to develop research questions, and thematically engage the main parts of the theoretical frame set out in Chapter 2. Because the piloted interviews emphasised the positive experiences of respondents, these are labelled to reflect differing patterns of engagement, complicity, negotiation and transformation (see Appendix I), encompassed in the research questions as follows:

1. In what ways are women female football players *complicit* in reproducing the gender discourses that frame their participation?
2. What strategies of *negotiation* do female football players employ in order to navigate opportunities and structures with regard to player development?
3. In what capacity do female football players actively partake in *transformation* in English football?

3.4 Analysis of Transcripts: Biography

In this section I explain the analysis of the interview transcripts. It has been impressed at various points throughout Chapters 2 and 3, that in order to draw up themes which could articulate a sense of the narrative, women's accounts are explained through experience, to make visible the real world in and around the activities to which participants gave precedence. How participants situated themselves in the collaborative nature of storytelling, draws on the reflexivity of the researcher and the storyteller e.g. 'stories of personal experience, organized around the life world of the story teller' (Riessman, 2003:4). For the main interviews, each participant was asked in the first instance, how they became involved in football. Each participant would give an autobiographical account (Riessman, 2008:55-59), and outline their introduction to football. This was a simple way of locating individual biography, and without variation all would start from the beginning, recalling their first, early-age experiences when they began playing. In this way, interviews were non-directive (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:101), and conversational in that subsequent questions were asked in relation to their own stories where they were asked to expand on points of interest or to gain clarification. Although experiences were not always recounted chronologically, opening the questioning in this way did allow participants to direct the interview. As Riessman explains, the development of narrative is dependent on linking the story to individual biography as it is spoken in an interview context, '[narrative] analysis interprets and compares biographies as they are constituted in the research interview' (Riessman, 2008:57).

The interviews elicited empirical data of such a depth and quality that the articulation of the narrative was a challenge in itself. For example, given the depth of the data, the first consideration was how to present it without constraining quality. More simply, which parts of transcripts would best contribute to illustrating the experiences of female football players interviewed? For instance, in order to preserve the properties of the story, each transcript was firstly taken in isolation, on its own, keeping the story intact from case to case. Emergent themes were identified within each transcript to retain the narrative properties of individual cases, allowing interviews to tell the story of each participant. This is the personal narrative (Riessman, 2000). Although each interview was themed as an individual autobiographical account, commonalities emerged across the range of interviews and a broader narrative was generated. Commonalities that were apparent across interviews were arranged under themes addressed in the following empirical chapters. There were three stages in this process of

analysis. Each stage is outlined below (thematic development is included in Appendix I for illustrative purposes).

Working with a single transcript at a time, I followed the procedure set out below:

1. *Cleaning Data and the Chronological Sub-text – Working with Marginal Narratives*

There are differences of opinion with regard to how much editing and cleaning up of data there should be (Corden and Sainsbury, 2006:195). However, as the aim of this thesis is to understand the narrative, and allow the data to tell the story from the perspective of the participants, I elected to keep the interviews intact as far as was possible, which meant working with large pieces of data under emerging themes. Although analysis of syntactic or structural elements of speech is not the purpose of inquiry, nor the focus of discussion (Taylor, 2012:8; Labov and Waletzky, 1967 republished 1997), inclusion of pauses was a useful way of revisiting data to retain the interview interaction. I transcribed my own interviews as this allowed me to revisit the fieldwork and methodically begin to develop greater familiarity with the data. When transcribing, pauses were indicated in brackets, but were tidied for presentation purposes (number of seconds pause removed for extracts included in empirical chapters).

Of course, there are a variety of perspectives with regard to how narrative data should be presented, as the following quotation by Corden and Sainsbury illustrates.

There were sharp differences of opinion on the amount of editing and tidying up of their spoken words that should be done by the researcher, and people who did not read also had views here. The original draft included excerpts from transcripts that included verbal hesitations, repetitions and some of the transcriber's phonetic representations such as 'cos' (because). For some participants it was important that spoken words were not changed in any way. If the researchers changed words, for example by removing hesitations, representations of dialect or swearing, then the words were not real and the report would be '*untrue*'. It was also more interesting for people who read or listened to the report when it included different ways of talking (Corden and Sainsbury, 2001:105).

Although hesitations were removed for presentation purposes, during analysis their inclusion was a useful mechanism for emphasizing each subject's experience. For instance, in one interview, the participant became very hesitant when talking about a past event that was emotionally challenging for them. The inclusion of pauses reflected this (there were many), and this contributed to the overall sense of the difficulties that this participant had

experienced. Likewise, Corden and Sainsbury also cite phonetic representations that transcribers might sometimes change. These have been left in extracts presented in empirical chapters to articulate the sense of the real world, grounded experiences. The vernacular of the football pitch for instance, included expletives and northern English dialect e.g. the tendency to use the object pronoun *me* instead of the possessive adjective *my* ('me mam' rather than 'my mum'), and present participants' narratives as authentically as possible.

Data was then cleaned i.e. pauses taken out, and points of temporality were identified in this stage of the analysis in order to synthesise and sustain the cohesiveness of the narrative. When considering sequences of events within and then across transcripts, the question asked of data was whether it was possible to identify a relationship between gender and how football is structured organizationally? More simply, what pathways do, or did, participants pursue to be able to play football, and for the older interviewees, where they had been excluded from playing, how did they negotiate this exclusion? In order to extract temporal changes that intersect with women's football and players' experiences over a period of time, I identified quantifiable and metaphorical references to time, as follows:

- Years/dates: time can be identified by specified dates i.e. asking 'when did that happen' type questions when interviewees were talking about specific 'events'
- Clarification of when events took place
- Metaphorical references to time e.g. 'back then', 'when I was young', 'it was different in those days' etc.
- Comparisons between early experiences and current experiences. References to school and pre-school experiences was a fruitful area for comparison

Having identified aspects of transcripts that made temporal references, each individual transcript was worked with and *events* were ordered (Mishler, 1995:89). This exercise of emplotment (Ricoeur, 1991:20-33) added temporal coherence to each transcript. When looking at the ages of the women interviewed, the range of 18 to 60 encapsulates experiences spread over a timespan located from the late-1960s to 2015. Just to reflect back on Chapter 2 and the notion of marginal space, it was argued that this space is conducive to the emergence of resistance narratives, and that women (in football) are favourably positioned to generate narratives that articulate peripheral voices in the form of critique. Susan Bell's (1999:1-43) comparison of illness narratives is indicative of the temporal elements of storytelling, because

narratives change over time in political and historical contexts. In such a way, because interviews have a temporal dimension, the stories are maintained in a narrative by identifying the points of change (Elliot, 2005:37). I therefore looked at sequences of events and considered whether their significance could be understood in relation to the whole (Elliot, 2005:3) i.e. gender in football (objective context).

Although temporal change is not discussed under its own theme, there is a sub-text that underpins the empirical chapters. For instance, women's football has made progressions. Infrastructure has improved and numbers of girls and women playing has increased. This progression can be illustrated relative the age spread of participants. For instance, participants under the age of 25 had many more opportunities to play football, and did not have to deal with the same level of prejudice; at least it is not as overt or frequent in comparison to the women who grew up playing football during the 1970 and 1980s. It is therefore important to reason and recognise this, because although chronology could have constituted a chapter in itself, this would detract from the overall purpose of the thesis. Therefore, time and temporal change are not discussed beyond the scope of the three main themes of complicity, negotiation and transformation, but it is implied throughout empirical chapters. This contributes understanding to the changing experiences of women in football over the period of time that this thesis covers.

2. *Mapping Empirical Data to Research Questions: Narrative*

Having drawn up individual narratives, identifying extracts from transcripts constituted the next stage of analysis. Identifying extracts was for the purposes of illustrating discussion with reference to the research questions, and for presentation in empirical chapters. Thematically, the empirical sections of this thesis are located in terms of the three key themes identified from the pilot study; complicity, negotiation and transformation; and this therefore constituted the focus of cross-case analysis. Having mapped themes that emerged in individual cases, commonalities were identified across transcripts. In order to frame data in accordance to key conceptual terms discussed in Chapter 2, the composition of empirical chapters are organised under themes relative to research questions and theory is integrated into the discussion. Although thematic ordering of transcripts is discussed in quite general terms here, it does give a guide to narrative development and methodological process. Transcripts were mapped out to correspond to the concepts of mimicry, disavowal and hybridity according to the following criteria:

Chapter 5 looked at the concept of mimicry in order to locate the object of study (gender). It was notable that there were many examples of cultural practices that showed participants interacting in order to fit in, or comply. For example, there were many examples of labelling interactions, being called a tomboy for instance. Moreover, in acquiring football and becoming a football player, there were some notable examples in which participants imitated dominant cultural practices. In the context of football matches for example, some women would discuss the aesthetic pattern of matches and taking on a conventionally robust physicality in order to adapt to the environment i.e. replicating dominant hegemonic masculinity. These vignettes are termed complicit, because these interactions make gender observable and evidence the dominant narrative. Transcripts were mapped using two main thematic components.

- Theme 1 – looked at the experiences of participants that highlighted dominant cultural practices that were apparent in divisibly gendered spaces. For instance, in order to evidence gender in football, not only beyond abstractions symbolized by a masculine/feminine binary, complicit narratives were manifest in experiences organised around informal (formative/childhood) and formal (institutional settings) experiences of playing football. The prevalence of segregated spaces emergent in institutional settings, illustrate the extent to which complicity highlights power and gender hierarchies, i.e. gender is observed by the existence of cultural boundaries in evidence when participants were excluded from playing football at school. Participants' experiences were arranged around acknowledging gender conventions, being encouraged to play supposedly female sports.
- Theme 2 – explored participants' descriptions of football matches. Participants recounted a variety of examples of playing football, which in many cases replicated the cultural practices that bear association with hegemonic masculinity. In mimicry, participants would sometimes actively re-produce masculinities, and although the masculine/feminine binary is limiting for understanding cultural differentiation and complexities, it also illustrates how *doing* gender in football is actively made. Although in this section actions are conceived of as mimicry and so compliance to dominant cultural practices, female football players in this way show how important it is to understand that the binary is artificial and open to contestations. Drawing on the duality in Bhabha's mimicry not only illuminates boundaries i.e. informal/formal

spaces or appropriate and inappropriate femininities, but disrupts the view that one's gender is pre-determined by one's sex.

Chapter 6 looked at the concept of disavowal. Despite the presence of complicity, participants expressed how they were able to contest conventional gender stereotypes illustrated in reactive othering and disavowal. Disavowal is examined in examples of some negative responses when participants played football, or expressed an ambition to play. For example, there were instances of bullying and exclusion. However, the overall narrative was the feeling of transgression gained from playing football, and which channelled itself into confidence, or social capital, and capacity to challenge gender binaries symbolised in the stereotype. This is themed negotiation. The main examples that illustrate this theme were evident in persistent strategies of managing a way to play football when opportunities were non-existent or limited. Such persistence was also illustrated in examples of career mobility and the tenacity of supportive and active friendship networks formed via football. Transcripts were mapped out under the two following thematic components:

- Theme 1 - Participants did not situate their experiences in explicitly careerist terms, but career progression and mobility were often contextualized with reference to availability of a local football team for instance. In this way, because opportunities were often reduced or even non-existent, participants did find some way of playing football. Some participants discussed playing in university or college setting, and some women set up their own clubs (see the following discussion), but importantly, disavowal is situated with reference to structure and opportunity because the foundation of these experiences are uncertain, they are not clearly defined.
- Theme 2 - in order to circumvent disavowal i.e. marginalization is systemic, conditions tended to be experienced as an opportunity to create something and the marginal space was actually progressive. Just as disavowal marginalises non-conforming identities brought about in mimicry, asserting ownership and creating a space for resisting the domination of hegemonic masculinity, and femininity for that matter, was a feature of many interviews. In these terms, displacement into the margins may be embedded systemically, but this also inspires a search for an identity (Rutherford, 1990:24).

Chapter 7 looked at the concept of hybridity in order to examine contestation and non-traditional cultural practices. This was most prevalent in discussions of mixed football. Players' employment of a gender binary was challenged through their own experience of playing football with boys, mainly because they were able to directly contest static categorisations through a positive role performance (Thing, 2001:276). Therefore, where new spaces and meaning emerged, narratives are termed transformation because they draw attention the limitations of objective gender construction and account for women's football stories and the marginalised self (Williams, 1984:197). Thematic terms are drawn up on a case-by-case basis were mapped to conceptual terms across transcripts (mimicry, disavowal, hybridity), explained in the research themes of complicity, negotiation and transformation with reference to the research questions (see Appendix I). The following three themes are the thematic components under which hybridity was organised:

- Theme 1 - Participants were tenacious in testing structural limitations and they were very adaptive when they succeeded in transgress into those spaces that have historically been closed. It is not a new topic and there has been past research that looked at the school playground to be a key site where gender is negotiated (Clark and Paechter, 2006:262). This bears similarity to the arguments made under the concept of mimicry, specifically the divisibility of space that emerged when participants made transitions from informal and non-gendered, to the formal spaces of education. Transitions draw attention to the gender binary, because the expectation that women do not play football, whether this discourse is actually fulfilled in practice on the part of the institution or accepted by women themselves (this was not the case with this research sample), nevertheless ensures masculine domination of football spaces. The informal/formal dichotomy was categorical in this way, symbolically defining spaces in terms of what it means to be masculine or feminine i.e. participants were excluded from playing football simply on the basis of their sex. This obviously impacted upon involvement, with there being greater numbers of male than female players, and more intricate supporting infrastructures that actively discourage female participation. Nevertheless, participants were active in negotiating these challenges in various ways.
- Theme 2 – in the context of mixed-sex football, participants did not tend to experience this disjunction between sport and femininity in any problematic way. As noted previously, the emergence of complicit narratives demonstrated the adoption of dominant physical practices i.e. aggression, strength and determination, but

conversely, participants also actively engaged in resistance strategies to counteract the physical prohibitions of established femininity and embodiment. Resistance is not always complicit, but emerged in hybridity, and this was a useful basis for understanding transformation narratives. It was apparent when participants discussed mixed-football that it can provide the opportunities to develop skills and build confidence, and these examples were therefore placed under the concept of hybridity.

- Theme 3 – Participants employed a gender binary which encouraged dialogue that brought into question *knowledge* about femininity and physicality placed in the context of women's football. As an example of hybridity, these experiences demonstrated a different way of perceiving football. Participants placed certainties (about one's gender) under scrutiny by positioning their experiences not as deviation i.e. playing football 'like a man', which was prevalent in discussions of stereotyping and examples of being branded a tom-boy, but by applying a gender binary as a way to focus variation and complexity. Fundamentally, they would often emphasize aspects of women's football, i.e. 'it is slower', that might be negatively framed in a men's game, as a positive quality because it makes more space for players to show off their skills. These examples of differentiation encouraged hybridity with regard to how we might understand women's football. Just as Caudwell (1999) talks about 'knowledges' and Haraway (1991) is critical of the historical discourse that prioritise 'knowledge' about one's gender, it was a really positive aspect of these transcripts that such 'knowledge(s)' were challenged and thrown open to debate.

3. *Retaining Narrative and Presentation of Data*

Participants talked about playing football in different contexts; they would for instance, talk about specific football games which were frequently recounted as an anecdote. There were examples of career progression and playing football in mixed and single sexed football matches. For the advancement of the thematic structure, which Riessman (2008) refers to as 'telos' (Riessman, 2008:57), data is presented as speech data in cohesive blocks (Lieblich et al, 1998:85-65) for the purpose of retaining the features of the narrative and keeping it intact. For example, rather than coding transcripts line-by-line (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), the purpose of drawing individual narratives was to show how each interviewee constructed their knowledge relative to their position in the field by examining subjective vignettes (Goffman, 1971:xi). Moreover, the presentation of data is a fundamental aspect of illustrating the meaning of such biographical talk. In the empirical chapters for instance, detailed extracts

are included in order to facilitate the narrative (Taylor, 2012:4) and allow the speaker to tell these experiences. It should be noted then, that there are long quotations presented in empirical chapters because they maintain the clarity of narrative, thereby progressing the focus of the thesis.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the design of the thesis with reference to epistemological and methodological trajectory of the research. In order to meet the demands of the research and institute a methodology suited to the narrative, I reflected on my own role as a researcher, and argued that subjective experiences could be taken to challenge dominant knowledge regarding gender in football. It is the notion of knowledge that establishes certainties about gender and detracts from the veracity of experiences and engagement by which women participate in football. Differences that deviate from the dominant masculine narrative are prioritised in this research, so it was important to set a methodological frame that would enable the subject as a mode of critique. What other narratives exist and are part of football, what are knowledge(s) that really underpin the variety of experiences? Therefore, a critical narrative that can articulate subjective understanding of participants' experiences will be the focus of the following empirical chapters.

The problem of traditional sociological empiricism is its reliance on universalities, which effectively obscures the meaning attached to social action. When looking at women's experience in English football culture, this can account for gender only on a broad level. The masculine is unerringly there, but it is an epistemological canon that excludes women, so when they do transgress into male spaces, hegemonic masculinity is the dominant, applied, standard. This can diminish women's football and alternative narratives within this culture. Certainly, on a quantitative level, women's football is a nascent game, but at the level of culture, masculinity remains a pervasive allegory for acceptability. The reflexivity of the social actor that enables the production of critical narratives is central to such a critique and using participants' subjectivities crucially aims to make space for women's stories. The emergent narrative therefore, subjects the static categorisation of gender to examination using the subjective experience of women as a critical method to discuss the relationships of power and exclusion in this context.

Chapter 4 - Bridging Theory and Empirical Evidence

4.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the key conceptual components outlined in Chapter 2; mimicry, disavowal and hybridity; in order to illustrate how the theoretical framework integrates with interviews collected during the fieldwork stage. Chapter 4 is a way of scene setting for empirical chapters, with key points of analysis discussed under each of the main chapter headings and sub-headings. To incorporate the oral testimonies gathered during the fieldwork, Chapter 4 synthesises theory and method to illustrate how the subject was fundamental to making marginal voices heard. Given that the experiences of participants have been situated at the heart of the research design, it was important to allow the subject voice to advance the narrative, thereby interrogating the utility of the third-space as a theoretical frame. Chapter 4 is therefore broken down into three sections in accordance with the main theoretical concepts of mimicry, disavowal and hybridity, and discussion is staged in three ways to correspond with each individual research question stated in Chapter 3. The empirical data is organised under the themes of complicity, negotiation and transformation.

4.2 Complicity: Mimicry in Understanding Gender and Football

Chapter 5 responds to the research question, ‘in what ways are women female football players *complicit* in reproducing the gender discourses that frame their participation?’ based on Bhabha’s concept of mimicry. Mimicry instigates disruption of the gender binary to develop a frame that can advance the notion that football is played out in contested settings. Cultural settings spatially and temporally shift and alter, and for women’s football this is very important because it is a narrative has not been told. It is ‘assumed’ that football is something that men ‘do’, and while in crude terms of participation numbers this is the case, it should not be the case that women’s participation is trivialised because of this. Chapter 5 is organized around mimicry for the purposes of setting a third-space theoretical framework for examining gender in football, and to look at how the gender binary can be illustrated through the experiences of female football players.

Conceptually, mimicry as Bhabha (1984) employs it, suggests that there is a tension between dominant and marginal cultures. Dominant and marginal interact and the emergent tension provokes cultural contestations because boundaries of cultural appropriateness become apparent. Mimicry is the basis for ascertaining how dominant cultures maintain

power, principally by marginalising, or othering, deviant identities. The boundaries of acceptability are symbolized in a binary; there is a governing objective narrative; which is a cultural centre and focal point (Spivak, 1993:55). Participations that do not conform to standard definition indicate how gender is observable. For example, it can be seen that there is exclusion and inequality with regards to women's football when perceived through the experiences of participants. In response to research question 1, and to illustrate how gender is observable, Chapter 5 is organised under the headings: 'Mimicry: Informality' and 'Formality of Space and Narrating Football: The Artificial Binary'.

In Chapter 5, the experiences of participants highlighted the powerful imposition of dominant cultural practices that are then replicated in divisibly gendered spaces. The experiences of participants for instance, highlighted the association between the gender symbolised in culture and the boundaries of acceptance, specifically in terms of the contrast between informal and regulated sporting and leisure spaces. Participants' reflections on early-years, formative experiences of playing football, were characteristically un-gendered. They were motivated to play football because it was an intrinsic facet of their lives from a young age, it attracted them as a sport and their gender was not under consideration. Contrastingly in education, many participants explained how they were excluded from playing football. There simply were not the opportunities available, or were made available, and such examples of discrimination highlighted an informal/formal dichotomy that maintained a system of privilege that favoured boys'/men's football. Many participants were encouraged (or forced) to take up corresponding so-called feminine sports and in Chapter 5.

The sense of there being a gendered space was an institutional response to participants' ambitions of playing football. For the purposes of situating gender, football was not suitably feminine, and consequently opportunities to play were restricted or non-existent. This aspect of the narrative illustrates how power is maintained by the informal/formal dichotomy. It is an institutional progression of historical precedence and discourse, which defines appropriately masculine and feminine sports. The institutional frame is exposed in the experiences of participants because informal/formal spaces exemplify margins of acceptability. These margins of acceptability situate Bhabha's mimicry if spatial segregation is considered as a form of imitation. Dividing spaces as masculine/feminine reveals the image of dominant culture, and subjects (female football players) were critical of gender inequality advanced institutionally.

The second main theme in chapter 5, Narrating Football: The Artificial Binary looks at participants' descriptions of football matches. For Bhabha, the concept of mimicry is

ambivalent and although to mimic is a way of becoming like something, making oneself in the image of the coloniser, mimicry also initiates difference. As Bhabha states, '[mimicry] is at once resemblance and menace' (Bhabha, 1984b:86). In Chapter 5, participants' descriptions of football matches emerged in similarity and differences, as it does in mimicry, and these narratives have been themed complicit when masculinity and femininity were visible. For instance, mimicry was illustrated in resemblance because participants frequently described football matches in very combative and physical terms. Appropriating hegemonic masculinity was a way of differentiating from other, less physical, football players (within the context of single-sex football matches). Some participants, who had played mixed-sex football for instance, would assert their superiority over other female players, by being more physical. In this way, extracts illustrate how playing football is underpinned by both similarity and differentiation. Similarity that sustains the priority of hegemonic masculinity and adherent cultural practices, but also it disrupts a conventional sense of femininity. Physicality is not something that women are supposed to do. As such, there is an inherent tension or contradiction. On one hand playing football is being like a man, on the other it is not being like a woman, but there are demands for recognition and an identity. Contestation emerges from competing identities, and this is a central point to Bhabha's theory of colonial domination. To put it another way, colonial domination is discernible in a 'panoptical vision' that is present in compromise and an ironic mimicry (Bhabha, 1984:126). Mimicry playfully holds a mirror to dominant colonial identity and shows it for what it is. In such a way, mimicry is mockery or caricature, which is effectively a strategy for approval (Bhabha, 1994b:86). In similarity, being complicit, participants disrupted notions of being conventionally feminine. The challenge for women who wanted to play football, then, was to transgress cultural appropriateness. That is, the actual activity of playing football for many of the women interviewed was a proudly physical activity, and adopting a robust style of play was a way of adapting.

Moreover, compliance was for some participants a strategy of asserting authority and claiming superiority over other female players (in some single-sex games it was the case). This is a notable dynamic indicative of learning to become a football player. For instance, there were examples across cases that talk very specifically about the physical nature of some matches. In such a way, complicity (to established cultural practices) is illustrative of demonstrating competence and developing skills important for playing football. One must adapt and authenticate in the image of the dominant. So on one hand mimicry seeks approval, yet it is also displaced into otherness and ambivalent because it is fetishised. Mimicry is 'the

same, but not quite' (Bhabha, 1994:86), and while these narratives demonstrate a great deal about the strength of the dominant, mainstream, cultural practices to impact upon women, there were also emergent tensions foregrounded in the stereotype of feminine deviancy. In response to deviancy, mimicry is ambivalent, because women playing football is symbolic of the unruly, which is then othered into the stereotype. Nick Hornby's *Fever Pitch* is an interesting text in this regard. Although it is acknowledged as an initial text in the perceived feminization of English football culture in the early 1990s, it is an *aide memoire* written at a time when English football underwent structural change. But, it does bear a sub-text that is sometimes revealingly misogynistic, 'never let your mother, wife, sister, daughter, girlfriend or mistress near the VCR under any circumstances.' (Hornby, 1992:11). Hornby's narrative elevated a romanticised notion of masculine identities that symbolise an enduring purity and authenticity lost in contemporary football.

Although attention has notably increased on the women's game, there is an undercurrent of ideas that continue to prioritize participation complementary to exhibiting hegemonic masculinities. It has been argued that traditional working class cultural practices endure as a prerequisite to normal participation in contemporary football culture (Brown, 2008:349; 2004:176; King, 1998:190), for instance. Women's football threatens the ideal type, 'Christ you've even got women playing' (Brimson and Brimson, 1995:7). Thus the concept of feminization is derisively applied in critical discussions regarding women's involvement in football, as players and spectators, with the implication that 'women' are the arbiter of cultural change (Giulianotti, 1999; Conn, 1998; King, 1998; Lee, 1998). However, the underlying premise that football should become more feminine in order to enfranchise women is based on discourse that continues to objectify masculinity and femininity, which does little to help us understand the complexity of experiences and contests within this cultural space. Usefully, Spivak (1993) adds to this debate about mimicry because she criticises the capacity of the grand narratives of colonial history to explain the colonised, or subjected, narrative. Spivak argues that cultural practices may only be understood from the position of the subject, hence the necessity to understand the coloniser-colonised dichotomy, its inherent inequity and the misinterpretation of colonised cultural texts (Spivak, 1993:55). For example, evaluating cultural practices from a position of power is a narcissistic interpretation of cultural practices spoken with the dominant voice (Spivak, 1987:137). For female football players, this is important not merely because gender in football is placed in a binary that privileges men, but that the subject voice of female football players can establish how they see and experience these conditions.

What does it mean to disrupt this binary, that there is a definitively masculine or a feminine way of doing things, and understand what women do to negotiate the conditions of othering? Importantly, to the extent that the stereotype is symptomatic of a crisis of authority (Childs and Williams, 1997:129), as the empirical evidence begins to show, when women do make transgressions into traditionally non-feminine spaces, is there greater segregation and disavowal? Chapter 3 explained that participants would emphasize the positive experiences they had playing football, and tended to treat with disdain and directly challenge the notion that football is solely something that men do. Consequently, segregation was negatively experienced, but participants were creatively strategic in looking for alternative avenues of expression.

4.3 Negotiating and Disrupting Gender: Disavowal

In response to the research question ‘what strategies of *negotiation* do female football players employ in order to navigate opportunities and structures with regard to player development?’ Chapter 6 looks at the concept of disavowal. The conflict that underpins mimicry i.e. mimicry can be subversive because although participants may conform to hegemonic masculinity, at the same time they challenge conventional femininity. In this way, women’s football might be symbolised in the stereotype, the ‘butch’ woman for instance. Mimicry is therefore ambivalent because it elicits a response that expresses desire at the same time as it does derision (Childs and Williams, 1997:124). Derision was for many participants an aspect of playing football, and evidenced in the responses to which they were sometimes subject. For example, fear of the unknown i.e. women who play football, is the source of curiosity that gives the object position an affirmation of completeness (Nathan, 2010:54). In this way, women’s football reveals and importantly, tests the authority of hegemonic masculinity.

Within the duality of Bhabha’s mimicry then, the vacillation between curiosity and fear draws on Freud’s imposition of sexual difference (Bhabha, 1994a:57), which fetishizes the superiority of the male sexual imperative (Childs and Williams, 1997:129). To the extent that Freud perceives femininity to be deficient, so we might usefully extend the relationship that emerges through this metaphor to understand the authority of the colonized/colonizer duality in women’s football. The metaphor of sexual difference underpins the conflict that emerges in such social practices of shaming and diminishing of non-traditional femininity. For instance, almost all interviewees, discussed how they had been labelled a ‘tomboy’. This is an ambivalent label because it fluctuates between disavowal and curiosity. Is the label

of a tomboy therefore indicative of mimicry because it is tethered to the shadow of the colonized man (Bhabha, 1994a: 44)? In the frame of women's football, tomboy might be a discriminatory label that solicits disavowal. Fear of the unknown justifies (objective masculine) dominance (Child and Williams, 1997:129), and it might be inferred that labelling practices are examples of disavowal, *vis-a-vis* the stereotype, which are destabilizing. Distinguishing girls who play football to be a 'tom' then, exposes cultural regulation in relation to appropriate demonstrations of hetero-normative femininity (Renold, 2005).

'Girls who play football seem to be particularly subject to sexual labeling since their behaviour is perceived as inappropriate or threatening to the gender order. This is supported by findings on the gender 'deviations' of women in sport who are accused of being lesbians or 'non-women' (Dewar, 1990; Griffin, 1992; Sparkes, 1994).

In short, ambivalence effectively undermines non-traditional cultural practices, or obscure practices, such as those located at the margins because they are different. Disavowal is illustrated in the over-determination of the butch woman (Caudwell, 1999:40; Cahn, 1993:35-61) for instance, and football is something that women and girls are not supposed to do, because playing football is perceived be unfeminine. For two participants particularly, the process of disavowal had very discernable implications that emerged in instances of bullying and social exclusion. As Bhabha explains, the stereotype intimates what these accepted boundaries are, and where they are culturally located.

To be amongst those whose very presence is both 'overlooked' - in the double sense of social surveillance and psychic disavowal - and, at the same time, overdetermined - psychically projected, made stereotypical and symptomatic. Despite its very specific location - a Martinican subjected to the racist gaze on a street corner in Lyon - I claim a generality for Fanon's argument because he talks not simply of the historicity of the black man, as much as he writes in 'The fact of blackness' about the temporality of modernity within which the figure of the 'human' comes to be authorized (Bhabha, 1994a: 339).

The stereotype elicits a gaze that is a form of surveillance. In such a way, disavowal has a consequence of authorization, an authorization that emerges in the maintenance of appropriately masculine and feminine sports. However, there is also another, more practical dimension in response to disavowal. There were very pragmatic discussions about finding places and space to play football, and participants outlined what opportunities were available. In this context disavowal actually had a very literal, structural dimension. Having been

dismissed to the margins participants gave accounts of how they negotiated exclusion, even setting up their own independent football clubs, which generated a very tangible sense of pride and ownership bound up with a stoic search for identity. The two main themes that emerged around this aspect of interviews were headed, 'Making Transgressions: A Professional Career and Mobility' and 'Ownership and Identity: Football Communities'.

In the section Making Transgressions: A Professional Career and Mobility, participants considered the practical aspects of their experiences that made apparent the limited infrastructure and opportunities available to them. Amongst older interviewees, it was clear that following an ambition to play football could be a challenge in itself. Opportunities were negligible, and the structural foundations participants discussed were, and still are, more greatly advanced for men to follow a career in football. Despite this, participants seemed to accept that this was simply a fact of conditions that could be negotiated. In circumstances that were uncertain, or ambivalent, a narrative emerged that illustrated how participants challenged the conditions of exclusion. Marginalisation brought about confrontation, which encouraged some creative strategies. Significantly, participants claimed ownership over particular spaces, specifically when they established their own football club. Under the theme of 'Ownership and Identity: Football Communities', negotiating exclusion was an unavoidable aspect of participants' experiences. Although in contemporary terms there is a narrative promoted by institutional bodies such as the Football Association (FA), which stresses inclusivity and tolerance, in more practical terms there do remain constraints that can hinder participation.

Although pathways to professionalism are clearly improved, it remains the case that women, even to the top level, must still find a balance between family and/or career and playing football. The persistence of hetero-normative social roles was also an aspect of interviews, and the persistence with which research participants negotiate conditions was very interesting. There were notable conversations about managing domestic obligations for example, and then finding time to play football, with many women still having to find a balance between private duty and public participation. It is a pragmatic issue, because participating in football is inhibited by domestic expectation, which is framed in the context of nostalgic reminiscences of traditional public/private spatial segregation and social networks (Williams, 2003a; Walvin, 1994; Fishwick, 1989; Rubin cited in Nicholson, 1997:159 also Young, 1997; Mitchell, 1971). Disavowal therefore, is means to disrupt this binary because the aim is to understand how women negotiate these conditions of othering, and that there is a masculine or a feminine way of doing things. The existence of gendered

conventions with regard to women's domestic responsibilities may persist, but how do women then go about managing these expectations and what can this offer in terms of making the availability of football more open for women?

