

Idyllic or isolating? Rural Britain, Social Capital and Physical Activity.

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Abstract

The belief that rural Britain is an idyllic landscape has become a part of everyday discourse and can be attributed to the growing number of families migrating to countryside villages (Shucksmith, 2004; 2012; Tyrell & Harmer, 2010; Bernard, et al., 2019). Within this research project, Rural Britain has been defined as a town or village with a population of less than 10,000 (Department of Food, Environment and Rural Affairs, 2017). The 'idyll' discourse does not always account for what it is like for young people (15-25), who are transitioning from childhood to adulthood and may face unique challenges impacting their inclusion in wider society (Glendinning, et al., 2003; Shucksmith, 2004). Therefore, individuals who can invest in their social capital could gain access to new opportunities and experiences that enable a smoother transition (Black, Scott & Shucksmith, 2019).

Community groups such as sports organisations are often seen as positive environments whereby social actors can formulate new social connections in line with the concept of social capital (Coalter, 2007; Nicholson & Hoyer, 2008). An increase in social capital can create a more harmonious community and enable an individual to receive certain economic benefits, for example, job opportunities or access to new experiences (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2001a). This research project utilised a social constructionist lens, allowing a greater appreciation of the various life experiences the participants have had (Crotty, 1998). Data was collected through a series of participant observations coupled with a set of focus groups. Furthermore, this project will be theoretically informed by Pierre Bourdieu's 'Theory of Practice' which offers an understanding of the behaviours, thoughts and feelings of people, utilising the fundamental concepts of, habitus, field, doxa and capital.

This project argues that can sport act as a vehicle for the generation of social capital, often enabling young people to make strong social connections (Putnam, 2001a; Coalter, 2007; Nicholson & Hoyer, 2008; Nichols, Tacon & Muir, 2013). Additionally, participants perceived the countryside as a positive place to live, due to the natural beauty and freedom the environment offered them (Tyrell & Harmer, 2010). However,

they equally believed that the lack of access to transport and travel was a drawback to living rurally, and this contributed to feelings of isolation from mainstream society (Shucksmith, 2004; Black, Scott & Shucksmith, 2019).

Declaration

A thesis submitted to the University of Gloucestershire in accordance with the requirements for the degree of MA by Research Sport Leadership, Education and Society in the School of Natural, Social and Sport Sciences.

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other educational institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Signed: Bradley Jacques

Date 30/09/23

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1. Introduction

Over the last three decades, there has been an increasing portrayal of rural Britain as an ideal and safe location for families to grow up, which has led to an increase in families migrating to the countryside (Shucksmith, 2004; 2006; 2012; Tyyrell & Harmer, 2010). Moreover, the countryside provides children with a natural area to grow, allowing them to explore and connect with nature (Shucksmith, et al., 2023). However, some academics (see Milbourne, et al., 2003; Shucksmith, 2006) have observed that young people (15-25) are often neglected within the countryside as they begin the transitional journey between childhood and adulthood (Glendinning, et al., 2003; Milbourne, et al., 2004; Shucksmith, 2006; 2012; Bernard, et al., 2019; Shucksmith, et al., 2023). Therefore, young people may be disadvantaged as they lack access to important resources (e.g., human, social and financial capital) and opportunities (Bourdieu, 1986; Warren, Thompson & Saegert, 2001; Glendinning, et al., 2003; Milbourne, et al., 2004; Shucksmith, 2006; Patnulty & Svesdon, 2007 Bernard, et al., 2019; Shucksmith, et al., 2023). Furthermore, this has led to young people having to make the difficult decision about whether to leave their rural villages and towns to pursue opportunities in adulthood (Shucksmith, 2006; 2012).

It is believed that enhancing one's social capital can help support young people and make them feel more included within the wider society (Putnam, 2001; Warren, Thompson & Saegert, 2001; Halpern, 2005). Social capital is an idea that theorises the value and potential benefits that can be accrued from one's social networks and connections (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 1993; 2001; Halpern, 2005; Rostilla, 2011). While the modern conceptualisation of social capital has been popularised over the last 20 years, the values embedded within have been important topics of research since the earliest sociological research by academics such as, Emile Durkheim (1897). Durkheim (1897) stressed the importance of social connections as they facilitate a sense of belonging and identity which positively impact one's well-being.

The modern understanding of social capital was initially conceptualised by Pierre Bourdieu who integrated the concept within his 'Theory of Practice' seeking to understand the role of power and conflict within society (1977; 1984; 1986; 1990). Despite the theoretical grounding that Bourdieu's theory demonstrated; the concept

has been manipulated by several other academics (see, James Coleman (1990) and Robert Putnam (1993; 1995; 2001)) changing its purpose and definition. Arguably the latter has made the most significant and prominent changes to the concept applying the theory as a commodity of the community, and not the individual (Halpern, 2005; Son, 2020). Moreover, this has inspired policy debate within Western countries, elevating social capital into everyday discourse, and making it one of the most widely discussed concepts that have emerged from sociology (Halpern, 2005; Coalter, 2007; Rostilla, 2011; Son, 2020). The perception is that social capital can create an inclusive society with the ability for people to access new resources and opportunities which enables them to be more widely included in society (Putnam, 2001; Halpern, 2005; Rostilla, 2011).

Additionally, sports clubs and organisations have often been associated with the generation of social capital as they are a place with which people can socialise together through a shared interest (Coalter, 2007; 2015; Nicholson & Hoye, 2008; Spaaij, 2009). Also, this allows, an individual to meet new people through competitive fixtures or as new members joining the club (Auld, 2008; Walesth, 2008; Morgan, 2012). However, there is a more extensive debate which questions the extent to which sport truly supports the generation of social capital (Coalter, 2007; 2015).

This research project will therefore seek to further explore and understand two key research questions.

- 'How can sports organisations facilitate the creation of social capital within rural communities?'
- 'How do young people perceive living in rural Britain through their lived experiences?'

It will use a combination of participant observations and focus groups to further explore the lived experiences of young people who reside within rural areas.

The findings of this project suggest that sports organisations can facilitate the formation of social capital. However, this predominantly occurred between members

of the same club, demonstrating a higher level of bonding capital. Further, within this study, the young people who participated spoke positively about their lives in rural areas and enjoyed the natural landscape and freedom it offered them. However, at times they felt disconnected from wider society due to a lack of access to transportation which ultimately led to them missing out on social events or relying on their parents to take them to places.

2. Literature Review

To appreciate the nuances of this research project it is necessary to understand the common themes which will underpin this. Therefore, this chapter will begin to analyse and evaluate a range of literature texts that focus on the overarching themes of this project. This enables the understanding of the current issues within rural Britain and how sport may be a vehicle for the production of social capital, which will be linked back to Bourdieu's theory of practice. Additionally, it will show the lack of current research that sits within the niche area of sport and social capital development within rural areas.

Rural Britain

For several years there has been a renowned interest in the lives of people from rural areas in the UK (United Kingdom) (Shucksmith, 2004; 2006; 2016; Tyrell & Harmer, 2010). This research project will use the UK Government's definition of rural, which describes settlements that have a population of less than 10,000 (Department of Food, Environment and Rural Affairs, 2017). Equally as illuminated by Rye (2006) there is a subjective nature to rural Britain. Many villages and towns have unique and enduring characteristics that define their being and their rural nature (Rye, 2006).

Common media discourse paints the picture of a rural idyll (Shucksmith, 2004; Collins, 2008; 2010; Tyrell & Harmer, 2010; Yarwood, 2017; Shucksmith, et al., 2023). A place of natural beauty that is safe and peaceful, and considered ideal for raising children, when compared to urban cityscapes (Shucksmith, 2004; Leyshon, 2011; May et al., 2020; Shucksmith, et al., 2023). This rhetoric has become a contributing factor to the development of a counter-urbanisation movement in the United Kingdom, which defines the process of many middle-class families who have migrated from urban areas to rural areas over the last 30 years (Tyrell & Harmer, 2010). A lack of perspective from both urban settlers and the media means that the true lived experience of people in rural areas has not been fully explored or recognised (Marsden et al., 2012; Willet, 2021).

However, as this chapter will demonstrate this is not always the case as many young people find these areas are not for them, enhancing notions of exclusion (Glendinning, et al., 2003; Shucksmith, 2004; 2016; Milbourne, 2004 Tyrell & Harmer, 2010; Leyshon, 2011; Culliney, 2014; Bernard et al., 2019; Shucksmith, et al., 2023). Furthermore, this can lead to young people feeling 'socially excluded' from society, which is detrimental to their well-being and future journey (Levitas, et al., 2005; Collins, 2008; Leyshon, 2011; Bernard, et al., 2019).

This section will evaluate the core issues facing young people in rural Britain such as a lack of transportation (Milbourne, et al., 2003; Shucksmith, 2004), a reliance on their parents (Tyrell & Harmer, 2011) and contention for social space (Collins, 2010; Tyrell & Harmer, 2010). Furthermore, it will use contemporary issues that may face young people to further contextualise these arguments, such as the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the high rate of economic inflation in the UK.

Transport

One of the largest reported barriers for young people living in rural areas is transport (Urry, 2002; Shucksmith, 2004; Gray, Shaw & Farrington, 2006; Collins, 2008; Harmer & Tyrell, 2010). The globalised modern world enables people to be connected in a variety of ways (Gray, Shaw & Farrington, 2006; Pierson, 2010; Bernard, et al., 2019). However, a lack of transport can contribute to rural-based young people 'lagging' behind their urban peers (Gray, Shaw and Farrington, 2006; Pierson, 2010). This can limit young people's opportunities to socialise with their friends and may also impact employment opportunities outside of their local area (Gray, Shaw and Farrington, 2006; Pierson, 2010; Harmer & Tyrell, 2010; Bernard, et al., 2019). Individuals can benefit from having a private vehicle; however, this comes with considerable financial costs attached (e.g., learning to drive; fuel and purchasing a vehicle) (Bailey, et al., 2016; Klarner & Knabbe, 2019; Shucksmith, et al., 2023). Additionally, Bailey et al., (2016) argues that some families have to cut other luxuries to fund a private vehicle. In the most extreme circumstances, this may lead to families choosing between food or fuel, which illustrates the importance of their car (Bailey, et al., 2016; Shucksmith, et al., 2023).

In addressing these issues and supporting rural communities, the British government made a large amount of funding available for the provision of public transport in the 1980s and 1990s (Urey, 2002; Glendinning, et al., 2003; Grey, et al., 2006). However, in recent years the consistency of these services has waned, and they are becoming less reliable, for the young to use (Tyyrell & Hamer, 2010; Black, et al., 2019; Klarner & Knabbe, 2019). As Black et al.'s (2019) study illuminates this has been an ongoing issue for rural areas since the economic crash of 2008, and the subsequent austerity measures put in place by the Conservative Government to curb public spending (Morgan, 2013; Shucksmith, et al., 2023). Subsequently leading to a lack of essential funding for key transport and welfare services (Black et al., 2019).

Furthermore, in contemporary Britain, there has been widespread industrial action in the transport sector by both bus and train workers (BBC.co.uk, 2022). This is an issue that has the propensity to get much worse as Britain faces a 'cost of living crisis' caused by both the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukrainian War (BBC News, 2023; Shucksmith, et al., 2023). Furthermore, this has put families under intense financial pressure as the prices of everyday items such as food and fuel have increased exponentially (BBC News, 2023; Shucksmith, et al., 2023). It can be inferred that this may impact young people the most as transport links are crucial to for them to connect more broadly with people (Grey et al., 2006; Tyyrell & Harmer, 2010; Eime, et al., 2010; May et al., 2020). Farrington (2004) terms this 'access poverty' which occurs when an individual's ability to move is trapped or restricted. As a result, access poverty can lead to young people feeling as though they are confined to the local areas further restricting their movements (Hamer & Tyyrell, 2010).

A potential consequence of access poverty is the inability of young people to look outside of their immediate locality for work (Farrington & Farrington & Farrington & Farrington, 2004; Culliney, 2014; Shucksmith, et al., 2023). Employment in rural areas is often seasonal or temporary as business owners make sure they are using resources efficiently (Shucksmith, 2004; Grey et al., 2006; Culliney, 2014; Bernard, et al., 2019; Black et al., 2019; Shucksmith, et al., 2023). The flexible nature of work in rural areas can be beneficial to young people as it allows them to prioritise education or other hobbies but still earn money during busier times of the year (e.g., summer)

(Rural Communities, 2006; Shucksmith, et al., 2023). On the other hand, the instability of work in rural areas is a contributing factor to low pay, which can increase financial pressure on families, and limits an individual's ability to cultivate key employability skills (Rural Communities, 2006; Shucksmith, et al., 2023).

This notion is corroborated by Culliney (2014) who describes this phenomenon as the 'rural pay penalty'. This is a term that defines the difference in pay that rural employers can offer compared to urban businesses (Culliney, 2014). For many, this is an incentive to find work in the national labour market, which will offer higher wages in larger businesses and facilitate professional growth (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2000; Cullianey, 2014). However, these higher-valued roles are competitive and therefore, the individual's socioeconomic status and level of education are often determining factors for success (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2000; Cullianey, 2014). Recent government figures also show the discrepancy in wages for rural dwellers with the average worker in urban Britain making around £3500 more annually (excluding London) (Department for Environmental Food & Rural Affairs, 2021).

When evaluating the disparity in rural wages with the current economic crisis facing the UK, it becomes clear that individuals from rural areas are at a disadvantage (Cullianey, 2014; Bailey, et al., 2016). This is further exacerbated if the individual does not have access to a private vehicle, which makes acquiring employment within the national market increasingly difficult (Cullianey, 2014; Bailey, et al., 2016; Bernard, et al., 2019; Shucksmith, 2023).

Contested Space

An issue that can widely affect young people is the lack of appropriate space for them to socialise with friends (Tucker & Mathews, 2001; Leyshon, 2003; 2011). This is essential as it allows young people to develop their own identity, and find a sense of self (Milbourne, et al., 2003; Tyyrell & Harmer, 2010). Additionally, friends often act as a support bubble, which can enhance feelings of acceptance and increase well-being (Shucksmith, 2004; Rose, et al., 2012; Bernard, et al., 2019; Shucksmith, et al., 2023). Commonly, young people in rural areas search for local areas to 'hang out', allowing

them to talk, or play ball games together (e.g., football) (Tyyrell & Harmer, 2010). Despite some people's belief that there is plenty of space, much of this is reserved for farming or other labour work, thus forcing young people to socialise within the village or town (Gildings & Yarwood, 2005). Often to the outsider, this can be perceived as being unorganised and unstructured, influencing negative opinions from adults, who perceive this as young people 'getting into trouble' or 'loitering' (Shucksmith, 2004; Gildings & Yarwood, 2005; Tyyrell & Harmer, 2010; Leyshon, 2011; Bernard, et al., 2019).

These negative attitudes are often the product of traditional values and the unequal power dynamics between young people and adults (Leyshon, 2011). Often young people are situated at the bottom of the rural social hierarchy and adults at the top (Leyshon, 2011). This notion is illustrated in the stories of young people who suggest that at times adults will move into 'their space' and overtake it to facilitate their social activities (Tyyrell & Harmer, 2010; Leyshon, 2011). As Punch et al. (2007) notes power is formed within the social relationships that young people have with adults. It is within these relationships that adults can establish and reinforce the expected rules and values of rural areas, it is expected that young people will conform to what's expected of them (Punch et al., 2007; Shucksmith, et al., 2023). Therefore, the reproduction of these values is used as a means to control young people who otherwise can be seen as 'unpredictable' (Punch, et al., 2007; Tyyrell & Harmer, 2010; Yarwood, 2017).

When viewing rural power through a Bordieuan lens it can be argued that the reproduction of structures is a product of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1990; Shucksmith, 2012). Symbolic violence is a term for the structures of misrecognition that occur within society (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990). According to Bourdieu (1977; 1990) if ideas are not recognised then they hold no true value. This can be seen when young people's ideas are suppressed by adults as they do not conform to the traditional norms and values upheld by the local community (Shucksmith, 2004; 2012; Tyyrell & Harmer, 2010).

Furthermore, this can lead young rural people to feel they are being 'othered' or ignored by adults (Phillips, 2010; Leyshon, 2011; Hickey & Pauli-Myler, 2017). This is the result of young people having a limited role within their community, perpetuating

the notion that their opinions are less valid (Tucker & Mathews, 2001; Phillips, 2010; Leyshon, 2011; Hickey & Pauli-Myler, 2017). Likewise, Uprichard (2008) argues that it is often the case that adults focus on what the future holds for young people, the skills and competencies that they will need but do not currently possess. Resulting in them feeling inadequate as they are told they are not capable or worthy of having an opinion due to their age and lack of experience (Gildings & Yarwood, 2005; Uprichard 2008).

Furthermore, young people may have to socialise within their local village due to a lack of available space, and this can lead to them feeling as though they are being watched by adults (Gildings & Yarwood, 2005; Tyrell & Harmer, 2010; Shucksmith, et al., 2023). This surveillance can cause rural young people to no longer want to socialise or feel they must conform to the local values and norms of the community (Shucksmith, 2004; 2012 Tyrell & Harmer, 2010). Moreover, individuals may feel they are not truly accepted if they do not conform to these norms and values which may be a barrier to them finding their identity (Gildings & Yarwood, 2005). Rose et. al, (2012) argues the importance of acceptance as a building block for the inclusion of young people in society. To be accepted is to be included; and as Whitaker (2010) notes informal structures of recognition such as praise can play a simple but effective role in making young people feel accepted (Rose, et al., 2012). Further, this can also lead to positive feelings of belonging which can enhance one's well-being, and decrease possible mental-health issues (Collins, 2010; Whittaker, 2010; Rose et al., 2012). Additionally, it may impact an individual's feelings about their future, in Tyrell & Harmer's study (2010) those young people who had a more negative perception of rural life were more likely to want to leave their local community.

Pierre Bourdieu

This research will be theoretically underpinned by Pierre Bourdieu's 'Theory of Practice' (1977; 1990). Bourdieu's theory focuses on the reproduction of power and class within society; thus, it operates as a suitable lens to view the lives of young people who reside in rural Britain. Bourdieu's 'Theory of Practice' is acclaimed for its critical perspective of society and its use of empirical research to ground these ideas (Portes, 1998; 2000; Swartz, 2008; Grenfell, 2012).

Practice encapsulates all mannerisms and behaviours, thoughts, and feelings of the social actor (Jenkins, 1992). Our social life is innately practical and reflects the world around us, we learn through action, and the outcomes determine what our future decisions will be (Bourdieu, 1990; Jenkins, 1992; Cushion & Kitchen, 2010). Bourdieu's thinking tools work in relationship with one another to form practice, this is demonstrated in this equation (Maton, 2012, p.50). "[(habitus)(capital)] + field = practice" (Maton, 2012, p.50). The equation is fundamental to the understanding of practice and explains the relationships that are formed between each component. (Jenkins, 1992; Webb et al., 2002; Swartz, 2008; Grenfell, 2012; Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2015). Therefore, this illustrates that one's position in a social field is determined by their starting point (habitus) and their ability to mobilise power (capital) within a certain social environment (field) (Maton, 2012). Each of the next parts of this review will look at each component of Bourdieu's core concepts in more detail, analysing their use and contribution to practice.

A foundational pillar of Bourdieu's theory is to view the world through a combined lens of both subjectivity and objectivity (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990; Webb et al., 2003). Bourdieu believes these are two extreme points of view that do not fully reflect the structure of society. Rather it is Bourdieu's belief that while objective structures have an initial impact on one's life, there are subjective factors which also influence our perception of the world (Bourdieu, 1990; Cushion & Kitchen, 2010; Grenfell, 2012). The merging of objectivity and subjectivity is where Bourdieu finds social practice, the outcome of his theory (Bourdieu, 1977; 1984; 1986; 1990; Jenkins, 1992; Webb, et al., 2003; Swartz, 2008; Grenfell, 2010).

Habitus

Habitus is renowned for being the beginning of Bourdieu's ideas within his theory of practice (Beames & Telford, 2013). The habitus describes how social actors perceive the world around them, this is influenced by their earliest experiences, and inherited in part from their parents or guardians (Bourdieu, 1990; Maton, 2012; Beames & Telford, 2013). Habitus is formed through the coming together of objective structures and subjective perceptions (Bourdieu, 1990; King, 2000; Maton, 2012). Moreover, the habitus is dynamic and able to adapt to different social fields, but it is within our earliest experiences that social actors are most impressionable and therefore gain much of their worldview (Bourdieu, 1990; Maton, 2012; Beames & Telford, 2013). Therefore, one's habitus can be an early predictor of social class, through the inheritance of class and capital from our primary caregivers (Bourdieu, 1986; Beames & Telford, 2013).

As the habitus works in relation to a social field, a set of transposable and durable dispositions are formed, these supplement the decisions social actors make and inform practice (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990; Maton, 2012). Further Bourdieu (1977; 1990) suggests these decisions are determined by a 'predictable trajectory'. In other words, social actors make decisions based on their level of comfort and often stay within the norms and values of their social class (Yang, 2014). Therefore, it can be suggested that the decision-making process is not wholly conscious but determined and shaped by the habitus (Bourdieu, 1977; 1986; 1990; Raey, 2004; 2010; Yang, 2014). In some respects, this can be seen in rural Britain as social roles are passed down often through family businesses, which reproduce power and social class (Shucksmith, 2004; Leyshon, 2011).

The role that habitus plays has been challenged by those who consider that Bourdieu neglects the subjective elements of habitus (Jenkins, 1992; Raey, 2004; 2010; Sayer, 2005; Yang, 2014). Rather they claim that habitus is a structural component that guides or dictates practice (Bourdieu, 1977; 1984; 1990; Yang, 2014). Yang (2014) explores the habitus of working-class individuals within educational settings, concluding that these individuals are unable to thrive in this social field as their habitus does not allow it (p.1528). Thus, demonstrating the 'structural ceiling' placed upon individuals which is influenced by their social class and habitus (Bourdieu, 1986).

Furthermore, Bourdieu argues that no matter the advantage one may receive in life they will conform to the position in which their habitus feels most comfortable (1986). This leads many to believe that for Bourdieu social structures are more likely to reproduce social position rather than enhancing it (Evans, 1999; Raey, 2004; 2010; Sayer, 2005; Yang, 2014). Similarly, Evens (1999) claims that Bourdieu's theory is a sophisticated version of objectivism. These critiques demonstrate a contrast to the belief that Bourdieu was able to eliminate dualisms from his theory (Raey, 2004; 2010; Sayer, 2005). Despite some pitfalls or uncertainties around Bourdieu's theory, as King (2000) argues Bourdieu goes further than any sociologist to create a grand theory of social practice, that eliminates these more extreme sociological points of view.

Field

Fields are the second component of the theory of practice and for Bourdieu, simply represent the social arena in which interaction takes place (Webb et al., 2002). Each field has its own set of rules (values and beliefs) that dictate the way that interaction occurs (Jenkins, 1992; Thomson, 2012). Furthermore, fields can be described in the large macro sense (e.g., law, education, sport) or in smaller domains, called sub-fields (e.g., the local community) (Jenkins, 1992; Thomson, 2013; Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2015). These social fields are structured hierarchically, with social actors who have more power (capital) residing at the top (Bourdieu, 1986; 1990; Jenkins, 1992). Additionally, the interconnected and dynamic nature of fields means social actors can occupy multiple fields at the same time, leading Bourdieu to theorise a meta field of power, which underpins all other social fields (Thomson, 2013).