When negotiating these spaces, or between traditional masculine/feminine spaces, the persistence of friendship networks and the social aspect of playing football were a further part of participants' experiences. Feminine friendships tend to be placed in a frame of emotional support and bonding (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993:221-241), but emergent in interviews were friendships and networks based on sociability and activities of doing that tested such conventions. Under the theme 'Friendships and Sociality: A *Safe Space*', friendship groups established in football were a means to confront disavowal, disrupting the ideological link between masculinity and football, symbolized in the iconic male footballer (Cashmore and Parker, 2003). The strength of participants' social ties to the group were articulated with veracity, and deviated from the gender norm in the sense that these friendships were based on leisure activities rather than emotional sharing. The types of friendships that have traditionally underpinned masculinities, (Jamieson, 1998), however, were also reinforced for participants in the context of playing football. Because the prevalence of friendship networks was so prominent, it was a significant frame with which to sustain the argument that meaningful negotiation emerge in non-traditional cultural practices. The endurance of friendships and the positively active experiences organised around playing football enabled participants to confront and re-negotiate a feminine stereotype, even if they did not express it in these terms. The activity of the subject in this way is subversive, and it was not uncommon for participants to emotively express commitment to friendships, and to football. At least two participants for example, articulated with great pride that the eldest women who played football in their group were 58 and 60 years old respectively, and which drew great admiration. In the marginal non-traditional space therefore, displacement as a consequence of disavowal tests tradition, and arguably emerged in hybridity when experiences were organised around expressively robust communities, friendships and social groups.

4.4 Hybridity: Contesting and Transforming Gender

The final empirical chapter responds to the question, 'in what capacity do female football players actively partake in *transformation* in English football?' Drawing on negotiating strategies that women pursued so that they could just play football, Chapter 6 argues that women are engaged negotiating spaces that have traditionally been closed, and are creative in

making alternative spaces of expression. Just as Bhabha conceives of anxious colonial power i.e. it is never stable and dependent on the assertion of difference and superiority (Bhabha, 1994b:86; Childs and Williams, 1997:129), resistance in marginal spaces foregrounds perseverance with which women sustained their commitment to playing football. These marginal and therefore creative spaces are a site of contestation, and hybridity extends to those voices that fall outside of dominant histories (Spivak, 1993:55). Therefore, Chapter 7 looks firstly at critiques of categorizing female football players, in order to underpin hybridity as a focus of analysis.

With regards to girls who play boys' sports, it is useful to consider how dispensing with categorizations may open up a dialogue that challenges masculine and feminine configurations regulated, and symbolised, corporeally in sport (Cashmore, 1996:12; Shilling, 1993:10). As participants constantly transgress and begin to open spaces of critique because they do not conform, we can understand Bhabha's stereotype as a provocatively ambivalent construct. It (the stereotype), and by implication therefore, also the stereotype of the masculine female football player fractures normality. The stereotype undermines, or diminishes, categorization as a means of surveillance (Bhabha, 1994b:86). Categorization in sport prioritizes hegemonic bodies, but they may be contested by dispensing with labels i.e. women's football or men's football, and could begin to reflect cultural complexities that encourage spaces in which hybrid narratives bring about adaptations and ultimately contest. For example, Chapter 5 looks at mimicry performing as a camouflage, which underpins complicit narratives. But mimicry is also to mock, reflecting the characteristics and therefore boundaries that constitute dominant cultures. Understanding this dual relationship increases the visibility of boundaries, and also how such characteristics are tested, confounded by that which is almost the same, but unnervingly different. Chapter 7 looks at participants' experiences of learning to play football and relates these to pragmatic concerns of developing female football players. Participants' own perceptions about their competency, for example, raise questions regarding learning, and how it might be facilitated in the present and future development of women's football. Moreover, these experiences perhaps address a very fundamental facet of this research, specifically how football is constructed as an expected expression of hegemonic masculinities. It has been argued for instance that in order to meet the demands of femininity, girls may find it difficult to take part in sports (Hills, 2007:320). Consequently, anxieties about becoming un-feminine are illustrated in the expectation that boys have many more opportunities to acquire football than girls do.

Learning to play football is further exemplified when physical capital converts into economic, cultural and social forms of capital (Connolly, 1998; Gorley et al, 2003; Hunter, 2004; Shilling, 2004 cited in Hills, 2007:319). For instance, because physicality is perceived to undermine femininity, it is consequently a less valuable, even desirable, form of capital for females to accrue. Thus, Cockburn and Clarke (2002) identify the masculinized doer (the tomboy) and the feminized non-doer (Cockburn and Clarke, 2002:61). Moreover, Hills (2007) has suggested that this dichotomy influences the decisions that girls make with regard to physical education, that is, they may not choose to play football nor be encouraged to do so. Yet anxieties about being feminine did not emerge in any meaningful way in the experiences of participants, but many did express anxieties about ability and becoming competent football players. In this way, Chapter 7 addresses these anxieties in the context of acquisition by discussing under the theme Creative Spaces: Learning, Development and Football Capital. In terms of becoming an accomplished football player, fractured conditions were apparent in the strategies participants employed for negotiating spaces, and then maneuvering in spaces, where they could learn to play football.

Learning how to play the game often meant only starting to play football well into their teenage years, or their experiences may be characterised by breaks. When there were no local teams available, for instance, there were frequent instances of playing football as a child then not playing again until finishing post-16 education. Anxieties were expressed in terms of having the skills, competence and confidence to play football. It is useful to ask then how can negative cultural and self-perceptions be overcome (with regard to gendered physical embodiment)? In examples of mixed-sex football in leisure or informal matches, although these matches were not officially competitive, they did provide a useful context for looking at how participants' manoeuvred negative cultural perceptions, contesting normative hegemonic femininity and inciting change. Participants' experiences are themed under 'Hybridity in Mixed Football' because this was a positive setting for enabling competence and developing football capital. In the effort to disrupt the limitations of the masculine/feminine binary, participants were active in challenging discourse that disparages athletic women. As noted previously, the problem of segregating sports determined by the sex/gender matrix, has disadvantaged women's football and sustained the primacy of hegemonic masculinity. Challenging the 'binary' in mixed-football had enabled participants to interact in a positive way. Participants would challenge negative social interpretations of female embodiment, directly contesting discourse and behaviours that could incite hybrid interactions necessary for encouraging cultural transformation.

Brunel University conducted feasibility studies looking at mixed-football (Hills and Croston, 2012:591-605). These trials culminated in the age-cap for mixed sex football being extended to 14-years and raise an important point with regard to development and learning. Brunel's report indicated that mixed-football could offer girls opportunities for skills development (Hills, 2007:319) and extend scope for negative assumptions regarding female physicality to be tested. Mixed-football provided more opportunity to develop physical capital (Hills and Croston, 2012:598) and furthered the potential to engage and re-package gender, because participants were not segregated on the basis of their sex. These are hybrid interactions. Bhabha's hybridity is useful for understanding interactions between dominant and marginal culture(s), it can ascertain change and transformation. For example, participants would discuss directly challenging the dominance of hegemonic masculinity, as demonstrated in mixed-football, but at the same time when describing the attributes of single sex matches, they made comparisons between men and women's football. These are examined under the theme 'Characterizing Women's Football: Re-classifying a Conventional Football Typology'.

Just as Chapter 5 examined the tension underpinning Bhabha's mimicry, when this concept is situated in football, it serves a dual purpose. It affirms dominant facets of culture i.e. participants would adapt to the challenge of physically playing football when being physical, yet conversely, engaging in compliance simultaneously disrupts hegemonic femininity, it does not conform and deviates. Similarly, when participants did employ a binary frame to evaluate the positive aspects of women's football, they incited critique of conventional knowledge hierarchies and these aspects of interviews were therefore placed under the theme transformation. As Haraway argues, normal masculine/feminine bodies are maintained by the sex-gender binary (Haraway, 1989:290), and this is clearly the case in football. The binary is a way of ascertaining context and of boundary setting in football. In this frame, hybridity instigates critique of dominant knowledge hierarchies sustained by biological mapping incited by participants, potentially emerging in new football knowledge(s) (Caudwell cited in Wagg, 2004:130) and transformation. Chapter 2 accounted for the reasons why girls might be discouraged from taking up the game i.e. the consideration that playing football is not appropriately feminine, but there is another dimension, which argues that girls may also be discouraged from playing when their skills and competencies are diminished. For example, physicality associated with hegemonic masculinity and football, are sustained at the expense of diminishing alternative, different, perceived feminine qualities. Physicality is prioritized, just as Young discussed in the scaling of bodies (Young, 1990:122-155) privileges particular attributes. Yet from this context, the employment of a

binary was a frame for assigning value. For example, when comparisons between men and women's football did emerge, participants foregrounded the value of being different, emphasising aesthetic facets of women's football that highlighted the softer, less physical aspects of the game. Participants would discuss speed as an indicator of quality and many women explained that they actually value the slower pace of women's football exactly because it allowed more space for tactical display and skills. In such a way, from the marginal, participants incur contests that advance a different way of seeing.

4.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to address and outline the main themes that constitute the empirical chapter that follow. Just to look back for a moment and support the rationale for the inclusion of a bridging chapter, the preceding chapters of the thesis were designed to set a frame that would give space for the narratives that are the main focus of Chapters 5, 6 and 7. Chapter 2 for instance, accounted for a dominant narrative that frames gender in a binary, women's experiences within this, show how football is played out in many ways, in contested settings that are a struggle for space and recognition. This is not to diminish that the fact that there are still advances to be made for women's football, but to develop the narrative that women have been, and are, very active in making spaces for themselves. The challenge for women's football is one of pushing for equitable governance and career progression. This is improving, but the real problem for women's football is archaic perceptions of femininity sustained in football culture. It is intended that the narrative in the empirical chapters that follow, will show some of the ways that women encounter and manage this discourse. Chapter 3 explained the design of the research and the challenges to researching women's football that would be encompassed in the methodological frame, most importantly looking for narratives that did not confirm conventions and that could account for participants experiences in football. The synthesis of these chapters, having set the object of the study and then how it was to be researched, constitutes the purpose of Chapter 4. Fundamentally, when stories are marginal, I proposed that provoking debate on gender in football could be achieved through subjective, grounded narratives.

In the chapters that follow, mimicry, disavowal and hybridity are set to draw out the narratives of complicity, negotiation and transformation. For the narrative, the organisation of empirical data around these themes advances the third-space because the testimonies of participants progressively develops the sub-text that football culture is inherently conflicted.

In this developing the conflict, Chapter 4 addressed these themes in turn. Complicity that corresponds to mimicry when looking at cultural and structural practices in football that gender space. Making gender visible in this way, locates the gender binaries normalized in football culture, dominant masculinities for instance, and examines their construction. Negotiation narratives are a response to spatial segregation consequent of disavowal, i.e. the othering of women's football. Negotiation, I argued, is an act of disobedience, encapsulated by strategies that participants were compelled employ in order to negotiate conditions that diminish, or exclude, their ambitions to play football. Finally, this chapter combined the theoretical concept of hybridity relative to the epistemological narrative trajectory under the theme of transformation. In interviews, participants often discussed developing competence and learning how to play football, consequently testing binary gender fixation. In the third-space, hybridity is an intervention as it asserts a challenge to the endurance of historical identities and cultural homogeneity in this way, and in both mixed and single sex football, participants contested negative connotations attached to female physicality and potentially women's football more generally. In short, challenging conventional gender stereotypes that emerged in hybrid and therefore transformatory narratives. These are the main issues that emerged in interviews, and narratives in the following chapters are composed around the themes of complicity, negotiation and transformation to examine these issues in more detail.

Chapter 5 - A Narrative of Complicity: Mimicry and Cultural Adaptations in Accounting for Gender in Football

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I respond to the research question ‘in what ways are female football players *complicit* in reproducing the gender discourses that frame their participation?’ I draw on Bhabha’s concept of mimicry to locate the relationship between gender and football. Chapter 2 explored the potential issues that women might experience when playing football because their participation challenges broadly held cultural assumptions about femininity (Caudwell, 1999, 2004; Cahn, 1993). The narrative theme that is the focus of this chapter, complicity, emerged in two principle ways. Firstly, compliant narratives are situated in examples of participants’ ambitions to play football, specifically in a frame that implies reference to gendered space, and the extent to which aspirations to play football were regulated institutionally. For instance, sports were designated as appropriately masculine or feminine, and in order to explain the institutional directives by which sports are gendered, there is an underlying narrative of segregation when participants contrasted playing football in non-institutional and institutional situations. This is illustrated in many examples of formative experiences that make no reference to gender; playing football was unstructured and not conceptualised masculine or feminine. Then as participants moved into formal institutional contexts (usually education), there was clear distinction made between girls’ and boys’ sports. Secondly, complicit narratives were apparent in examples of how women narrate their experiences of playing football in both single-sex and mixed-sex football matches. To this extent, the recollections of football matches will contextualise cultural practices, or *adaptations* as they emerge in many cases, which women made when playing football. Adaptations are conceived as complicit because the adherence to a dominant, masculinised narrative. As this analysis is developed, I draw out the dual utility of Bhabha’s mimicry to illustrate that although female football players engage in identifiable patterns of complicity, these transgressions increasingly bring to light the limitations of a masculine/feminine binary.

5.2 Mimicry: Informality and Formality of Space

With the aim of understanding cultural practices that gender football culture, data analysis revealed social interactions that illustrate the synthesis of structural and cultural norms in the

experiences of participants. Many of the participants spoke about how by virtue of being a girl, more often than not, meant restricted opportunities to play football for instance. This is a standpoint that illustrates how there is an identifiable institutional reaction to women's football, which reflects cultural norms that situates football as unfeminine. Another way to think about this is as spatial stratification. A gender binary is embedded in cultures of football and progressed institutionally in corresponding practices when sports become designated male or female. For example, many interviewees recollected playing football as a child in an informal setting, such as on the street or in the park. What particularly characterizes these stories is that they were unregulated, and non-gendered, at least when participants talked about their experiences, gender as a concept was never clearly referenced to explain playing football. Such formative participation would indicate that informal interactions were at the very least not subject to customary and legal constraints (Tong, 2009:2) that do define gender in football. To this extent, the androgynous characteristic of these spaces suggest that when gender is not a regulating factor, these interactions were not considered as appropriately masculine or feminine either. In short, there is not a determining gendered narrative around which participants framed their understanding. As a basis for evidencing gender then, there is a key question that arises from such an analysis, at which point does one's gender become an issue? This emerges quite readily through the following discussions. In contrast to those experiences at school for example, the cultural pressures of an institutional narrative, which prioritizes masculinity and football, becomes quite clear as it can be illustrated in the existence of gender appropriate sports. As a consequence of prioritizing on the basis of one's gender, there is a notable stratification between the themed *informal* and *formal* spaces.

The common experience that defines and binds example of informal space, is the appetite to play football. For participants, the fondness with which formative experiences of playing football are recollected in comparison with transitions into more formal spaces, expose systems of cultural practice that routinely displace women in sport. In the foundations of Bhabha's ideas about othering (Bhabha, 1994a:49-53) displacement is noticeable because there is a point up to which gender stratification is apparent, most clearly when there are spaces that are progressively closed. To account for closure and spatial stratification, the following interviews recollect firstly, early experiences, and are characteristically un-gendered. Secondly, as this narrative is developed, interviewees discuss formal, regulated interactions when playing football was divided and then closed on the basis that this was not an appropriately feminine sport. Participants were expected to take up female sports to the point that they are excluded.

Linda is in her early-50s, born and raised in the north west of England, although she no longer plays football in any formal capacity, she continues to be involved in the coaching of girls' teams in the local area. Her recollections were interesting because they frequently centred on spatial focal points. Linda chronicled her formative experiences in a way that does not place them within a gendered matrix, or another way, she talks about how she played football with friends. To this extent, this space is androgynous and autonomous from gender as a defining category, because Linda does not experience it in these terms. In other words, gender is not an integral to Linda's interactions in this space. Because gender is not a focal point drawn upon to explain and make sense of these experiences, I argue that discourse which privileges a reductive sex-gender/male-female binary is undermined. Such subjective interpretations of grounded actions highlight the precarious ground upon which knowledge about masculinity and femininity are constructed. To illustrate this point, Linda recalls her formative expectations when playing football in the locality and the strength of friendships that underpin the value of these experiences.

Linda: Me and Rita have been going to (Manchester) City together for like, I don't know [], the bloke who used to be the secretary, or work in the office, used to take us. So we used to, because we used to live opposite Rita so we used to get a free ride there and back. [] playing football was, playing with the kids around where I used to live, because it was different then, you could go out, you could go out to the park, you could stay out all night, you know. [] The park, we used to go around until it was dark.

The narrative that emerges through recollections of childhood highlights the limitations of a male/female binary, and the problem of objectifying gender in the context of football. In broader discourse masculinity and femininity are antithetically situated in a sex/gender matrix, but Linda's placement within the story as protagonist, means that she is at the centre of interactions and her experiences break convention. She recounts her early experiences of playing football on her terms rather than any ascribed notions of gender. The informality of the space is very productive in this way because it is not yet defined, and encourages Linda to draw on her imaginative construction of events as a youngster, which is placed in a deeply romanticized sense of the past. Linda further talked about how it was different 'back then', because it was possible to stay out all night.

Importantly, there are fundamental aspects of Linda's experiences that encourage breaching gendered regulation. One is the aspect of time or the temporal narrative, and the other is the sense of space, or the spatial aspects of narratives. Chapter 2 put forward the

integral importance of time, and progressive change over time in situating how gender is constructed and realized in football. This notion of time temporally locates, or anchors the narrative, and this is interesting because not only does Linda's recollection evoke a sense of perceived freedom and of pleasure drawn from playing football in such an un-regulated way, but over time, there are cultural transitions that impact on her experience and being allowed to play football as she grows older. For example, it is shown through the narrative how and when football spaces are regulated, gendered in which a way as to exclude women who want to play football. Gender is not initially utilised as an organising concept, and reference to femininity is conspicuous by its absence. Doreen Massey however, has discussed gendered space in her recollections of journeys into Manchester city centre, of football and rugby pitches that because they were 'given over to the boys' were a reminder of her 'conventional subordination' (Massey, 1994:185). Yet, although many of the women interviewed talked about playing football with 'the lads', this was not the defining part of the narrative. In fact, lack of gender acknowledgement was more revealing. What emerges as a prominent facet of Linda's recollections was simply about finding a space to play football.

In the following examples, the notion of space and informality are important features of the discussion. Firstly, there is Pat, 45 and originally from the north of England, explaining playing football on the fields of the local grammar school. Linda also reminisces about creating spaces to play, even venturing on to roads and places that were not really appropriate for such use. Nevertheless, there is a determined ambition to seek out suitable locations for playing football. Lastly, using Gillian's example, she discusses having a 'kick-about', again mostly with boys, and it is interesting that these friendships are organised around a common interest and sociality, doing an activity rather than whether their friends are male or female. Friendships are discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, but Gillian's reflection on a childhood experience are brought to attention at this point, because these interactions have a tendency to disrupt the essential nature of normal gendered identities. Insofar as feminine identities and congruent friendships have been placed around conventional symbolism, in beauty work for instance (Smith, 1988:39), or placed in terms of emotional sharing (Allan, 1989:72), then these recollections are notably unconventional. Gillian had friends who were interested in playing football, doing an activity and she could kick the ball 'as well [as the boys]'. Consequently, it instigates the argument that the informality of these spaces permits these non-traditional interactions. To understand the meaning of non-traditional, the narrative brings into question the essential underpinning of a sex-gender binary, because these participants' friendships are placed in a context of social interest rather than activities where

appropriate genders are practiced and made in social interactions. So the following examples are organised around friendship based on the shared activity of football, and utilisation of public spaces. They are taken from interviews with Pat, Linda and Gillian.

Pat: Well, up the road there was a grammar school playing fields, you know, you used to be able to just climb over the fence. We never, nobody ever got stopped for playing on the grammar school fields, it's weird. But they actually weren't at the school you see. It was like, up the road. I don't know if they'd bought this playing field, so it wasn't actually at the school, so the caretaker could never see you really, unless he come to have a look. So, we just [pause], and it was only like a two or three minute walk from our house so we were just in there all the time. Always playing, and when it got dark, you know, we'd actually play until you could barely see the ball, you know.

Linda: [When there were] *no spaces*, we used to go and play on the roads, you know, just on the side roads with goals and, now there's cars there and everything.

Gillian: And I remember just really just enjoying kicking a ball around with friends, mainly boyfriends I'd say [pause] at that time. And I had a lot of cousins who were male as well, so I think you know, very quickly because I was, you know, because I was able to play and I could kick a ball as well as boys, I joined in boys' games really. It was very informal and of course in those days, you know growing up in the 70s, there wasn't that much opportunity really in a structured way to play girls and women's football like there is now.

Certainly in these formative experiences, playing with the 'lads' was a normal part of such grounded activities, and stories are centred on collective friendships based around football. The implicit notion of fitting in, which features in Bhabha's concept of mimicry, suggests complicity because participants convey strategies of creating a space in which they can participate. Chapter 1 explained that football cultures are complex and contested by their very nature, as can be illustrated in spatial and temporal transitions (Giulianotti, 1999:39-65). One characteristic of formative experiences therefore, is the androgyny of these spaces. Not referring to one's gender subverts the precedence afforded to hegemonic masculinities because participants' experiences illustrate that it is not innate to football, but advanced structurally and culturally. The absence of gender to meaningfully convey these early experiences shows us this. Pat discusses a football tournament she and her friends would organise amongst themselves.

Pat: I remember the bunch of lads that we grew [pause], it was called [name] the town that I'm from, it's just off the motorway, and the lads that we used to play with, I don't know where it come from, but we had this little tiny silver plastic trophy, thing, that had a little black stand that it went on. And we decided we'd play one-on-one, you know where you just had one goal at one side, and it was whoever [scored won the game], yeah, and it was the NIFA Trophy, the [name] International Football Association [laughs], and I won the NIFA Trophy and I used to take it 'round like that [gestures lifting trophy] [laughing] it was a tiny little thing.

Pat recounts her story and articulates the collective cohesion based around the football tournament that she and her friends conceived amongst themselves. Pat does talk about the 'lads' that she used to play with, and it has been noted that playing football with groups of boys, or that friendship networks were composed of (one might infer) boys, was common across the interviews. It is noted that Pat was not drawn into discussion about whether she was unfeminine or that most of her friends were boys, the only thing that is of consequence is participating in activity. It is a focal point for Pat's childhood and teenage years. It is a celebratory narrative, and a vignette that illustrates how she is part of something, which is communal and meaningful for her because it articulates a sense of belonging and finding a home (Rutherford, 1990). This is not about her gender, but is an expressive forum for the aspect of her identity, which enjoys playing football. We might understand this narrative as stoical, "gender" is not inferred, but rather emphasises the collectivism of determinedly pursuing her chosen sport.

In this era during the 1970s, the examples of Linda, Pat and Gillian highlight a sense of resolution, being a part of a collective rather than being 'the only girl'. These are interactions that are pointedly androgynous, and this is important exactly because it is not a process of becoming a girl or becoming feminine, none of these women are excluded from playing, they are focussed on being a football player. Butler (1997) conceptualises of gender as discursive and actualised in performance in response to speech acts, but in these examples one's gender is not assigned, indeed gender is not really inferred to make sense and explain these interactions. The activities outlined in the examples of Linda, Pat and Gillian, and their recollection of events actually undermines any conviction that authenticate the symbiotic relationship between hegemonic masculinity and football. Football is not inherently masculine, but learned. Sandra for instance, spoke about some of her experiences of playing football and school. She is in her early 40s and was allowed to play some football at school,

and the quotation below illustrates the abandonment with which she could play football when it was free from regulation.

Sandra: Well I was born in '74, so [pause] my first experience of playing football was [pause] I might have had a kick about with friends before going to primary school, but it was always with boys at school. And that's what I did; if we weren't playing other random games then were kicking a football around either on the concrete or on the grass if it was sunny.

Collectively, these examples illustrate immersion into football at a young age, which consequently problematize the naturalized relationship between masculinity and football. These formative experiences are good examples of how un-regulated sports and leisure encourage the agency of participants. Rutherford writes very candidly about strangeness (Rutherford, 1990:10), and these non-traditional spaces illustrate that in cases when there is limited organisation and bureaucracy i.e. the football is not officially organised, there is some capacity for self-definition. As such, the over-riding narrative that permeates these aspects of the interviews really compounds the cultural and structural process by which gender does become regulated. The regulatory disciplining of gender becomes a definitive feature of participants' testimonies as they recount tales of exclusion defined by the formal conditions of education.

As interviews progressed, participants would talk about later experiences and their memories of growing up. It becomes apparent as time moves on how integral the intersection of bureaucratic institutions are in terms of defining and categorizing gender on the basis of sex (Buzuvis, 2011, 2010). Therefore, the impact on women's football is very clear, and this intersection is very much illustrated in spatial stratification. Gendered spaces become apparent as each participant moved on to talk about their experiences in formal (educational) contexts. After playing football when she was a child, Sandra told me more about how she did not begin playing football again until much later when she was at university. There was a large gap between playing football pre-school and then when she began playing the sport again. She explained why:

Sandra: I don't know if I would be a kind of standard female to ask that to, because I had a different experience. I might not do to other girls or women going into football, because obviously when I was playing women's sport was separate you didn't really have anything. At my primary school you didn't have a women's team or anything like that. [] And I did kind of ask [pause] if I could be in the [football team], because the

primary school did have a boys football team, but at that time it was just a simple case of, 'you're female, no, you can't play'. I did play in [pause] they had a couple of friendlies, which I was allowed to play in, but it was just simply 'you can't play'. There was no suggestion that you could go elsewhere and do it, or anything, it was just 'it's football, it's essentially for boys, you're not a boy.'

This separation is common amongst the conversations with all the women around Sandra's age and older. From the informal spaces playing on streets, for example, and then progression into what might be termed formal spaces, sporting activities provided institutionally are demonstrative of gender stratification and division into male/female sports (Houlihan, 2008:133; Caudwell, 2004:131).

In the examples that follow, Linda explains that although there was no girls' football team, she does imply that there were gender appropriate sports. She also discusses her accomplishments in developing skills that are advantageous for playing sports generally. There is a sub-text to Linda's concerns. She inferred for example, that one learns to be a football player, but only if there was scope (and willing) within the curriculum to support women's football. In essence, Linda is critiquing the structural deficiencies that have historically limited and excluded women's football. Further to this, although Sandra was allowed to play some football, she states that there was a clear division, and spatial stratification begins to emerge more definitively in the extracts that follow.

Linda: There was no girls' football at school, years ago, and then when I went to secondary school, which was all girls, there were some players there, but they also, there was no football team, but the girls who could actually play hockey and ball sports could also play football [they had good hand eye co-ordination].

Sandra: I have very fond memories of playing football at primary school, and it was, it was my mates, and we just kicked around, and we, you know, there was the banter that went on when you were primary school kids. And that was from infants all the way up to juniors [pause]. And then high school, I played a little bit of football, again in the playground, but you get to that age, I don't know whether it's a societal exertion on you that, girls and boys divide kind of thing, and the focus was on what you could call traditional female sports, so, hockey.

Tradition therefore is the basis for segregation, but other than this, there is no substantive rationale to systematic stratification. Just as Caudwell (2004) has conceived of traditional female sports, there is a frame of historicity that quite simply restricts choices for girls,

maintaining gender segregation and a system of privilege. Football is one of those spaces into which the threat of the stereotype and normalised femininity come into conflict (Kleindienst-Cachay and Kunzendorf, 2003; Pfister et al, 1999; Hargreaves, 1986), referenced by some participants. Although sexuality was not included as a topic of questioning in the research schedule, it did emerge in some interviews. Because football is closely bound up with the authority of hegemonic heterosexual masculinities (Caudwell, 1999:40), this association underpins the recollections that participants spoke about. The sub-text of sexuality is arguably manifest in the systemic stratification of sports/leisure spaces, and it was common across all interviews that they were encouraged to make suitable choices regarding football. This association with deviant sexualities and the threat that the stereotype poses (Bhabha, 1984:126; Childs and Williams, 1997:129) is reflected in football's infrastructure, it is institutionalised. For example, the strength of narrative in interviews demonstrates that as spaces in institutional contexts are designated male or female, so gender is established organisationally. Participants were often simply not allowed to play football and in this way space becomes closed and protected to sustain this division. As Sandra explains, closure results because of structured exertion within the conditions of formal education. She goes on:

Sandra: It was a clear separation, 'you're female, you can't do this sport', even, I could do it as a recreational activity, but doing it in an organised kind of a form, was impossible. I mean maybe if there had been somebody who was more sympathetic, like a teacher or something who had looked into it, they might have been able to suggest somewhere. But as I said, as far as I was aware, there was nowhere local to meet that had actually even thought about including girls. It was [pause] kind of pre that time, 'this sport for boys, this sport for girls.

Such is the contrast between informal and formal space, recollections often focused on usually being the only girl who played football. The sense that there are appropriate masculine and feminine spaces is quite clearly incorporated into institutional practices, but equally, these spaces are surveilled for deviant incursions. Systemic stratification then meant that participants had to transgress into prohibited places. Pat talks about such transgressions, and is required to be complicit i.e. she became (like) a boy. In transgressing, Pat's interactions in male space incited accusations that she is non-conforming, or to be clear, that her gender identity did conform to dominant conforming femininity. She does mention that there were several occasions, for example, that her deviations from being appropriately feminine elicited questioning responses. For instance, she says the following in interview, 'me mam wanted me to be more girly', 'I was just a boy really', 'because I was such a boy'.

In this way, Pat's reflects on her own identity in terms of mimicry, she is in her words like boy. Because of this she is othered, segregated and pushed to the margin because of her non-conformity.

For girls it is clear that playing football is gendered not by virtue of their sex, but by virtue of the responses that de-feminise them. The 'tom-boy' would be one example, being a 'tom' replicates and mimics, it is an adaptation to context, but importantly is not quite the same (Bhabha, 1994b:86). Bhabha explains that mimicry is an interaction whereby the colonized adopts the characteristics of colonizer. As gender exists in football, the interaction of mimicry helps to explain how participants adopt dominant cultural characteristics. It is a dynamic cultural exchange (the tension between the subject and object), as if in taking part, participants are conversing with this culture. Their transgressions by way of mimicry illustrate adaptation in order to participate. So Pat had a non-conforming identity and this is observable in the relationship to a significant other (her mother), because mimicry is an affront and inappropriate. There are consequences, and as Pat went on to explain, there are clear conceptualizations of girls' and boys' sports.

Pat: So, you know, I think me mam and dad, well [pause] me mam, wanted me to be more girly, you know, but I was always just a tomboy. I was just a boy really [laughs]. So yeah, me dad was a rugby man, you know, where me love of football came from and why I ended up playing in the playground with a stone. [] I think it would have been about 7 to 13 [years of age], something like that. And so they had a lad's football team then and because I was such a boy, I played in a lad's team from when I went to that school, 'til the last year, and I was, you know, made to give up football. It was just horrifying. [] I had to play girls' sports. I mean, I'd played since I was 7, and I used to play on the right wing then, but, and the last season I played, I was leading scorer even though I played out on the wing (on the boy's team).

Despite playing up to the point that she is excluded, the lack of developmental provision has a very personal impact upon Pat's early experiences as she progresses into formal education. Formal exclusion was a narrative across interviews evident in an informal/formal dichotomy. Such a thematic frame emerged as participants explained that they were not allowed to transgress such boundaries, and this is illustrated in the markedly different responses to girls and boys ambition to play football. These recollections are interesting precisely because they evoke a sense of space, or that space in which they played football was without boundary, and therefore not gendered. As participants recalled their formative experiences, they romanticised about past events and that events were much less complicated than in

contemporary conditions. In order to develop this thematic strand, and further unpack mimicry, I draw a complicit narrative in the context of football matches.