Due to the patterned nature of fields, it can be inferred that those people who are powerful in one field, will ultimately remain powerful in another connected field (Thomson, 2013; Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2015). This can create a complex and confusing theory, as all fields become interlinked (Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2015). Furthermore, it may mean a researcher is analysing the power structures of all of these fields at once (Thomson, 2013). One solution proposed by Bourdieu is to conflate various fields or take some out completely to get a more organised approach (Bourdieu, 1984; 1990). This can be seen in his work with large fields such as

education (Bourdieu, 1984; 1990). This research will contend with similar issues. Larger fields such as sports or rural towns will be considered, however, due to the variance in teams and sports it will be more obvious where the intersections of fields occur. Equally, this will highlight the unique but important norms and values of each field.

In certain structures, individuals can utilise their power and determine what can be considered as 'authentic' capital, or legitimate power. (Jenkins, 1992; Grenfell, 2012; Thomson, 2012). Subsequently, Bourdieu (1977; 1984; 1990) notes that those who reside at the top of the field, have an innate 'feel for the game' which is controlled through their habitus. This allows them to strategize and invest their capital into fields more effectively than their peers (Bourdieu, 1986; 1990). Equally, certain individuals reside at the top of multiple fields, offering them more avenues to invest capital and therefore, reproduce their power more effectively (Nash, 1990; Thomson, 2012). The reproduction of power in this way is representative of the concept of 'doxa' (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990; Deer, 2012; Thomson, 2012). Doxa is a form of 'symbolic violence' or misrecognition that allows for aspects of society to exist or reproduce without question (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990). Even when questioned powerful people will have the means to change the narrative and remain on top, supporting the reproduction of power in the field (Nash, 1990; Thomson, 2012).

Bourdieu also uses fields to demonstrate exclusion and is keen to illustrate social fields are more representative of mountains as individuals do not begin life on an equal playing field (Bourdieu, 1990; Thomson, 2012). Further, this illustrates privilege in society, and how some people are born into power and influence while others must struggle to climb the hierarchical social ladder (Bourdieu, 1990). For this reason, Bourdieu often terms social fields as 'fields of struggles' in which conflict between social actors occurs as they climb to gain recognition and power (Bourdieu, 1984; 1986; 1990). Bourdieu uses this to describe the 'structural ceiling' that may be placed on working-class individuals (1984; 1986). Moreover, this demonstrates the distinct critical perspective that runs through Bourdieu's theory (Portes, 1998; 2000; Siisänen, 2000; Fine, 2010). Unlike other social theories, (e.g., Putnam, 1993; 1995; 2001) Bourdieu does not focus on only the positives or the negatives of life, rather, he takes the true experiences of people through ethnographic research and expresses these

within his theory (Bourdieu, 1984; 1986; Portes, 1998; Siisiainen, 2003; Grenfell, 2009).

Capital

Capital is the final component and is fundamental to the understanding of power within Bourdieu's theory of practice (1986). Integral to the concept of capital is the ability for it to be recognised by the people around them, termed 'symbolic capital' (Bourdieu, 1986; Siisiainen, 2003; Webb et al., 2003). If one's accumulation of capital is not recognised by peers then it becomes meaningless, a further element of 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu, 1986; Siisiainen, 2003; Pret, Shaw & Dodd, 2015). As mentioned previously, this occurs at times within rural areas when adults do not recognise the value of young people, leading them to feel 'othered' and under-appreciated (Shucksmith, 2004; Tyyrell & Harmer, 2010). The production of symbolic capital is the outcome of effectively mobilising and strategizing one's capital resources to demonstrate their power (Bourdieu, 1986; 2013; Portes, 1998; Pret, Shaw & Dodd, 2015).

However, Bourdieu (1986) views these transactions holistically, understanding all potential transactions that can occur in social life, and not just the ones with a physical or tangible outcome. Therefore, there is a need to pay attention to both the non-tangible transactions that occur in the social world, as much as the physical exchanges which are traditionally valued (Bourdieu, 1986). This has led to academics (see, Grenfell, 2012) arguing that Bourdieu's theory of capital is a much more critical theoretical model compared with traditional economic perspectives of capital that focus purely on mercantile exchange (Webb et al., 2003; Moore, 2012; Yang, 2014). To offer a more succinct understanding of this Bourdieu splits capital into two categories, self-interested and disinterested (Bourdieu, 1986)

Self-interested capital describes those economic exchanges that have an immediate return on their investment (Bourdieu, 1986). These usually involve the investment of money or assets (e.g., property or stocks) and can be recognised instantly by those around them (Bourdieu, 1986). On the other hand, disinterested capital can be

represented in several ways such as knowledge, experiences, and social connections (Bourdieu, 1986). The two main forms of disinterested capital that Bourdieu (1986) focuses on are cultural capital and social capital. Cultural capital represents an individual's status in many regards (Swartz, 2008; Grenfell, 2012). It is influenced by their interests, education, and hobbies (Bourdieu, 1986). Social capital is an accumulation of social resources mobilised within the connections one makes, which has the potential to create tangible benefits (Bourdieu, 1984; 1986).

Fundamental to Bourdieu's capital theory is that each of the different types of capital can be mobilised and converted into other forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Webb, et al., 2003; Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2015). For example, an individual may invest in their education (cultural capital), and achieve higher qualifications, this could lead to a better-paying job which increases their economic capital. The convertible nature of capital facilitates the use of its disinterested form as a multiplier, allowing individuals to express their power in a variety of ways (Bourdieu, 1986; Grenfell, 2009).

It is this concept of exchange, which Portes (1998; 2000) argues fundamentally grounds Bourdieu's theory and makes it more refined than other social theories (Grenfell, 2009). Moreover, exchange allows for a focus on varied resources that are available to powerful individuals (Portes, 1998; Portes & Landolt, 2000). Those with the greatest accumulation of capital hold the means of production and through 'exchange' can reproduce their social position generationally (Portes, 1998; Portes & Landolt, 2000). This notion has been observed and demonstrated in various educational studies (Edwards, et al., 2003). Often higher-class parents can use their status to enhance their children, utilising structures such as private education, to amplify the social and cultural capital of their children (Westergard & Resler, 1975; Allat, 1993; Edwards, et al., 2003; Butler & Hamnett, 2011). Furthermore, this supports the claims of Bourdieu's critics, that his theory is a means for the reproduction of class and power (Raey, 2004; 2010; Sayer, 2005). Those individuals who hold the most power will strategize their capital to benefit those around them (e.g., their children) (Edwards, et al., 2003; Raey, 2004; DeLuca, 2013).

Further, one's capital resources are linked to their position within a field as well (Bourdieu, 1984; 1986). An increase in disposable capital of any type can increase

one's position within that field, as they possess more power and access to greater opportunity (Bourdieu, 1984; Olliver, 2008; Lefevre & Ohl, 2012). Therefore, this can impact their tastes and the types of activities or sports in which they consume (Bourdieu, 1984; Lefevre & Ohl, 2012 Grenfell, 2015). By viewing the field of sport in as a singularity with its own hierarchy it is plausible to understand some sports as having a larger distinction than others (Bourdieu, 1984; Grenfell, 2015). Distinction is a key aspect of this notion of class - a sport or hobby which requires a high-level of cultural and economic capital is deemed to be distinct, something with which the higher class would aspire to be involved in (Bourdieu, 1984; Webb, et al., 2003; Olliver, 2008; Grenfell, 2012; 2015). For example, sports such as polo or sailing or golf may fall into this category of having a high level of distinction due to the need for expensive equipment or exclusive membership to participate. In contrast, to this commonly played sports such as football or netball can be seen to have a lower level of distinction as the barriers to entry are much smaller both culturally and financially. The notion of distinction, therefore, underpins the ideas of class within Bourdieu's theory using the different forms of capital to represent this concept (Bourdieu, 1984; Grenfell, 2012; 2015).

One study by DeLuca (2013) explores this link of exchange to reproduce power. DeLuca (2013) observes that within a local community, the swimming pool serves as a means for generating social capital among high-class mothers and their children, However, there is a financial barrier to joining the pool, which creates a 'class boundary' (DeLuca, 2013). This assists those with higher status to reproduce their capital by socialising with powerful people (Bourdieu, 1986; Portes, 1998; 2000; DeLuca, 2013). Only those with the means to enter the club will have access to the higher-quality disinterested capital which can be reproduced and exchanged (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu (1986) believes these can be utilised as a 'multiplier' for privileged social actors, as it allows them to hold a higher status within various social fields.

However, there is still uncertainty when it comes to applying Bourdieu's capital theory in its totality by economists (Bhandari & Yansoubo, 2010). Economic capital is seen as the only true interpretation of capital, as it can be visibly invested, exchanged and owned, therefore, one can track their stock of economic capital (Schmid, 2000;

Bhandari & Yasnoubo, 2010; Field, 2016). The subjective and broad definition of capital does not fit suitably with an economist's interpretations of the traditional concept as the amount one owns cannot be measured sufficiently (Grix, 2004; Fine, 2007; 2010). Bhandari & Yasnoubo, 2010). This contributes to an uncertainty of the potential outcomes that can be realised from disinterested forms of capital, as many economists do not account for social values in their understanding of economic development (Barro & McCleary, 2002).

Furthermore, the subjectivity of these concepts (especially social capital) means that they have the potential to mean everything which ultimately means they hold no weight in academic discussion (Portes, 1998; Portes & Landolt, 2000; Portes & Vickstrom, 2015; Pret, Shaw & Dodd, 2015). On the other hand, it can be suggested that the traditional understanding of capital is one-dimensional, as society begins to recognise a broader set of important values (Grenfell, 2012; Pret, Shaw & Dodd, 2015). The values which are embedded in these disinterested capitals are often representative of 'soft skills' which are acclaimed to be important in the pursuit of employment (Halpern, 2005; Coalter, 2007; Fine, 2007; Rostilla, 2011; Pret, Shaw & Dodd, 2015; Field, 2016)

Social Capital

Social capital is the main social theory that this research project will use as a point of measurement and analysis. While being a modern concept, the over-arching characteristics and issues which it is concerned with (social connections among groups of people) have been important within sociology since its very beginnings. As illustrated by the work of 'grand theorist' Emile Durkheim whose seminal paper 'Suicide' (1897) explored the importance of social connections on an individual's sense of belonging and well-being (Halpern, 2005). Social capital is a resource which is formed and maintained within the social relations of groups of people, this can be used to gain an advantage in society (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2001a; Halpern, 2005).

As the next chapter will explore, the modern understanding of social capital has been perceived in many ways (Halpern, 2005). This has confused the concept with the emergence of multiple dimensions all claiming social capital to be something different

(Halpern, 2005; Coalter, 2007; Rostilla, 2011). Despite the definitional differences, there are three commonalities, these are the appreciation of norms and values; the importance of social connections/organisations and sanctions which can occur when individuals do not adhere to the shared values of the group (Halpern, 2005; Field, 2016).

Definitional Differences

Bourdieu's original conceptualisation of capital theory led to the emergence of the modern notion of social capital, a term which he officially coined in 1986 in the paper 'Forms of Capital'. As discussed above Bourdieu's theory is influenced by the notions of power, and social class (1986). In contrast, Robert Putnam (1995;2001) theorised a more collective understanding of the idea, arguing social capital can influence communities and societies, through a more civically engaged population. Putnam's theory has been particularly influential in the growth of the concept, allowing it to emerge within everyday discourse and Western social policy (Coalter, 2007; Rostilla, 2011). Many scholars split social capital into two categories; theories that focus on the individual (Bourdieu, 1986) and those that focus on the collective (Putnam, 1993; 1995; 2001; Halpern, 2005; Rostilla, 2011; Bjornskov & Sonskervkov, 2013; Son, 2020).

Bourdieu

Bourdieu's theory of social capital leads on from many of his concepts discussed above in his 'Theory of Practice', it advocates that social capital is a resource obtained by the elites of society; and allows them to advance their social position (Bourdieu, 1986; Portes, 1998; 2000). Bourdieu (1986, p.21) formally defines this as:

"Social capital is the aggregate of the actual and potential resources which are linked to possessive of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition."

There are two distinctive elements to this definition (Rostilla, 2011). Firstly, is the importance of membership within social organisations (Rostilla, 2011). Social

organisations are the ideal location for social actors to invest, maintain and reproduce their social capital, through reciprocal tasks that emerge from other members (Bourdieu, 1986; Siisiainen, 2003; Bjornskov, 2006; Rostilla, 2011). This occurs over time as you begin to meet new people and form friendships. Moreover, Bourdieu (1986) argues the accumulation of social capital is often unconscious and not sought after, but takes significant energy over time. This can lead members to feel obliged to help with tasks as there may be informal sanctions that occur if they do not (e.g., gossiping among members) (Halpern, 2005). Further facilitating the production of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Portes, 2000; Halpern, 2005). Therefore, if social actors lose contact with their peers, they are no longer able to effectively mobilise their stock of social capital causing a decline (Bourdieu, 1986; Portes, 2000).

A second important consideration is how social networks/resources are measured and defined, this is categorised in two ways; by quantity of networks (number of connections) and the quality of relationships (the relative status of people you are associated with) (Bourdieu, 1986; Rostilla, 2011). It can be inferred that Bourdieu (1986) acknowledges the quality of connections is the most important aspect of connecting and obtaining social capital. By associating themselves with higher-quality social connections, social actors increase their perceived influence, which can lead to other people recognising their enhanced social capital or status and therefore, want to network with them as well (Bourdieu, 1986). This demonstrates the mitigating role of social capital and its ability to multiply one's capital and enhance their social position (Bourdieu, 1986). Those individuals with higher amounts of social capital can utilise their social connections in exchange for tangible future resources which further illustrates their status (Siisianaan, 2000; Rostilla, 2011). For example, Bourdieu (1986) argues the importance of a powerful family name (e.g., The British Royal Family), whereby their name alone possesses power in the many different fields, which can be used by other social actors to gain more power for themselves (Portes, 1998).

Portes (1998; 2000) argues that the individualised perspective of social capital is theoretically refined in comparison to the collective perspective. Furthermore, noting that the concept of conversion is the most prominent feature as it allows for an understanding of how social capital can be mobilised by an individual to gain an advantage compared to others (Portes, 1998; 2000; Portes & Landolt, 2000; Portes &

Vickstrom, 2015). In this sense it can also become clearer how social capital works as a form of capital, social actors can invest in it, and they can use it strategically in much the same way one would with the economic notion (Bourdieu, 1986; Claridge, 2018). At times this has been used as an argument against social capital with many economists seeing the term as a stretched metaphor that blurs understanding of economic capital rather than anything with true value (Solow, 1999; Fine, 2007; Claridge, 2018).

By contrast, Smart (1993) argues that social capital is the most conceptually vague and ill-defined form of capital Bourdieu theorises; arguing that it is more representative of a 'gift' as it forms through social obligations, which once used they no longer exist anymore, they do not reproduce (Smart, 1993, p.393). Further, he argues that some of the theorised potential outcomes that arise from social connections are more representative of economic capital (Smart, 1993). Once more this links back to ideas from economists who do not perceive the value of social capital, and instead believe it confuses the overall idea of capital (Fine, 2007).

Similarly, the complexity of Bourdieu's theory and the unique language used often means that it is not operationalised correctly (Fine, 2010; Grenfell, 2012). As Grenfell (2012) discusses Bourdieu's 'Theory of Practice' along with social capital is a relational theory to be used as a whole, coupled with habitus and field (Swartz, 2008; Agotnes, 2021). This does not often occur with many academics using the concepts in solidarity, and not offering a true appreciation for Bourdieu's theory (Swartz, 2008; Grenfell, 2012; Agotnes 2021). The complexity of the theory has led to its under-utilisation with other academic perspectives such as Putnam (2001) being used more frequently (Halpern, 2005; Swartz, 2008; Rostilla, 2011; Agotnes, 2021). This is despite a widely held belief that Bourdieu's theory is the most critical and theoretically sound approach of social capital when compared to other iterations (Portes, 1998; 2000; Siisasanan, 2000; Fine, 2010; Morgan, 2013; Field, 2016).

Robert Putnam

Popularising Social Capital

Robert Putnam's theory of social capital looks at the concept through a different lens than both Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1990), analysing the concept from a political scientist's perspective, he therefore comes to some very contrasting conclusions (Halpern, 2005; Son, 2020). Putnam's research in both Italy and the United States of America inspires his theory for which he observed that communities that were civically active and socially connected offered a better quality of life, reducing socially ill behaviours such as crime, homelessness and unemployment (Putnam, 1993; 2001).

Within these communities, the distribution of resources occurs which allows for those who reside within them to gain benefits (Putnam, 2001a). The popularity of this perspective grew exceptionally after the release of his paper 'Bowling Alone' (2001) which focussed on the demise of the American 'stock' of social capital. Putnam attributed this to an increase in many different social ills (e.g., crime, homelessness, etc.) in the United States of America. This has led to many Western societies implementing social capital into their social policy (Coalter, 2007). One example of this is the UK's New Labour's government which used social capital to underpin their social policy often using sport and physical activity as a vehicle to pursue these goals (Coalter, 2007). While there are a large number of advocates for Putnam's theory, there is an equally large swell of academic scrutiny for the theoretical, empirical and ideological roots of the concept (Foley & Edwards, 1997; 1998; Portes, 1998; 2000; Portes & Landolt, 2000; DeFillips, 2001; Fine, 2010; Ferringina, 2013).

Active Membership

Fundamental to Putnam's ideas is the role of voluntary associations which facilitate the maintenance and reproduction of social capital (Putnam, 2001a). Inspired by Alexis DeTocqueville, a grand sociological scholar who argued the importance of American civil society in the 1800s for their increased economic development (Edwards & Foley, 2001; Halpern, 2005). Putnam argues that populations who are actively 'civic' are more likely to harbour important values such as trust, and reciprocity (Putnam, 2001a). However, Putnam (1995; 2001) believes the traditional notion of trust and reciprocity

can only benefit an individual so far; and therefore, believes they should be held in a generalised state. Putnam defines this notion of trust as being 'thin' meaning that it can be spread to other members of society with ease. (Putnam, 2001a; Tourche & Valenzuela, 2011). Further, he suggests that individuals should be more open and supportive to others without the need for anything in return, creating a more efficient and cooperative society (Putnam, 2001a; Newton, 2001; Uslaner, 2005). This illustrates Putnam's very positive perspective, which at times, does not want to suggest that people may want to take advantage of one another or advance their position, to the detriment of others (DeFillips 2001; Fine, 2010). While this is a nice idyllic image of society, it is not truly representative (DeFillips, 2001; Fine, 2010).

However, Putnam's straightforward approach to trust has generated some controversy, Newton (2001) suggests that trust is much more complex than Putnam's theory leads people to believe. Furthermore, Newton (2001) suggests that Putnam's definition is more akin to something quite different from trust and could be a valuable idea if it was separate and given a new name. The simplification of terms within Putnam's theory is a common critique of his work with some believing it is a set of over-generalised metaphors, this heavily contrasts Bourdieu's perspective which leans into the complexity of social life and offers a richer understanding (Fine, 2002; 2010; Claridge, 2018; Lewandoski, 2018).

Similarly, Torche and Valenzuela (2011) contend that within Putnam's definition, there is an element of distance and time which are not effectively examined within the confines of his theory. Moreover, this creates 'conceptual holes', with a lack of evidence presented to understand the differences between bonds founded in the community, and those formed with strangers (Torche & Valenzuela, 2011). Thus, more confusion is created around the effectiveness of Putnam's vague terms and metaphors (Tourché & Valenzuela, 2011). Furthermore, this links back to Newton's (2001) belief that trust is a more complex notion than Putnam's ideas can comprehend.

Another consideration for Putnam (2001) is that individuals who are active members of organisations will be more trusting of people around them and therefore, hold more social capital (Edwards & Foley, 1998; 2001). This holds particular significance in relation to this research project, as sports and physical activity form the largest

proportion of the voluntary sector in the United Kingdom (Morgan, 2013; Sports England, 2021). We can infer from this that these organisations and activities facilitate the production of social capital and a more trustworthy society (Nicholson & Hoyer, 2010; Morgan, 2013, Nichols, Tacon & Muir, 2013).

However, Portes (1998) argues that the theoretical link between organisations and a trusting society is blurred and lends itself to 'circular reasoning', meaning the causes and effects of social capital are not distinguishable (Portes & Landolt, 2000). Moreover, this links to Fine's (2010) belief that Putnam's perspective of social capital is theoretically weak, with a lack of strong empirical evidence to back up his overly positive claims. Furthermore, studies such as Li, Pickles and Savage (2008) illustrate this claim further, arguing that there are many reasons why individuals may not be able to join groups that are completely unrelated to aspects of social capital. For example, economic factors are very influential as many organisations ask members to pay for membership, or to use their time to help with the running of the club (in a voluntary role) and this can influence whether someone can participate fully (Li, Pickles & Savage, 2008; Numerato & Bagoloni, 2010; Andersen & Bakken, 2018). Contemporarily, the financial implications of being a member of a club or organisation could have the greatest bearing on one's participation; as the UK are going through a 'cost of living crisis' with rising inflation after both; the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukrainian War (BBC, 2022).

Types of Social Capital

One significant contribution to the social capital theory that is developed by Putnam is the types of social capital (Norvaro, 2002; Halpern, 2005; Rostilla, 2011). In its original form, Putnam described two types of horizontal social bonds; bonding and bridging (1995; 2001); Putnam focussed on horizontal bonds as he saw these as being essential within voluntary associations and were ideal for creating trusting relationships, which focus on pursuing commonly shared goals within the community (Szreter, 2002). This was further extended by Michael Woolcock of the World Bank who conceptualised a vertical element of social capital - termed linking (1998; 2001).

Characteristically, bonding capital is associated with tight, well-formed connections among individuals who have similar backgrounds and interests (Putnam, 2001a; Patnuly & Svesdon, 2007; Claridge, 2018). This is often linked to 'thick trust' meaning that bonds are forged over a longer period (Patnuly & Svesdon, 2007). Additionally, it is often argued that bonding social capital is associated with lower-income areas, which often go through struggle for many different reasons (Briggs, 1995; Uslaner, 1998; Patnuly & Svesdon, 2007; Claridge, 2018). Therefore, a tightly bonded group can act as a support system for members of the community (Briggs, 1995; Gambetta, 2005; Halpern, 2005; Patnuly & Svesdon, 2007; Claridge, 2018). As Uslaner (1998) suggests communities who are struggling may find it hard to trust more generally as they cannot afford the negative consequences if someone betrays them.

By contrast, bridging capital occurs when social connections are opened to a wider and more diverse group of people (Patnuly & Svesdon, 2007; Claridge, 2018). However, naturally, the bonds formed are weaker, meaning these are created with a more generalised form of trust (Patnuly & Svesdon, 2007). Bridging capital is often associated with 'getting ahead' in life as it allows for the synthesis of information to occur between groups of people; this can be particularly useful when looking for new jobs, or gaining voluntary roles (Briggs, 1995; Putnam, 2001a; Patnuly & Svesdon, 2007; Nicholson, Hoye & Houlihan, 2010; Claridge, 2018).