5.3 Narrating Football: The Artificial Binary

Many participants talked about the dynamics of particular matches. They also spoke about preparation and rituals prior to playing a game of football. Taking examples of match descriptions, this section looks at the extent to which participants were active in complying with both hegemonic masculinities *and* femininities. Complicity was apparent when participants spoke about playing football matches and being physical, emerging in compensatory cultural practices i.e. emphasising hegemonic femininities to offset anxieties about becoming masculinized (Cox and Thompson, 2001:9). Just as mimicry is underpinned by similarity and difference, participants' experiences in this section look at cultural practices that are appropriately gendered. Complicity illustrates boundaries and gender was observable because participants were active in fitting into this environment by adopting suitable, hegemonic, corporeal masculinities. When talking about football matches for example, descriptions were organised around the physicality of the game and were very combative. Chapter 2 made reference to a style of play, an aesthetic that emerged from public schools that was very physical. It has been argued that that pre-eminence of this style of play extends into the contemporary English game (Winner, 2005:9-10), and potentially also into women's football. In this way, football is an influential social environment that frames the experiences of female football players. A gender binary is constructed because as one learns how to play, conformity to mainstream cultural practices are mimicked. Mimicry is a process of becoming gendered and participants' experiences emerged in two main adaptive strategies as discussed in examples of:

1. Similarity: sustaining a gender binary in players/coaching relationship, assertion of femininity to *negate appropriation* of masculinity, discussed in this section
2. Differentiation: compliance to hegemonic masculinity to *attain status*, discussed below

Just as becoming conversant with dominant cultural practices was apparent in the division of gendered space discussed in the previous section, this action of becoming is given further substance in the examples that follow. For instance, the extent that participants were aware of

playing football, that it was a tough environment, would indicate that they consciously interpret their experiences and that they can interact appropriately (Sandvoss, 2005:6; Fiske, 2003:20). Bearing this in mind, inappropriate femininities symbolically defined in the stereotype are neutralised by compensating in other ways. There are examples of accentuating conventional feminine characteristics that would negate othering or gender deviancy. Some participants discussed pre-match and social activities when team-mates would emphasise their hegemonic feminine identity, and some examples made reference to the relationship between players and coach which could be construed in quite conventional terms. In the following interviews with Nina and Meghan, they discuss such counter strategies, and this is themed complicit because these examples maintain gender binaries that are conformist.

In the first example, Nina's assessment of coaching and coaching style is an exercise in adapting and learning, which emerges in formal interventions, or more simply, being taught how to play football. The institutional, or formalized role of the coach, and Nina's evaluation of her coaches' approach to teaching football brings to bear one way that the relationship between subjective experience and objective construction of gender can be understood. For example, she spoke about a particular coach when playing football at university. It is interesting that from her position as protagonist, at a critically subjective position, she casts her coach in a paternal role.

Nina: Well for a start, he's quite a lot older than us, but he's incredibly nice to us, but he's got [pause], he always knows when to step in and just go, or he'll say things like, 'well if that's the level you want to play at, then I'll lower my expectations', and then people will go, 'oh now, we don't want to . . . ' [pause], we want to make him proud. But he says [pause], it just doesn't come across like that, but he's got that personal charisma that. I also think that age gap helps a lot, because if someone my age says that, maybe it doesn't have the same effect as him, 'cause we all call him 'dad', and everyone wishes he was their dad. There's really, there's really that connection and it's really interesting because people from 4 years ago called him dad, and people this year call him dad, and his teams have the same effect on everyone. He also seems to have understood women's football in the sense that he knows how to deal with a woman. Because I've found that a lot of coaches just don't know quite how to deal with [women].

Nina draws on conventional gender constructs at various points in the cited example. The underpinning narrative is complicit because it asserts a traditional gender hierarchy. For example, the sub-text contributes to the subject/object relationship because it implies there is

a dependant, fatherly role projected onto their coach, whom they call 'dad'. Femininity is positioned in binary opposition, its symbolization expressed through the status of players and coach. There are a number of explicitly gendered statements that impress an assertion that he 'seems' to understand women's football, or how to 'deal' with (a) woman, which suggests that there is complicity because Nina discursively masculinizes the authority of her coach. In this sense it sets a binary, (he) has knowledge that is resonant of McLintock's (1995) conquered geographies. In colonial discovery narratives, the passive feminine acquiesces to masculine dominance. Similarly, Nina appeals to the authority figure of her football coach. Moreover, she goes on to explain further that they want to make him 'proud'.

Nina: But see, I found, I've played under a coach that made us want to play well for him. So we always want to make him proud.

The tone of the recollection is at points akin to remembering an intimate relationship rather than that of a player and coach. As she has explained that he (her coach) knows how to elicit the best from the relationship, Nina goes on to state that this elevates his status above other (male) coaches, *'because I've found that a lot of coaches just don't know quite how to deal with [women].'* In such a way, the binary may impress compliance, or at the very least, it replicates quite dominant and ultimately routine notions of gender. Bhabha explains how colonial power is maintained in mimicry, because it is also the sign of the inappropriate. Mimicry is different in that it is recalcitrant and maintains colonial power because it 'intensifies surveillance, and poses an imminent threat to both "normalized" knowledge and disciplinary powers' (Bhabha, 1984:126). It is interesting then, that a gender binary is affirmed by quite tacit remarks. In the following example, the flippancy with which Meghan remembers the dressing room activities of one of her peers does support discourse that implies playing football for a woman is de-feminising.

Meghan situates the social and football activity of her team-mate as really just part of a normal match-day routine. The prevalence of compensatory practices (Cox and Thompson, 2000:7-8), presumably to negate becoming masculine, moderate deviations into the inappropriate. She told me quite extensively about some changing room behaviours, and the example I have cited next depicts the endeavours of one player to assert her femininity.

Meghan: We've got people before a match putting on deodorant, perfume and hair gel. It's a weird one, because after that she's fine, but before the match she does feel the

need to not smell, which is [pause], and she's got a quiff going. I think once we're on the pitch it's fine, for socials because we do fancy dress, some girls will always turn up, but turn any fancy dress into short skirts and tiny top. It's always the same ones, I don't know, the best player we've probably ever had, has slaps and slaps of fake tan and [pause], but she didn't sweat, she played for Leeds Ladies a few years ago. She plays now again, but unless she was really running she wouldn't sweat, so she had all the fake tan and [pause], well unless it was like fitness she wouldn't sweat [laughs], but it was a weird one, because on the pitch she was incredibly physical and she is the best player I have ever seen, but the best player I have ever played with. She'd go into tackles, and she played from a very young age, but I don't know if it's as a reaction to [pause], or just a personal thing, but when she would go out, she'd go out in fake tan and shorter skirts and just over the top, so [pause]. Absolute change [between playing and going out], she turns into a beast. But then, like twice a year we'd do formal dinners, and then everyone turns up in dresses and, and just very nicely dressed, so I think most people make a difference between sport and normal life.

The conflict that emerges in this discussion is interesting as Meghan develops the story. There seems to be friction between the assertive physical practices of playing football, when contrasted with a stout endeavour to conform to a standard hegemonic femininity. Meghan explains her teammate's social activity when she would wear short skirts and just generally be 'over the top'. In these cases Meghan's teammate exaggerates her femininity. There is a clear demarcation between what Meghan calls sport and 'normal' life, presumably normal meaning those cultural practices which affirm the heterosexual imperative, which taking part in football diminishes (Cahn, 1993:354). Complicity then, depends on reproducing both masculine *and* feminine stereotypes. This can be seen in the physicality of the football match and the platitudes she bestows on her team-mate. She lauds her ability as a football player, in terms of commitment, describing her in animalistic terms as a 'beast'. Antithetically, there is the 'over the top' distancing from her football identity. To be sure, in the third-space, in mimicry as produced *by* the colonized in the stereotype, compensatory practices are manifest in order to negate the anxieties about being unfeminine.

The stereotype is there to cover a fear, to negotiate a crisis of authority by the reaffirmation of the unruly, and therefore threatening native, who justifies his dominance (Childs and Williams, 1997:129).

Yet there are contradictions throughout these exchanges. Participants, as they interact and move in these spaces, although their actions sometimes affirm the authority of hegemonic genders, they also contest and transgress such cultural boundaries. Football is not essentially

masculine, but it is a context that propagates gender stratification, which prioritizes masculinities. In this way, culture is acted and therefore one might question the extent that such complicit narratives expose the artificiality of a gender binary sustained in football cultures. Bhabha has referred to mimicry as subversive because it represents a destabilization of colonial power. In football, I have argued that the institutional narrative maintains this imperial/anti-colonial manliness (Gandhi, 1998:98), yet this does not mean that the subject is redundant, and this point can be developed further as a position of critique. These are adaptations that are indicative of the active social actor to identify with a conventional gendered role, yet the exercise of becoming gendered is the peculiar dimension unique to mimicry that foregrounds the inherent contradictions in dominant 'colonial' identities. For example, mimicry replicates dominant behaviours, or at least endeavours to elicit favouritism by becoming like (being masculine), illustrated in examples thus far. Therefore, when Bhabha infers a de-stabilization of colonial power, it is because the binary (the object) is actually quite precarious. Anxieties that emerge endeavour to sustain privilege, illustrated in acts of labelling tom-boy for example, because expressive anxieties actively situate otherness and this has the effect of marginalizing. In short, the binary is opened up to debate by mimicry effectively undoing one's gender (Butler, 1997:402). When something is the same, but not quite, mimicry is unintentionally subversive (Bhabha, 1994a:85). And so it follows that the marginal space, and those cultural practices that do not quite fit, are critical for instigating cultural elaboration (Rutherford, 1990:19), showing how culture is full of variety because they provoke the limitations of normal cultural practices. To the extent that female football players are compelled to adapt, it is an interesting commentary because one may argue that femininity has no existence outside of discourse. A gender binary is an approximation, easily open to question in the grounded interactions and the reflexive activities. Female football players by making transgressions, disrupt gender when it is discursively constituted by language (Butler, 1993:232), because they are actively participating in making culture (Geertz, 1973:448).

5.3.1 Mimicry: Attaining Status

Having begun to develop the interactive, and specifically the conscious adaptations that underpin the experiences of participants, it was notable how the authority of dominant cultural practices was sometimes an emergent tactic for asserting status. Evelyn, now in her early-50s, explained to me her quite extended experiences of playing mixed-football, up until the age of 14, and the covert role that she had to adopt. When I state that she played football

covertly, there are strategies she employed so that she could continue playing football. Because there were no girls' teams in the area, there was an inventive aspect to Evelyn's compliance that is a way of adapting or becoming, out of necessity.

Evelyn: And then I joined a boys' football team, my father ran a boys' football team, I played down here in a league, the Valley League, that's a district round here, in those days it was illegal for girls to play football, so [*Regardless of age?*] yeah, I couldn't play. So they signed me on, they signed us all on by our initials so I could play.

These recollections cover a period in the 1970s when it would have been illegal for any mixed-sex football. Evelyn's experience is interesting because she is assertive and tests the sex/gender equation that underpins gender stratification. She was able to play football, in a boys' league on a boys' team for instance, until her physiological characteristics meant that eventually she was unable to do so. Interestingly, Evelyn's story underlines the utility of mixed-sex football in facilitating skills and attributes that underpin developing competence in football (Hills and Croston, 2012).

Evelyn: And when I was about 11 or 12, I started getting scouts from Leeds United coming down to watch me play. Leeds, a couple of, you know, they were *the* team at the time, and they used to come round, in those days they used to go round and look at all the kids all over the country. And they came down and then because they came down and started taking an interest in me, they starting asking my dad my name and whatever, he said 'oh no, not interested, not interested.' Anyway, when I got to about 12 they did an article on me in the paper, and of course it come to light that I was a girl playing in a boys' league and there was ructions, all these meetings and God knows what. And they couldn't ban me then 'cause I'd been there for 3 years, and they hadn't realized, you know and it was so. And then because of that, well I did another 2 years there, so I was about 14 when I started playing with a women's team.

Evelyn's recollection from this time are relevant to some contemporary studies (Hills and Croston, 2012; Hills, 2007), which forward the argument that mixed-football positively encourages a context whereby gender can be re-interpreted. Her experiences here are even more interesting because the tensions in mimicry and becoming gendered are clear when Evelyn's actions bring into question the viability of segregating of spaces as masculine or feminine. Having been scouted for Leeds United, and then the club showing an interest, Evelyn's father has to divert this interest. What is interesting is that Evelyn is scouted as if she were a boy, that despite the perceived physical differences, her ability as a footballer is

sufficient for a professional club to take an interest at this stage of her learning. This transgression was also discussed in Elizabeth's interview.

Elizabeth: I was actually scouted. [*Was that in the 60s?*]. Yeah, probably yeah, 60s. And this guy come up to me, and he says [pause], 'cause I'd decided by which time I was going to be a Burnley fan or whatever, and me friends kept saying, in them days it were Man United I think was quite the big team, but anyway, this guy come up to me and said, 'do you know' he said, 'if you 'adn't 'ave been a girl I was going to send you for a trial.' It was Everton. [] I remember distinctly just the [town] square, the school's there [pointing], whatever, and I'm there with me mates and this guy says, [pause] I mean everyone said 'you should have gone', 'cause I mean me hair was short. [*Did he think you were a boy?*]. Well no, he knew I was a girl, but obviously the skill level was enough for him to say, you know, you need to go for a trial. But that's what it's worth, 'cause he said 'if you'd been a boy, I'd have sent you for a trial', but people did say 'cause obviously me hair was short, that, your physical attributes as a youngster aren't quite as distinctive as 'til you mature and that sort of stuff.

Both of these participants, Evelyn and Elizabeth, were 'scouted' on their ability, but rejected because of their sex. These examples are compliant because they perhaps exemplify how one becomes a football player, and one's gender is intrinsically linked to the cultural environment. For instance, Evelyn had been adaptive just so she could play football because there were no other (female) teams available, but a consequence of this is that she is mistaken for a boy, and on this basis she is considered at this point to be a competent football player. Equally in the case of Elizabeth, she impresses the lack of physical distinction between herself and the boys she plays football with.

Hills and Croston (2012) have impressed how mixed-football is a creditable environment for learning, and I will move onto this in greater detail in the following chapters. At this point though, their experiences highlight the significance of context in giving dominant cultural practices substance. For example, at the onset of this thesis, one aim was to account for masculinities as the most prevalent characteristic in football. In the case of evidencing how the authority of a dominant culture to prioritize masculinities, it was interesting when some of the football matches described by participants were compliant, mimicking mainstream cultural norms. When they talked about football matches for example, participants often did so in terms that subscribed to the hegemonic cultural practices. The basis of this thesis is to develop a frame in which contestation is the focus of cultural exchange, and this is illustrated in these match descriptions. To conceptualise of masculinity in this way would seem to contradict this aim, but in order to problematize the binary,

because the imagery of combative exchange is practiced in the context of a women's football match, it illustrates the interactivity of culture. Participants described in these extracts the most appropriate way of playing football, and demonstrated that gendered boundaries can be transgressed. The following examples are organised around complicity when playing football as an adult. These reflections progress the idea that gender when situated in football, is an act of becoming i.e. constructed. Pat for example discussed some past encounters in football matches.

Pat: Well bad tackles I suppose. And the other thing is the standard of refereeing was just shit. It was absolutely crap [laughs]. But I mean it was bad tackles that you know, I was probably one of the worst for the tackling. There was just no holds barred, and, I dunno, somebody would just stand up and 'what did you do that for?' 'Fuck off'; and I'd just tend to lash out and hit someone or kick someone or whatever, I mean it wouldn't happen now, the whole team would just pile in. I remember having a fight with a whole team from Liverpool and I think that our girls were just so disgusted with me, they were just like, 'Pat, for fuck's sake.' They just left me to it you know. I was getting battered by a bunch of Scousers [laughing]. That was a really common occurrence, fighting and bad tackles and [pause]. But you didn't seem to get sent off for some reason. The refereeing was just non-existent really. It was [pause] and a lot of times the coach of the home team used to do it, which was you know.

Pat's recollections of this particular game are aggressive and belligerent, but this was the nature of the match and this is how she adapted to this context. As a complicit narrative, it draws on the many facets that intersect with the gendering of sports because interactions on the football field mimic as a way of fitting-in, of adapting. Moreover, the practice of becoming culturally conversant returns the analysis once again to the focus of this thesis, because adaptive strategies illustrate the progressive learning of one's gender in sports. When Pat explains the characteristics of games that she played in, there is a clear sense of attrition, so complicity is demonstrated in how she acquires appropriate strategies to deal with what are essentially very confrontational and tough matches. Gender is observable in dominant, hegemonic masculinity and Pat's recollections of this football match are quite atavistic.

The dynamic of mimicry is apparent in adaptation, which in Lucy's case is apparent by way of making adjustments. In the following example, the adjustments she makes are appropriate when switching between single-sex and mixed-sex matches. In these interactions, traversing between single and mixed games is an active dynamic, further discloses binary artificiality in the sense that she consciously transitions in order to engage with the

characteristics of each different space. Lucy's conscious reflection for example on how she engages in each match, is illustrative of the utility of the subject narrative to test a gender binary, and these examples again foreground the actions of acquiring, or learning football. Because she plays football on a regular basis against men, Lucy proclaims authority as a means of differentiation from other women when playing single-sex football. This is also an activity for distancing herself from a conventional femininity, and in doing so an unintended consequence is that she asserts her abilities (and attributes) as a football player, not as her gendered self. It is notable that in complicity there is beginning to emerge an emphasis on developing competencies, which for Lucy was a useful way of adapting to playing mixed football. It is a non-traditional, marginal space because mixed football is not the norm, but she adapts to the context and uses it productively to develop her skills.

Lucy: We did a few charity matches as well [pause] I ended up, I played with the guys more than I did the girls to be honest. I ended up playing with one of the men's [pause] well, the men's veteran team. Most of it was really [pause] and because it was informal it was like, 'yeah, that's fine, Lucy can play' sort of thing. So I just did that, and to be honest, when I did come 'round to playing with women, I felt really bad 'cause I didn't want to dive in for tackles and stuff, 'cause I as like 'oh no I'm going to hurt them, I'm not used to this', 'cause I'm used to you know, going up against a guy full on.

This complicit adherence to hegemonic cultural practices is very conscious on Lucy's part. These recollections highlight adaptation and reflexivity, which then illuminate the process whereby participants interact and become a proficient football player. As many participants have explained, they adapt to a style of playing football. Lucy makes adjustments whether playing against men or women illustrated by how she makes tackles. She adopts the dominant adaptation and is therefore complicit. While she expresses a hyper-physicality learned from playing against people (men) who are physically bigger, she is also aware of not wanting to hurt 'them' (women) in one-to-one contacts. Interactions are complicit to the extent that they attest to normalized masculinities, and then extend into women's experiences of playing (single-sex) football. In such a way, Bhabha (1984) describes mimicry as unintentionally subversive because it emphasises how expressions of power are artificial. In the accounts of complicity, the narrative questions gender in football culture and the way in which it is constructed.

Lucy went on to explain her experiences of playing football with men and the development of an appropriate style, or method of performing. She adapts and consequently

asserts her authority by following hegemonic behaviours learned from playing football against men. The experience is provocative in this way because she transposes dominant behaviours into the context of single-sex football matches. She is fully aware of what she is doing, it is a source of amusement, but also her interactions are a declaration of her own status, she others the other women.

Lucy: You do learn with the guys it is a diff [pause] totally different game that it is obviously women playing against women. When I've played against women you know, they try and shoulder you off the ball, and I just end up laughing, because it's just like 'seriously, did you just try and shoulder me?' [laughing] Come on, try a little bit harder please, 'cause they sort of do it and then they bounce off me.

In this example, Lucy is complicit because she constructs her own performance, validates it even, in a conventionally gendered hierarchy. It is a means of stratification that also emerged in the previous section, except with the context of specific football matches rather than mixed-sex football matches. It is, however, essentially the same process and laden with the same assumptions with regard to binary gender. She derives a sense of superiority from having played football with men, and when she plays in single-sex (women's) football, her status is (self) elevated. She demarcates herself from the other women, and it is an interesting dynamic because she initiates her own sense of authenticity or value, over other (female) players. In setting herself apart, she asserts complicity to a hegemonic gendered binary for the purposes of her own edification. Moreover, she is complicit when she mocks the differences, the physicality adopted for when she plays men's football, she deems inappropriate when playing a women's game.

Lucy's own understanding of events in such binary terms is illustrative of how adaptations are learned. In short, Lucy's interactions transitioning between men and women's football are notable for the very active and reflexive actions of becoming compliant. This is not to derogate such activity, but to really develop the challenge to gender binaries, and advance equality for women's football. Lucy's actions are quite provocative for impressing how important it is to understand the social processes by which a gender binary is sustained in football, because she reflects on the different facets of each space. The act of transitioning between spaces is a good example. Her interactions are robust when playing against men, but she considers they are not suitable for playing against women. Iris Young (1990b) notes the appropriation of gendered movement (Young, 1990b:146) and contends that feminine physical inhibitions are learned in an institutional environment. Although in sports and

segregated spaces gender is quite clearly observable, the authority of an objective (colonial) text emerges through interviews in terms of the extent to which female football players engage in constructing masculinity and femininity themselves, with their own actions. In Lucy's case, this adherence to dominant cultural practices is by no means a passive exercise, it is actively regulated and made through adapting and defining one's own position within this culture. Her interactions are contextualised by adopting the appropriate masculine type, and this indicates the artificiality of the masculine/feminine binary. Complicity is an activity of becoming culturally conversant rather than a disposition determined by one's sex.

Similarly, Sandra explained her experiences of playing mixed-football. Immersed in the following example, which discussed informal, five-a-side matches, cultural exchange is a process, and being a football player is dynamic learning experience. Consequently, it seems that a mixed-football context encourages critique of the limitations of binary categorisation, and the masculine feminine stereotypes maintained in football. Sandra for instance, notes that there are different levels of ability between the men and women playing in this game, and that the men use this a way to assert their authority. In doing so, it becomes apparent that there is contestation that tests this authority. Sandra explains what is happening, and then takes action accordingly to neutralize her sense of injustice. In short, she consciously complies to meet the demands of playing mixed-football. Take this example:

Sandra: We do it from time to time, maybe three times a year four times, but we do five-a-side. And sometimes [pause] we did it initially we did it, men against women but then we ended mixing the team up, but when we did men against women I started getting really competitive, because of the fact that I was eluding to before, that [pause] a lot of the women don't have the skill set of the men when it comes to football. The guys were just coming, a couple of the guys were just coming in a just taking the ball off this poor woman who was like 'I'm looking at my feet, I'm trying to control, what do I do?' and they just came on and bam bam bam and scored, and it was like what do actually get from that? And it was proper, I squared up, it was like, you know [pause], if it was a woman I wouldn't actually do that, but I do find if I'm playing against men, I will do, I'm more likely to square up because, I don't know, it just seems it's a more appropriate way to deal with them.

Sandra's interactions in mixed-football emerge in cultural practices that mimic appropriate behaviours. Sandra understands these conditions by way of adapting to suitable cultural practices in order to deal with 'them' (men). She does this by 'squaring up'. This is her justification because it meets the demands of the context in which she is playing football.

Lucy in the previous interview also explained adapting in this way, and it seems pertinent specifically to a mixed context. It is opportune to acknowledge therefore, that Sandra engages consciously on her actions. She is very aware of her compliance and that her combative interactions are fitting for the space in which she is playing.

A useful way to think about compliance further is to evaluate these vignettes with the removal of a gender binary. Although it might seem counterintuitive to remove gender from the equation, given that the binary is conceptual frame for situating participants' experiences, Sandra's assessment of players on the basis of ability shows again how this space is a dynamic, contestable, environment. For example, she explains that a lot of women do not have the skill-set to play football, many are playing for the first time for instance, and this is a fair reflection of the impact of limited structural opportunities. If in this situation 'a couple of the guys were just coming in and just taking the ball off this poor woman', then it can be argued that gender is not so much the issue here, as much as the disparity in skills which result from inequitable development structures. In many ways, this reflects the discussion in the previous section regarding the gendering of space, of informal and formal spaces. There was a clear cut off in terms of provision and opportunity (as Evelyn and Elizabeth have both intimated), and this manifests in cultural interactions.

Sandra: Yeah, with men, if you're, if they give you something you give back, and that's fine, that's the way it goes. [] They have a five-a-side competition down at the Pits, and it was a mixed team, and you had to have one woman on the pitch all the time kind of thing. This one guy came up to me, 'cause I was like, 'well you know, I'm not going to be too physical when I'm playing', and he just knocked, just shoulder charged me off the ball and it was like, 'okay, fair do's'. Next time he had the ball, I did exactly the same to him, he told me off for being too physical! And I was like, 'but you're a man, what else am I [supposed to do?]' It's like, you know what I could have dropped my shoulder and sent you flying, but I decided not to do that. And I was like, 'I'm sorry, you're bigger than me.' It was like you're taller than me, you're bigger than me, how does that go? It was kind of weird.

In being complicit and adapting to the context of mixed-football, Sandra's exposition of events illustrates systems of cultural meaning practiced in sport as she adopts hegemonic masculinity, which simultaneously deviates from hegemonic femininity. Because Sandra engages in tit-for-tat interactions, she intimates that she can give as good as she gets, such an example of complicity disrupts binary convention. In the situations that arise in Sandra's example, the gender binary is strengthened in interactions not because women cannot play

football, but because they have not had the benefit of structured development. In this way, the narrative of compliance to a binary is a consequence of inequitable opportunities rather than a natural disposition. Sandra endeavours to counteract masculinity by dealing with ‘them’ (men) ‘appropriately’. If a fundamental reality of historicity and equating sex with gender categorization is limiting because it sustains inequalities (Buzuvis, 2011:37), then the activity of ‘squaring up’ and dealing ‘appropriately’ challenges the notion that women cannot do sports in the same way when quite clearly shown in experiences of playing mixed sex football, participants have been adaptive and to all intents a purposes, demand an identity. Moreover, Mennesson debates the gendered nature of football by which the women’s game might differentiate itself, but equally questions the objectivity of conceptualising essential traits.

Female footballers present their sport as being more tactical than the male game, since it is based on technical mastery rather than physical strength – though this has still to be objectively proven (Mennesson, 2000:21).

Gender stratification and compliance to the culturally appropriate that induces mimicry is a tough environment, but these women explain how they adjust, and explicitly cite their methods of adaptation. In the overall context of football then, the grounded experiences of participants illustrate how its culture is more complex and varied than broader representations of male and female dictate. There are not pure social categories, and complicit narratives illustrate the capacity of social actors to interact, interpret and affect cultures, which then incite renegotiation that undermine binary gender. The reflexivity of respondents demonstrates recognition of how actions are practiced in relation to circumstances. In mimicry, the duality of similarity and dissimilarity emerges in an underlying capacity to adapt, and this is perhaps the most productive way of positioning the overall focus of the analysis in this chapter. Although the narrative on a broad level can be taken collectively as series of confirmations, that ‘hegemonies’ are a clear part of these experiences, participants have shown how they are proactive in testing the institutional narrative of football and masculinities.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter was organised around impressions of complicity and Bhabha’s concept of mimicry. Framing the context to women’s football, particularly the experiences of female

football players, was aimed at understanding the cultural practices in football that gender such spaces. For the most part during the course of this first empirical chapter, evidencing gender is necessary in order to underpin contests and transformatory cultural practices that constitute the main focus of the two chapters that follow. If we want to understand cultural practices in football, and certainly the constructed characteristics of masculinity and femininity as complex and varied when compared with broader cultural representations, then this is a vital part of this process.

In order understand mimicry, and how this can show to us the relationship between gender and football, I looked at the processes by which football becomes masculine. Many of the women interviewed talked about formative experiences of playing football, and what was interesting about this was that when there was no regulation i.e. playing football informally, then gender was not applied as an organizing concept. When looked at in contrast with experiences of playing football at school, when girls were not allowed to play, then the characterisation of spaces in gendered terms was apparent. These were themed informal and formal spaces in order to demonstrate spatial stratification. In these examples, football becomes gendered not by the women playing football themselves, but in accordance to an institutional narrative that situates masculinity and femininity. This is interesting because it illustrates the social processes that objectify and gender football. It would therefore seem obvious that in order to generate contests the subjective experience of female football players is a necessary starting point.

Secondly, the concept of mimicry was extended to then look at how women narrate their experiences of playing football in both single-sex and mixed sex football matches. Mimicry was prevalent in adaptations. There was overt complicity, or adoption of cultural norms, which asserted the composition of masculine and feminine constructs and their respective placement in football culture. What is so important about these adaptations was the readiness of participants to interact, which is important to looking at the relationship between objectifying gender in football and the subject narrative. Examples used in this chapter have been discussed with express intention of demonstrating how gender could be seen, or observed, in football. Participants' experiences have illustrated how they adopt and recognise dominant cultural practices, and why the perspective of the subject is so important for highlighting this. In the following chapter, using the concept of disavowal, this method of adaptation underlines the interactions between dominant and marginal. It demonstrates the intersections of power, but equally, illuminates the limited nature of the masculine/feminine binary, because women consistently question the nature of such constructions. In order to

develop this inquiry further, Chapter 6 argues that subject narratives can be understood in football as spaces of transition. In doing so, I interrogate cultural contests in marginal spaces for ascertaining the dynamics of gender with reference to disavowal under the theme of negotiation.

Chapter 6 - Negotiating and Disrupting Gender: Disavowal

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I respond to the research question ‘what strategies of *negotiation* do female football players employ in order to navigate opportunities and structures with regard to player development?’ Chapter 5 employed Bhabha’s concept of ‘mimicry’ as the basis for instigating a general debate around football, gender and women’s participation, and in the next stage of this analysis, Chapter 6 will build on the dual utility that underpins mimicry by applying the concept of disavowal. Mimicry has a dual function that highlights a progressive conformity (Bhabha, 1994b:86) when subordinated cultures adopt characteristics of dominant cultures. In short, mimicry is the interaction between dominant and marginal and in this way its conceptual utility is in understanding intersections of power. For women’s participation in football, intersections of power are discernible in a masculine/feminine binary, but rather than adapting and being complicit, this chapter will argue that female football players consistently question the nature of such constructions. Disavowal is an act of defiance, and the aim of this chapter is to employ this concept to disrupt dominant, normative conception of gender situated in football culture.

Chapter 6 firstly outlines disavowal with reference to labeling and exclusion when it was featured in interviews. The purposes of such an exercise is to locate disavowal when it emerges in women’s football, as it is a response to fear of something different i.e. women’s transgressions into male space, and which elicits a negative reaction to something that is considered strange (Rutherford, 1990:10). Having examined disavowal, using further examples, the discussion is then organized under two main themes. The first theme examines issues of professionalism and career mobility. By taking into account the historically limited opportunities for women to pursue a career in football, this section explains how women are required to negotiate and devise strategies in order to pursue any sort of career in football. Participants discussed some strategies they deployed in order that they could continue to play football, and as such, there is a sub-text of creativity underpinning negotiation, which develops over the course of this discussion. Chapter 5 for instance, looked at the progressive spatial exclusion of women from football, and it was interesting to note the creativity with which participants asserted a sense of ownership despite exclusion. Examples of women’s football clubs and friendship networks reveal a meaningful search for an identity (Rutherford, 1990), because participants were active in creating spaces for alternate, marginal, cultural

expressions. Moreover, football's infrastructure has restricted opportunities for women's football to develop, and for the women's game to really assert a coherent identity (Williams, 1994a: 68). In this way, women's football, and the myriad of experiences have traditionally been excluded from the conversation (Hester and Francis, 2003:36). Yet participants' experiences were frequently emotive and placed a great value on the activities and friendships organized around playing football. The agency apparent in these exchanges is characteristic of an ambivalence found amongst participants towards exclusion, despite having to negotiate autonomy in a male dominated space. This theme presented itself strongly in the data, and form the second main focus of this, specifically where playing football emerged as a fundamental part of negotiating exclusionary conditions when organized around sociality and doing activities.

6.2 Locating Disavowal

When looking at interviews collectively, there were explicit and conscious references to gender that tended to emerge only when exclusion was apparent as a result of social hostility. For two women particularly, their early involvement playing football was discernible by the unfavourable social responses they were subjected to. As a caveat to the disapproval Jody and Lucy give examples of, and to foreground the two sections that follow, this should not detract from the overwhelmingly positive experiences that participants discussed. Instead, disavowal is situated in this first section as a basis from which to understand how grounded interactions can highlight some of the issues facing women and girls who choose to play football.

Jody explains the reasons for withdrawing from playing football at school. Jody is 25 years old and talked firstly about her introduction to football at a young age, which was through her father. Notably, she explained how playing football had set her apart to the extent that she was othered because of her sex. Disavowal in this way has utility because it contributes a backdrop. Othering is a response in disavowal that prioritizes hegemonic masculinities, and in the following example, Jody recalls her experiences at school and some of the disavowing reactions that caused her to question whether it was worth continuing to play football.

Jody: I don't think it helped me when I was at school. I don't think it helped me at all, so [pause] it probably didn't really give me the confidence because I know I was like so different from like other people in school. So it probably set me back there if anything. And I probably resented football maybe for one of those reasons.

Jody's apparent lack of confidence emerges because she was 'so different'. It was a situation that she categorically states had 'set me back', and it caused a conflict and resentment of a sport that had previously been a source of enjoyment. Importantly, pursuing football became a challenge and the transgressions that she made situate her otherness. Her exclusion is a position that she later explains is only overcome in her early 20s. She did for instance explain further in the interview that she had begun playing football again, and there is a distinct transition from negative experiences of childhood in which she was socially marginalized, to the positive social friendships and networks formed through football in her young adult life. Given the dissenting responses, it might be concluded that such reactions are symptomatic of the threat that a girl playing football would have posed. Disavowal is established in behaviours that socially marginalise Jody, and consequently affirm her otherness. Her recollections demonstrate the necessity of utilising the position of the social actor as a critical tool because the social world is in this case observable (Benney and Hughes, 1956:138; Prasad, 2005:33). Subjectivity is a way of seeing and Jody's frequent use of the first person pronoun *I* linked to collective nouns is indicative of how we might feasibly think of the relationship between the subject and the object i.e. 'I don't think people were very accepting'. This negative positioning of femininity in football is clearly an aspect of Jody's formative football experiences that connect her personal experience to a social context (Mills, 1959:11).

Jody: I just, I don't think people were very accepting, and I think that was probably one of the reasons why, truth be told, probably why I quit. That and also joining a new team where I didn't really know anyone, but yeah, after a while I just got really fed up with being one of only the few girls you know, playing football, yeah. I suppose I was a bit of a tomboy at school as well so it wasn't just me playing football, it was probably the way I looked and the people that I hung about with. You know, very similar minded people as well so, you just, you get the odd comment don't you at school? [*Was that off other kids, just the boys, the girls?*]. Well, yeah, off other kids sometimes. I mean I were quite quiet at school, but I managed to avoid a lot of negative attention really, I was kind of just left alone if you know what I mean, so I was quite lucky in that way. But you even get parents you know who think you shouldn't be playing football as a girl as well, and even my nana used to say [laughs] to me 'oh you should have been born a boy', things like that you know, just little comments, and you're like '*do you really need to say that?*'

Jody was isolated as a consequence of negativity, and there are dissenting voices that impact on her participation as she was divisively labelled a tomboy. As a result, these social reactions become exclusionary and she makes the decision to quit playing football.

The pejorative label tomboy is a common aspect of many of the interviews conducted for this research. Although superficially, in itself it seems quite playful, it does bring to bear how gender is acted and confirmed. It is symptomatic of Caudwell's (1999) discussion with regards to the manner in which gender, or specifically femininity, is situated in football and arguably fetishizes deviant femininities. Football is perceived to negate hegemonic femininity because it is not considered a female appropriate sport (Houlihan, 2008:133; Caudwell, 2004:131). It is a line of enquiry that does add significance to binary gender and its composition in football terms, but equally it is a basis from which to unpack its limits in accounting for variability, difference, alternate and deviating identities. This is the argument that Rutherford (1990) poses. Although binary placement is constricting, in order to challenge its authority, disavowal opens up the restrictions of power to question. In short, it exposes and makes restrictions visible. In the examples below, participants cite instances of how gender is created by being labelled, that is, they are gender deviants. Because of these deviations, these experiences illustrate disavowal when their otherness is constituted in language. Transgressing the boundaries of masculine and feminine elicits a sense of disavowal because football was just not what girls did.

Pat: So, you know, I think me mam and dad, well [pause] me mam, wanted me to be more girly, you know, but I was always just a tomboy.

Lucy: Just 'cause basically they said I was a tomboy.

Elizabeth: growing up and kicking a football and dare I say in them days you get called a tomboy.

Erin: There weren't many girls playing in those days, and I just got called a tomboy.

Consequently, Jody's relationship with football is fractured, and this fracturing diminishes her gendered self-identity. She states quite categorically for example, that she was told she 'should have been born a boy', and to this extent her subject location is intersected by much broader social conventions about how gender should be practiced. Jody's recollections and those cited above, emerge in a narrative that strengthens the perceived natural partnership that masculinity and football share. Biological sex and gendered physicality define the notion that football and femininity are incompatible, which then culminate in othering.

Jody: It does accumulate, and some of it wasn't really malicious, what me nana used to say, but it does get to you after a while. And at that age I thought I don't want to do it

anymore. So [pause] after a year of playing at Dukinfield, I just threw the towel in, so I think I was about 14, maybe 15 when I finally stopped. And then I didn't play football then until I was about 22, possibly.

To draw further on the aspects of disavowal that were common across interviews, Lucy's formative experiences of playing football continue in much the same way as Jody. Pejorative labelling is apparent when Lucy explained that she was the only girl playing with the lads. It was a recurring theme that participants were often the only girl playing football with a group of boys. We might surmise that pejorative and damaging reactions are therefore indicative of social anxieties provoked by girls' transgressions into traditionally male space (Poulton, 2012:2). This tension is further evident when Lucy explains the transition from playing football in informal spaces i.e. pre-education or outside of education, to the organized football offered at school. Chapter 5 covered the differences between informal to formal space and noted the challenges that surfaced as girls expressed a desire to play football in education. The example that follows goes some way to contextualizing how such challenges emerge when football is institutionally ordered, but more importantly indicates the reactive behaviours that illustrate disavowal. Lucy gave an example of bullying she experienced when she played football at school in break-times.

Lucy: I actually got bullied at school for playing football, I got bullied, said I was a tom boy, every school I went to I got bullied. *[Who was that off? Was that boys, girls?]*. Girls. It was off the girls, the boys didn't have a problem with me. Absolutely no problem at all. I mean they'd come over and try something, so they'd hit me, so I'd punch them back, next thing we were best mates. But the girls were just you know, it's a typical girl thing really, be snikey and bitchy and [pause] but I had that every school I went to, unfortunately, [pause] and in the end it actually meant that I left school and I was home educated for several years.

There are a couple of key points that should be made about this testimony in terms of how it is indicative of disavowal. Firstly, Lucy makes reasonable adjustments in order to fit in. The boys punch her and she would punch them back. The recollection of these events is quite casual in terms the way that she relates the story, as if it was the most normal thing in the world. Secondly, she makes a clear gender distinction. For instance, due to her transgressions or deviations into non-feminine activity, Lucy associates the adversity of being marginalised is the result of some 'typical girls'. Similarly, the othering that is apparent in Jody's case is

further evidenced in Lucy's example and how this was manifest in behaviour that actively segregated her, notably in the form of bullying.

In Lucy's case this becomes more explicit because she had to be removed from formal education and schooled at home. It is questionable whether the intensity of these reactions was typical of social anxieties that might emerge in response to the presence of deviant femininities. Lucy's was an extreme example of all the interviews. Nevertheless, repetition of the word 'bullied' for example, three times in the first sentence, seems to fortify the negativity, and Lucy directly links it to her playing football. She states that she 'actually got bullied at school for playing football'.

Lucy: Just 'cause basically they said I was a tomboy and it just got to be really [pause], I just couldn't take it anymore. Unfortunately, I think part of it was [that] I was good mates with the boys, and by the time it came for me to leave, I think I was about 11/12, so girls are just starting to get the thing of fancying lads and all the rest, and they didn't like the fact that I got on with the lads and they didn't. So yeah, I ended up doing that, so I didn't play for years.

Both women experienced clearly negative reactions, which framed their participation authoritatively. Yet, neither Jody nor Lucy gender their own relationship to football, it only becomes apparent when they describe the prejudice to which they were subject. This re-asserts the ontological frame of the subject-object relationship, and most importantly the highlights fetishized subject because it is a symbol of fear. Mimicry, exemplified in the tomboy, brings about disavowal. In this regard, disavowal is partial or fragmentary, because female football players are perceived as deviant. The cultural symbolism of the stereotype propagates deviancy (Childs and Williams, 1997:129), and as Bhabha explains, 'the success of colonial appropriation depends on a proliferation of inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure, so that the mimicry is at once resemblance and menace' (Bhabha, 1994a:123). Notably, Lucy explains that it is not the group of boys who other her, but the group of girls. Interestingly she also others her own transgressions by setting herself apart from 'typical' girl behaviour as she impresses that she is not really like them. Merely by the fact of 'getting on with the lads', Lucy does not conform to a customary standard set in a binary by 'fancying' the lads, and her transgressions therefore solicit disavowal. So while disavowal works to maintain gender inequality, deviations bring about anxieties that focus on inappropriate social identities (Bhabha, 1984a:126).

Disavowal reveals the challenges that female football players face with regard to power, status and inequality that has pragmatic consequences simply in terms of encouraging girls and women to play the sport. It has been explained that disavowal results in othering, and anxieties about women's football, I maintain, has implications for the numbers of girls and women who participate in the sport. Nina and Jody for instance, discussed the low numbers of female players (in comparison with male players), with the question being: why might girls be less likely to want to play football than boys? Jody's recollection is perhaps typical of the tribulations encountered, because there are fewer female players, her concerns indicate that this it is a result of poor development and merely finding a team to play for was a challenge in itself.

Jody: At the age of about 13/14 we was finding it increasingly difficult to field a full team in the league that we was in. I think what you tend to find in girls football is that people start to lose interest in it at a certain age, so [pause] 13/14 struggling week in week out to field a team. I ended up leaving that team, just issues with transport and where I was living at the time, so I moved to a slightly more local team, and I joined that team. I was playing football there about a year. I didn't really enjoy it the same though, [pause] I think at that age, I think I was starting to lose a bit of interest meself. I think at school playing football was quite difficult really, 'cause I think there was quite a lot of stigma involved with girls playing football, you know from other people.

Nina: I was talking to [pause] the woman who runs St. Johns, who I was coaching last year, and at the minute they're fighting with Manchester FA because [pause] Manchester FA want them to play, I think they want the under-12s to play 9-aside instead of 7, because that's what the boys are doing. They want to increase the amount of players on the pitch. It's [sometimes] very difficult for girl's teams to get that many players, but the FA answer that, 'if you want to be equal then you have to do it the same as the boys'. And that just shows it's not the right approach, you have to be more flexible than that.

Spatial stratification was discussed in detail in Chapter 5, and it was argued that because football spaces are constructed as masculine, for women and girls, negotiating and making transgressions into this environment can be disconcerting (Cahn, 1994; Griffin, 1998; Lenskyj, 1987, 1994). One of the challenges for female football players is that in order to play football, they make transgressions that are perceived to put their femininity at risk. As noted in examples of labelling, deviation induces disavowal and creates a threatening stereotype (Spivak, 1993:55). From the examples given by Jody and Nina, the notion of putting one's femininity at risk would seem to have implications about the choices that girls

make about playing particular sports, notably football. Both participants explained that attracting sufficient numbers to make up a team has been, and can be a problem. One Sport England CEO in 2014 for example, proposed that girls would be encouraged to take part in physical activity if hair dryers were introduced into female changing rooms (Paton, 2014). The lower numbers of girls and women playing football⁵ in comparison to men would suggest that these anxieties remains an issue. Identifying as a football player for example, can lead to the scrutiny of one's femininity, as Lucy and Jody have shown. To this end, there are challenges with simply having to manage this tradition. From this context, the following section considers how participants negotiated these challenges and found spaces to participate. Negotiating spaces are a critique of conventional wisdom about women and football, and illustrate how participants actively sought to claim to new spaces. In order to overcome the challenges emergent in disavowal, there were discussion organized around differentiation and whereby non-traditional identities that fall outside the norm and into the margins, could be safely expressed. Making transgression seems to form a large part of what these participants' experiences. Negotiation then, indicates the ways that participants transgressed the normal and in many cases there were further emerging issues of infrastructure and the opportunities. The next section looks at transgressions under the focus of opportunities available to participants to consider whether these opportunities have changed over time.

6.3 Making Transgressions: A Professional Career and Mobility

To pursue a career in football has been, and still is to a lesser extent, a considerable challenge for women. The structural foundations that facilitate a footballer player's career if they display sufficient potential as a youngster are considerably more developed in men's football than in women's football. This is simply a fact of conditions and, as such, those conditions must be negotiated. It was interesting that career mobility was not necessarily discussed in explicit terms i.e. 'this is what I did in order to pursue a career in football', it was simply a fact that where opportunities and professional structures were limited, or even non-existent, participants found spaces to play and were very tenacious in this regard. In terms of how might these spaces look, do they have a consistent character that can account for how structural (and cultural) challenges are contested? As the narrative develops, extracts from

⁵ Estimated at 2.89 million playing for girl's teams (www.bbc.co.uk), 'Women's World Cup: England success leaves WSL legacy'. 8th July 2015), but still significantly behind other sports in terms of participation choice.

interviews that make reference to the quality of facilities and career mobility are cited in order to illustrate career progression and hierarchies.

Evelyn is in her early-50s and she discussed her transgressions into those forbidden spaces. There is a sense of purpose in her explanation because in order to play football (there was no local girls' team) and to continue playing, as she grew older Evelyn is compelled to negotiate opportunities. In the late-1960s, Evelyn would have been 8 years of age and mixed-sex football was not permitted. She talks in the two quotations below about her early experiences of playing football, and how she negotiated the age restriction, at least until it (her sex) became obvious.

Evelyn: Yeah, I couldn't play. So they signed me on, they signed us all on by our initials so I could play, so it was like E. Smith or whatever, and I did go 3 years in the league before they realised I was a girl. And I had this big long plait down my back as well, I just used to tuck it in. [*You didn't do anything to hide it?*]. No, no, nothing, never hid it.

There was a league at the time, it was our first league you know. So, I started off playing for them [names team], and still played for the boys' team on Saturday, then for the women's team on Sunday. And then, once I got into the women's set up, the national team was just starting up at the time, so I went for trials and got selected for the first national team. So, I was 15 when I first played for the national team, and then that went on then and you know, the boys just sort of went.

The first league that she mentions will have been in the mid-1970s and she played in both the girls' and boys' leagues until it was no longer possible for her to do so. In order to do make transgressions Evelyn employs some level of subterfuge, and this is how she negotiates gender segregation. For Evelyn this is a transitory space, and strategic negotiation enabled her to play football until her progression into the national team. The aspects of structure and career mobility are explained relative to the different opportunities that are available. For instance, in a league system that is the topic of this example, there are more opportunities for boys to play football than not girls (at this level). When Evelyn gets older, into her mid-teens, she explained that there was the opportunity to play for the national side, but it is significant that there are gaps in provision. The opportunities to advance were restricted for Evelyn, which discloses the lack of coherent structure for women's football. She was a young girl having to play on a women's team because there was no provision for a girl of her age. She

therefore transgresses into enclosed (and illegal) boys spaces. In such a way, she makes adjustments and creatively negotiates passage.

With her father as an accomplice, and taking the role of a gatekeeper, she challenges the limitations, but rather than complying, Evelyn draws on the subversive facets of mimicry to negotiate and fundamentally contest. For instance, her physique is of a negligible concern at this age, and she uses this to her advantage. Evelyn's transgressions draw attention to the over-simplification of binaries as discussed by Bhabha (Huddart, 2006:4; Gandhi, 1998:34) i.e. colonizer/colonized, masculine/feminine, and which then bring into question the ontological frame of gender segregation in sport that essentialize masculinity and femininity on the basis of sex. To this extent Evelyn unwittingly undermines the gender binary. Having to engage in negotiating strategically between different teams, these interactions consequently incite contestation. In such a way, Evelyn creates a place where she is able to play football (for a boys' team), because she is compelled to when there were no other options open to her. This is a consequence of inequitable governance and institutional priorities that favour men's football. It is interesting that despite these conditions, she is very secure in managing this exercise. Evelyn did not indicate an ambivalent attitude towards the fact of her transgression, if anything she was quite dismissive. When asked if she ever tried to hide her gender in fact, she retained a stoical position, which suggested that she did not have any doubts about meeting the demands of her chosen sport. One way to look at this indifferent response would be to ascertain whether Evelyn actually felt that playing football was a compromise or conflicted her sense of identity. Although there are literatures that position football and femininity as a space of tension that undermines one's gendered, feminine self (Kleindienst-Cachay and Kunzendorf, 2003; Pfister et al, 1999; Caudwell, 1999, 2004; Cahn, 1993; Hargreaves, 1986), Evelyn's response suggests that playing football contributed in a positive way. It has been argued that not all female athletes perceive conflict between attaining femininity and sports participation, female boxers and weightlifters are other good examples (Kleindienst-Cachay and Kunzendorf, 2003:34). Indeed it is possible interpret Evelyn's comments as a source of self-confidence and self-awareness (Pfister et al, 1999:152) of the gender issue, but her aim to play football over-rides any conflict and she pursued a pathway whereby she could achieve this ambition.

Evelyn's testimony is underpinned by a sense of liberation, and this determination assists her transgressions and capacity to negotiate access. This issue was also apparent in Chapter 5, because such mobility is a challenge in itself, and therefore necessitates some quite creative solutions to negotiate passage into non-traditional, closed, spaces. It was a

strong feature of interviews that in order to support negotiating, participants frequently cited the role of a gatekeeper, which was a factor in permitting transgressions to be made. In some ways, the strategy of negotiating is quite pragmatic. Just as Evelyn had talked about the role of her father in facilitating a gateway, so Linda also cited a significant actor who organized a local girl's football team. Moreover, negotiating opportunities were quite emotive, going against the norm and deviating from normatively defined femininity elicited some dissenting reactions from other people as cited in the cases of Jody and Lucy. For Elizabeth, transgressing into non-traditional feminine spaces was equally challenging, and this was indicated in the contrasting emotions from the despairing to a sense of resistance and an undercurrent of optimism.

Linda: I didn't do anything. A bloke called George used to organize it. That was in like, I left school in '77, so that was in like, probably '74 or '75, but when I was 16. [] So when I went to school, when I went to secondary school, I used to play and everything, but I never had a team, but I always wanted to. And then, one of the girls who I think was like two years older than me at school, her mum and my mum and dad, heard, and I heard that she played for a team called Corinthians. And I was like [ecstatic expression], so me mum got, [pause] there was a league. We used to play, [pause] (God) where was our pitch? They were based in Manchester, at one time, because this is going a long time ago, at one time we used to play on the pitch that, on Princess Parkway.

Elizabeth: On the girl's football front as I'm growing up, I'm desperate, I want to win medals. I want to play. I want to play for a team. So I actually did on one occasion write to a club called Manchester Corinthians, I wrote in secret. I wrote in secret 'cause I was desperate to play, and then me parents said 'you're not going anywhere' [*Why did you have to do it in secret?*]. Well, I'm not going to blame my parents 'cause I'm grateful for the life and career, and me family and friends, everything, it's just because women [pause] women and sport perhaps wasn't seen or recognised, you know. And families have changed, you know, the social, you know, lifestyle and that sort of stuff.

The example quotations refer to the early to mid-1970s (clearly in Linda's interview, Elizabeth is a little older). Similar to Evelyn's experiences, there are central figures who could facilitate admittance into closed spaces. In Elizabeth's case, the family was a particular focal point and institutional metaphor that maintains a gender binary. For instance, Elizabeth's discussion organised around the family transmits a dominant narrative, because girls do not play football. Although this did not dissipate Elizabeth's ambitions to play football, the emotional aspects of this recollection are very effective because she did have to

write to a local football team without her parents' consent in order to get around the problem. It is clearly a source of frustration that she firstly not only has to seek out a team, but secondly, she has to exercise a degree of caution because women playing football was not customary.

Collectively, there is an interesting aspect to these three testimonies, which draws attention back to the problem of historicity and sequestering of women's football, namely that there is an absence of narrative. In order to contribute to a better understanding of women's football and the variety of women's experiences, understanding the narrative and emergent sense of identity is an important aspect of addressing the marginalization of the women's game. For this reason, a significant other, or gatekeeper, in all of these testimonies, is helpful in helping to understand these conditions in order to address inequality. The reasons for systemic inequality were explained in Chapter 2 and having set this context, and to circumvent exclusion, Evelyn, Linda and Elizabeth impress that there were women's sports and that they were perceived to be encroaching into a masculine domain, but also, women's sport in general was just not *seen* at all. They were of a minority concern and afforded a lesser status. This point was a tacit aspect of Elizabeth's experiences when she explained the disapproval of the family, indicating the veracity of cultural sentiment that inferred women's football was improper.

There is a variety of literature that examines the problem of the athletic femininity, which particularly focuses on sports traditionally dominated by men (Caudwell, 1999, 2003; Mennesson and Clément, 2003; Cox and Thompson, 2000). Although these literatures focus more clearly with the deviant female body, in the examples cited so far, deviations have tended to foreground issues of development rather than sexuality. For example, the challenges that have faced the participants in this research have tended to highlight the structural dimensions apparent in opportunities, or lack of them. The challenge for many women and the practicality of having to be clandestine in contacting a women's team, or other such strategies, lends a degree of visibility to gender because by having to adopt subterfuge, participants' testimonies highlight where these boundaries are. Arguably, gender is actively constituted because the organizational structure that prioritizes masculinities combines to sustain women's marginality. One may observe the active sustenance of gender segregation in structure, and the maintenance of hierarchy in some very basic challenges regarding facilities and playing surfaces.

In terms of facilities, Lucy recounted an experience of her team finding a place to change into their football strip. Changing in a car, for example, was a common occurrence.

The quality of football pitches and Pat's assessment of playing surfaces conjures images of Sunday League football and there is an argument to be made that these are basic facets of provision common in football generally. But in order to ascertain whether there is a gendered dimension to these experiences, then many women expressed pleasure, perhaps relief, when they were given a changing room. One participant even explained that they were expected to give-up their changing room for the men if the kick-off times clashed. If changing rooms and football pitches can be used as a metaphor for gender, the examples below are revealing because they are indicative of the gender hierarchy that displaces women's football. In short, women's football is poorly incorporated systemically. Lucy, Pat and Meghan discussed issues of changing room facilities and football pitches respectively, they are basic necessities, but their allocation is helpful in understanding how exclusion and gendered priorities that favour hegemonic masculinity impacts in very practical ways.

Lucy: Keith ended up almost arguing with this guy, saying 'look we need', in the end he sort it that he would stay for us to get changed, but otherwise [pause], basically we said 'it's alright we can get changed in the car,' and Keith and a few of the other chaps who were with us said no that's not acceptable. They said we shouldn't be doing that. They said we've travelled 70 miles, we shouldn't be having to do that. You know, you want to go for a wee what you going to do sort of thing? You're not going in the bushes thank you.

Pat: Yeah I mean, we had a pitch at college obviously, but some of the pitches we played on [pause], you know just park pitches that had bloody dog crap on them, and bits of glass and everything on. Occasionally there were teams that couldn't get the nets, you know, so obviously when you've not got a net, certain shots and certain angles, it's difficult to know whether it [the ball] went in or didn't go in. But yeah, some of the pitches very rarely had changing rooms. You know, you used to have to get changed in the cars or get changed before you went, so, yeah very [pause] and if you did [have changing rooms] they were horrible and mucky and freezing, and the toilet was dreadful, ugh, even if there was one, ugh.

Meghan: Yeah, if you look at some of the changing facilities, yeah, they still don't provide ladies toilets. That was another thing, when we turned up for one our matches over in the Wirral, and all the guys had just finished [pause], a few matches, our opposition hadn't actually turned up yet and they'd all turned up in their kit, we were like 'they're in their kit', all these guys are coming out of the changing rooms, there's a big burly guy stood there and we said 'can we use these changing rooms?' and he went 'no there's guys in there'. We went, 'well when they're finished can we use them?' and

he went ‘no I’m locking up to go.’ And we went, ‘where are we supposed to get changed?’ and he went ‘it’s not my thing, I’m just here to lock up.

The state of playing surfaces, or having to hang one’s own nets prior to a game, is typical of football at this amateur level. Certainly some of the pitches that are being discussed in these examples are common ground community pitches. They are Sunday League pitches that may be used by anyone. Gender is not always the defining feature of these experiences. Indeed they reflect a commonality regarding resource allocation, and in some ways highlight concerns regarding funding and providing adequate playing conditions in any circumstances (Gibson, 2015). However, I would argue there are aspects of these examples that are gendered and illustrate how women are placed in a hierarchy. Firstly, consigned to getting changed in cars (there were many other examples of this covering a range of interviews) essentially is an exercise of distancing, into a different space, and a space that was not designed for that purpose. There was even an undercurrent of pleading. Lucy for instance, was particularly critical that having to get changed in a car was a frequently occurring scenario, and when Meghan had asked about using changing rooms, the women’s team was denied access into this space. Such exclusion is reminiscent of the spatial segregation discussed in Chapter 5. Denying access was quite categorical and sustains hegemony, it is expressive of disavowal and therefore separatist. This is their ‘space’ and connotes which teams are the more important (Harris, 2001:26).

Career progression and facilities were not asked about specifically in interviews, and although these topics may have been a subject of questions when they did emerge, both were evident in the analysis of interviews. The role of governance for example, in facilitating career progression, was apparent in two examples in particular. The contrasting experiences of Evelyn (in her early-50s), now retired from playing but still involved in coaching, and a younger participant, Emma who is a current international, gave two very different pictures. They are illustrative of the extent to which infrastructural improvements from the 1970s to the present have increased opportunities. Evelyn talked about her international career when she compares the number of caps she achieved with how many she might have if she was still playing.

Evelyn: [*When did you stop playing?*] I was 35 when I got my last cap, so I did 20 years, but in those days it wasn’t like now, every other week they’re playing for [the international team). In our day, if you got two caps a year you were, you know. And in-between that I had a fall out with the manager so I missed about 2 years [laughs].

I then spoke to Emma who is a regular representative for her country. She is 22 years of age, and her experiences highlight this structural change and the frameworks that now facilitate female players' careers. She briefly recounted her progression through the various stages of her football career. Firstly, she recollects some formative experiences, and signposts each stage of her career relative to her age at the time. In contrast to those women interviewed who were generally over the age of 25, Emma's experiences are much more clearly structured, and rationally explained in terms of development opportunities.

Emma: So I got into football because of my dad, he played football. He had trials for like [professional football club] I think, so he got me into it first of all. I played for my school, primary school, and then I just used to hang around with the boys, and [pause] one of the boy's dads coached a team, so then I joined. I think I was about 9. They were called [name of team], up in the [location], I played for them for like 2 years I think it was, I got to 12 and I wasn't allowed to play anymore because I was a girl. So I used to live up the [location], so then I joined a girls' team, I played for the under-16s, until I was 15, maybe 16 [pause], and then I played for [team name] Ladies team. I basically just got into that because I was playing for my school and I got scouted to play for [country] under-16 development squad. A couple of girls playing for [name of women's club], they mentioned, because I was living in (city) then, they mentioned going to play for [team name] played for them and I went to play for [name of women's team] when I was 16, and then I was in the [international team] under-19s squad and then moved up to the senior squad.

As the contrast with Emma's interview shows, she did not really discuss inadequate changing room facilities, or having to travel distances when there was no girls' football team in the vicinity, but she did explain specifically how she progressed through the ranks of football. For example, participants' experiences to this point have highlighted poor structural development and there is a sense of time implied in Evelyn's discussion of attaining international caps. She explains that the profile and scope of opportunities to play at international level in the contemporary women's game compared to in her 'day' are greater. At its very base, her experience is an interesting contrast because it is organised around a very definitive career structure, or system of progression. None of the older participants were able to do this. By negotiating new spaces, participants discussed topics of ownership and therefore identity, which were apparent in emerging communities.

6.4 Ownership and Identity

Disavowal evokes *otherness*, as it was argued earlier in this chapter. Consequently, there was an emergent aspect of transcripts that aimed to overcome marginalization by creating something new. Some participants discussed independent (women's) football clubs for instance, and the marginality was often engaged in a way that was progressive. It was evident that participants conveyed identities and ownership in response to the conditions of exclusion. Just as disavowal displaces non-conforming identities into otherness, this sense of spatial exclusion evokes a search for identity that Rutherford argues emerges in response to simplistic binaries (Rutherford, 1990:24). The fear of the unknown has been discussed when it is fetishized in the stereotype, and is further suggested this is illustrated by the existence of structural constraints when opportunities to play football have been limited. There were some examples of women setting up their own football clubs for example, and not only does this make the inequity that female football players have had to negotiate apparent, but this also represents a very meaningful act of searching for an identity, an endeavour to assert a sense of ownership in a marginalized space.

Gillian discussed some of the issues relating to playing on a women's football team when they were mostly, but not all, part of community development schemes. She really questions how this was beneficial for women's football, particularly when the organisation was tokenistic. Just to be clear about the context, during the 1960s and 1970s the organisation and structure of women's football remained somewhat ad hoc, although at a grass roots level ownership of the game was strongly female. The establishment of the Women's Football Association (WFA) in 1969 was an effort to set a league structure, but the organisation did not enjoy an auspicious end, and by 1993 it had descended into political infighting. The 'rescue' by the Football Association Lopez (1997) claims, would allow it to manipulate women's football 'lock, stock and financial barrel' (Lopez, 1997:56). The issues of identity and ownership that emerge from this context are apparent in Gillian's discussion.

Gillian firstly spoke about her experiences of playing for an official (independent) women's club, not allied to a professional men's club. It becomes clear in her account that the club's independent status is integral to the value she places on ownership, because the club has an identity and is self-determining. The independent status of the club might be understood as an endeavour to negotiate the conditions that have emerged because of marginalisation. These are necessary measures in order to combat disavowal (Huddart, 2006: 44). Because disavowal results in otherness, a separatist strategy is a way to manoeuvre

prohibitions to facilitate opportunities and career progression. Gillian and Evelyn explained the philosophy underpinning the clubs that they played for, Evelyn is still involved. These are examples of independently run women's clubs.

Gillian: So I played pretty much solidly then for (team name). Really good club, you know, very kind of women run club, women coaches, women trainers [pause], it was completely separate from the men's club. I mean there were a lot of approaches from the men's professional club in terms of trying to get connections, but [pause] (team name) Football Club, the men's side, was very badly run in those days. You could say it's still badly run [laughs] with the fuss over the last few weeks, but equally the women's club was started in I think, 1975, it's one of the oldest women's clubs really that's been constantly in operation. And so they were very well structured and very well run, so as a result they felt they didn't need to get the male club to sponsor them and support them in that way.

[You're not affiliated to the men's club are you? That's a separate thing?]

Evelyn: Not at all, we fell out with them [laughs]. We started, the club has been going since 1975 []. We developed over, what [pause] 40 years now, it's been going for that length of time. [] It's our club, this is it, it's our club. Because you know, you get some people who go through the system, they'll go off and play for another team, but we have this thing when you play for [this club] you always play for [this club], because no matter where they go afterwards they're always watching our scores. I mean I don't watch teams I played for and some of those are still going, I don't watch their scores. I mean they come in here, know what we're doing, know where we're going and so on.

This football club is considered to benefit from the position of not having to be reliant on an established men's club. In terms of negotiating spaces, Gillian argues that women's football organisations, clubs, can take heterogeneous forms. For instance, it might be beneficial for a women's team to be part of a bigger, more stabilised set up, and as she goes on to explain, there is a place for 'that'. However, there are pertinent issues of ownership and identity. Gillian places such value on independence because it is a way to prioritize women, their engagement, encouraging an alternative space.

Club ownership is clearly an important issue for both of Evelyn and Gillian, the emergent sense of community is a focus that progresses criticism of dominant, established, spaces from which they have been excluded. In this way it is a very gendered community, which is really the fundamental point of the exercise, to circumvent patriarchal definition. Definition is an interesting means of looking at women's football clubs and why both Evelyn and Gillian placed so much value on separation. It seems that a women's club inspired a

sense of belonging and identity through ownership. Ownership and identity are not uncommon topics of discussion in football more generally. Whilst the men's game on one hand is concerned with the intersection of global processes on clubs and fans, the issue of ownership and identity (specifically supporter identities) has focussed around notions of community and the role of football clubs in this regard (Brown, 2008, 2007). For women's football, this notion of ownership has much more fundamental connotations. There is a pioneering spirit underpinning recollections of establishing a football club, perhaps because they have had to be inventive as a result of systemic marginalisation intertwined in the experience. For women's football, having self-determination and provoking change is a constant challenge. Whether to adopt a strategy of separatism, or not, has been a consistent debate for women and I would suggest that because of this, fashionable contemporary critiques of the modern game, are not really so new. Gillian and Evelyn's concerns regarding independence emphasize the value of agency in understanding negotiation. In the frame of Bhabha's disavowal, Gillian and Evelyn are displaced and therefore othered. Consequently, they are compelled to adapt and their response is to contest gender conventions that marginalize women by looking for different openings i.e. they decided to set up their own football club. Their actions raise questions about embedded hierarchies because they show them up to be inadequate, and they highlight structural deficiencies. Mimicry holds up a mirror to dominant cultural conventions, and in this way demonstrates its conceptual utility to engage culture critically (Bhabha, 1994a:54) because it highlights where there is difference and contest, as Gillian went on to explain.