Putnam (2001) places the highest importance on horizontal connections and the notions of tight and loose bonds. Firstly, they add a qualitative element to his theory, which otherwise demonstrates a historical positivistic research design, and use of quantitative measurements (Grix, 2004). Additionally, it has offered a new angle for analysis which has been exploited within the 'sports and social capital' literature. Nicholson and Hoye's (2010) book demonstrates this with many of the chapters focussing on bonding and bridging capitals to explore the amount of social capital that was generated within their research context. Furthermore, it allows for a multi-dimensional perspective of the bonds created within society, adding more depth to the theory when compared to Bourdieu's (1986) which only evaluates elite connections (Claridge, 2018).

Linking capital represents a vertical relationship between communities, enabling those disadvantaged communities the ability to lobby resources from outside their immediate vicinity (1998; 2001). Characteristically, this shares many of the values of bridging capital as connections are made among a diverse set of individuals (Woolcock, 2001; Halpern, 2005; Fine, 2010). The partnerships formed by communities enable these groups to work together and meet common goals (Woolcock, 2001). However, the presence or availability of linking social capital in society is relatively unknown as there has been a lack of research to explore this type of social capital (Rostilla, 2011). It is proposed that linking social capital can create an environment of positive social mobility (Skidmore, Bound & Lownsborough, 2006). This can occur in sporting situations through the support of National Governing Bodies (NGBs) who can offer funding, education (coaching qualifications) and general support to localised clubs for them to reach their organisational goals (Skidmore, Bound & Lownsborough, 2006).

However, there are some concerns and weaknesses that are present within these concepts. Firstly, the potential negative externalities that can arise as a feature of bonding capital groups (Portes, 1998; Cusckley, 2010; Fletcher & Richardson, 2020). This has been coined the 'dark side of social capital' and describes the potential outcomes that result from tightly bonded social groups (Portes, 1998; Portes & Landolt, 2000). One such outcome may be that the members do not look fondly to people who reside outside the group as they look inwardly (Portes, 1998; Fletcher & Richardson, 2020). This can create an environment that encourages the reproduction of traditional or outdated values (e.g., racism, misogyny, and homophobia); furthermore, this can be linked to oppressive groups such as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and the Mafia (Gambetta, 2000; Portes & Landolt, 2000; DeLuca, 2013). DeLuca's (2013) study demonstrated how bonding social capital can create an environment where only white swimmers are allowed to join the swimming club. These values were embedded in the history of the club and facilitated by the President (the highest member of the social hierarchy) (DeLuca, 2013). A lack of diversity in the swimming club meant these racist values were perpetually reproduced (DeLuca, 2013).

By contrast, some academics suggest that bonding social capital has a bad reputation but can be a necessary component for supporting local communities (Tonts, 2005; Patnuly & Svesdon, 2007; Walesth, 2008; Fletcher & Richardson, 2020). Especially

those who are living in deprivation or have a lack of infrastructure (e.g., rural areas) (Patnuly & Svesdon, 2007; Fletcher & Richardson, 2020). Strong bonds act as a support system for families when going through hardship (Patnuly & Svesdon, 2007). Claridge (2018) contends that it is important to have a balance of bonding and bridging social connections, as this can aid an individual's social development and well-being.

Further, a key component that is subsequently missing from Putnam's initial theory is the diffusion of power within society (DeFillips, 2001; Fine, 2010). As noted by Athertly (2006) Putnam (1993) does not see the value of vertical social connections, believing that these could not sustain relationships based on trust and reciprocity. Furthermore, Putnam (1993; 2001) suggests that social connections operate as a 'win-win' for all social actors, with benefits being equally weighted (Fine, 2010). Therefore, suggesting resources and power are spread equally; while this is a nice sentiment it is not representative of society (Portes, 1998; 2000; DeFillips, 2001; Fine, 2010). This also relates to Portes (1998) suggestion that social capital attempts to be everything and therefore, means nothing as it cannot be everything to everyone (Szreter, 2002; Schaffer & Brown, 2003). As DeFillips (2001) concludes, there is a need for Putnam's social theory to re-include notions of economic power for it to have any significance, or value within social theory.

Social Capital and Physical Activity

Rural Physical Activity and Social Capital

Furthermore, it is important to highlight the scarce nature of literature revolving around the generation of social capital and sport in the rural context. Many of these papers are presented within the Australian context (e.g., Tonts, 2005; Atherly, 2006; Skinner, et al., 2008; Spaaij, 2009; Skinner, Zakus & Cowell, 2010; Frost, et al., 2013). In these Australian based papers, sports organisations are seen as an important part of rural life, harbouring and maintaining social interactions among various members of the community (Tonts, 2005; Atherly, 2006; Frost, et al., 2013). Furthermore, they enable individuals from the local community to bond and meet, therefore, acting as a tightly bonded support system (Tonts, 2006; Frost, et al., 2013). In contrast, this is a relatively under-developed area of literature within the British context with papers such as

Collins (2010) focussing more on the influence of social policy and government rather than viewing the social context and understanding the community impact sport may have. Therefore, this research provides an important step in investigating the impact of sport and social contexts within the rural context.

The formation of bonding social capital in Physical Activity Clubs

The emergence of social capital within everyday discourse exemplified its popularity in the early 2000s (Portes, 1998; Field, 2016). Like many western countries, the UK adopted the democratic strain (Putnam) of social capital into their social policy, using sport and physical activity as a vehicle to meet certain goals (Coalter, 2007; 2013; 2015; Adams, 2010; Auld, 2010; Long, 2008; Spaaji, 2011). These policies aimed to create a more civically engaged society, where individual communities supported each other, sustaining their level of social capital (Coalter, 2007; 2013; Adams, 2010; Morgan, 2013). It is perceived that sport and social capital are an ideal pairing (Coalter, 2007). Sport is seen as a 'great equaliser' bringing people together from diverse backgrounds, while social capital can create a more harmonious society (Seippel, 2006; Long, 2008; Spaaji, 2011; Rich & Misener, 2017).

However, the wholly positive perception of sport being a 'panacea' of social ills has been called into question (Coalter, 2007; Long, 2008). In part, this is due to a lack of evidence and data that would suitably demonstrate a sports-inclusive nature (Coalter, 2007; Long, 2008). Rather, sport in general, has as much of a reputation for being exclusive, with clubs generally consisting of the 'social winners' of society (Seippel, 2006; Perks, 2007; Nicholson & Hoye, 2008). These are people who hold larger amounts of disposable income and leisure time. (Seippel, 2006; Perks, 2007; Nicholson & Hoye, 2008; Numerato & Bagoloni, 2010; Coalter, 2013; Andersen & Bakken, 2019). Therefore, it is the exclusive nature of sport, that is often overlooked, Numerato and Bagoloni (2015) argue that sports participation reflects the structures of society and demonstrates voluntary sports clubs as a tool for the reproduction of inequality in society (Bourdieu, 1977;1990). This chapter will explore and analyse the links between sport and social capital, often utilising Putnam's (1995; 2001) bonding and bridging social capital which have become a popular version of measurement

within this area of literature. Additionally, it will highlight that there is a clear lack of papers that focus on rural sports groups and therefore, there will be a link to studies that have taken place in urban areas.

Tonts (2005) and Atherly (2006) studies explore the role of sports organisations within rural communities based in Australia. Both academics suggest a common link between sport, community and the creation of tight bonds within these rural areas (Tonts, 2005; Atherly, 2006). Moreover, sports clubs provide a 'focal point' for people in the local community and enable individuals to have a place to socialise and form social connections, demonstrating the creation of social capital (Tonts, 2005; Atherly, 2006). Furthermore, it is contended that rural sports organisations provide a 'safe space' for members and allow individuals to support one another in times of hardship (Briggs, 1995; Patnulty & Svesdon, 2007). This also links to Coalter's (2013) study which suggests that members of sports clubs have a unique connection to one another whereby members will know the finer details of one's life despite only seeing them now and then.

Fundamental to the survival of these organisations is volunteering, which is worth around £24 billion to the sports industry in the United Kingdom (Tonts, 2005; Atherly, 2006; Cuskelly, 2008; Morgan, 2013; Sport England, 2021). In many cases, without individuals supporting these clubs they would no longer be able to survive (Tonts, 2005). Volunteers can take up many different roles, such as playing, coaching or making food and drinks for spectators (Bradbury & Kay, 2009; Cuskelly, 2008 Hoyer & Auld, 2006; Doherty & Misener, 2008; Hoyer, et al., 2020).

In general, volunteering has been identified as an effective means to create and maintain social capital (Tonts, 2005; Harvey, Levesque & Donnelly, 2007; Cuskelly, 2008; Auld, 2008; Kay and Bradbury, 2009; Okayasu, et al., 2010; Nichols, Tacon & Muir, 2013). A contributing factor for this is the time that volunteers spend helping out, which enables them to undertake helpful tasks and ultimately mobilise their social connections (Tonts, 2005; Harvey, Levesque & Donnelly, 2007; Cuskelly, 2008). Often this develops over time and takes a considerable amount of energy for volunteers to be recognised (Bourdieu, 1984; 1986; Harvey, et al., 2007). Consequently, both Cuskelly (2008) and Harvey et al., (2007) suggest that it was more common for

bonding capital to be created in this environment as volunteers were often interacting with the same people on a daily or weekly basis. This notion is compounded by a variety of studies which suggest that a socially dominant class of people are more likely to volunteer (white, middle class, male, etc.) (Coalter, 2007; Cuskelly, 2008; Skinner, et al., 2010; Okayasu, et al., 2010; Nichols, Tacon & Muir, 2013). The homogenisation of identity within these groups creates a platform for bonding capital as individuals interact more often with people like themselves (Cuskelly, 2008; Auld, 2008). An outcome of this can be that the same resources are being reproduced throughout the organisation which can lead to a downward levelling of norms and values (Portes, 1998). This can be linked back to Bourdieu's notion of doxa, demonstrating that the structures of power will be continually reproduced and are misrecognised by society and therefore are taken for granted (Bourdieu, 1986; 1990; Deer, 2013).

The notion of bonding social capital has also been observed within a playing capacity, with studies such as Forsdike, Majoribanks and Sawyer (2019) and Burnett (2006) suggesting that voluntary clubs become like a 'family' or an extension of home. Within both of these studies, there were clear links to reciprocity and the development of trust between participants, which Burnett (2006) noted appeared to foster these tight bonds. One potential reason for this may be the development of an 'us and them' culture which views opposing teams as the enemy that must be defeated (Walesth, 2008). Further, this could create an environment that is suited to bringing people together to meet shared goals (defeating the enemy) and therefore creating a sense of exclusivity (Atherly, 2006; Long, 2008; Walesth, 2008).

However, as Ekholm (2019) argues, bonding capital created in sporting clubs is not always a bad thing. Young people will often start playing in their local club with other young people from their local area, this can create a deeper bond enabling a sense of self and identity to be formed (Atherly, 2006; Auld, 2008; Long, 2008; Walesth, 2008; Lewandowski, 2018). Furthermore, it can breed comfortableness and confidence which provides a positive environment for the development of skills and can encourage people to try new experiences (Long, 2008). Overall, this plays a vital role in supporting marginalised or excluded individuals offering them the chance to develop important 'soft skills' that can help them pursue new opportunities (e.g., paid employment)

(Collins & Kay, 2003; Collins, 2010; Walesth, 2016). Moreover, these bonds can create the foundations for more diverse social connections to form, enabling marginalised individuals to further enhance their social capital (Walesth, 2008; Forsdike, et al., 2019; Widdop, Cutts and Jarvie, 2016).