Gillian: You know it's back to what we said before really about the way to build infrastructure is to align it with the men's game and the men's clubs, I think that that's one answer, it's not always the answer though, it's not always the solution. I think you've got to look at developing women's clubs in their own right and you know, out of boys clubs as well so that you get boys and girls playing together and then they split, and then you get a women's club from a children's club effectively, I think that's another way of doing it. And there's some good you know, women's only clubs that aren't a part of male set ups as well. And the Premier clubs, a lot of them are associated with a Premier men's club, but a lot of them are not and that's good as well you know. I think it's horses for courses with this really.

Gillian for example discusses established infrastructure, but went on to question the efficacy of simply placing women's football within the current, established structure of men's football i.e. women's football clubs attached to existing men's clubs. At least she identifies that there

are many more choices available which might offer more scope for inclusion and the development of the women's game. But just as Gillian does not offer up solutions, she does make the point that offering opportunities for girls and women is only part of the game's development, encouraging a sense of ownership is integral for advancing women's football, which means contesting discourse that football is a 'man's game' (Harris, 2001). As negotiations have become more apparent then, the tension between the marginal and dominant spaces hints at the durability of women's spirit to find a means to play football. In this way, Bhabha's third-space encourages us to think about how culture changes when dominant and marginal cultures interact (Childs and Williams, 1997: 134). An identity is invested in ownership of the club, translated from a marginal place because women's participation has frequently invoked derision and exclusion.

By virtue of prohibition, women have negotiated spaces elsewhere that endeavour to circumvent exclusion. As it has been argued, the relationship between the subject/object is transitory and evident in the active agency of female football players. These interactions emerge in grounded actions i.e. negotiating space to play football, and it was notable that there were supportive networks in the form of friendships, social and community ties that further intensify the critique of tradition and gendered spaces. Importantly, I have argued that negotiating interactions are never clearly experienced as *inappropriate* as one might find in avowal (Foucault in Brion and Harcourt, 2014; Bhabha, 1984a:126), but infer a meaningful search for identity that finds voice in adverse conditions. The following section explores this further.

6.4.1 Friendships and Sociality: A Safe Space

Friendship networks established and maintained through football were an integral feature of participants' experiences, and foregrounded ways that women actually confronted disavowal. Participants, for instance, discussed friends that they had made, or what they get out of playing football, which consequently revealed the importance placed on social ties that tell us much more about the breadth of female football players' experiences. Many of the women interviewed expressed the sociality of participating in football, with activities frequently organized around doing friendship. Participants met to train an average of twice a week, and this was often followed with a post-training drinking session. These activities of making friendships and actively participating in social activities created strong bonds that challenge normative (binary) gender identities and corresponding social roles. It is because of this freedom to express the value placed on such activities that these spaces instill a sense of

safety. They are spaces that allow deviations from those gendered traditions, and it was against a backdrop of past experiences whereby despite being encouraged to take part in more feminine activities, that this facet of interviews was so strongly apparent.

The question was posed earlier in this chapter about what spaces might look like if independent of gender conventions. The notion of these being safe spaces that encourage expressively non-traditional identities is quite provocative in understanding the depth and variety of the narrative. Coddington has argued that transgressions into traditionally masculine spaces are often an underlying aspect of female football fans' stories, yet are overwhelmingly positively experienced (Coddington, 1997:57). Similarly, the strength of friendships and the social aspects of these experiences emerged with authority, and because of this it could be argued that there is an implicit value to be taken from encouraging girls and women to participate in football more frequently, and in greater numbers. Social capital (Bourdieu, 1980:2) acquired in doing activities organized around football, underlines the importance of the utilizing the subject for showing cultural practices that deviate from tradition. Conventional, objectified femininities are commonly defined and organized around domestic expectations, or are based on emotional support (van Hooff, 2013:68; Jamieson, 1998: 141), yet Evelyn and Gillian go on to explain about the strength of social networks and friendship groups that are distinctly non-traditional. These bonds, similarly debated with reference to ownership and identity, highlight some of the challenges facing female football players. Evelyn, for example, talked about domestic responsibility with regard to the players who she trains; domesticity impinged on the time players could give to training and their careers more generally.

Evelyn indicates that conventional femininities are maintained in gendered social roles, despite more advanced opportunities i.e. the conflict between private domestic responsibilities and participating in leisure and sports activities. In short, Evelyn indicates that there are circumstances when players must make a choice between one and the other. Gillian also makes the same point, and the following two quotations look at the persistence of conventions. Consequently there is an interesting sub-text because there are compromises that the players have to make, and it lends a sense of tenacity to this narrative. In order to play football, negotiating and therefore balancing a dual-role is an almost expected part of the experience.

Evelyn: It is tough, I mean we've lost [pause] we've lost quite a few, well, I say quite a few, but we've lost two or three of late where they've got a mortgage, or working on a

Sunday as well, and also the children side of it. I mean we've got a youngster with us now, she's 25/26, it's no age really, she's just had her second child now, full international, and whether she'll come back in [pause], she said, well, she might do, but the pressures the internationals put onto them as well in terms of this, training that, you know whatever. With a young family and keeping down a full time job, which you need to do these days to pay their mortgage, you know, it's difficult for them.

Gillian: Because women's football is predominantly amateur, in fact almost entirely amateur really in Britain, you know you've got semi-pro contracts, but they're not worth that much really in monetary terms. And because of that, the commitment shown by female players is phenomenal. You know, if you look at the England set up now, I know quite a few of the girls who have been involved with the England set up or who are coaches now, and these are always people who have kind of put their careers on hold for 20 years, and their families effectively. And they wouldn't get that in men's sport at that level because the professionalization of the men's game has altered the mindset. You know, boys now at 24 are associated with an academy at a club and they're already geared towards the big money lifestyle, that's how they see it. Not all of them obviously because there's some sensible kids as well, but a lot of them see it as you know, they want to be earning big bucks by the time they're 16 and they want that to progress. Women footballers can't think like that, so they think more about improving their game, you know. So it is a kind of psychological thing as well.

Gendered domestic responsibilities present a challenge for many women football players and can encroach on simply making the time to play football. Even at the highest level, Katie Chapman, midfielder for England and Chelsea, has spoken openly about struggling to balance her commitments to her husband and sons with the demands of football (Taylor, 2015). Meeting the demands of a domestic role surfaces in many interviews. There *are* outside pressures that impact upon playing football, including education, and the tension in fulfilling other commitments is a system of gender stratification.

We might readily think about how the public/private debate is illustrated in the friction between privatised feminine social roles and then transgressions into the public sphere. There is a balance between domestic and public duality illustrated in many of the interviews that I conducted. It is interesting that women seek to transcend this duality, and extend negotiation in order to make transitions from private to public, or even back and forth. As Martha explains:

Martha: Yes, so we play there on Tues ... , I used to play on Platt Lane, you know The Dome, and basically one girl from there I kept in touch with, after I had a second baby, because I've got two small children. And she contacted me (to see) if I wanted to go

and play. So then I [pause] as soon as Georgia was born really, six weeks after, something like that, I went [pause] Georgia is now 22 months, I went and start playing with this lot and they're my age group I would say, because I'm 39 this year. There are girls 35, there are 25, you know, there's a range of 25 up to even 56, we have a lady who's 56.

It seems Martha barely even stopped to give birth to her second child before beginning to play football again, and almost brushed it off as nothing when she talked about it. Although there are quite clearly dual responsibilities, her capacity to fulfill both roles is manageable, almost normal and expected. Martha demonstrates how she has to negotiate different spaces, in order to be able to balance domestic responsibilities and playing football. With the management of domestic expectation and sporting ambition, the traditional woman's role is reinforced in football because masculinity has co-opted tradition to the extent that although there are contests and cultural resistance, these gendered zones remain quite entrenched (Clark and Paechter, 2007:261). Balancing dual-roles was an aspect of many participants' experiences that they sometimes chose to divulge, and so it is interesting that negotiating different roles were integral in locating football as a focal point from which strong, enduring friendships and social networks could be formed.

Not all of the women talked about their family commitments, or indeed if they had any at all, nevertheless, it is notable that some of these women's experiences were duty bound by domestic responsibilities. When the topic of friendships and group networks emerged, they were greatly valued aspects of playing football. These first examples from Linda and Grace are quite diverse in terms of when they occurred in each participants' life, yet they share a common theme, because they foreground the valuable status of their friendships. Linda talked about a long-standing friendship from childhood and Grace discusses her endeavour to become social when making the transition from the familiarity of school to the anxiety in adjusting to university life. They both underline the foundation friendships and sociality taken from football.

Linda: I've known Rita since she was about 10, because her mum and dad and my mum and dad [pause] used to go drinking in the Conservative club, which was where I met Rita, when she was little so, and they only lived around the corner. [] We met a lot of friends through the playing, that still, you know, I've known Benny and Rowena, Rita for God knows how long. And Rita and all the other people that I used to play with before [pause] if we all sat down and had a laugh, we'd probably remember a lot more things. Me dad's got pictures.

Grace: You could probably argue that lots of things do that, but football, you get to meet people from such diverse backgrounds and geographies as well. Like I say, I wouldn't have had friends at university who were from America, or from all over the country, which would last. Because you're sort of forced together with people who study the same subject or you're in the same college as, football is something I chose to continue [pause], I know you've talked about the networks thing before, and there's some people you stay friends with, and it's just like any form of stuff you do in your life, but I think football is more lasting, as well as watching it as well.

Linda has a long-standing friendship with Rita. They lived close to each other when they were young, and although this close proximity will have facilitated the relationship, their friendship is affirmed through football. The maintenance of this friendship was a focal point, and Linda impresses value and implicit pride in its longevity. There are a variety of texts that have commented on the integral aspects of women's experiences in football as emerging in a counter culture (Cox and Thompson, 2000; Scraton et al, 1999; Coddington, 1997). The counter-cultural argument stresses non-traditional identities, which encourage the strength of social ties that displace certainties about gender. Certainties are opened up to question by the subjective position, as the veracity with which women are compelled to negotiate illustrate. Moreover, Rutherford discusses identities that fall outside of established and categorical binaries as psychosis (Rutherford, 1990:9-27), which is a way to account for the changing and contestable nature of culture. Such was the reality of these groups and communities organised around football, they contribute to the notion that a counter culture opens up tradition to debate. Grace's difficult adjustment to life at university is resolved by relationships formed through football. Football was not just a competitive pursuit, but also a meeting point that facilitated negotiation for challenging traditional privatized and domesticated femininities.

These experiences diverge from the common ground of feminine friendships organized around emotional sharing and are instead based on doing things together more usually the preserve of masculine friendships (Jamieson, 1998:100). Sociality would seem to bear some validity in affirming the value drawn from playing football. Grace recollected some formative experiences of playing in her hometown for example. She expressed a sense of positive social interaction, because playing football marked her identity and was therefore a place of safety and self-expression.

Grace: That was the thing that was so, just such a rarity it must have been [girls playing football], although I'm saying that there were people at my school who played as well,

at junior school up to 11, but as a coach, years later who were still playing recreationally [pause]. I packed in when I was 30, but then I was coaching and still played occasionally, but lower league. So I was, people knew me as the girl who played football in Jarrow, although there were others, 2 or 3 who were very good players from different parts of the town.

As the girl from Jarrow who played football, she is bestowed an identity. It demarcates her from the group (of boys), although not in a derisory way. Grace's recollections reveal a sense of identity that football gave to her in a way that such a space can be explicitly conceived as creative because she was confident to negotiate an identity. It is interesting that as Grace remembers her experiences of adjusting to higher education, that the space of football is a place in which she actually finds a resolution, it is a place of transformation because it enables safe expression. She discusses this in terms of how it links her personal situation to the social context (Mills, 1959:144). Football in this way is reminiscent of the formative childhood experiences discussed in Chapter 5, which emphasises not the formation of a gendered identity, but the expression of an identity *per se*. This is a very candid explanation of personal difficulties, how football provided a way to overcome such difficulties, and one that was not expected going into this research.

Grace: It [football] was pretty much a lifeline for me because I went to Oxford, from a comprehensive background and then a technical college and fulfilled every stereotype you could have imagined, sort of drunk, not really trying very hard, sort of Geordie girl. So it, it was difficult because I was from that kind of background and everybody I knew at my college was from a [pause] a single sex, like, grammar or private school type, so the football team was people like me, and that got me out of my college and into university. So the university team, I was fortunate that there was 3 or 4 girls in the same year as me, and 1 or 2 in the year above who were decent footballers and similar types of background. And then you'd have people who'd come in from the US and [pause] who were Rhodes scholars and that kind of thing, so it just completely expands your mind from if I'd just been in Keble with all of my insecurities, and I had an eating disorder and all of these things, I would have imploded. But with the football team, although I had mates in college, really good friends, it gave me an extra dimension, so it was actually a huge thing for me. It was something that gave me an identity, I excelled at it, I was the best player and people liked me because of it and so it sort of [pause], and I think it was probably one of the reasons I got in as well. I was a minorities girl, and one of the good things about me was I played a sport and played it well and that sort of thing.

Friendships and communities centred on football are a prominent aspect of the narrative; they were illustrated further in the next two quotations from Nina and Sandra, and add an extra dimension to this analysis. The aspects of safety are still very prevalent, but the examples below infer ideas of social capital (Bourdieu, 1980:2), underpinned by the strategies in which participants' negotiate and maneuver in these spaces. In the first example, Nina explains how football is an outlet in which she is able to assert herself. It as a safe space, it is familiar and comfortable for her. She discusses becoming confident, which for her was a way of becoming more social. Such a testimony illustrates how participating in football adds social value, because it is a context that encourages participants to explore their character and identities through the building of relationships that perhaps would not be so easily found elsewhere. When Hills (2007) and Hills and Croston (2012) conducted the mixed-sex feasibility studies for the Football Association, one important point of analysis reported that such an environment facilitated achievement and learning football skills (Hills and Croston, 2012:591-605; Hills, 2007:319), and was a positive context for developing social capital (Skeggs, 2004:75). Nina illustrates this point when making reference to supportive friendships and the more practical work with which she is involved. Sandra furthers this point. There are social facets to her story, organized around 'having a laugh' and the sociality of the events.

Nina: Well personally [pause], I always put the football stuff in my CV because there's the refereeing thing, which has well leadership and being able to do your own thing and that kind of stuff. But in terms of it has given me, the social aspect for me is incredibly important because I'm not naturally outgoing, I do tend to [inaudible], if I feel confident where I am. It's just in an environment where I've always felt comfortable and people [pause] enjoy me being there, and even when I fight with people in the team, I've always had other people to fall back on. So I think personally, it's given me the best and the toughest times. But [pause], well there's no regret, it's the best decision at university, but in terms of committee work, because I did social sec [secretary], so that involved getting everyone into socials and I [pause], getting everyone drunk, communications are what I learned to do [inaudible] and then I did club captain, so that was running the whole club.

Sandra: The higher up you go, I would say the more professional. If you want to turn up and just have a laugh, like recreational, then you'd be in the county league and you'll play at Hough End and spend hours on somebody's shoulders trying to put the nets up won't you? Which still goes on, you know, you go out and you don't know who has had too many, who's tanked up from the night before. And as you go up and it gets a bit more serious, you should, yes, enjoy yourself, but we've got a game on, we've got

to be at Middlesbrough at half-12. So you're travelling at 10 o'clock, so there's got to a lot of [pause], the girls have got to [pause], if you want to play, play, if you want a laugh, drop down. Because there probably are, there are a lot of girls who've dropped out the football who have had the talent, because they just want to go out. They think it's probably like, the lads, isn't it, you know?

Both accounts are discernibly hierarchical, Nina in terms of role responsibilities, and Sandra with regards to the balance to be made between playing football and leisure. Sandra's testimony is a point of synthesis, that is, one can be social, but if you want to pursue a career, then a professional mindset and strategy is required. To this extent, the scope of Sandra's recollection is indicative of the sense of professionalism and commitments in meeting the demands of playing. With reference back to conditions, although women often spoke about playing football in shabby settings i.e. poor facilities and pitches, which sustain inequality and gender hierarchies (Williams, 2003a:6), these settings did actually engender a sense of the collectivity. It was increasingly apparent that despite the conditions, it did not derogate the persistence of the emergent communities that women have, can and do create for themselves.

Nina went on to explain more about her work in organising the football team. She accrues capital that is helpful when participating in the public sphere (Skeggs, 2004:75). Nina suggests that her experiences with the football team are important not only for her development as a football player, but also accruing capital. She talks about a 'hen-group' for example, around which social activities are organised, which generates a sense of ownership of this space. Moreover, Nina talks about feelings that come from belonging to a club, she asserts the value of this space as facilitating grounded and meaningful interactions. In short, there are noticeable group formations that are integral to her experience.

Nina: Well the club rules say that you're not allowed to drink 24-hours before the match, pretty much everyone sticks to that. Unless there's birthdays or, but no, usually no-one's got a hangover which is pretty good. We used to enforce it, but now we're not even enforcing it. I mean some 3rd team players were a bit more dodgy, but 1st and 2nd team don't go out [before matches]. I think it just comes with the feeling of a club, of a group. In a way, it [football] introduced me to the whole like hen group, you know just girls as group spending time together, which I hadn't experienced as such, before joining football. There are some people who you, it was weird, some people who are actually quite good [at playing football] who are really negative about girls playing football. Like girls can't be as good and stuff.

The notable sense of belonging, and Nina's relationships to her peers is incorporated around the group. It performs a function, in the example above, to be a form of resistance. Nina discussed activities centred on drinking (although there are rules that must be adhered to prior to a match), and she elicits a sense of belonging, indeed she actually states it within the narrative. Within the 'hen group' interactions are resistant when Nina proudly states that girls can 'be good at stuff [too]'. The friendship choices that emerge in these contexts, sustain the positive way in which the space encourages contestation. The space is dynamic in the sense that participants challenge conventionally gendered roles, which are negotiated collectively. Social activities could be rowdy, deviating from discourse that asserts femininity is naturally passive. Disruption is caused to the gender binary because these spaces are not defined by dominating masculinities. They create something different because they are appropriately safe avenues for expressing something that moves beyond customary gendered practices and identities. Importantly, they are marginal spaces that are productive for emerging non-traditional, subjectively defined narratives. These are the cultural critiques that are illustrative of heterogeneous cultural practices in football. These are third-space, marginal communities, and they are underpinned by the strength of the friendship networks, which are an essential component of these experiences. Participating in football allows time for social interaction that inspires positive attitudes toward physical education. Peer interactions are therefore a necessary part of sustaining participation (Hills, 2007:322) and in these examples facilitate identification with the social context.

In the next two quotations, the experience is of mutual support and endorsement, positively conveyed in the group dynamic. Jody talks about the group, or one of the groups, being close-knit which impresses ownership on this space. The dynamics of the groups are interesting on both counts. The age range is broad, and in Lucy's own admittance there are people who she would not have met if it were not for football. To this end, the building and maintenance of friendships is one way to transcend more traditional bonds. For instance, Cronin (2015) found women more likely to end or restrict contact with same-sex friends after marriage, but men tended to maintain friendship groups. Such prioritising is founded in a conventional gender binary, but in contemporary terms, and certainly in the experiences of these women, the strength of social ties formed in football challenge such notions.

Jody: But I think that now I've found a group that I feel quite happy with, you know everyone's accepted, this is the Wednesday one, now I've found this group I feel that it probably has helped me now. I mean it's probably, I was probably wrong to give it up

you know. 'Cause I could have met some absolutely fantastic people over the last few years and I've missed out on that. But at least I'm doing it now and at least I'm socialising with like-minded people as well so, it's all good, yeah. I think that the Wednesday group is really quite a close-knit group, and they've got core people. And I think that the group has been running for about 10 years. So you do really well to get in with this group and, you know, great people, different age groups you know, fantastic.

Lucy: *[It's quite a broad age range?]* Yeah, very wide. From I would say from about 18 up to about 55 or 60 possibly . . . different people who you would [pause] I personally would never meet these people you know, it if weren't for football, so it's great really. And we all make time to go for a drink after football. So it's nice and you get to know people you know rather than just playing football with them. And I think in the pub last night, I think we probably had about 12 people in there, so you know, it's good.

Pat: I don't know what it's like in men's football, but I get the impression it's not the same as like whole teams hanging out together and stuff, and going on team nights out. We've always had a drink after football together, and I think successful women's teams do need that camaraderie, that team building thing, I really do. I don't know about the really top teams, but I find if [pause], I've always found that if you don't have that camaraderie, you lose the fact that you do anything for somebody on a pitch if you see what I mean. They're your mates and you're not going to let them down, you're not going to let them be kicked up in the air and that sort of thing. I think that's really important, I always have done. And yeah, I've got friends I played football with years and years ago, and I'd like to compare that to men's football 'cause I don't know if you know that's a similar thing.

Sociality is obviously a fundamental aspect of these experiences and would suggest further that interactions in these marginal spaces not only facilitates women's participation in football, but emerge in some very positive outcomes. For instance, there were two examples of disavowal that manifested in bullying and social exclusion discussed at the beginning of this chapter. However, these experiences did not account for the greater proportion of interview transcripts. Having reflected on my own experiences in Chapter 3, and similarly to the experiences of the women interviewed during the course of this research, the overwhelming narrative has been positive.

6.5 Conclusion

Chapter 6 was organized around Bhabha's concept of disavowal for the purposes of illustrating negotiation. Making reference to issues of exclusion, the aim of this exercise

was to illustrate how disavowal can emerge in women's football as a response to fear of something different i.e. female football players, and which may provoke a negative reaction. Disavowal emerges because of fear, fear of something different and suggests an assertively negative reaction to something that is strange (Rutherford, 1990:10). In the context of disavowal, a progressive exclusion tended to emerge, and as a result participants were compelled to negotiate this prohibition. As such, there were prevalent strategies that illustrated how women made spaces, or transgressed into places that were traditionally closed. This was illustrated in issues of career mobility and professionalism, and friendship groups and social networks. Participants discussed opportunities and negotiating, illustrating gender in discussions of facilities and the quality of football pitches, but importantly, despite these clear indicators of a gender hierarchy, establishing independent football clubs asserted a sense of identity and ownership.

Friendship networks or groups formed via football were strongly articulated in many of the interviews, and so the strength of social ties laid the foundations for expressive and coherent identities not generally recognised, or perhaps legitimated, because they are female networks. The veracity of these communities centred on football, or female owned communities, were quite lucid and tenacious contests to conventional discourse. These experiences presented an argument for understanding female friendships that disrupted conventions of traditional femininities and friendships, which tend to be based on emotional support and domesticity. Instead, sociability and activities of doing created the most prevalent characteristics of these groupings. Based on these communities, I argued that female football players make adaptations and therefore lay groundwork for change because they test the gender binary. As such, the basis of cultural interactions that mimic also facilitate critique and negotiated practices that open up hybrid spaces. This facet of women's football I would suggest is fundamental to understanding the strength of social ties forged and experienced, which can then lend some coherence to a creative and identifiable framework for women's football. I have referenced negotiation in terms of transitory spaces that not only show the value of networks and friendships formed through football, but importantly the subjective voice in highlighting agency and asserting the complex interactions in marginal football spaces. In this way, negotiation can show us transitory spaces, and now transformation, which I move onto in the following chapter.

Chapter 7 - Examining Hybridity: Transformation, Creative Spaces and Emerging Women's Football

7.1 Introduction

In this final empirical chapter, I respond to the research question 'in what capacity do female football players actively partake in *transformation* in English football?' During the previous chapters, analysis of the interview transcripts was developed by drawing on the duality that underpins Bhabha's concept of mimicry; there were identifiable narratives that were both complicit *and* critical of dominant masculinities and femininities sustained in football. Most importantly, advancing mimicry's duality in this way created a sense of how female football players are interactive agents in opening up a dialogue regarding gender. Drawing further upon this duality and the tension between dominant and marginal facets of culture, this chapter looks at the prevalence of hybridity in order to account for transformation instigated from grounded experiences. Simply learning to play football featured strongly in players' experiences and, because there have not been coherent development pathways, participants negotiated their career progression in creative ways.

Participants frequently expressed *anxieties* about playing football, and betrayed a sense of self-conscious concern about their footballing abilities, even if they did not explicitly discuss it in these terms. In Chapters 5 and 6, I discussed how participants' experiences were characterized by fractured systems of development (Lopez, 1997:56) to the extent that limited opportunities are likely to have affected their own competencies as football players. Consequently, issues of skill, technique and fundamentally just having the confidence to take part and play football were apparent in discussions. The experiences of participants in terms of informal and formal spaces and the implications for developing female football players, is more simply captured by the idea that there is a skills gap. That is, limited opportunities or lack of encouragement, or both, was evident in some participants' experiences. For example, there were anxieties apparent in participants' accounts that emerged specifically when they discussed issues of training and learning, and this chapter therefore examines whether mixed football can be a productive space of developing female football players, or more generally, football players *per se*.

Despite any anxieties about learning to play football, participants would also describe the aesthetic aspects of their own experiences with reference to the characteristics of

particular football matches, which are examined in the final section of the chapter. Participants did inevitably make comparisons between men and women's football, which was interesting because the underlying premise once again foregrounded conventions and an embedded system of gender classification. Bowker and Star have argued that systems of meaning grow out of institutions, which represent the 'world out there' (Bowker and Star, 1999:61). In the context of articulating the shape and characteristics of football matches then, participants tended to typify descriptions in a binary frame. Moreover, the practice of classifying in order to explain something also underpinned discussions about coaching experiences. Yet in order to advance the concept of hybridity, both mixed and single-sex football were productive spaces in which gender could be re-configured. In terms of developing female football players for instance, participants intimated that coaching football would be more effective if based on assessing competence rather than the assumption that there is a *natural* (physical) pre-disposition determined by one's sex. Such an argument is developed during the course of this chapter since it is important for women's football and for on-going contestation of gender hierarchies in order to encourage participation and the development of the game as a whole.

7.2 Creative Spaces: Learning, Development and Football Capital

The tenacity with which participants pursued their football careers illustrates how they really tested the limitations placed upon them. It is through interactions that creative spaces as places of potential change begin to emerge. I have stressed how female football players' experiences open up debates regarding gender definition, specifically within the context of traditionally male team sports such as football. For example, a principal aspect of both complicit and negotiated narratives observed that female football players were very adaptive. In being adaptive, they were able to transgress into those places that have historically been closed, and transgressions into marginal spaces then incited cultural contests. In the following example, Evelyn makes the subtle suggestion that female football players are not fairly represented, instigating a critique of objective gendered classification. Evelyn disassociates with male and female as identifiable categories.

Evelyn: I think it's a lot, it is a lot different, but even so we still find we still get a lot of prejudice. Massive problems at the moment in terms of trying to get them seen as international athletes, as opposed to you know, just [pause]. But having said that, we don't help ourselves to a great extent as well, because they are international athletes,

and then they get to a certain point and then they stop, because they're not getting the recognition of somebody of their abilities and talents would get in another sport.

Evelyn discusses ability and athleticism and thus highlights the difference between the way women's and men's sports are evaluated. Evelyn talks about female football players as 'athletes' regardless of their sex, she does not position the discussion with reference male or female football players. Therefore, rather than stressing that there might be tensions between femininity and physicality, which would emerge in disavowal, she utilizes athlete, which is a fundamentally androgynous label. It disrupts the stereotype (Bhabha, 1984:130) because gender is not the basis for her assessment. In this way, Evelyn circumvents negative stigma towards female physicality (Boyle et al, 2006:103; Mennesson, 2000:21). This is an important point because it refocuses on abilities as opposed to pre-categorized assumptions regarding whether football is *suitably* masculine or feminine. She draws attention instead to attributes required for taking part in competitive sport. Donna makes a similar argument, and she spoke about the attributes of women's football rather than how it compares to the men's game.

Donna: It's (women's football) got so much going for it, it's got so many young girls wanting to play, the fact that it's done through the schools now has got to be a strength, that the interest is there, that is one of the biggest things it's go going for it. Also the fact that they're bloody good as well, some of these players, they really, they're just as skilful. They're enthusiastic, they train, they're athletes basically, they're bloody good athletes.

Both Evelyn and Donna discuss women's football, particularly athletic femininities, by means of a narrative that generates accomplishments, or attributes that they consider the women's game possesses. As Buzuvis has argued, segregation on the basis of sex is applied absolutely, and therefore does not evaluate characteristics or skills (Buzuvis, 2010:38). In terms of competence then (skills acquisition), the issue of development underpins these experiences. The argument goes that poor structures have not allowed women's football to develop, and could explain why when participants talked about when they learned how to play football, such anxieties were present and emerged with such persistence.

Anxieties about learning football are symptoms of issues discussed around the themes of career mobility, and football as a profession. Participants were very persistent in negotiating quite limited opportunities, which had a bearing on becoming football players and

acquiring the requisite skills. Limited development meant fewer opportunities to become competent and this clearly shows in some participants' experiences. Participants talked very explicitly about this, but not in such a way as to diminish its value (in comparison with male football players), but as a 'young' sport, women's football has the opportunity to define itself. Sandra argued this point and insisted that women's football is (unfairly) positioned relative to long-standing prejudices anyway, when it is evaluated in direct comparison with men's football.

Sandra: I mean, I have to say that I have not watched a lot of women's football other than on the telly, I am hoping to get to go and see some of the Super League, but yeah, I think that the skill. You're still going to get a fantastic game, you're still going to get end to end and some that are boring 0-0 draws kind of thing. So, I think it's just getting people's perception, they 'it's women, they can't play', of course they can. And as I said, that's why I think with the Olympics, the way that that enthused people about sport, hopefully women's football can kind of take that and run with it, and develop it.

Pat also recounted with amusement a conversation with a male friend of hers, and his dismissive attitude towards women's football. The lack of information on which Pat's friend based his assessment prompts an inquisition of his prejudices. This example is provocative because these prejudices are based on categorizations that reflect in the stereotype. For instance, the assessment that women are just 'not that good at football', is based on presumptions about gender and how it can be situated in appropriately masculine/feminine spaces. In football, the perception that women are less skilled is interpreted, reinforced, and objectified based on the supposition that there is an acceptable type of femininity. More clearly, it is demonstrative of knowledge that has established and defined the limitations that order gender.

Pat: But even now, even people I know. I was talking to me mate Dave the other day, and he's a really good friend of mine, and I said I was doing this thing [the interview], and he said [and I know he was winding me up] 'oh you won't be qualified to talk about the game'. I said, 'why's that then Dave?', you know, 'women are not that good at football', and I was like 'fuck off', and he's like, 'I'm only winding you up'. Two minutes later [he said] 'but they are shit at football'. [I said] 'How much of that do you actually mean?' I said, 'have you ever actually watched any?' and he said, 'well actually I did watch some of the World Cup last time and I was quite impressed with some of it'. I was like, 'well there you go then'.

Just as Chapter 6 utilized the concept of disavowal to illustrate how prejudice manifests in derision, the assertion that ‘they [women] are shit at football’, is based on assumptions about women’s ability to play football gauged against a hegemonic, definitive standard. In endeavouring to assess this standard, it is implied that women are not ‘that good’ at football. Typically, it is argued that the application of a ‘masculine style’ (Caudwell, 2003:377) undermines women’s participation in a sport that has historically been played mostly by men, depreciating women’s football, as Pat’s friend testifies. However, it emerged in this research that there is another dimension to this argument. Hills and Croston (2012) explain that because football is associated with exhibiting hegemonic *heterosexual* masculinities, and as such compromising femininity might discourage women and girls to take up the game in the first place (Hills and Croston, 2012:591). Yet such anxieties about being unfeminine, or labelled as such, was not apparent in interviews and there was a different anxiety that emerged instead. For instance, rather than expressing anxieties on issues of sexuality or that by playing football they would ‘become masculine’ (Cox and Thompson, 2000:7-8), participants actually articulated anxieties that emphasized misgivings about learning and perceptions of their own ability.

If anxieties are demonstrative of negligible opportunities, then learning to play football, coaching, training and simply participating are a very real aspect of these women’s experiences, which evidence the necessity for coherent and sustained development. Many participants explained that they did not begin playing football until they were in their late-teens or there were breaks in their experiences because they lacked opportunities to play. In such a context, Chapter 6 examined how women did negotiate these conditions, but the fact remains that for some women there were anxieties about playing and having to learn and develop skills at a much later age than would be expected for boys. Sandra for example, had explained earlier about her experiences of playing football as a youngster, in the examples below, she outlined expectations of her ability and those of her team-mates. She recounted a story about joining the women’s football team at university and the comparative levels of ability. Playing football and becoming accustomed to kicking a football are rudimentary skills, but for some women this was the first time they had done this. As a consequence of systemic exclusion or perhaps fear of derision, maybe a combination of the two, there was a clear disparity in competence, noted by Sandra.

Sandra: There were a lot of women who played on the football team, and it was like the first time they’d really played football, and it was noticeable the difference, as you do if

you play against men in a sport, whatever sport it may be, and they've been playing it since they were young, and then you come to it late and it's [pause], I do think it improves you because, you know, you're used to the touch, or control or passing. Just used to kicking a football, that kind of doesn't leave you so [pause], yeah I'd definitely say that helps, no doubt about it whatsoever. It's just a shame that, 'cause I didn't realise until that time how kind of unique my experience was, 'cause it [pause] I mean when I was at university there wasn't anybody who'd played it when they were younger.

Sandra had actually played some mixed-sex football, and she makes reference to it in her recollection. The following section specifically focuses on mixed-sex football, but it is interesting to note at this point because this experience is a benchmark by which she evaluates the standard of her own ability, and those of her female peers. Sandra verifies her competence based on the competencies of the people around her. Because there is such a disparity between her own ability, having played football from a young age, and other players, who had not, then developing competence is in some way be tested by challenging binary fixation. For instance, Bhabha's hybridity is an intervention, it asserts a challenge to historical identities and cultural homogeneity (Bhabha, 1994a:54). In order to overcome the anxieties and encourage more women to participate, the challenge is to test gender conventions. This thesis has done this to some extent by looking at mimicry and disavowal. Chapters 5 and 6 explained how the division of masculine and feminine sporting types i.e. in a binary; are sustained into women's contemporary participation. However, as Sandra's example of the variation in playing abilities illustrates, the suggestion that hybridity is apparent in non-traditional and marginal contexts, instigates a place where contests can emerge. The aim is to test and ultimately undo the conventional limitations that are practiced in sports (Hills and Croston, 2012:595). Un-doing gender categories as they are placed in football, privileges abilities and skills rather than gender. Facilitating acquisition then, is fundamental in this route.

Nina recalled some of the challenges that she faced when she explained her introduction into football. There is an active sense of accomplishment as she talks about acquiring skills, tactical knowledge and basic competence. There is a definitive change as the interview began to focus on this transition. The narrative veers from very formative experiences that articulate naivety, through her development as a player, which demonstrates an exponential learning curve with the development of 'foot skills' and heightened sense of confidence as she moves through the team ranks.

Nina: I think I learned as I went on really, I started with the Third Team and had a few like, shambolic matches. Well it was the Third Team and it was all a bit, it had been founded about two years before, and there was a lot of people who played very dodgy football, and, well, got demolished a few times, but it was just []. Well because I'd always played in goal, but with five-aside I'd pretty much always stayed on my line, but with 11-aside there was things, the coach would tell me where to stand and go forward and do this and that. Then I moved up to Second Team the same year, and then two years later to First Team. But it's been like a learning curve only this year I felt, like confident in knowing what I was doing, because I had the like foot skills from 5-aside, but it was just, yes, tactically, and just positioning and that kind of stuff.

There is a definite transformation as this aspect of the narrative develops. At a most basic level, Nina talks about the difference between competent and non-competent football players. In the physical environment, Nina constructs a frame in which she learns, but also evaluates the competencies of her team-mates in comparison to her own through observations of spatial awareness and having to explain positioning during a football match. Nina is employing a system by which she analyses competence, and this strategy involves the 'scaling of bodies' (Young, 1990a:122-155). It is a means of systematic evaluation that privileges bodies in relation to a hierarchy, in this case, displays of competence translated into status. Moreover, scaling privileges physicality and therefore creates order (Hills, 2007:327). Scaling is an exercise that engages a framework of measurement. Nina for instance, measures her own capabilities, but also scales the benchmarks that are set by her coach. This is interesting in the sense that her learning is not solely experiential, or devoid of context, but also instructed. To this extent, there is a transitional quality to Nina's story, because learning is systemic. She acquires tactical knowledge by being advised where to position herself on a football field for instance, which is instructed knowledge relating to structural development and learning. Although women's participation in football (and sport generally) is disciplined when players are confronted with questions about their sexuality and sexual identity (Harris, 2005:187), Nina's example allows us to re-focus and prioritize development and learning as opposed to gender and is a way to confront the hierarchical structure that prioritizes men's football. Being a football player is not a matter for one's gender, but actively dispersed through structure, which foregrounds how it is learned and constructed in grounded interactions.

In such a context, developing competence is one of the most significant challenges that emerged in interviews. It is evident that competence is not by default equated with robust and physical exchange, but there is a sense of the body becoming functional and an asset on the football pitch. In this sense, becoming a football player was a challenge for participants,

which illustrate the embedded gender hierarchy that sustains inequality in football. This was apparent in anxieties, because anxieties were arguably a consequence of systemic inequality. For example, anxieties were there, albeit latent, because there were insufficient opportunities to play football, because football is not a *girls* sport. Players might not verbalize these sentiments in such terms, but there is gender prioritizing that has had an impact on their development and competence as football players. Sandra went on to discuss more about formal interventions and *how* they were taught to play football. From her experiences of playing football at college, before moving onto university, opportunities drop-off after secondary school. Her sex results in exclusion from the spaces that would allow her to learn, to develop competence, and therefore to become accomplished. As she went on to explain.

Sandra: Well sort of after high school, I didn't, sixth-form college, again it was sort of knocking around with the lads and playing. When I went to university, obviously you've got a whole range of sports that you can play and playing football was one that I chose, because I'd been interested in it for such a long period of time, I thought it would be nice to have organisation. We had coaching, we played 11-a-side, we played 5-a-side, so obviously we played against other universities, and it was interesting to see the different standards that were available kind of thing, because you had some, 'cause it's like having such a big gap out and not really being coached, you come up against someone who's very nippy [pause] because I played right-back in 11-a-side, somebody's who's very nippy and you're thinking, 'well okay, I can run, but now what am I supposed to do against you?' kind of thing. Whereas if I'd had the coaching earlier [pause], yeah, some games were fun, but some games were like if I knew what I was doing that would be grand.

Sandra's assessment of ability and variable standards of quality in women's football is a development issue. Women's football has not had the established systems of support that men's football has been the beneficiary of, and it although it is important issue for the women's game to raise its profile, there is also concern to raise playing standards and quality. Participants obviously respond to their learning environment, and this is very clearly characterised by each subjects' own self-awareness and evaluation of their competence relative to other players around them. From the following three extracts, Nina, Jody and Elizabeth discuss their engagement in development, and there is an emergent sense of how they learn. Anxiety over one's ability is implied, and this is most apparent in Elizabeth's testimony.

For Elizabeth, playing football initially was a challenge and despite her reservations, she attains a sense of resolution because playing with players better than herself made a

positive contribution to her development as a football player. It might seem an obvious point to make, but in cases where participants did not begin playing football on a regular basis until they were older, usually when they had left school, low confidence was an issue. There is an evident instructional facet to the following examples in terms of being coached that encouraged participants to challenge themselves and broader assumptions about their capacity to *become a football player*. Development and becoming competent is hybrid in this way because the expectations of physicality are contested and positively overcome. Jody's exchanges with her team-mates for instance, are interactive and contribute to her becoming a football player.

Nina: I think it was a lot the coaches and then sometimes the players, I think it's mainly positioning or where people would just go [say], 'go there', 'stand off your line', 'go closer to that line', and also a lot of telling you to be louder, communicate, or take my time, or stuff like that. But, I must say I think I've had some excellent coaches, which really helps because you can feel yourself progressing as well.

Jody: I think you tend to go through a bit of form don't you? And I think I'm probably not playing very well at the moment [laughs]. I think I've got better. I don't think I had very much tactical awareness and especially because I'm a defender, playing five-a-side, six-a-side, you've got to be quite mature, intelligent, quite switched on to the play at the back, 'cause it's all about positioning, you know. That's probably the main part of the job isn't it really at the back? [*Did you improve with coaching?*] Oh yeah. There's a girl there who's 18, she's actually the manager's daughter, and she plays at centre back and she tells us all what to do, communicates with us, and I've picked up a lot off her. Even though she's like 10 years younger [laughs]!

Elizabeth: Because you know, if I don't know the players that I'm playing against, I think maybe they had that advantage because they started whatever time and they'd had the training, they'd gone through the basics, and those tactics and they kind of knew what to do, yeah [pause]. I found it quite a steep learning curve, but it was worth doing.

Learning instructed by their coach is supported by on-field interactions. The interactions discussed in the quotations above, are indicative of strategies of learning, and the frameworks that participants developed as football players. It is also interesting to consider the creative aspects of these experiences provoked by a dialogue between coach and player. For example, Nina explains how she reacted to instructions from her coach, Jody positively responds when I ask her if she improved with her coaching (both had also previously been critical of some poor coaching). They evolve as football players and the narrative articulates a sense of

dynamic cultural exchange. The dialogue incites contestation as the examples of Nina, Jody and Elizabeth illustrate. Adapting and acquiring is a process of intersections between the objectives of learning and the players' evaluations of their own abilities.

Returning to the concept of hybridity, intersections between dominant and marginal cultures (between object and subject), with reference to women's football can be further understood in terms of aesthetics (Giulianotti, 1999:127-145). Although women's football has been othered i.e. marginalized structurally and culturally, in contemporary terms, women's participation can incite creativity and challenge the hegemony of the binary masculine/feminine matrix. Gillian for instance, talked about responses to coaching, illustrated in comparisons between boys' and girls' football. She considers that girls are not 'wedded' to skills and techniques that boys may already have. It is notable for example, that Gillian utilizes the word 'acclimatized', because it accentuates the way in which gender becomes embodied and intimately linked to development. Young (1990b) uses the example of catching a ball. Femininity becomes embodied in learned social practices. In sports, such practices impress that girls should protect individual space by enclosing the body, 'in softball or volleyball women tend to remain on one place more often than men do, neither jumping to reach nor running to approach the ball' (Young, 1990b:146); rather than using a more effective counter-motion i.e. going towards the ball. Thus, femininity is learned in the teaching of appropriately gendered physical practices, and just as this research has set an ontological frame to challenge the conventional, Young's argument questions that there is a natural condition of hegemonic (non-physical) femininity.

Gillian's point with regard to coaching football is notable in this regard. Looking at this in relation to hybridity, Gillian made an interesting argument that it is advantageous for women's football to be a young sport, with the implication that because this is a non-traditional and therefore marginal space, there is more scope to contest and transform gendered hierarchies. This is most clearly illustrated in Gillian's assertion that girls' have not yet developed skills, they have not (yet) fallen into bad habits and are more amenable to coaching. One might consider this is a productive environment in which to facilitate competence, promoting a physically competent femininity that is not diminished because it falls outside gendered boundaries, but another way to understand how femininity encompasses differences. In the light of this, Gillian spoke a great deal about coaching, and creating positive conditions for learning and developing football capital.

Gillian: That's something, a bit more controversial, but I'm not a coach so I'm probably not qualified to say that [laughs], but I know a lot of coaches, male and female, who I talk to regularly, and they would say that girls particularly are more amenable to being coached than boys. They would say [pause], you know, women and girls are pleased to have good coaching for a start, whereas boys expect it at an elite level. So as a result girls are more acclimatized to listening to a coach and trying to improve, and not being wedded to some of the skills and techniques they've had before, and so you can mould a talented female player probably better than you can a male. Not in every case, but certainly in some cases, and I've seen players who at 10 look very ordinary, but because of the coaching, come out at 14 as really talented, technical players.

Many participants discussed their understanding of women's football on the basis that is a formative space. It is a young sport that now has the opportunity to re-define much broader cultural thinking and expectations about the characteristics of the women's game. In a broader sense, the standard that women's football has attained to date is underpinned by examples of learning and acquisition cited in this section.

There are challenges that have faced participants in attaining a competent level of football, and when examining the quality of the women's game, it is all too often directly compared with men's football. Such a context is a method of signification, and despite some interviewees not conceptualising football as gendered i.e. men's or women's, there is still this overarching a frame of reference. In mixed-football, this is clearly the case, because it is a physical environment in which female football players can directly contest the anxieties constructed around femininity and being physical, or merely taking part in sport. To progress the thesis that the subjective experiences of female football players is a means of unlocking some of the challenges that face women in physical sporting contexts, I argue that positive conditions which can encourage women's participation in football and contest a gender binary, are furthered in mixed-sex football. This is perhaps the clearest indication of cultural contestation and resistance to the notion that physicality is naturally pre-disposed to masculinity, when in fact it is socially constructed.

7.3 Hybridity in Mixed Football

Mixed-sex football is an interesting context in which to interrogate, and potentially disrupt, the narrative that women cannot 'do' football. Mixed-sex football was a positive context that facilitated learning, competencies and confidence, and although Hills and Croston (2012) have examined discourses of masculine superiority as they emerge in PE, they found that some girls actively challenged physical assumptions regarding *incapable* femininity and

endeavoured to negotiate discourses (Hills and Croston, 2012:598). The examples in this section are taken from a range of interviews mostly from formative experiences of learning dating back to the 1970s, and some contemporary experiences. All of these examples are taken from informally arranged, or unofficial, football matches.

Participants had discussed at length how they had negotiated their career progression in creative, non-traditional and therefore hybrid ways. Such manoeuvring of space for participation was illustrated in experiences of playing mixed-sex football. One interview in particular stood out. In the example below, taken from an interview with two students from an FA Football Academy, the advantages of playing mixed-football were very prominent. Both participants are very forthright in challenging convention that women cannot play football. They discuss some abrasive interactions, and it is a productive space for looking at the concept of hybridity. Both girls impressed their own capacity to contest naturalised femininity and embodiment. For example, initially they were in disagreement concerning physicality and the potential to compete on an equal footing with the boys. Yet, after remonstrating with each other, they eventually reach a point of consensus about their aptitudes as football players. They discussed some of the informal football sessions they had in-between timetabled classes. The two young women were interviewed together.

Jade: They didn't like me, on the Thursday Friday they didn't like me, but on the Monday when we actually played football, they shut up then 'cos we showed them what we could do. We did though didn't we?

Hannah: Yes.

Jade: They were alright after that because I don't know what they thought but [pause]

Hannah: They tried doing all their tricks 'round us, then as soon as we put our foot in tackled them, they soon changed.

Jade: I think when they realised we weren't there just to mess around.

Hannah: That we were there to play football, and we could kick a ball, as soon as we took one on, then they started passing.

In this example, the advantages of playing mixed football even in such a casual setting, were positively beneficial in terms of enabling Jade and Hannah develop their competence. Although in the initial exchanges of this experience the boys are not very receptive, they do directly contest and assert themselves on the basis of their ability. In short, it becomes apparent that ability is a more equitable means of evaluation as opposed to gender. This is a marginal space, because it is not the norm, yet in these direct interactions it becomes apparent that it is a productive space that enables Jade and Hannah

to stake a claim for their right to play football. Fundamentally, testing the conventions of their gender in such direct contest is a critique of power. For example, in hybridity, this marginal space (that of mixed-sex football), although the boys were initially resistant to the girls' participation, they do respond positively once they are opened up to this. Just as Butler (1993:232) has accounted for gender as discursive, constituted in language, so the active engagement of culture through the subject shows how fragile definitional femininity (and masculinity) is in reality. Complicit narratives discussed in Chapter 5 for instance, illustrated how for some participants the direct physical contact in football tended to replicate hegemonic masculinities. Despite complicity, however, these interactions also constituted transgressions because they deviated from the binary i.e. they did not conform to established hegemonic femininity, and therefore illustrated how gender was constructed in practice. As Jade and Hannah's example demonstrates, their experiences bring gender conventions into question. It follows that, active engagement is not about their gender, although it is initially a barrier, but really about developing *football capital* and contesting gender binaries.

In other examples, Jody talked about some of her early experiences of playing mixed football and considered this in the context of how it contributed to her development. In the following account, Jody is really articulating how such un-gendered spaces might look if girls and boys are allowed to mix from a young age, and how women's football might look as a result of the contribution that mixed football can make to players' development.

Jody: I think at that time I think I mixed in quite well with the boys at that time, because obviously strength isn't really an issue and speed is kind of even as well, so [pause] I think I mixed in quite well at that age. [] I think five-a-side probably suits some people better than others though, it depends on what your style of football is I suppose. But, I think it (mixed-football) does definitely help your touch and your passing.

Jody's discussion is interesting because she explains the benefit she felt as a football player, and also that style depends on the individuality of a player. She does not talk about this in terms of gender, nor does she try to characterize it in such a way. She intimates that evaluating individual competence, rather than competence based on assumptions about one's sex, is a more equitable means of developing football players. In this way, she incites contestation, undermining a gender binary in the context of mixed football that allows new,

or distinctive, hybrid (Bhabha, 2004:113) identities to emerge. Jody is the positional subject, and opens up a dialogue to the extent that she illustrates how playing mixed football had been a positive aspect of acquisition, specifically with reference to passing. She extends her development, indeed explains it, relative to specific skills and her subjectivity foregrounds the conditions that have aided her development rather than her gender.

Although there are aspects of the following extracts that would utilise gender in tandem with physicality as a categorization around which to make sense of experiences in mixed football, there is still an emergent narrative that hybridity is facilitated in such direct contests. Millie had explained some of her formative experiences of playing football and its contribution to her competency. Playing mixed-football set a standard for her, and she cites it here as a positive aspect of her development.

Millie: I always played [football] with boys [when I was younger]. My neighbour, his brother, their best mate at the time, so they were all boys, and my sister occasionally, but I was always out playing football with boys. And I think it made me a better player because I was striving to keep up with them. When I was a teenager, if I had ‘women’s problems’, cramping up, I just dealt with it, carried on playing.

Gillian also spoke about mixed-sex football, but contributed a different dimension to the narrative when highlighting the role of governance and the overall development of women’s football. Gillian is a former international player, she talked about training games she took part in against the international under-18s (male) teams. It is interesting here that she does talk not about the physical aspects of playing football, but instead instigates debate with regards to sex as it is incorporated to infer gender. The sex/gender matrix when situated in football (and sports generally), focuses on dualities that are limiting to female participation i.e. that women cannot be physical. In the extracts that follow, Gillian, Pat, Millie and finally Martha, outline how this sex-gender binary is constructed and more importantly, subject to debate. As a collection, the examples that follow illustrate how women can be physical. Complicit narratives in Chapter 5 have illustrated this, but in these hybrid narratives the focus is on transformation. Although mimicry depicts cultural construction i.e. the subject adopts the characteristics of the object dominant in order to blend-in, hybrid interactions emerge in change, which highlights complexity in cultures. For some participants the physicality of playing a contact sport is integral to taking part, but physicality is not really the issue. Hybridity instead foregrounds that in mixed-training sessions, as Gillian explains, there are different facets of *aesthetic* that have far more value for development than presumed

gendered categorizations. The point is to recognise strengths in developing competencies and quality.

Gillian: It's a difficult debate this isn't it? A lot of people says it's completely different, well it's not completely different clearly because there's a lot of similarities. I mean I've played with men and against men in training games. So for example, when we were with the [national women's team] seniors, we often used to play against the [national] under-18 boys as a warm up before an international. And you notice the difference because clearly men have much greater physical strength and can kick the ball much longer and harder and more accurately than women can I would say that's an obvious difference. [] There are things that women I think are better at than men. Sometimes it's positional, sometime when you see young players, when you see youth players together, I think the girls are technically better than the boys, say up to 14 certainly.

Gillian intimates that the conditions of a mixed-sex football environment can present a space in which female football players also test these boundaries, and therefore facilitate heterogeneity. She does for instance go on to problematize the naturalness of gender inferred by binary masculine/feminine physical embodiment. In the practice of heading a football for example, she explains that this can be coached.

Gillian: They [men] can also head the ball better, generally, although that's technical and can be coached, you know. [] After 14 the boys develop. But boys pick up a lot of bad habits from playing casually you know, whereas as girls don't play casually as much and are coached better, often the technical skills are better developed and more mature than boys up until 14. I think anyway.

In terms of coaching, Pat went on to talk about tactics, which principally extends the point that Gillian is making. Mixed-sex football can set conditions that problematize how gender is categorized, of course, there is great variation in tactical systems in temporal and spatial terms (Giulianotti, 1999:127), but Pat's assertion is fundamentally dismissive that there are substantive differences between men and women's football anyway. Her experiences are illustrative of a framework in which she benchmarks to particular criteria, that gender is not the primary factor in meeting the demands of playing, but rather the relative standards of the other players.

Pat: Not really, I don't think it is played in any different way to women's football apart from just a bit faster. You know, tactics wise not at the standard I was playing, I mean

it's only up until last year I played five-a-side. Me and a couple of girls from the football team played with the lads, and I don't think we stuck out massively for being not as good. Obviously depends on the standard the lads you play with, but yeah, it's never bothered me. But the sad thing, how will that ever change? There'll always be some people that, 'women's football'.

Pat establishes an almost nonchalant attitude towards playing mixed-football, and this permeates through a few of the other interviews conducted. When discussing the standard, essentially benchmarking her ability as a football player against other players, she argued the point that defining equitable standards was not really about her sex, but about assessing and attaining relative levels of competence. Fundamentally, learning how to play the game, developing competencies is a matter of generating supportive conditions (Croston and Hills, 2012:599) rather than segregation.

Conversely, in the next example, Millie had explained about a poor experience in the past, and this was manifest in her opinion about mixed-football as she favoured a separatist position. It is interesting however, that although she holds the view that there is no substantive difference between women and men's football, there are still behaviours, which are inherently gendered. Teasing, for example, is largely evident when girls participate in sports that are not traditionally feminine, which supports segregation on the basis that there are unequivocal gender differences. Conversely, it is also argued that segregation actually increases the potential to reinforce stereotypes (Evans, 1989; Stidder, 2000). Concerns regarding mixed-football are frequently situated with reference to risk and injury (Channon, 2013:1293), but these arguments crucially miss the point that teasing/harassment mask differences, and the extent to which they are embedded in structure and organisation of physical education (Hills and Croston, 2012:591).

Millie: I always say that women's football should be treated differently, as a baby sport. It's played no different to the men's game, slightly slower I think, sometimes. I think it's not so much, it's not a physical thing anymore either. I think what's stopping mixed-football is the PC world we live in. Girls are still deemed lesser physically than men []. At the age of 12 you become more physically aware of yourself, your own anatomy, it's nothing to do with physicality, it's nothing to do with skill set, it's when puberty hits, I've played with boys at 13 and just been groped, but there are girls that are not going to be able to deal with that.

Of course, advancing non-segregation is not a simply applied solution to challenging gender stereotypes in football, but it does offer a potential pathway to overcome the gendered

traditions embedded in the physical act of playing football. For Martha, playing mixed-football was not always so easy, as she explained; ‘the boys are much faster than me. Physically, I’m strong yeah? But not as strong as they are, so shooting, running wise and the endurance is completely different. Even if I put in my best it’s nowhere near that’. Despite this, she also told me about her experiences over quite an extensive period from the age of five up to her early 20s. Martha certainly does not extend the argument that playing football against men was problematic, at least at this stage, and consequently transgresses into a place that is culturally creative because there are no absolute barriers. In hybridity, Martha’s competence, in a mixed context is creative because she interacts in such a way that does not conform, or overcomes gender conventions and therefore assumptions about her ability to play football. Martha is the resistant subjective voice that contests the sex-gender binary, which instead locates mixed-football as a beneficial way of learning.

Martha: My dad, my dad and my granddad basically taught me. I was joining my father’s sister’s husband who was a football coach, so I used to go since I was five, football training, with the boys. [*So you actually had some organised training from when you were very young?*]. Oh yeah, I joined the boys []. But in-between (taking part in other sports), every time I had, I played football, mainly with men’s groups. I used to go every Wednesday and Saturday and Sunday, and I have three different men’s groups, it was like, they were ex-footballers, I was 20, 19 something like that, and they were in 40s/50s, they were proper ex-footballers.

So Martha’s formative experiences contrast with the gendered spaces and segregation discussed in Chapter 5. Her normal experience was located in a traditionally masculine context, and she learns how to play football in this type of space, one that might be termed marginal. Her testimony is different from other interviews in that learning and acquiring in a mixed-context *was* her normal experience. She undermines the concerns that inform gender segregation, and to this end the space of mixed football encourages hybridity. It is disruptive because she is engaged in de-traditionalising broader discourses that frame these spaces as authentically or naturally, masculine. She articulates a sense of her own physical capacity and explains that she does not want to be treated differently.

[*What was that like then?*] Martha: I was obviously, everybody, it was indoor, because I play indoor football and outdoor football, how many people came? About six-a-side or seven-a-side, eight-a-side, you know how many? Eight-a-side was too much. But it was, I would say, I was pretty good because I was younger and my stamina was very

good, playing basketball as well, so I was fit that time. Secondly, everybody, I just mentioned to everybody ‘please don’t take me as a woman, take me as one of you’. That’s why, okay? I don’t want any extra, you know? So many times I had so many bruises you know. I get so many bruising because I don’t mind to get shot (in the way of a shot), I always put my body in front (of) the shot and never move, whether I get it in the face, body, back, I just don’t mind. [] It was very exciting for me, because most of the guys they were my father’s age and I had them as a [pause] I can’t say idol, but they were really good footballers and I only can learn from better ones, better than me. And whenever I turn up to play, if I feel sick or something, I always, maybe it’s wrong to say always, I want to win. I am very competitive in football because if I’m coming (playing) just for joking, it’s not worth it for me, I can stay at home.

With reference to anxieties about learning how to play football present in some interviews, it could be suggested that Martha’s bullishness and her persuasive confidence about her own abilities is a result of playing football from a young age. Many of the women interviewed had not had this opportunity; they were stopped from playing football and were encouraged to play other feminine sports. As such, they have not been able to develop or become more accomplished football players. This seems to be a very real source of anxiety for some participants, but Martha transcends this because of her experiences in playing in a space that has allowed her to become competent.

Martha’s account as she talked through her childhood, then her youth and into adulthood generates a very real sense of how gender is contestable. In contesting discourse, emerging in hybridity, participants did tend to classify gender, but it was an integral aspect of these conversations from which to disrupt conventionality. With hybridity, classification might be more productively thought of as reclassification. Although comparisons between men and women’s football were frequently employed as a frame of reference, it also illustrates the extent to which divisive categorizations have evolved. With this being the case, many interviewees discussed the characteristics of women’s football as they relate to the spectacle of the game, as a performance. In the following section, descriptions of single-sex football matches incite contestations that undermine the gender binary, and debate hegemonic femininity embedded in broader cultural discourse. For women who play football, conventional categorisations examined in Chapters 5 and 6 have systemically excluded them, and so it was the focus of this section specifically, to understand hybridity as it counteracts disavowal. In the next section, participants’ descriptions of single-sex football matches are organized around hybridity to advance contestation and highlight the limitations of gender categorization in football when accounting for cultural variations.

7.4 Characterizing Women's Football: Re-classifying a Conventional Football Typology

There were times during interviews when the characteristics of women's football were discussed. These have been termed *attributes* because interviewees were encouraged to think about how they might describe women's football. Typically, comparisons were made between men and women's football. Chapter 2 examined the historical foundations that define gender binaries in football. Femininity and masculinity are the culmination of knowledge that maps gender to biological sex, and in the context of football the emergence of a dominant aesthetic validates hegemonic masculinities (Connell, 2008:61), but female football players solicit disavowal as exemplified in the stereotype (Childs and Williams, 1997:129). In another way, hybridity incited critique of dominant knowledges about gender that are supported in a binary. Similarly, Haraway is critical of knowledge hierarchies and it is a point of note for this thesis that in order to disrupt normalised femininities, the status afforded to categorical biological mapping should be subject to debate. Rather than focussing on the body sustained by sex-gender discourse for instance, by addressing the historical imperatives on which biological discourse has foundations gender can be 'remapped' (Haraway, 1989:290). The problem then for women's football is a categorical frame, because it is so definitely applied to ascertain certainties and status about masculine and feminine physical accomplishments. In complicit and negotiated narratives, participants have shown certainties to be anything but certain. Moreover, in hybridity, the challenges faced by female football players often emerged in mixed-sex contexts. However, there were also examples of re-classification in a single-sex football that equally challenge the binary of masculine and feminine embedded in football.

In some participants' experiences of formal development systems i.e. development as regulated in coaching, rather than replicating dominant cultural practices, there was an inverse response. For example, in contrast to complicity representing *one* way in which a narrative emerged, participants' narrations of football matches contain stories that *deviate* into alternative, non-dominant cultural practices. In this way, they actively describe the 'aesthetic' aspects of their own experiences. In short, participants would prioritise aspects of the match over others. There is a system of privilege instigated by women themselves. Martha for example, explained how important competitive commitment was to her enjoyment of the game. She organised the characteristics of these matches around physical engagement and there is potential to theme this under a complicit narrative. Although the veracious

physical contact would lend itself to the view that she is replicating mainstream cultural practices i.e. masculinities, there is an undercurrent to her testimony that underlines how Martha's penchant for competitiveness and physicality, for instance, emerges not as an essential masculine quality, but instead illustrates how aesthetic is the sum of cumulative interactions that are *a consequence of playing football*. In short, Martha acquires her skills in a mixed-sex context, but narrates the experience with reference to aspects of her individual characteristics as player and then places this in a single-sex context. Martha's evaluation of her own skills are hybrid because they are not tethered to her gender. For instance, the veracity of the social bonds with other players is integral to her involvement in the game. Martha describes this as 'synchronising', which is contributory to the characteristic, competitive standard of the match. Moreover, she validates the authenticity of the tackles, they are actual tackles, and are an important part for her of playing football.

Martha: But I feel with these girls, they are just all different characters, some of them are like this, some of them are competitive, with some players we've got a bond where we always play together. With some players I've never played together, because I don't have the (pause) harmony. I'm not synchronising with them. But with one girl in particular, she's a police officer, she's a sergeant now, and when we play against each other we are very very competitive. More than anyone, we actually tackle each other, but in a sporty way, not in a nasty way. But we both prefer to play on the same team because we don't like that extra pressure. People see that as we like hate each other, but it's not true. I actually admire someone like this one girl in particular, like when we go hard at each other, getting the ball, really tackle that you feel physically somebody, not being too gentle, because football is a contact sport. You can't, if you are going to whinge, don't play it. Obvious we don't do any nasty tackles, kicking or anything. But this girl, she said 'Martha, I liked it', because some people think we are kicking each other. We don't. You want to get the ball, you have to tackle. What are we going to do, how are we going to get it?

She went on to say:

Martha: I had with one girl, and because she plays 11-a-side, used to different tackles, then we had a thing against the wall, chasing the ball, the body checks, because that's what is, body charges, you know shoulder charge, that's not a foul. We can fall, but it's still not a foul. And the girl said to me, 'I enjoyed that, that was good'. She said, this is what I'm used to, I'm a fire fighter, you can't hurt me to push me against the wall. And she actually enjoyed being physical. It's a contact sport football. You play it or don't play it. There is no other way.

Martha's is only one facet of this narrative, but it is important in locating the perception of the subject position in drawing together the variety of experiences that emerged. Her physical engagement is obviously important to her enjoyment of playing, given the prominence she affords to this aspect of the game. The physical narrative accentuates her peer relationships (Hills, 2007:317), and it is bound up with her view that it is not possible to play football without some level of antagonism. The physicality that she articulates through the lens of football is as robust as the strength of the narration itself. To this end, Martha's engagement on the football field undoes gender, it contests the conventional duality that polarises femininity and masculinity, and emerges in hybridity that instigate gender complexities.

In such ways, the subjectively narrated aesthetic has vitality. It is culturally disruptive because it undermines objective conventional femininities. This is not to say that gender categorisation is not employed as a means of explaining participation in the examples that follow, or as a means of benchmarking the character of women's football, it is just that Martha's narration is in many ways defiant. She elicits her enjoyment from playing football by engaging in such a way that pleases her, not by an objectively defined gendered construction. Conversely, with these narrations, there are of course direct comparisons drawn between male and female football players. Over the course of interviews, benchmarking becomes apparent to the extent that there is an emergent typology around which aesthetic value and quality are ascertained. One such means of classification draws on a broader global context, and to this end, gender is not the sole framework for categorizing football.