The formation of bridging social capital in Physical Activity Organisations

Other studies have demonstrated a role for sport in the creation of bridging capital (e.g., Kay & Bradbury, 2009; Hayton, 2015). Generally, speaking it is acknowledged the development of bridging capital is harder as humans find it more difficult to connect with people who are characteristically unlike themselves (Putnam, 2001a; Putnam & Campbell, 2010; Gelderblom, 2018). Rather, the studies that show the development of bridging social capital often centre around either young people or migrants, who don't have the same depth of social connections as other adults may (Perks, 2007; Walesth, 2008; Kay & Bradbury, 2009; Hayton, 2016).

In Kay and Bradbury's study (2009) bridging capital was only formed by young people who volunteered in sports clubs which they had not previously been to before. As they mixed with a wider and more diverse group of social contacts a sense of self-confidence and esteem also developed (Kay & Bradbury, 2009). This also links to Perks (2007) study which suggested that early childhood involvement in sports created an ideal environment for the creation of bridging capital. This could be further developed as they were also more likely to be life-long participants (Perks, 2007). In addition, Seippel (2006) noted that if the sports organisations themselves can connect broadly with partners and groups (e.g., NGBs or sponsors) then this can also form an environment for bridging capital. However, it is important to note the dynamic nature of social capital this was exemplified by Kay and Bradbury's (2009) who identified these bonds could quickly become tighter and represent 'bonding capital' (Claridge, 2018). Further, this demonstrates that bridging connections can be used continually to create a wider web of connections which will further benefit young people (Putnam, 2001a). While also linking to Bourdieu's (1986) belief that social capital would be lost by individuals if not mobilised often enough.

3. Methodology

Positionality

An important starting position for establishing a methodological lens is to understand the ontological and epistemological positions of this project (Crotty, 1998; Savin-Baden & Howells-Major, 2011; Hiller, 2016; Grix, 2019). An ontological position defines the way that the researcher views reality and how phenomena are formed in this reality (Hiller, 2016; Grix, 2019). Closely linked to this idea is epistemology, which defines the way that one establishes knowledge, and importantly the methods with which we discover and analyse this information (Crotty, 1998; Pascale, 2011; Hiller, 2016; Grix, 2019). When these two methodological theories and philosophies are coupled together, they create the 'building blocks' of the research (Grix, 2004; 2019); which enables a greater understanding of how knowledge and reality are formed (Crotty, 1998; Savin-Baden & Howells-Major, 2011; Bryman, 2016; Thomas, 2017). This first section of the methodology will establish the ontological and epistemological perspective that will guide any research decisions and methods taken. It will evaluate these against their opposite and ultimately will justify the use of social constructionism and interpretivism.

Ontology

Two commonly used but opposing ontological views are social constructionism and objectivism (Crotty, 1998). Social constructionism argues that the world is made of multiple individual realities which are shaped and influenced by the perceptions and experiences of people (Crotty, 1998; Andrews, 2012; Gablin, 2013; Burr, 2015). These perceptions of the world are shaped by language and communication which enables meaning to be ascribed to objects based upon both unique personal experiences and historical norms and values that shape human perception and everyday life (Crotty, 1998; Gablin, 2013). This can help us to understand the names and meanings behind common everyday items as they are generationally recognised and accepted and therefore become universally agreed upon (Crotty, 1998; Andrews, 2012).

Furthermore, social constructions are also shaped by culture and structures of power as they are often ‘taken for granted’ and continually reinforced by social actors (Gablin, 2013; Serge, 2016). As suggested by both Gablin (2013) and Serge (2016) those social constructions which are continually reinforced through society often favour the powerful within a social hierarchy (e.g., the value of gold). Moreover, this can be related to Bourdieu’s (1977; 1984; 1990) theory of practice in several different ways. Bourdieu (1977; 1990) uses aspects of constructionism to underpin his theory by combining subjective and objective ideas of society. This is illustrated within habitus, for example, in the way individuals perceive the world is based upon their habitus and life experiences, enabling them to form a personal and unique version of meaning (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990).

In contrast to constructionism is objectivism, which is an ontological position that argues that object and meaning are homogenous within social space and reality. In this sense, the researcher believes that the answers are already present in reality, and it is their job to find them (Grix, 2019). Objectivism is commonly associated with positivism and the natural sciences, it therefore, lends itself to numerical data which can be tracked and observed for patterns and anomalies (Savin-Baden and Major Howells, 2011). However, in relation to this project, an objectivist lens would not allow the researcher to find a deeper meaning to the dataset collected (Crotty, 1998; Grix, 2004). This is an essential aspect of this project which aims to search for a deeper meaning and understand the lived experiences of young rural people.

Epistemology

In conjunction with this, a researcher needs to consider their epistemological position. This will provide insight into what their belief of knowledge is and the appropriate methods that are used to discover phenomena (Grix, 2004; 2019; Bryman, 2016; Thomas, 2017). The traditional perspective is called positivism and derived from scientific roots that knowledge is objective and discovered through our senses, e.g., through sight, or hearing (Grix 2019). Positivism is an objective understanding of knowledge valuing precision and accuracy to assess phenomena, with the researcher seeking to find patterns and anomalies (Crotty, 1998; Grix, 2004; Thomas, 2017). For

these reasons, a positivism-based approach would not suit this research project, as it would likely create a one-dimensional view of the social world and not offer a fuller picture of the lives of young people (Crotty, 1998; Grix, 2004). Additionally, a positivistic epistemological position would not enable the researcher to be flexible in their data collection and analysis methods (Crotty, 1998; Bryman, 2016).

Contrastingly, this research project will use the epistemological lens of interpretivism to understand knowledge. An interpretivist perspective enables the researcher to explore and understand the subjective meaning of the collected data (Crotty, 1998; Savin-Baden & Major-Howells, 2011; Bryman, 2016). Moreover, it recognises that there are fundamental differences in the subject matter of social science when compared with natural science; therefore, there is a need for a change in the logic to reflect the dynamic nature of human action (Schutz, 1968; Grix, 2004; 2019; Bryman, 2016). Further, this creates a more flexible interpretation of knowledge and the methods used to interpret the deeper meaning of human nature (Bryman, 2016). Therefore, interpretivism is the ideal lens through which to view knowledge in this research project as it enables the researcher a fuller and more rounded approach to understanding the lived experiences of young people in rural areas (Savin-Baden & Major-Howells, 2011; Bryman, 2016).

Research Design

The research design describes the foundations of the research, offering a plan or 'blueprint' that the research will follow (Gratton & Jones, 2015). This research project will use a multiple-method qualitative design to explore the unique characteristics of rural Britain and the lived experiences of young rural people (Savin-Baden & Howells-Major, 2011; Bryman, 2016; Gratton & Jones, 2022). It will use a mixture of participant-observations and focus groups to collect data enabling the researcher to view the lives of young people from multiple angles and generate a greater understanding of the rural context (Bryman, 2016). The design of this study aims to answer the research questions:

- How can sports organisations facilitate the creation of social capital within rural communities?
- How do young people perceive living in rural Britain through their lived experiences?

This research design takes inspiration from an ethnographic design. Ethnography is a specific design where the researcher deeply embeds themselves within the social context (Savin-Baden & Major-Howells, 2011; Bryman, 2016). Utilising a combination of observations and interviews the researcher can gain a deep understanding of their research context and the lived experiences of their participants (Bryman, 2016; Silverman, 2022). This links to the aims of this project, and therefore, the researcher decided it was an appropriate template for this project. However, due to COVID-19 restrictions which were in place at the beginning of the data collection phase, the researcher was not allowed to embed themselves fully in the context. Instead, the researcher compromised and observed the young people in a single setting (e.g., their sports organisation) before the focus group occurred. Enabling a relationship between the participants and researcher to form (Gold, 1958; Thorpe & Olive, 2013). Furthermore, this links to the early works of Pierre Bourdieu who saw participant observation as a key method for understanding the lives of his participants, and establishing how they accumulate their capital (Bourdieu, 1984; Webb et. Al, 2003).

By generating data from multiple methods, the researcher can triangulate the data to answer the research questions (Bryman, 2016). Triangulation offers the researcher a fuller understanding of the social contexts by confirming their interpretation of one set of data with another (Bryman, 2016; Silverman, 2022). This was important to ensure the credibility of this research project, which otherwise could be open to the interpretation of the researcher and lead to bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Sparkes & Smith, 2014; Silverman, 2022). This is frequently cited as an issue of qualitative research and, therefore a key step in creating a higher-quality piece of research (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Equally, the chosen methods complement each other well, as can be seen by the popularity of designs such as ethnography (Savin-Baden & Howells-Major, 2011; Bryman, 2016; Silverman, 2022).

Significantly, this design also aligns with the positionality of the research which underpins this research (Crotty, 1998; Chamberlin, et al., 2011; Bryman, 2016; Silverman, 2022). This can be an issue when the research design uses a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods as it can create contradiction (Chamberlin, et al., 2011). The use of multiple qualitative measures can help to drive the research towards answering the question and gaining a greater understanding of the social context (Chamberlin, et al., 2011; Silverman, 2022).

Social Capital

In the planning stages of this research project, it was important to consider the methodological challenges that have occurred within the measurement of social capital (Putnam, 2006; Engbars, Thomspson & Slaper, 2017; Grix, 2019). Commonly, this has occurred due to a lack of agreed definition among academics, coupled with a lack of understanding as to the cause and effects of social capital (Portes, 1998; 2000; Blackshaw & Long 2005 Halpern, 2005; Coalter, 2007) Therefore, it has been difficult to generalise the findings of social capital studies hard (Portes, 1998; 2000; Blackshaw & Long 2005 Halpern, 2005; Coalter, 2007; Rostilla, 2011; Grix, 2019).

Robert Putnam's theory of social capital (2001) represents the leading piece of social capital research and has contributed to the popularisation of the concept. In this paper, Putnam (1995; 2001) uses historical quantitative analysis to measure the rate of memberships within voluntary associations in the United States of America (Grix, 2004; 2019). Putnam (2001) claims the reduction of memberships is proportionate to an overall reduction in civic activity, and therefore less social capital within the community. This method of data collection and the overall process of research used by Putnam (1995; 2001) aligns with objective positivist research philosophy, closely related to the natural sciences (Grix, 2004; 2019). However, this neglects the subjective nuances of social capital theory, such as the nature of the relationships in these organisations and whether the members got on or not (DeFillips, 2001; Edwards, et al., 2003; Grix, 2004; 2019; Claridge, 2018; 2020).

One example of this is measuring the concept of bonding and bridging social capital (Putnam, 2001; Claridge, 2018). Which can be influenced by context, time and the individual, and therefore, reflects the dynamic nature of the social world; this is not truly considered within Putnam's methodology (DeFillipis, 2001; Claridge, 2018). The need to analyse the subjective nature of social connections has become a frequent critique of the concept and led to other studies adopting qualitative research design (e.g., Walesth, 2008) (Schuller, et al., 2001; Blackshaw & Long, 2005). While other studies have adopted a mixed methods approach using both quantitative and qualitative methods of collecting and analysing data (see Tonts, 2005) (Schuller, et al., 2001; Blackshaw & Long, 2005).

Sample

Throughout the data collection process, there were 16 individuals interviewed in the four focus groups from three different organisations. In total, there were 12 females and four males. Subsequently, this has been identified as a limitation of the study as it does not show an equal representation. As the literature shows there are some differences between the perception of rural life between men and women which could have been considered if the numbers were more equal (Shucksmith, 2006; Tyrell & Harmer, 2010; Shucksmith, et al., 2023). As this section will further analyse a lack of male participants was an outcome of no male teams/organisations coming forward and replying to the researcher. While there is no clear reason why this may be the case, it could be inferred that rural sports clubs are unsure of outsiders and therefore, unlikely to want new people entering the group (Tonts, 2005; Atherly, 2006; Shucksmith, 2006).