In contrast to Martha's preference for physical contact, another way of thinking about a narrative for women's football is in the context of Gillian's broader emphasis on a global framework, and the extent to which this may intersect with developing the women's game. It has been implied over the course of these chapters, that there is an underlying cultural disposition that errs towards a dominant style of play, or a dominant aesthetic. In this way, the stories of female football players instigate contest and change, and they do so in a frame that for all intents and purposes is already multi-faceted. Lucy and Gillian, both draw on such a framework, that is, they place women's football within in a much broader context of difference and contests.

Lucy: The thing is [pause] I dunno, typical guy thing I suppose of lump them all in together, the thing is you watch the England ladies compared to France, compared to Sweden, compared to the US, they all have different ways of playing, just as the men's

teams do. I mean you look at Real Madrid and Barcelona compared to Everton and Sunderland.

Gillian: The women's game tends to be [pause] at the best level, tends to be shorter and sharper passing I think than the men's game. So it's almost like watching a good technical Spanish side, or even you know, one of the Dutch sides, when it's played well. Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying all women's football is like that.

The value underpinning these testimonials should not be understated. Aesthetics are a matter of place as much as they are gendered. In terms of how difference links to development then, Gillian posits that the 'short passing game' might be a beneficial way of teaching. It is not the only way to enable learning, because not 'all' women's football is like 'that'. Yet Gillian describes some of the aesthetic aspects of football with reference to place, to national geographies. Similarly, there are spatial and temporal complexities within men's football (Petersen-Wagner, 2015; Giulianotti and Robertson, 2004; Giulianotti, 1999). Football is played out in contested settings, in temporal and spatial terms, which was a point made at the beginning of the thesis. Therefore, in hybridity, this is the point that begins to tie into a narrative of transition and heterogeneity. Hybridity demonstrates how important it is to understand the contribution that women have and do make to this culture and illustrate contestation.

7.4.1 Revisiting Stratification: Examining the Gender Binary for Transformation

Many participants described the shape and characteristics of games they had watched or played in. Sometimes this was explained in reference to the broader masculinized narrative, and sometimes the narrative emerged in ways that were less than conventional. Pat for example evaluates women's football as a physical competitive contest, and she quantified it to some extent in comparison to men's football, because she makes reference to the number of tackles one might observe in a women's football match. This is interesting not because she thinks that there are fewer tackles in a women's football match, whether there are or not is not really important. The main focus of the narrative is that number of tackles does not define the competitive spirit of the game, and this is clearly important to Pat. Antiquated notions of masculinity and femininity may endure in football, but participants have demonstrated how they disrupt such categorisations. In this way, Pat also distances from the institutional narrative and instead insists that there is a different kind of competitiveness (Witt, 2005:623).

Pat: Well I find [pause] that women's matches have very few tackles compared to [pause], not tackles, very few fouls, compared to the men's game. And, that's not necessarily a bad thing. Very, very few tackles, and when there is a tackle there's a greater brawl about it. We played a varsity game a few week ago and [pause] after the game we sat down and watched the men, which we rarely do, and everyone was like, 'why are they?' [pause], it's 2incredibly quick game, they're just like sprinting everywhere. It's a very, very different pace indeed, and with direct comparison you really notice the difference in pace. But, what I've always felt with women's matches and women's tournaments is the atmosphere is very different. 'Cause last week [at the Women's FA Cup Final] children, families everywhere, and it was just [pause] there was no rivalry in that like aggressive sense, it was just like, it was really that sense of being part of women's football, that [pause] like being something historical in a way.

When Pat described the game, its characteristics, she made very definitive references to gender. Her analysis is extended through observing pace, tackling and aggression, supplemented by an appreciative atmosphere, and she uses this as a point of differentiation. There emerges a valued sense of community, which is also a source of identification. Similarly, as Martha fortifies her peer relationships in match-play, specifically her gratification drawn from athletic commitment, Pat emphasizes the value in being different, just as Erin and Yvonne do.

Erin: The way we [women] play, there is more finesse and emphasis on passing and moving. There is an element of elegance.

Yvonne: We rely on the skill more don't we? They're bloody good as well, some of these players, they really, they're just as skilful.

In these examples, Erin and Yvonne sought to ascertain aspects of women's football that they considered elevate its value. It is interesting that Erin prioritizes passing and movement rather than physicality and describes the aesthetic almost as if it was a dance. The descriptions of elegance and finesse, and in Yvonne's case the primacy of skill that 'we [women] rely on', were explained in such a way that they were differentiating from dominant hegemonic masculinities. Some participants explained how women's may not be as fast or as physical, and would instead emphasize other important qualities, as explained in the following extracts.

Millie: I think for the women's one it's actually taught me to [pause] it's a much more elegant game. You know, you watch how some of them (women) play, and you watch how they do something and you go 'that, that was beautiful'. Yes okay every now and

again you get a really good guy, like the likes of Messi etc. who do make it look absolutely fluid and impossible, make it look almost like a dance.

Lucy: But that's always the difference with women's football (it is still a very young game in development terms), is [pause] obviously we can play longer and you actually notice the better players are old really, compared [pause] for football sort of age. They're usually late-20's, early-30s, mid-30s. And that's when they've got that, basically when they're in their prime. 'Cause they've got the experience and they've still got the stamina and everything like that. But it's that experience, you know, that drives you through.

These spaces are creative because they assert something that is different from the norm. Hybridity emerges by way of marginal cultures defying standards that are set by the central, dominant culture (Spivak, 1993:55). As the thesis has been progressed, firstly looking at complicity, disavowal and now hybridity, it is useful to question the extent to which the many experiences of participants denote cultural transformation which are more accepting and inclusive of women's football. Extracts from interviews suggest that there have been positive changes, but transformation is a robust term, when there are clearly still issues to be overcome. The persistence of the gender binary continues to impact upon women's participation in football, yet it is the most important aspect of these experiences that they show the way for challenging gender stereotypes. The subjective critique that emerges in complicity, disavowal and then hybridity can progress structural and cultural spaces that include women and girls' participation. One aspect that Emma talked about was the technical aspects of women's football.

Emma: Ummmmm, well exactly the same, they didn't really, I wouldn't say they was any different because [pause] sometimes, obviously there was a few of us internationals there, and we were on the same level if not better than some of the boys. Like technically, I don't mean physically, obviously they're going to be quicker, but technically we could be even better than the boys, and they could see that themselves so [pause] the proof was there. Never in university did I experience anything just because we were women we couldn't play.

Although Emma considered physicality in the extract, she did not centralize it in such a way that it was indispensable for playing football and to a good standard. Aesthetic is a construction mistakenly allied to biological sex, but as previous extracts have illustrated, women can be physical and do often adjust to conditions. This was demonstrated most clearly in Chapter 5 when looking at mimicry and the prevalence of complicit narratives. Overall, the

third-space frame has shown how female football players adopt, conform and reproduce dominant discourse, but as Emma went on to make comparisons between male and female football players, she illustrated how these spaces equally can be a point of contestation.

Emma explained that despite the quicker pace of men's football, abilities considered natural, such as heading a ball, are actually taught. In terms of illustrating the constructed features of football cultures, this is a significant point. Football capital is learned and by acknowledging this, Emma prioritizes aspects of women's football in which such gendered categorization is contestable. In hybridity, Emma's narrative centralizes cultural complexities by undermining gender categorization when highlighting the potential of women's football to instigate difference and therefore, transformation.

Emma: For me there's no difference between men technically compared to women, I think a woman can hit a ball exactly the same as a man, I mean obviously there is physical differences, women are not as quick as men or as strong as men and so obviously the men's game is a lot quicker than the women's. But if you were to break it down and just look at the technical aspects of it, it's very much the same.

Evelyn reiterates this point, and forwards the view that there is an age up to which it is beneficial for both girls and boys to play mixed-sex football (Hills and Croston, 2012: 591-605). Evelyn talks about abilities and discusses the potential of evaluating players on the basis of competency, as opposed to gender. Interestingly, although Evelyn benchmarks women's football in comparison with men's, by doing this, she is actually setting a frame that can undo gender. For example, on one level (below Premier League), she explains that when she was doing her coaching badges, the men she trained with found it beneficial to develop coaching skills by training women. She cites technical ability as the essential asset in women's football.

Evelyn: There's no difference as long as women are playing against women. That's it, I mean obviously it becomes a farce when women play against guys because of the strength factor and so on, but when I first started coaching, the coaches that I [pause] and obviously I took my badges and they were doing theirs as well, and the guys who were our trainers, our coaches, mentors, [pause] they used to use us as their, the women, as their you know, technical practice because we were technically better than the guys. Because obviously, until you get to the Premier League and those type of championship levels you don't come across that amount of ability.

Coakley (1998) argues that women's participation in sport should not be benchmarked against men's sport because it is, for all intents and purposes, different. Attributes used to evaluate competence, for example, sustain patriarchy. As she explains, 'if sports had been created by women and for women, the Olympic Games motto would not be *Citius, Altius, Fortius* (higher, faster, stronger); instead it might be '*balance, flexibility and ultraendurance!*' (Coakley, 1998:226). Once again, it has emerged at various points throughout these empirical chapters, that women's football (sport) should be separate. But the philosophy that underpins separatism is not so pragmatic. In terms of access to facilities for example, which was one issue that emerged, segregation would not necessarily create more opportunities and it was acknowledged that separatism has historically marginalized women. Moreover, there is a more fundamental problem: it has been explained that segregation does not actually do anything to challenge gender stereotypes, and this is the principle narrative that is now coming to the surface as this analysis reaches its conclusion. In Evelyn's discussion of training coaches, she advances that such contests can actually re-negotiate a gender binary. She explained, for example, that in her experience it is more beneficial for men to learn how to coach and train football players by training women, because of the higher standard of technical ability than they would get in an equivalent men's team. This is interesting because she foregrounds how women's football is a context within which a fixed gender binary becomes a site for contestation.

Evelyn: You'll find now that most of the coaches are desperate to get in with a decent women's team because they know the level of ability there is much higher than they'll get at the local park game[s], or even semi-pro. And they take it on board much easier. They're prepared to listen and learn, and challenge you on things, whereas the guys are [mumbles].

Contestation in hybrid space is incited by looking at the positive aspects of women's football as opposed to situating in relation to gender. To take this further, it is interesting that Nina states equality does not necessarily mean sameness. Ability, rather than gender categorization is a point of departure. The notion that the category of woman and man are fixed by some condition that defines ability are polarised constructs and conceptually inadequate for explaining not only the experiences female football players and their development, but also complexity within these categorisations. It fails to take into account 'the multiplicity of cultural, social and political intersections' (Butler, 1998:19-20). For instance, in the following quotations, Nina firstly explained differentiation within the

category of 'female' i.e. within women's football itself. Secondly, Pat discussed women's football in the United States of America.

Nina: Equality doesn't mean doing it exactly the same, it means giving the same opportunities really. It would be daft to think women's football is the same as men's football, but that's not the point. We know it's not the same, just because we're not physically the same. I think in terms of, I don't know if it's negative or positive, but [pause] on the pitch for example, it's less physical than the men's game, but I do think that they're [women] technically incredible. But it's never going to be as quick, it's just a bit of a different game.

Pat: And I'll tell you an interesting point I always think about watching the Women's World Cup and that; the Americans have got a really good team. I don't know if you've noticed, but their style of play, style of running and everything, I think because it's grown up as a sport in its own right, bigger than men's football really in the States. And it's not grown up as girls playing with lads from an early age, and watching men's sports like me being part of their teams. It's almost like a totally different way it's played. They don't run like men's footballers. They don't strike the ball like men's footballers. They're a very physical team, a very big team, but every time I've seen them play I think, 'God that's' [pause] have you noticed that?

Hybridity emerges in the extracts above, as both Nina and Pat impress, by way of differentiation. In the sense that this progressive distancing from tradition and the establishment symbolised by men's football, hybridity is most evident in Pat's assessment of how female players are developed in the USA. When she focuses on the physical movement of female football players to illustrate difference, she is emphasising the environmental aspect of learning. Pat explains that they (the USA women's national team) 'move differently', which implies that women's football has developed an aesthetic in its own right. Pat's reflection on the identifiable and original character of women's football in the USA is a method of separatism that disassociates from the burden of gender convention. She adopts a very positive way of looking at women's football, and this is premised on variation, contests and claims for identities that underpin football cultures as opposed to culture. Moreover, disassociating attitudes that elevate the status of women's football was also apparent in Gillian and Grace's reflections on the characteristics of women's football outlined in the following examples.

Gillian: It's got more a spirit of amateurism in it, you know, which is a good thing Corinthian ideas.

Grace: But then it (women's football as referred to as retaining a Corinthian spirit) comes across as patronizing, they're just doing it because they love it. And they are, and that is important but, in this day and age, people want to you know, with TV coverage people put it down because there's only 600 people there watching, not a big TV [pause], but then at the same time they're not getting paid a fortune, so it's 'what do you want'?

Differentiation was also apparent each time the notion of the *Corinthian Spirit* emerged. As if drawing on a link with the past, some participants utilised the courteous notion of the Corinthian Spirit as a positive aspect of women's football, yet Grace was slightly dismissive, presumably because it re-asserts the notion of authenticity generally associated with historicity and a by-gone age, and infers that it patronises female football players. In a broader football context, contemporary criticisms of the Football Association in the more liberal sections of the media (Conn, 2013, 2004) seek to reclaim a traditional authenticity, yet these critiques of modern football (Lee, 2014; Conn, 2012) arguably pose a dilemma for the women's game. As Grace argues, the Corinthian ideal is antiquated and critiques of the contemporary game arguably restate conventionality that women's participation challenges. It might be considered a form of cultural colonisation, which of course brings the narrative back to one of identity, ownership and about how women transgress and can be assertive in negotiating exclusionary spaces. Grace's claim that football *per se* has become too commercialised has foundation in contemporary critiques that the game has become too far removed from its traditional communities (Conn, 2004). But rather than seeking to reclaim the traditional authenticity (King, 1998: 189-90), she infers criticism of the historicity that privileges men's football.

The relationship between masculinity and football has made it difficult for women to find new spaces and contest the ideological boundaries of hegemonic masculinity, as discussed in Chapter 2. Her rejection of the term is therefore a critique of the hierarchy of privilege that sustains the powerful position of men's football, on the basis that this dispels the understanding that football cultures are complex. For the acceptance and inclusion of women's football, this is a concern, and this premise seems to underpin Grace's criticism of the Corinthian ideal. Football has moved into a context of increased commercialism, and she posits that with this being the case, why should women's football not also be a beneficiary of this. The issue here is not one of commercial concern, but a recognition that the game has changed remarkably in contemporary terms, and this can perhaps be the basis for advancing inclusion of women's football. Pat further illustrates differentiation, separating or distancing

from ‘that’ *men’s* game. Pat others men’s football with her antipathy towards some of the antics that, she contends, have become prevalent and as a consequence holds women’s football in a higher regard.

Pat: I think that’s one of the things that has changed, that physicality, particularly the fitness, the fitness levels have [pause] I think in women’s sport the strength thing and particularly the fitness has just gone up from a fantastic degree really. I think, [pause] one of the questions was the difference [between women’s and men’s football]. I think what is just so, a really really really good difference is you do just do not see the diving and the feigning things. You do not see it at all in women’s football. I’m sure I watched all of the Women’s World Cup and didn’t see a single dive. You know, I just think that’s such a positive thing for women’s sport, and you do actually hear men saying that now, that you don’t see the diving and the rolling about.

Millie: It’s a hard game, there’s a lot of hard tackles, but I think it’s absolutely great that they can cling to that (perceived lack of feigning injury), because if there’s one thing that annoys everyone about men’s professional football, everyone’s united in that it’s absolutely vile, the diving about, wimpy behaviour that, you know, that comes out of it.

Such inversion of conventional categories frequently employed to diminish women’s football is expressed as strength. Distancing from those facets of football, such as feigning injury, for Pat and Millie has little or no place in women’s football. At least it is not very apparent. These were not the only women interviewed who cited this as a positive aspect of the women’s game. It prioritizes the positive facets of their role as *football players*. Moreover, particularly in single-sex football, hybridity emerged in exchanges that demonstrated the importance of drawing on subjectivity to indicate complexity and the aesthetic vitality of women’s participation. To this extent, conceptualising the characteristics of women’s football as a hybrid narrative is culturally disruptive because it undermines conventional femininities. Expanding understandings of difference and of complexity, as many women have explained relative to grounded and broader systems of classification, can be engaged in a narrative that illustrates how there are a variety of football experiences.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has responded to the research question *in what capacity do female football players actively partake in transformation in English football?* In women’s football, the sex/gender matrix represents a culmination of shared possibilities and limitations, that is,

binary restriction is challenged, but at the same time (in some cases), also observed. This is prevalent within debates of single and mixed-sex football. There were latent anxieties about abilities and confidence in many participants' experiences, which were perhaps indicative of the piecemeal development structures that women have had to contend with and negotiate a pathway through. In overcoming these challenges, and also the negative connotations attached to female physicality i.e. losing one's femininity, mixed-sex football can feasibly extend scope for assumptions regarding female physicality to be contested. Drawing on the tension that emerges from the duality inherent in Bhabha's mimicry (in complicit *and* critical commentaries), such mixed-sex sessions were a valuable facet of many of these women's experiences of learning football, of acquiring capital to contest dominant masculinities and femininities sustained in football. With the application of Bhabha's concept of hybridity, myths about *dangerous* female physicality were challenged in single and mixed-sex football contexts, which I argued was necessary for progressing the women's game and increasing participation. Participants for example, did not express any anxieties about playing mixed-football, if anything it was expressively articulated as beneficial to their development as football players. In such a way, participants could directly contest the constraints of gender binarism, and playing in such an environment was a positive exercise in acquiring football capital.

Another aspect to transformatory narratives emerged in participants' descriptions of women's football matches. It is a challenge for women's football to contest and expel myths compounded in hegemonic femininity, and foreground a framework that can expedite the game's development and increase participation. Over the course of these empirical chapters, the three main components of Bhabha's third-space (mimicry, disavowal, and hybridity) combine to contest the gender binary, so it was notable that when participants were asked to describe the key features of women's football matches, they often did so in binary terms. By way of differentiation, participants identified and discussed what they ranked as the most positive and valued aspects of women's football. It is 'slower' as many women explained, but added that this was of the benefit to the game because it emphasized the skill of the players rather than the blood and thunder replicated in the compliant aspects of experiences explored in Chapter 5. The narrative therefore, examined ways in which women's football can overcome the old stereotypes and elevate its status. The application of hybridity goes some way to doing this. Participants were not discouraged by broader perceptions of the women's game that diminish its value, and this is an aspect of these experiences which is considered in the concluding chapter that follows.

Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

This final chapter will address, in turn, the three research questions stated at the beginning of the thesis, and which were the contention of preceding Chapters 5, 6 and 7. The purpose of this exercise is to return to the overall objective, ‘to what extent can the narratives of female football players in England be situated in a third-space analysis?’ reformulating the main points of discussion to consider the efficacy of the third-space frame for looking at women’s football. The point was made that a third-space theoretical frame had not been applied to women’s football previously, and the original contribution of the thesis is really encompassed by this point. The third-space, supported by a subjectively grounded epistemology, was designed in such a way as to encourage the emergence of marginalised narratives and demonstrate that football culture(s) are composed of great complexities not generally represented in broader discourse. For women’s football this is a salient point. Girls, for instance, may be discouraged from choosing to play football because it is not suitably feminine (Hills and Croston, 2012; Kleindienst-Cachay and Kunzendorf, 2003; Stidder, 2000; Caudwell, 1999; Pfister et al, 1999; Evans, 1989) and by designing effective support strategies beyond merely creating more opportunities is key to contesting gender stereotypes and encouraging greater female participation.

This chapter will firstly revisit the ontological position set out at the onset of this study and the debates that emerged around gender in football. Over the course of this thesis, subject narratives have been the focus of organising discussion around gender, and this strategy has been productive in articulating a range of participants’ interactions and activities in football. The design of the research was based on Bhabha’s third-space in order to interrogate interactions between marginal and dominant aspects of culture and, although there are limitations to this frame, it has been an asset in penetrating conventional objectively defined gender situated in football, and then setting a narrative of contestation. Secondly, in order to consider what has been learnt and what this thesis contributes to existing knowledge on women’s football, it was argued that there is an emergent contradiction when the dominant culture interacts with marginal facets of culture in the third-space (Bhabha, 1994a). In a football setting, female football players breach gender conventions symbolised in the binary. Female football players test the boundaries of both customary masculinity and femininity, and in order to interrogate the experiences of participants in such a context, I

revisit each individual research question with reference back to the main thematic focus of each empirical chapter. The theoretical frame is then subject to assessment in order to evaluate the limitations to this research with a view to evaluating improvements that could be made to the research design. The penultimate section of Chapter 8 considers the value of the epistemological setting of the research design for eliciting narratives of differentiation, making further reference to research applications. Finally, I look at directions for future research and outline the original contribution that this thesis has made, theoretically and epistemologically, bringing together the various strands of the thesis in an overall *narrative*.

8.2 Evaluating the Theoretical Frame: Re-thinking Gender in Football

A third-space frame was set in Chapter 2 in order to theoretically locate this thesis, and contextualise the experiences of the football players who participated in this research. It was explained that that institutional and cultural arrangements authenticate masculinities, and continues to subdue the value afforded to women's participation in the sport. On this basis, it was inferred that there is a dominant gendered narrative in football, but rather than delve extensively into the origins of Association Football and the ideological link to hegemonic masculinities, gender was instead considered in binary terms so that the impact upon the contemporary experiences of women could be located. Having set this frame, I took Bhabha's third-space, in order to incite debate centred on gender in football.

The progressions made by women's football in recent years are testament to the persistent activities of people involved in the game to provide a structure that will facilitate sustained and meaningful development for women's participation. Nevertheless, if women's voices have been marginal, then how as a researcher could I develop a theoretical frame that will allow these voices are heard? This is the most fundamental question asked from the onset of this research. Given the primacy bestowed on masculinities and masculine cultural practices, Bhabha's third-space lay the ontological groundwork which could facilitate the emergence of narratives of differentiation and cultural complexities in football. In order to advance narratives that were non-traditional and which deviated from the norm, the third-space theoretical frame privileged subjective voices in order to incite critique by highlighting the limitations of objectifying gender, specifically into binary masculinity/femininity. This was the basis that was set to disrupt conventions about gender in football. By locating a critique in the third space, I utilised the conceptual components of mimicry, disavowal and hybridity.

In mimicry, Bhabha explains that a ‘demand for identity’ is central to colonial domination or, put another way, colonial domination is manifest in a ‘panoptical vision’ that emerges in compromise and irony (Bhabha, 1984:126). In short, mimicry playfully holds a mirror to dominant colonial identity and it shows it for what it is. Having taken this premise, the thesis set out to interrogate the extent to that masculinities may impact on the character and shape of some interactions in women’s football. Most importantly, examining women’s football with reference to traditional masculinities was an exercise in making gender observable, and asking to what extent this construction intersects and shapes interactions in women’s football? In what ways could interactions in women’s football be explained by adherence to cultural practices that were conceptualised as masculine? Approaching women’s football in this way situated participants within a conventional binary in order evidence dominant discourse in pragmatically grounded experiences. A binary frame has been a practical heuristic device from which to begin drawing out a narrative. However, there is problem in utilising this approach because conceptualising gender in such a way, may also objectify and reify the concept of the third-space itself (Bhabha, 2004a:113). As Lossau (2009) argues, this is a criticism that may be asserted at Bhabha’s theory. Lossau maintains that by locating subordinate cultural practices in a ‘third-space’ results in a fixation of difference by catching the subject in a *territorial trap*, and thereby undermining the critical properties of the subjective voice (Lossau, 2009:63; Agnew, 1994:53-80). When reflecting back on the theoretical frame of this thesis, it is useful to note again that the overall purpose of utilising the third-space was not to fortify gender, but to bring it into question to the extent that binaries can be disrupted when interrogated from marginal spaces. In this way, the third-space is a way of seeing which illustrates how participants negotiate and manoeuvre spaces for expression. The third space is a way to encourage participants’ narratives to assert challenges to the notion that there are authentic aspects in culture, and in football. With this in mind, although it might seem counterintuitive to meeting the overall demands of the research, this thesis has employed and made consistent references to the existence of gender binaries in order to problematize their definition.

I have been conscious to impress that football cultures are temporally and spatially varied, and that this should be the location from which to understand how women’s participation in football contributes to complexity. As such, it has been a challenge to understand women’s football, its development and participants’ experiences within this frame without making reference to such objective terms as masculinity and femininity. In order to prioritize complexity and differences, participants’ accounts are only a part of the narrative.

Participants' narratives are a sample that captures a part of women's experiences in football, but not all of it, and is in some ways indicative of conducting a study of this type. Nevertheless, the theoretical and epistemological positioning has been fundamental to this research. Although it was not the intention that such labels were definitive i.e. experiences as masculine or feminine, this binary has been used in analysis to set examples that could illustrate differentiation and change. Setting a binary to conceive of spaces as dominant or marginal, for instance, shows where the cultural centre is situated (Spivak, 1993: 55). This frame of reference infers the critique of cultural centres by identifying deviations. In this research, participants have been actively engaged in forging out spaces, despite cultural and structural limitations. Their deviations from binary gender challenged the cultural centre symbolised by a normative femininity. It is important therefore, to reflect on the context in which female football players interact and engage in making cultural practices meaningful for themselves. More specifically, how women's participation is a critical standpoint (Harding, 1991:275-284), which establishes a position of context and then the potential to contest because there are similarities (complicity) and differences (negotiation and transformation) at the same time.

Perhaps the most fundamental facet of evaluating this theoretical framework is to consider whether the tension between the marginal and dominant can conceivably be conceptualised a place of transformation as addressed in Chapter 7. The notion of transformation suggests that change is sudden and widespread. Transformation suggests a cathartic cultural shift, and this research should be careful not to overstate the challenges that women's participation in football incites. Certainly there are emergent anxieties about women playing football, this featured in the many experiences of participants. The threat of feminine deviancy has illuminated existing power structures, and although women's football presents contest and struggles to forge spaces, it has been clear in the testimonies of participants that masculine privileges persist. Although I contend that this research should be careful not to overstating change, the theoretical testing of Bhabha's Third-space to the study of gender in football, has contributed to understanding the dynamic and shifting nature of women's relationship to football. In response to this suggestion, it is appropriate to think of women's football as inciting spaces of contestation. Participants have been creative in negotiating systemic and cultural exclusion, and in this way, the third-space encourages the emergence of subject narratives. The interaction between dominant and marginal narratives is an interrogative space, and transformation inspire the capacity for women's football and subjected experiences to disrupt the grander gendered narrative.

The marginal space featured centrally in the analysis. Where there is exclusion, deviant identities might be found in marginal spaces, and in this case there must be negotiation in order to challenge the conditions of exclusion. Participants in this study challenged in positive ways, interactively engaging with dominant and frequently derisory commentaries about taking part in football by simply continuing to follow their ambition to play. It was notable that that these interactions by their very nature did transgress into boundaried spaces and, by doing so, confronted conventions regarding gender in football. Mixed-football is peculiarly interesting in this regard. These were situations that actually revolved around some intense negotiation regarding how masculinity and femininity are constituted, subjecting both to contestation. In the application of mimicry, experiences questioned the notion that there are natural facets to being feminine or masculine, because participants frequently adopted conventional masculine characteristics. They did so to become football players, to assert themselves in mixed-football, but also to claim authority over other players in single-sex matches. Mimicry in such cases, demonstrated the intersections of power in football, by revealing the construction of the masculine/feminine binary. So in the context of football, if this is the case, the demands placed on women to be physical 'deviates' outside of the binary and subjects it to change. The third-space in the experiences of women seem to be a place of contest but more so, one of resolution. In this way, drawing on Bhabha's third-space with specific aim of formulating a narrative, posed the problem of finding a way to begin looking at women's experiences of playing football in an original way. Rather than re-stating what we 'know' i.e. that it is mostly men who play football and it remains extremely gendered, the theoretical position taken in this thesis was not to re-iterate the problem, but illustrate that complexity underpins English football culture as a way of seeking spaces/avenues for expression. I don't consider that this had really been done before, not a position that had been taken, that is, problematizing gender (masculinities) in football in order to disrupt and question position of privilege/power.

The components of Third-Space that have been used in this thesis are applied to empirical data to draw out different levels of experiences. The process of analysis mapped transcripts to concept of mimicry, disavowal and hybridity; could be read as replicating, exclusion, change. In response to each of the questions set, each empirical chapter corresponds to each research question, the 'narrative' that ties the research together can be plotted against each key concept that makes up Bhabha's third space, mimicry, disavowal, hybridity. Therefore the subject narrative tells the story, this is the lens for affirming what we already know (mimicry), how this manifests in participants' experiences (disavowal) and then

how it incites change (hybridity). In short, we have theory, practice and change. In response to each research question, these aspects of the third-space are revisited in the following section.

8.3 The Ontological Debate: Responding to Research Questions

In response to the research question *‘to what extent can the experiences of female football players in England be situated in a third-space analysis?’* when drawing on the theoretical basis of the third-space, an ontological debate was instigated around gender and the construction of gender in football. Taking Bhabha’s premise that when dominant (object) and marginal (subject) cultures are in contact, there will be emergent spaces that facilitate cultural contestation and encourage creativity, differentiation and transition. Revisiting the ontological basis outlined in Chapter 2 returns the final stages of the thesis to the gender binary, and the conditions of culture and structure that are evident in women’s exclusion. This is not say that women have not had a consistent presence in football even if it has not been as visible as men’s, but that masculinities are still privileged in English football (and football more generally). Despite marginalization it was interesting how participants were very persistent in negotiating spaces to play football and the narratives that emerged throughout this research. Perhaps most importantly, these narratives, often termed ‘non-traditional’ throughout precisely because they are different, underlined the ontological context that foregrounds gender stratification in football. It was argued that there is an institutional narrative that validates beliefs about femininity and masculinity, and in order to demonstrate the impact of this narrative, gender could be exemplified in the experiences of research participants.

It was explained from the onset of this research, that its originality could be created by the application of an appropriate epistemological frame, which would express marginal, subjected experiences. For women in football, historicity and the dominant gender binary provided a frame of reference, but did not require an extensively outlined account. It was important to create a frame in which women’s voices could be articulated. On this basis, it was sufficient to acknowledge the prevalence and domination of hegemonic masculinities in football, and then foreground the marginal, unconventional, women’s stories. Therefore, the ontological context, gender, was the object that situated women’s football in categorisations that, more often than not, interject negatively on women’s involvement in a masculine sport. In such a way, outlining this institutional narrative that stratifies gender, was set with the

expressed intention of interrogating how masculinities and femininities are constructed. Having situated gender in football in this way, the research then sought to disrupt such conventions by drawing on the subjective narrative expressed in the experiences of female football players. What do the variety of experiences tell us about how gender is constructed in football and what can be done to make space for the articulation of such non-traditional identities? It could be considered that this is a search for an expressive identity, which lends a sense of coherence to the breadth of women's experiences, and which illustrate how much more complex simplistic objectified, gender categorisations are. Certainly, it has been an aim of this thesis to expose the limitations of categorising gender and contest the binary, because binaries cannot account for the variation and complexity that are the sum of women's football. Interrogating gender using narrative interviews then, aimed to prioritise women's football and disrupt conventional feminine categorisation.

Research Question 1: In what ways are women female football players *complicit* in reproducing the gender discourses that frame their participation?

Based on interviews, empirical data was organised around the emergence of stories that were themed complicit drawing firstly on Bhabha's concept of mimicry to interrogate how female football players might replicate conventional practices. To this end, mimicry looked at the relationship between gender and football, setting the ontological context that maintains an infrastructure and cultural discourse in a system of stratification. Chapter 5 argued that such stratification, which prioritises men's/boy's participation in football, are observable in social interactions. Stratification could be observed in the progressive division of spaces into appropriately masculine and feminine territories. For example, there were instances when participants discussed when they were excluded or discouraged from playing football. In more extreme cases, there were instances of bullying. In these examples, participants were not speaking about gender in the abstract. These were real and very tangible forms of exclusion that served to maintain dominant masculine and feminine stereotypes. In short, their 'gender' was observable through the experience. In this way, the personal experiences of participants combined in a narrative that gave insight into how masculinity was prioritised in one way by institutions and, in another, by grounded interactions in the context of playing football matches. Chapter 5 looked at these two settings in further detail.