Table 1: Organisations and number of participants who took part in the study.

Organisation Name	Number in Focus Group	Number Observed
Oakley Rugby Club	5	10
Hillside Cricket Club	5	10
South Western College	6 (split 3 and 3)	6

The table above illustrates the organisations from which each of the participants resided. Each of these organisations resided within a rural part of the South-Western region of the United Kingdom. All the organisations did come from slightly different rural parts of the region which gave a general variance to the lived experiences of the participants. Also, this shows that several participants did consent to being observed but were unable to participate or attend the focus groups.

This research utilised a mixed sampling approach using both the snowball and purposive methods; which are non-probability methods of sampling but are commonly used within qualitative research such as this (Bryman, 2016; Thomas, 2017; Parker, Scott & Gedes, 2019). Initially, a snowball sample was used, this involved the researcher contacting 15 organisations, all of which fit the confines of the aims and objectives of the project (Parker, Scott & Gedes, 2019). A snowball sample is a type of sampling style where people hear about your study through word of mouth, or through the researcher networking with people while collecting data (Parker, Scott & Gedes, 2019). This also included a National Governing Body who provided the researcher with several appropriate rural clubs. Of these 15 organisations, only four came back with interest, a much lower response rate than originally anticipated by the researcher. One of these interested parties was deemed unfeasible for the study, due to a lack of younger people at the organisation to facilitate a focus group.

Consequently, this initial phase of sampling for this study demonstrated some of the issues that can occur with snowball sampling. As argued by Parker, Scott and Gedes (2019), the most prominent of these is the lack of snowball effect occurring in larger organisations. For example, Oakley Rugby Club is one of the largest sports clubs in the area, with hundreds of young players playing for them in many different age

groups. However, when asked the club did not provide the researcher with any more contacts which would have kept the snowball sample growing. As a result of this, there were fewer young people to collect data from than was assumed at the start of the process (Parker, Scott & Gedes, 2019).

On the other hand, the snowball effect did occur on an interpersonal level as participants convinced their friends to take part in the study with them (Noy, 2008; Parker, Scott & Gedes, 2019). This can be linked to Noy (2008) who argues that social networks are fundamental to creating an effective snowball sample. In addition, the higher number of willing females may also back up Noy's (2008) suggestion that females are more likely to participate in research projects such as this one.

While there are some clear limitations to using this snowball sampling method, it was a good initial step in this project to understand the landscape of rural sports clubs and the range that was available for young people. As noted by authors such as Auld (2010) and Morgan (2013) grassroots sports clubs are often run by volunteers who have other work commitments outside of the sports club, making them very busy. Therefore, it is likely this may have contributed to a lack of response either due to email inboxes not being monitored frequently, or other more pressing matters being prioritised (Auld, 2010; Morgan, 2013).

Additionally, this research also used elements of purposive sampling (Thomas, 2017). Purposive sampling is a method that allows the researcher to find participants that are specific to the needs of their research project (Thomas, 2017). Therefore, before undertaking any sampling or recruitment of participants, the researcher needs to create a criterion of ideal participants that would give them the best chance of answering their research questions (Bryman, 2016; Thomas, 2017). In this research, the key criteria decided by the researcher were:

- An individual between the ages (15-25).
- For them to reside within a rural area. (Defined as a settlement with a population of less than 10,000) (Department of Food, Environment and Rural Affairs, 2017).
- Engage in some way within a rural sports or physical activity organisation (e.g., player, volunteer or coach).

These characteristics were deemed important as they represent an individual who would have enough understanding to answer the research questions of this project.

Data Collection

Participant Observations

This research project started with a series of participant observations, which enabled the researcher to experience what it is like to be a member of a rural club or organisation. Specifically, to meet the aims of this project these observations involved the researcher becoming a volunteer coach or training with the team. Principally, this enabled the researcher an opportunity to gain a representative view of participants in their natural setting, which is a unique opportunity when compared with other traditional methods such as an interview or survey (Gold, 1958; Gratton & Jones, 2015; Olive & Thorpe, 2016). Each organisation was observed over several sessions usually each session would last between 60 and 90 minutes. Further, prolonged engagement within a particular environment such as these sports teams also increases the credibility and quality of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1989; Sparkes & Smith, 2015). The researcher can immerse themselves in this environment and gain greater insight into the multiple realities of the setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Sparkes & Smith, 2015; Burke, 2016).

A participant observation method was used primarily to build a rapport between the researcher and the participants (Gold, 1958; Tayki, 2015; Thorpe & Olive, 2016). An increased sense of familiarity between the researcher and participant will make both

feel more comfortable (Olive & Thorpe, 2016). Moreover, this has been linked to the researcher observing more authentic behaviour from its participants enabling a richer understanding of the context and environment (Savin-Baden & Major-Howells, 2011; Tayki, 2015; Olive & Thorpe, 2016).

During this stage of the data collection process, the researcher attended a set of training sessions for each of the groups. After initially contacting the coach of the group, the researcher took on a few different roles. For example, at Oakley Rugby Club they acted as a volunteer coach, assisting with the organisation of drills. While at Hillside Cricket Club the coaches encouraged them to both coach and play with the members of the club. As a result, this enabled the researcher to develop relationships with the participants to gain a sense of familiarity and comfort (Tayki, 2015; Bryman, 2016; Thorpe & Olive, 2016). In addition, this enabled the researcher to establish what it may have been like to be a member of the organisation and how that might influence their social connections (Thorpe & Olive, 2016).

Once a session had been observed the researcher spoke to coaches and then wrote up some field notes, allowing them to reflect on the session (Appendix A). In this instance, the coaches would offer some context or understanding when situations were not clear, for example, at Oakley Rugby Club there was a week of team building which was due to new members joining the club, however, this was not initially clear to the researcher without asking. This process was indicative of reflexivity as the researcher went back through data to gain a second opinion that aided their understanding rather than ascribing personal opinion to situations; this is a key characteristic of good quality research as noted by Lincoln and Guba (1985). There is a common perception that these observations may be liable to the researchers' biases making them fallible or lacking credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Braun & Clarke, 2022). Many academics discuss the importance of being reflexive and trying to distance themselves and their preconceived assumptions from the analysis of the research which is a key marker of the quality of the research (Braun & Clarke, 2012; 2019; 2022). Another method of overcoming this is to use a theory that underpins the field notes which adds more context and understanding to them (Bourdieu, 1990; Lincoln & Gubba, 1985; Webb et al., 2003; Thorpe and Olive, 2016). A further advantage of this is that it decreases the opportunity for the researcher's biases to

influence the research, increasing the quality of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Thorpe & Olive, 2016). This project used Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice and the key components of habitus, field, capital and doxa to understand what has been witnessed during the observational period (1977; 1984; 1986; 1990). Equally, notions of Putnam's (1995; 2001) bonding and bridging capital were also used as this is a key concept in understanding the types of social capital that sports clubs facilitate. This can be seen in Appendix A whereby the theoretical links are highlighted next to the notes.

Focus Groups

The second form of data collection utilised in this project was a set of focus groups. The focus groups were held after the series of observations and used a similar style to a traditional semi-structured interview. In turn, this enabled the participants to discuss what was most important to them while also enabling the researcher to discuss what was relevant to answering the research questions (Savin-Baden & Major-Howells, 2011; Bryman, 2016). Within these focus groups, the researcher took on a moderator role, allowing them to direct conversation and make sure all participants had a chance to speak about their experiences (Savin-Baden & Major-Howells, 2011; Bryman, 2016; Dogra & O'Reilly, 2016). Furthermore, this data collection method was chosen as it complied with the child protection and safeguarding policy as set out in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022' (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2016; Sin & Waterfield, 2019; Department of Education, 2022; 2023). Importantly, making sure that there was never a time when the researcher worked alone with any participant, and that there was a coach or well-known member of the organisation present during the focus group (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2016; Sin & Waterfield, 2019). In addition to this, before the commencement of any observations, the researcher provided the sports organisation with an up-to-date enhanced DBS certificate to ensure they were safe to work with young people (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2016; Bryman, 2016).

Each of the focus groups began with the researcher setting out the 'ground rules' and making sure that all participants knew each other's names. One of the advantages of this was it opened the conversation and made the participants feel as though they

could talk freely, once again encouraging more authentic data collection. However, at times, there was a need for the researcher to intervene and clarify points or encourage conversation between participants. This was especially the case with the ladies of Oakley Rugby Club who were the youngest group of participants (15-17 years old) and the least sure on how to answer questions, as they admitted it was not something they had thought of before (Lloyd-Evans, 2006; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011; Savin-Baden & Howells-Major, 2011; Brown, 2013).

An additional benefit of using the focus group interview design was its efficiency in collecting a large amount of data in a shorter amount of time when compared with a more traditional 'one-on-one' interview. (Savin-Baden & Howells-Major, 2011; Bryman, 2016; Thomas, 2017). Furthermore, the focus groups enabled the discussion of many different topics that young people felt were important based on their experiences, (Savin-Baden & Howells-Major, 2011; Bryman, 2016; Silverman, 2022). This could be seen in all the focus groups but most prominently within Hillside Ladies Cricket Club where they were focused on talking about the competitive nature of sport and their experiences in more performance situations; again, offering another angle to their sporting situation. Additionally, this also linked back to the ontological lens of social constructionism which underpins the philosophical understanding of reality within this piece of research; by demonstrating the fluid and dynamic social lives and how this can shape meaning and truth held by young people (Crotty, 1998; Grix, 2004; 2019).

Data Analysis

Once the data had been collected it was transcribed verbatim, which enabled the researcher to immerse themselves within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012; 2022; 2023; Bryman, 2016). This research project will use a version of thematic analysis developed by Braun and Clarke, called 'reflexive thematic analysis (2012; 2019; 2022). Thematic analysis describes a family of data analysis methods that seek to discover and form patterns among qualitative data (Bryman, 2016; Thomas, 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2022). A key factor in deciding which method of thematic analysis should be used is the philosophical positionality of your research and the procedures that are used (Braun & Clarke, 2019; 2022; Trainor & Bundon, 2020; Byrne, 2022). Moreover, Braun

and Clarke advocate that reflexive thematic analysis should be underpinned by the values of 'big Q' research (Kiddler & Fine, 1987), that is research that encapsulates subjectivity and does not allow for the values of positivism or post-positivism to emerge into it (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This is a common problem observed by Braun and Clarke (2019) who theoretically underpin their idea of thematic analysis with a purely subjective theoretical point of view. Ultimately, this links to this research project which also seeks to explore the subjective through a social constructionist lens as it explores the diverse lived experiences of young people in Britain.

Importantly this piece of research will not take heed to the earlier work of Braun and Clarke (2006) on reflexive thematic analysis. As identified by the authors, this early edition of their theory was underdeveloped and lacked clarity, which has led to many academics using the method incorrectly (Braun & Clarke, 2019; 2021; 2022; 2023). Furthermore, Braun and Clarke have 'called out' fellow academics who are applying their method incorrectly, for example, Fugard & Potts' 2015 article which used positivistic ideas within their analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2016).

Braun and Clarke's method of reflexive thematic analysis is devised into six unique stages all of which challenge the researcher to assess and review their understanding of the data they have collected (Braun & Clarke, 2012; 2019; 2021; 2022; 2023). However, this is not to suggest that it is strict and rigid in its approach, rather Braun and Clarke (2012; 2022) advocate for a creative interpretation of their method, which reflects the subjective nature of qualitative work.