Institutionally, it was apparent that gender could be observed in the emergence of informal and formal spaces. The themes of informal and formal were applied because there

were noticeable contrasts between participants' experiences of playing football in un-regulated, leisure spaces and regulated institutional spaces. Participants were asked firstly to explain how they began playing football and, without exception, each reflected on their earliest memories. Informal spaces were organised around formative, mostly childhood, experiences playing football when there were no formal rules of governance. Each participant explained how, as they became older and moved into formal institutional contexts such as education, their opportunities to play football diminished or were non-existent. These are *objective* social conditions because opportunities to play football were regulated by an organisation. Even when participants were not explicitly told that they could not play football, there was just no infrastructure to create opportunities. Football was simply a sport that girls did not play. Thus gender stratification was upheld by organisational bodies and gendered spaces accessed through participants' direct personal interactions with these structures. In this way, Chapter 5 explained systemic exclusion by contrasting informal and formal spaces. Informal early experiences of playing football tended *not* to be discussed with reference to gender, or a masculine/feminine duality. Examples of playing football at school were divided on the basis of gender.

Sandra: but you get to that age, I don't know whether it's a societal exertion on you that, girls and boys divide kind of thing, and the focus was on what you could call traditional female sports, so, hockey.

Pat: I was you know, made to give up football. It was just horrifying. [] I had to play girls' sports.

In these examples, football becomes gendered, imposed not by participants themselves, but they were instructed that they were not permitted to play football. In this sense, the overall themes of informal and formal spaces were judged to exemplify mimicry, and be considered a complicit narrative because these were environments whereby gender binaries were upheld. It was really the contrast between the un-gendered informal and gendered formal space that made this point of analysis clear. Formal, organisational spaces are regulated settings that endorse conventionality; gender binaries are advanced and supported by segregation.

Having begun to lay the foundation by which gender was, and is, recognisable through spatial stratification (themed informal and formal spaces), institutional gendering also emerged in grounded localised interactions. Drawing further on the intersections between objective setting and subjective participants' experiences, Chapter 5 then looked at

mimicry in the context of experiences of playing football in both single-sex and mixed sex football matches. In most cases, mimicry was theorized as adaptation because many participants talked about the dynamics of particular matches. Overall the narrative was encapsulated in adapting to the context, becoming a football player and acquainting themselves with the physical requirements of the game. Such interactions were theorized as adaptations, because participants were actively engaged in making gender and acquiring physical skills that emerged in mimicry, or complicity to dominant masculine cultural practices. In this way, culture is dynamic and made rather than an absolute given. It is not fixed and this is supported in Bhabha's understanding of mimicry. Descriptions of matches could be quite brutish and atavistic. Adaptations were complicit in terms of becoming conversant with mainstream facets of the dominant culture i.e. becoming masculine, but equally they were also disruptive. For example, in narrating football matches, there were discussions focussed on fitting in, yet at the same time these experiences were ambivalent because they were non-feminine, they transgressed the boundaries of normality and cultural convention. In Bhabha's mimicry this apparent ambivalence highlights the inappropriate (Bhabha, 1994b:86), 'me mam, wanted me to be more girly, you know, but I was always just a tomboy.'

To return to the research question, mimicry demonstrates the power of dominant discourse to sustain gender stratification in football. Gender was broadly understood by way of institutional and grounded intersections visible in subject narratives. It is worth noting that participants garnered positive and frequently inventive ways of forging spaces to play football, and were able to assert their disruptive identities. Rather than be held to account for their gender transgressions, participants tended to confront the pejorative. This confrontation emerged in negotiating strategies. Although mimicry has been used to explore the prevalence of complicit narratives, when highlighting the appropriate, mimicry at the same time shows us the inappropriate. This is symbolised in the stereotype and the masculine woman who deviates from conventionality. Gender in this way is actively constituted. It is observed in the divisibility of informal and formal spaces, and the adaptation of becoming a football player that for participants culminated in progressive othering. How women negotiated this exclusion was the focus of research question 2.

Research Question 2: What strategies of *negotiation* do female football players employ in order to navigate opportunities and structures with regard to player development?

Chapter 6 looked at disavowal and found that anxieties bound up in mimicry could be organised around cultural practices that was evidenced in labelling. For example, in contrast to the androgynous (informal) spaces discussed in Chapter 5, it was interesting that references to gender were clearly apparent, these tended to emerge in othering. Most interviewees talked about being called a ‘tom-boy’, and two participants especially were subject to discernibly hostile interactions i.e. in the form of bullying. Nevertheless, such explicit incidences of disavowal were infrequent and the main narrative of othering actually emerged more pragmatically in issues of development. Chapter 6 therefore, looked at stratification that was particularly obvious in restricted opportunities to play football.

In response to this analysis, transcripts were themed firstly under profession and career mobility, and secondly, under transgressions between public private spaces supported by friendships and social networks. Under these two themes, participants’ accounts were an interesting commentary on the ways in which women have consistently negotiated opportunities to play football. On this basis, it was argued that the veracity of the subject narrative to assert its voice and more broadly and identity, illustrated the tension between dominant and marginal interactions that underpin mimicry. In this research, mimicry is disruptive because it brings the subject into contact with the object. From participants’ perspectives, conditions that excluded them were there to be negotiated. Tensions such as these, which emerged in negotiation, illustrate the interaction between the dominant and marginal. Negotiating is a strategy by which women confronted exclusion, and in this way mimicry is defiant (Bhabha, 1984:130). Participants were compelled to negotiate their own spaces or at least be very creative in sustaining their ambitions to play football, and examples of negotiating were explained in terms of career mobility. What opportunities were there to pursue a career, or at the very least play for a team, in football?

Evelyn: There was a league at the time, it was our first league you know

Gillian: So I played pretty much solidly then for (team name). Really good club, you know, very kind of women run club, women coaches, women trainers [pause], it was completely separate from the men’s club.

Opportunities were quite fractured and nominal, and where there were no opportunities or they did not want to be a token part of an established men’s club, women might establish

their own football club. Moreover, there was a temporal aspect to these commentaries on governance and structure. Given the age range of participants, ranging from 18 up to 60, there were experiences illustrative of systemic change. For example, the sequence of events discussed by participants spanned a timeline from the late 1960s to the present (2015 on conclusion of the fieldwork), and highlighted improvements in structural provision and more opportunities to play football for instance. From clear changes such as these, it could be concluded that it is indicative of increasingly positive attitudes towards women playing football. One interviewee, Emma, now made regular international appearances at the age of 22. When she explained her career to date, in contrast to older women interviewed, she was able to sign post each stage of her progress as a football player, relative to her age at the time. These experiences were much more clearly structured and rationally explained in terms of development and opportunities.

The second thematic strand addressed in Chapter 6, was a more intimately experiential aspect of interviews. Participants discussed sociality and how playing football offered opportunities to forge and sustain strong friendships and social networks. Because these communities, friendships and networks were experienced in a traditionally masculinized context based on a common sporting interest rather than the conventions of femininity and emotional support (Pahl, 2000: 69), Chapter 6 claimed that communal groupings disrupted gender binaries. Across all interviews such friendships were an integral part of participants enjoyment of playing football. Therefore, in Chapter 6 under the theme of *Friendships and Sociality*, I looked particularly at negotiation in making transitions between public and private spaces, and the presence of communities organised around football.

There were favourable interactions in the prevalence of distinct friendship networks or groups formed through football, and the endurance of these networks was suggestive of positive negotiating strategies. The strength of social ties laid the foundations for expressive and coherent identities not generally recognised, or perhaps legitimated, because they are single-sex women's networks and based around masculine activities of doing. Participants' experiences in this way prioritize activities based on doing something, as opposed to 'emotional work' (Allan, 1989:72). These examples perhaps typify how women's progression into public leisure spaces and life can be facilitated by playing football and can accrue social capital (Bourdieu, 1980). In relationships, women are (still) expected to take the main responsibilities with regard to domestic and emotional labour (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993:221-241), and this can be to the detriment of social commitments. Consequently, gendered roles and friendship characteristics can restrict women's capacity to participate in

other leisure activities. So some participants were forced to be assertive in making transgressions and negotiation in order to find space to play football, and frequently this required having to balance domesticity.

Martha: So then I [pause] as soon as Georgia was born really, six weeks after, something like that, I went and start playing with this lot.

Although not all participants were in conventional heterosexual relationships, or in couples, it was nevertheless interesting that a narrative emerged that prioritised same-sex friendships. In such instances, it was argued that the primacy of sociality founded by playing football contests that broader narrative that there are specifically feminine friendships and masculine friendships. In short, the positive relationships founded in doing a sport, were important for supporting transgressions into public spaces. The wealth of women's experiences positioned this critique as a way to understand complexities and the variety of ways in which female friendships can be meaningfully asserted beyond the boundaries of tradition.

Research Question 3: In what capacity do female football players actively partake in *transformation* in English football?

In response to the final research question, I drew on Bhabha's hybridity, and it was argued in Chapter 7 that direct contests to the gender binary instigated potential to challenge exclusion, particularly in single and mixed-sex football experiences. This generated discussion around the development of women's football more broadly, and at a more individual level, the development of female football players. This was a notable topic of discussion because there emerged anxieties around simply playing football, or learning and becoming a football player. It might seem like a strange topic to occupy the final stages of discussion about disrupting gender, but this presented itself as an effective context in which to instigate such contests and challenge dominant discourse regarding what women can 'do' in football. The most fundamental question asked was, why should there be such anxieties, and how can the lack of confidence so often expressed in interviews be addressed?

In terms of engaging the concept of hybridity Chapter 7 looked at emergent anxieties and considered how the concerns of participants could be utilised productively as a basis for not only challenging gender binaries but, importantly, to illustrate cultural complexities in football. For example, many participants talked about the benefits of acquiring skills in a mixed-sex environment (Hills and Croston, 2012; Hills, 2007). Despite any anxieties about

learning to play football, there were notable positive contests in mixed football, which were demonstrative of how female football players actively, on the football field, interacted in a way that instigated dialogue about how gender could be contested and re-constituted. Hybridity applied to a mixed-football context highlighted how women routinely overcame anxieties about playing football. Mixed football was a context that participants considered improved their competence as players, and a space in which they also engaged in interactions that undermined conventions regarding femininity and physicality. Importantly, by challenging gender binaries in such a way, the association with masculinity and playing football which infers that football was somehow un-feminine, tended to be positively transgressed. In the context mixed-football for instance, participants directly contested gendered figurations that undermined their involvement in football. In short, mixed-football often created positive conditions in which participants could pose a direct challenge to the restrictions of binaries. This was illustrated by two of the younger women particularly, Hannah and Jade, who explained how they overcame some dissenting attitudes. As can be seen here, ‘they didn’t like me, when we actually played football, they shut up then because we showed them what we could do’ and with Hannah, ‘lads get more aggressive, [but] you improve your game more because you play faster’.

There were many instances of having played in mixed contexts (some women from quite a young age in informal settings) and it presented opportunities for participants to assert themselves as football players. Many participants talked about speed and physique in football, and went on to explain how they became accustomed to playing in physically demanding matches. Thus, they initiated ways in which to adapt and in such cases, they concentrated on their own strengths. More often than not, many participants talked about utilising the technical aspects of their skill-set. As Jody had explained, ‘I think it (mixed-football) does definitely help your touch and your passing’ or as Martha explained, ‘but I was always out playing football with boys. And I think it made me a better player because I was striving to keep up with them.’ It is a challenging environment, but was used to positive effect, and for the purposes of addressing the research question, these interactions illustrate how many of the women interviewed were active in making culture that emerged in hybrid cultural practices. There were these direct contests, but also ways of seeing difference and challenging the hegemonic brutish masculine aesthetic.

In single-sexed football, participants talked about the attributes of the women’s game, and although they made direct comparison to men’s football, prioritizing the qualities of women’s football were expressed in such a way as to authenticate its worth. Many

participants explained that women's football might be slower, for example, but they argued that women's football was more 'elegant' and afforded more time to display the technique and skill of the players, it was argued. Such comparisons could be understood as sustaining gender and conventions that are appropriate, but it is also a way of assigning value, asserting difference and hybridity. It was argued at the beginning of this thesis that football, in general, is full of complexities and historically and contemporarily contested. In short, there are different ways to *do* football and, as one participant argued, there are a variety of competences required in football even within individual teams. This is an important point for women's football, because the reality is that football is played out in contested settings, but the challenge is to overcome ontological frame of how it is situated relative to objective gender.

8.4 Reflections on the Epistemological Frame

When setting the epistemological frame, I reflected on my own position in the research field. Such a subject stance was designed to visit my own experiences and also prejudices in terms of how this might impinge on the research or, most importantly, how this would reflect on the stage of interview analysis. This process of reflection was an exercise in considering the type of knowledge that authenticates gender with the aim of developing a framework that would enable the research to best achieve its aims, and prioritize non-traditional (women's) narratives, which demonstrate the cultural variety embedded in football. This philosophical grounding was set to determine what is adequate and legitimate in conducting a piece of narrative research. In order to understand the utility of adopting a narrative focus, the initial stage of reflection looked at some of my own experiences as a girl, and a woman, in football. Reflection on the part of the researcher was the first step in considering gender in football in light of some of my own interactions. It is not something that I had ever really reflected on before. Not because there have not been incidences over the many years of watching the game when I have had to stand up for my sex and my right to participate, but because these incidences have not been the defining feature of my experience. I have never really felt excluded, nor have I ever been made to feel excluded by an abstracted concept of hegemonic masculinity because that was not a facet of my identity. Certainly in terms of governance and structural opportunities on offer to women, it is possible to evidence and assign exclusion based on appropriate masculine/feminine types. However, over the course of this research, although marginalization has been a reality for participants, it was also there to be challenged.

If anything, this subjective narrative has really shown this object up for what it is, a construct, and a limited one at that.

In such a way, the knowledge that emerges from grounded interactions is the epistemological foundation that contests the historicity of the dominant narrative that places masculinities at its cultural centre. The notion that ‘there is no objective truth to be known’ (Hugly and Sayward, 1987:278) is a diversion into relativism that *is* problematic, and the problem of prioritizing the subject is that the research could fall into cultural relativism, consequently having nothing to say about gender hierarchies in football. However, subjective experiences are not independent of context or objective gendered reality, and the epistemological foundation of this thesis therefore drew on this frame precisely to understand the ‘non-traditional’ in relation to a centre without slipping into relativism. Subject/object interactions emphasized diversity of experiences. Objective figurations that sustain power and inequitable social relations maintain limitations, in the categorization of femininity for example, but the subject/object interaction illustrates how football culture(s) are complex and changeable. How is knowledge about gender defined within objective culture and how can dominant knowledge that systematically excludes be challenged?

Rutherford ascertains that with displacement of social certainty and ascribed cultural identity, the contemporary condition can be illustrated in the multiplicity of subject positions. Within this context there is a meaningful search for an anchor and ‘home is where we speak from’ (Rutherford, 1990:24). But rather than a sense of not belonging, in the context of this research, it is actually belonging that really underpins the epistemological frame of this thesis. Participants never expressed that they did not feel part of football, indeed it was absolutely integral to their lives. In this sense, the subject voice challenges conventional knowledge that has historically opposed women playing football. Certainly, because it has been argued that football is a collection of cultures, complex in its character and experientially varied, it does in one way validate Rutherford’s conception that the contemporary condition is a meaningful search for an identity. I further suggested for women’s football, that this search for home is a fundamental aspect of drawing on the subject voice.

The epistemological setting for disrupting a gender binary and fixed condition of culture was set to undermine such objective authenticity. For women, the in-betweenness of being in neither one place nor the other, as was shown in analysis, underpins mimicry and hybridity. Mimicry and adaptation was about becoming conversant with the dominant culture, but at the same time differentiation and contestation through disavowal were a means

of synthesis for hybridity. The epistemological frame therefore had to assert the authority of the marginal subject to and problematize the notion of a natural fixed condition. Fundamentally, the subject voice was critical to this, taking this epistemological position by making it the instigator of the narrative that could illuminate masculinist figurations (Hargreaves, 1992:162, 178; Hartsock, 1983:231). Displacing certainties about women and femininity in order to meet the demands of the research question therefore, a subject narrative drawing on grounded experiences challenged the historicity of traditional epistemologies that discursively frame gender in very broad objective terms, by illustrating differences and alternative narratives.

When evaluating whether this epistemological approach has been effective in enabling me to achieve what the thesis set out to achieve, the emergence of narratives that had not been expected is perhaps the best demonstration of this. For example, the openness of interviews was beneficial during the collection of data. In order to gain knowledge about women's experiences, the narrative design of the research meant that during interviews, women interrogated aspects of their lives that had not really emerged when conducting literature reviewing, nor when formulating the research schedule. The best example of this was the emphasis given to friendship networks and sociality, and these findings were revisited earlier in Chapter 8. In the light of emergent narratives that had not been considered, the case for adopting this epistemological stance is persuasive in terms of effectively contesting dominant knowledge(s) in football. Objective categorisation in football 'stabilize(s) definitions' (Haraway, 1992:6) but participants have shown how such truths are shrouded in ambiguity. Referring back to Rutherford's argument that contemporary cultures are full of uncertainties, the stability of identities in modernity can equally be questioned. Just because it is a matter of longevity, knowledges (Haraway, 1991:189) are never stable and the epistemological frame shows this. Prioritising the subject contests stable definitions, and illustrates how categories (in this research binary masculinity/femininity) can be useful in highlighting the complexity of human experiences. The social world is a complex of disparity and exclusion, and if we are to make the most of contemporary disruptions and challenge embedded power structures, then the resolution might be found in sensibilities that are aimed at challenging objectified certainty. In a masculine/feminine binary, disruptions solicited in the experiences of female football players are indicative of the extent to which categorisations are more complex than broader cultural representations indicate.

8.5 Limitations of the Research Frame

By the very nature of narrative research, the size of the sample does not allow me to make claims to broader representation, however, with the focus on narrative depth, this does not detract from the quality of empirical evidence produced from fieldwork. It has been discussed extensively about the importance of taking a subject narrative as an instrument with which to instil critique of embedded gender conventions, and this has been achieved. The aim was to understand interactions that women have and do employ in order to negotiate those spaces that have been traditionally a focus of masculine pastimes and leisure. To this end, such interactions have been candidly strategic, although they might not have been expressed in these terms. In this sense, the theoretical and methodological frameworks were not designed to replicate those stories that are dominant and have the attention of a broader cultural forum, but rather to design a frame that would articulate voices that have been excluded. These are those voices which are marginal as a result of power inequity, but which nevertheless are valid contributions to the complexities and range of experiences that are the sum total of football's narrative.

The main themes that were more clearly related to the research questions were discussed within chapters 5, 6 and 7, and then re-visited in this concluding chapter. Whilst the issues of sexuality and class featured in interviews, they were not the strongest facets of discussion, but could form the basis of future research. In this way, the themes that have been included drove which way the narrative would develop, with the quality of the data meeting the purposes of the research aim in terms of narrating the grounded experiences of female football players who made up the sample. Participants' willingness to take part in the study meant that in this way it was self-selecting and for this reason, there are aspects of women's football that have not been covered during the course of this research. The most significant dimensions that have not been covered are most prominently issues of class, ethnicity and sexuality. In women's football, the main themes tend to focus on sexualities (Caudwell, 2004, 1999; Cahn, 1994, 1993; Pfister et al, 1999) and governance/development (Williams, 2003a: 5), with important contributions on spectatorship (Williams and Woodhouse, 1991) and historical accounts of notable women's football teams (Newsham, 1997), as noted in the introductory chapter. Furthermore, Chapter 2 noted key literatures in the body of football writing more generally that looks at race and stratification in this regard (Cleland and Cashmore, 2013; Saeed and Kilvington, 2011; Burdsey, 2004; Back et al, 1998), but the work in this area with regards to women's football is even more limited (Ahmad, 2011; Scraton et

al, 2005). As such, there is more theoretical work to be done here, and although my data cannot answer these questions because these topics did not present themselves, having looked at margins and othered participations, then the potential of a third-space frame for looking at further narratives could address these debates in future research.

8.6 Contributions: Directions for Future Research

This thesis has made a contribution to the significant range of academic literature that currently exists on the subject of football. In terms of the original contribution it makes, the design of theoretical and epistemological frame deviates from the main body of literature. It is clear that the mainstay of sociological literature on football *per se*, is principally concerned with men's participation. Such literature covers a broad range of concerns from governance, through identities, race and ethnicity, and ultra-groups, to the documentation of protest movements and supporter ownership. What binds much of this literature together is a broader institutional narrative that focuses mainly on masculinities. In this way, football is inherently gendered, it is embedded with cultural mores that for women who do participate, whether this be as players or spectators, their participation is by default of political value because it brings into question issues of power. It is in this context that women's football is situated, and Bhabha's concept of disavowal foregrounds the argument that when women do play football it is framed as inappropriate. Women's football is situated outside of the norm in the marginal space, and instigating a narrative from this position was an initial challenge in itself. In a previous section I reflected back on the design of the research frame, and considered whether this design has been successful in enabling me to meet the overall research aim. I made a statement about not having really concerned myself with gender and how this has impacted upon my own participation in football before undertaking this research. In the light of this, the most significant and original contribution that this thesis does make, and can make in the future, is based on this reflection.

Firstly, in the epistemological focus, the existing body of work on women's football does corroborate the reality of a gender binary, and although the binary is a reality that does exist in football for men and for women, the design of the epistemological frame incited subjectivity that prioritised women's football with the express purpose of drawing up an experiential narrative that could disrupt convention. The setting of a frame on this topic has not been previously conducted in this way specifically using the third-space. Participants have indicated how they negotiate their own spaces, and this underpins the dynamic of the

narrative. The marginal position illustrated how women's football has traditionally been perceived as an outsider, and the third-space initiated critique in order to challenge this notion and illustrate the value that women contribute to the sum of football culture(s). In this way, the third space is a critique of power and the search of new hybrid avenues of expression.

Having set this epistemological frame in order to elicit a narrative, the theoretical grounding of third-space tested existing knowledge about gender in football. The concepts of mimicry, disavowal and hybridity have not been applied to women's football before, therefore the theoretical frame was set in order to interrogate how women do participate through the lens of narrative expression and cultural practice which they themselves prioritize. The synthesis of epistemological position and theory in the design of the research, in this way is the priority and makes the most original contribution. Returning to the Chapter 1 and the statement that women's football is 'just not right', the challenge to dominant gender discourse made by women tests cultural mores that reminisce on the basis of tradition and misguidedly trade on its legacy. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to transform the dominant narrative, but it has been possible to innovate theoretically and add a new perspective, which can potentially extend the cultural forum of football to more equitably perceive women's participation. This was perhaps most clearly demonstrated in the discussions of mixed-sex football as a context in which positive challenges to binary masculinity and femininity emerged.

The concept of hybridity employed in Chapter 7 was particularly useful in the sense of looking for effective strategies for developing female football players, or at least, increasing participation by challenging the notion that football is a principally *man's* sport. Chapter 7 highlighted the limitations of associating competence with masculinities. Gender, for instance, has narrow scope for appraising football players, particularly in terms of non-standard practices (Williams, 2003a:23). Participants' descriptions of women's football matches and mixed-football were examples of marginal practices that do not conform to the dominant hegemonic 'masculine' stereotype, and incited contest. A useful way of thinking about non-standard practices is to refer back to a binary frame. Chapter 5 looked at mimicry to understand why female football players are stereotyped as deviant, particularly when transgressing into masculine spaces and becoming physical when it was not appropriately feminine. Mixed-football especially proved to be useful for instigating conditions whereby the binary was subject to challenge.

Since the feasibility studies conducted by Brunel University that looked into advancing provision of mixed-sex football, the age at which males and females are able to

mix will be increased to under-18 age groups in 2016, up from the current under-16 (www.bbc.co.uk, 2015). This is a long way from the Teresa Bennett case of 1978 discussed in Chapter 2, when it was a case that the English Football Association used their power to prevent *any* sort of mixed-sex football. The case studies conducted by Hills and Croston (2012) for Brunel University has progressed a forward path and foreground mixed-football (and more generally physical education) as a positive basis from which to re-interpret gender. This is very important in two ways. Firstly, for progressing learning and becoming a football player, and secondly, to encourage more girls and women to participate in physical exercise. In the second scenario, mixed football has shown to be a context whereby participants have contested conventional notions of femininity and binary thinking in sports. As Hills and Croston have noted, ‘the gender binary reconfigures within group capabilities while reinforcing difference, rather challenging them’ (Hills and Croston, 2012:599). In terms of this research, acquisition in marginal contexts was illustrated in many interviews that talked about playing mixed football at a very young age. Importantly, these experiences presented a strong argument for the introduction of mixed football for the development of not only women’s football, but of football players at an age when physical differences are negligible. When discussing divisible spaces in Chapter 5 for example, it emerged that exclusion had a clear impact on developing women’s football, and of female football players.

In hybrid contests, undoing this binary of stratified spaces may enable the implementation of more effective development strategy. Millie was one such example, and she discussed learning to become a football player from around the age of 6. She was actually a goalkeeper and she spoke about how her cousin would fire balls at her until she learned how to catch. He taught her all the ‘showbiz’ stuff, made her do repetitions, i.e. firing a ball against a piece of wood until she could do accurately and catch the ball correctly. Moreover, she went on to explain that she did not consider there were differences between men technically (skills) when compared with women. Although there were the obvious physical and speed differences, once broken down the technical aspects between men and women’s football, the games were similar and mixed-sex football helped her game. This is one example, but commonly emerged across all participants’ interviews. Women’s football, and football in general, would do well to integrate mixed-sex football looking at the strategies by which participants did challenge gender binaries in these contexts. Although conflating physicality with competence at football was a premise also prevalent amongst women themselves, nevertheless, in accounting for variety in sporting practices, mixed-football encouraged hybridity because it was a marginal space. It was a space of synthesis and

resolution and a productive learning environment that contested the limitations gender stratification in sports. Participants incurred a sense of ownership and belonging in such a way that hybridity was not a fragmentation, but a collective focus for identification.

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APPENDIX I

<i>Main Themes</i>		
<i>Mimicry: Complicity and Observing Gender</i>	<i>Disavowal: Stratification and Negotiation</i>	<i>Hybridity: Transformation, Contesting Binary, Developing New Cultural Formations</i>
<i>Informal Spaces</i> Childhood recollections and formative memories of playing football. No references to 'gender'.	<i>A Professional Career: Hierarchy and Mobility</i> Issues of resources of a league structure. Descriptions of some discernable form of recognizable structure. Commitment necessary to forge football <i>career</i> . Narrative is indicative of the legacy of poor structural development.	<i>Development and Learning</i> Where girls are not given the opportunity to acquire the football skills from a young age, and playing football comes much later on in comparison to boys, or where girls are expected to play <i>traditional female sports</i> , opportunity to develop competence becomes an issue later on. Anxieties about learning, particularly older women, evidenced by lack of confidence.
<i>Formal Spaces: Gendering Football</i> Formalized space i.e. educational, stratification into male/female sports.	<i>Social Networks: Durability of Friendships</i> Development of social networks through football. Social value of football. There does emerge a coherent narrative around social networks that brings to bear a sense of collective identity. The sense of collectivism is important in impressing narrative of durability and endeavour to impress in a context that has marginalized.	<i>Disrupting Femininities (gender binary)</i> When physical differences between boys and girl negligible, opportunity to challenge and contest the gender binary. Mixed football can be a source of challenge that questions the natural partnership that genders football. How to develop quality and skills, do we dispense with simplistic and evaluate on the basis of individual capability.
<i>Compensation</i> Compensatory practices, over-emphasis of femininity, heavy make-up and deodorant before matches etc.	<i>Ownership and Identity</i> Separate women's football club. Asserts own identity, antithesis of 'men's' football. Benefit of not having to be reliant on an established men's club. Why women's teams should operate separately, self-definition and ownership. A way of negotiating poor structures.	<i>Re-ordering Gender</i> Do not compare to men's football, it is too established, however, there are aspects of women's football which are too its strength such as technique and skill. Develop in schools and speed with which the game is growing.
<i>Complicity and Feminine 'Deviancy': Engaging Physicality</i> As with other interviews, the emergence of a narrative that conforms to hegemonic masculine context, become apparent, and also transgresses what we may understand as feminine, <i>adaptation</i> to the context. Physicality experienced in some football matches, poor tackling, fights, as a common occurrence when she was playing in the 1980s.	<i>Transgressing the Public/Private Dichotomy</i> Women have to make 'choices' because of structure/professionalism.	

APPENDIX II

Participants

Linda: Aged in her early-50s, born and raised in the north west of England, no longer plays football in any formal capacity, but continues to be involved in the coaching of girls' teams in the local area.

Nina: In her early 20's and originally hails from Luxembourg, but has lived in Manchester for three years while attending university in the city. A post-graduate student, so her experiences of playing football are largely centred around her social life at university.

Sandra: Late-30s and notably from the beginning of the interview, differentiated herself from what she considered a 'typical' female football player's story. She talked about her formative primary experiences, through university and then to more informally negotiated spaces that provide a community and very distinct identity for the group of women with whom she plays football on a regular basis.

Jody: 25 years old and living in North of England. Much of Jody's experiences are articulated through the recounting of formative memories around playing football at primary school. Locates her experience according to life stages and the transitions (from childhood through school to young adulthood) and which form a very distinct sense of change over time.

Pat: Originally from Leeds, but now 45 and living in Manchester. Continues to play football regularly for a Wednesday night five-a-side team. Formative introduction to football is facilitated by an uncle, because *'me dad was a rugby man'*.

Lucy: Late-20s, formative experiences of playing football are recounted as transgressing into spaces that are informally gendered as male, which led to her being bullied at school. Great deal of experience playing mixed-sex football.

Elizabeth: In her mid-50s, family relocated from Wales to East Lancashire mid-1960s. Continues to be very much active in terms of being involved in sports and youth development in the area. Elizabeth's biography explained in rural setting, and there is a narrative of locality in a close community setting.

Gillian: Early exchanges of this interview were quite brief, but did refer in partial way to Gillian's background. Now in her early 50s, Gillian's experience of playing football, and now later in a more custodial role, ventures insight into development and conditions that have seen significant advances in the development of the women's game.

Emma: At 22 is one of the youngest women interviewed. Because of this there is notable differentiation with the experiences of the older women, the main contrast being the citation of experiences with reference to definitive structural opportunities.

Grace: Early-50s. Places her relationship to football in the context of her social background when recollecting life at university and managing the transition into higher education.

Evelyn: Mid-50s and a wealth of experience playing and coaching football, introduced to football through her father, she is an only child and recounts an early memory of being taken along to the local football fields on a Saturday morning to watch her father play. Some indicative biographical content, she is an only child, and under the charge of her father on Saturdays, which meant football at the weekends.

Martha: Plays football in her free time in-between full-time work and family. Married with two small children. 39 years of age.

Yvonne: In her mid-40s, devoted to football since she was very young and played football during the 1980s to mid-1990s.

Millie: In her-30s, she talks about her 'love affair' with football. Introduced to football by her cousin who was professional football player and now a coach.

Erin: Just turned 60, the oldest of the women interviewed. Interesting background to the extent that she implies that here up-bringing almost forced to play football. For example, implies not a privileged upbringing having lived in tenements as a young girl, and it was boys who be playing in the area, consequently she played football because they did. It was a 'typical working class area'.

Jade and Hannah: Interviewed together, the youngest of the participants at 18 years of age. Students at an FA Football Academy, which is based at a local college they play football as part of their educational programme in conjunction with their 'traditional' studies.

Interview Schedule

Outline of the research (spoken prior to interview)

I am a post-graduate student at the University of Liverpool currently undertaking research into women's football. The aim of the research is to generate narratives from female football players in order to build a picture of past and present experiences of female football players in the north west of England. The research will give me a picture of the extent to which the women's game has changed over the period from the 1970s to the present day, with regard to development and playing opportunities and to the reception and attitudes towards women's football.

As this is a narrative piece of research, I am conducting individual interviews of 45-60 minutes on length. Interviews would also be recorded and transcribed, after which I would be happy to send a copy of the transcription to you so that you may look over this for approval. Please be assured that all content on transcription will remain confidential and that interviews will be anonymised to protect the identities of participants. Are you still happy to proceed?

1. When did your interest in coaching women's football begin and how did you get started?
2. What is your experience of opportunities for women to play football? You may include anything related to teams that you have coached, to what extent has this changed over time coaching women's teams?
3. Can you explain any experiences of coaching?
4. What are the facilities like for playing and training? Have these changed over your time?

Thank you for your time.