The first stage of the data analysis process is to familiarise oneself with all the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2012; 2019; 2022). To do this the researcher listened to all the focus group recordings and transcribed them verbatim. After that, they began a process of reading the transcripts and making some initial informal notes which helped them to gain an understanding of the data that had been collected (Appendix, B). Moreover, this begins the journey of becoming a reflexive or 'knowing' researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2022; 2023). To demonstrate the researcher being reflexive, before beginning their research they wrote down what they thought they were going to witness/ discuss with participants. For example, the researcher believed that most young people would speak negatively about living in rural areas, with suggestions that

these areas were boring or lacked social spaces for young people. In addition to this, the researcher also continually evaluated their research practice considering the potential limitations and positionality of their research (Stronach, Garratt, Pearce & Piper 2007).

The next step of this method is to code the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2012; 2019; 2022). Coding is a process whereby the researcher explores their data set and seeks to find the meaning within (Braun & Clarke, 2012; 2022) (Appendix B & Appendix D). Moreover, this sets up the researcher for the subsequent steps of their analytical journey, therefore, coding can be understood as the 'building blocks' of the data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022., p52). Furthermore, coding is a systematic process whereby the researcher tags aspects of their data that relate to answering the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2022a). Codes are built and evolve through this process, they are not static and reflect the journey that the researcher goes through as they begin to develop a greater sense of meaning in their work (Bruan & Clarke, 2012; 2022a; 2022b).

The first step of the coding process started digitally, as all transcriptions were downloaded to an iPad and annotated via the app Notability (Appendix B). This enabled the researcher to put their first impression on what participants had discussed, the notes added were not necessarily formal codes but would help to generate the codes within the next stage of coding. Additionally, field notes from the observations were added to these notes which offered some extra context and detail.

The next step in this coding process involved creating a more formalised system by labelling transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2012; 2022). To do this all transcripts were printed out, and key terms were highlighted (Appendix C) Furthermore, codes were written down on a set of post-it notes which enabled the researcher to keep a visual map of their data (Appendix D). While initially this formulated an unorganised array of codes and ideas, (Appendix D & Appendix E) the visual map enabled the researcher to begin to create links and ideas by grouping related codes. Another advantage of this is that the researcher could add ideas, and quotes and generate sub-themes which link to these ideas (Appendix E; Appendix G). Furthermore, these codes and

ideas could be moved and manipulated by the researcher which aided the formulation of different themes later in the analysis process.

The third step of the reflexive thematic analysis is to create some initial themes, these are constructed as a product of the codes (Braun & Clarke, 2012; 2022). For the researcher this means they need to develop an understanding of the codes, what they mean, and how they may link together (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Moreover, this may be where more descriptive codes can take on deeper meanings as they have a link and interact with other codes or for this research the field notes (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Within this research project, the researcher used the visual map of post-it notes to organise and understand the potential links that occur between codes. A simple example of this was the generation of the sub-theme 'reasons for getting involved in sport', this was a product of codes such as 'social', 'enjoyment' 'fitness' and 'a time waster', among others (Appendix D).

Once these initial themes have been developed, they need to be reviewed and verified to make sure the researcher hasn't missed anything that could further develop the themes initially constructed (Braun & Clarke, 2012; 2022). Furthermore, it may offer a chance for the researcher to explore new themes that they had not considered before (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Within this research project, this stage of analysis involved going back through all data collected including the field notes, to see if anything was missed in the initial process of constructing codes and themes. Once this had been completed, there was also an emphasis on the names of the codes. Fundamentally, the naming of the code is essential as it informs the reader of what you will be discussing (Braun & Clarke, 2019; 2021). Additionally, this is key to show that you're not using summarising a topic but analysing the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Typically, a one-worded theme name does not work for reflexive thematic analysis as it becomes liable for this topic summary, which is indicative of a positivistic epistemology (Braun & Clarke, 2019; 2021; 2022; 2023).

The final step of this process is writing up the findings and while this may not be traditionally thought of as being a part of the analysis, Braun and Clarke, argue that it is an essential part of the reflexive thematic analysis methodology (2022). This final

stage is about conveying the story of your research and for this project demonstrating the lived experiences of young people (Braun & Clarke, 2022). For this to be effective the researcher sought to take a plan of what each theme (chapter) would discuss some important quotes from participants as well as any theoretical links (Appendix E). This served two purposes, firstly, it gave the researcher a chance to look through their transcripts and visual thematic map before writing anything. Secondly, it offered a more effective workflow as it reduced the need to check through their analysis for quotes or ideas as this had already been conducted.

Ethical Considerations

As with all research projects, it was vital to consider the potential ethical issues that may arise throughout the project (Bryman, 2016). Especially so as some of the participants who took part in this study were under 18, and therefore, unable to give consent themselves (Thomas, 2017). It was essential to seek approval from the University of Gloucestershire's Ethic Panel (Appendix, K). This enabled a neutral academic to review the study and make sure it was safe and ethical for all participants. Furthermore, the researcher reiterated to participants that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time and could ask the researcher to not use the data they had collected up to four weeks after the focus group had been conducted.

Before participating in the study all participants were given a verbal discussion of what the study entails as well as an information sheet which provided the same information written that they could take home, enabling them to make an informed decision about being a participant (Appendix, H). Each participant then could give their assent with any under 18's also needing to provide written parental consent along with their assent to be a part of the study (Appendix, I; Appendix, J) (Savin-Baden & Major-Howells, 2011; Bryman, 2016; Thomas, 2017). Therefore, the information sheet was an important part of gaining consent from parents, as often they would not be at the training session but would still be able to get any information they needed before consenting. Equally, on all forms, there were the email addresses of both the researcher and the chair of the University of Gloucestershire Research Ethics panel which enabled any participant to ask questions or seek any advice they may have

needed (Appendix K). Moreover, there was an integrated 'cool-off' period (of three weeks) built into the study which further allowed participants to consider whether they wanted to be a participant stopping any participants feeling they were coerced into the study.

Another important consideration related to the ethical principles of a piece of research is the anonymity and confidentiality of information (Bryman, 2016; O'Reilly & Dogra, 2016). Once again this was a potential hazard as the study utilised a set of focus group interviews to collect data, which meant that participants would be aware of the others and what was discussed in their group interview (Bryman, 2016). To mitigate this risk, the researcher set some ground rules. This included making sure that the participants agreed to not discuss any of the conversations outside of the focus group interview. As all participants agreed to these rules it would lessen the risk of any potential discussion of information. Furthermore, to ensure confidentiality once any data was collected it was kept in a locked safe within the house of the researcher (Bryman, 2016). Any data that was digitised (e.g., transcripts and recordings) were kept in a University of Gloucestershire 'One Drive' folder which is password protected and only able to be accessed by the researcher. To further protect the identity of participants, any place and organisation's names will remain anonymous. These will be generalised, for example, a college in the South-West of England. Also, all participants were given a pseudonym to protect their identity (Thomas, 2017).

Furthermore, it was important to comply with safeguarding legislation as per 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (Department of Education, 2022). To comply fully with this legislation the researcher made sure to send a suitable enhanced DBS form to the club's child welfare officer who is responsible for safeguarding the team and the head coach of the team they were working with. Additionally, the researcher made sure they were never in a situation where they worked alone with a participant during the observational stage of the researcher (Department of Education, 2022). Moreover, it was also important during the focus groups that there was a recognised adult in the room at the same time (Gibson, 2007; O'Reilly & Dogra, 2016). Often this was a coach or in the case of the college a member of staff which all participants were familiar with. This was a precautionary measure to protect participants in case any questions were triggering for participants, and they felt they needed time away from the group. As set

out in the 'ground rules' any participant was able to leave the focus group at any time without detriment to the individual. In addition, this was also to make participants feel more comfortable within the focus group session, in the hopes they would 'warm up' to the researcher and talk more freely about their experience (Bryman, 2016; O'Reilly & Dogra, 2016)

4. Results and Discussion

The collection and subsequent analysis of data yielded several themes which needed to be explored. Within this process, some themes were joined together as ideas were related together to construct a broader piece of evidence.

In total three themes will be discussed within this section. The first will evaluate the role of sport as a vehicle for social capital, before analysing the type of social capital that was formed. The second will review the perceptions of young people and their experiences of living in rural Britain. This will make observations about the variance in rurality and how this may affect their experiences and perspectives of rural life. The third theme will assess the importance of transport in rural Britain and some of the barriers that young people may face as they go about their lives. To contextualise these themes both relevant literature and the observations collated in the field notes.

'Your club is your club.'

The facilitation and typology of social capital within Rural sports clubs

The opening questions to this research were concerned with the experiences of young people within their sports clubs and organisations. When analysing the data, it was clear that some participants played for their health and well-being, some for more performance reasons, but an overwhelming majority of participants acknowledged the social side of sport being an important reason for their engagement in sport.

One example would be Lauren from Oakley Rugby Club who said, “think it is a good way to make friends” while Yas from the cricket club said, “I’d say I do it mostly for the social.” Equally, Heather, who aspired to be a professional cricketer, could see the importance of the friendships within the local club stating, “I just wanna have a nice time with friends.” But, reaffirmed that this was not always the case when playing for a representative team outside the local environment.

These discussions were reinforced by the researcher's observations, which saw the coaches and players making a sustained effort to create a welcoming and friendly environment within clubs. Often this was facilitated by the coaches and some key characters within all the groups, who were responsible for creating conversations, and friendly ‘banter.’ This established an inclusive environment that focussed on the enjoyment and participation in the sport rather than the performance. These results link to existing research that showed that sport can bring people together and act like a hook or vehicle which enables socialising of people (Seippel, 2006; Auld 2008; Nicholson & Hoyer, 2008; Doherty & Misener, 2008). While additionally linking to Putnam's (1995; 2001) and Bourdieu's (1986) claims that group memberships are the ideal environment for the accumulation and maintenance of social capital.

The importance of voluntary clubs was further illustrated within the observations made by the researcher, and in particular the reciprocal nature of these social connections. One example of this observed by the researcher was that players would be happy to help their coaches by setting up equipment or by putting the nets up before training started, to ensure they started on time. Similarly, this was expressed by Margot in her rowing club she explained the importance of helping to clean boats and put them away for her coaches. “We'd volunteer to put the boats on the truck and getting all the kit sorted so our coaches didn't have to do it” (Margot). This was a whole club activity; where the club came together to support the coaches, while also allowing members to socialise during these mutual obligations. “Our coaches would come over and give us flapjacks and stuff and we all had a sit down and a chat and stuff and all went our separate ways and stuff”(Margot). Bourdieu (1986; 1990) defines reciprocity through mutual obligations which create a sense of solidarity among members of an organisation (Siisissian, 2000). This allows social actors to interact with one another and exchange capital (Bourdieu, 1986). In particular, mutual obligations allow for social

capital to be maintained and for other forms of capital (e.g., cultural capital) as members help each other out and trade knowledge with each other enabling a connection to form (Bourdieu, 1986; Portes, 1998; 2000). As Halpern (2005) notes if one does not conform to the norms and values of the group then individuals may be the target of informal sanctions such as gossip. This can create a divide within the social group, which may affect previously established relationships within the group (Halpern, 2005; Rostilla, 2011).

Equally, within the rugby club, there was also a large emphasis on the need for 'car-sharing' with some parents taking more than four other players across two family cars. This was discussed by Angela and her dad who was a volunteer coach at the club they said, "We fill up both cars." Unlike the examples above this demonstrated the characteristics of 'generalised reciprocity' which shows a sense that there may not be returned action immediately (Putnam, 2001). This is a value that Putnam suggests helps to 'lubricate the frictions of social life' (2001, p.135) Furthermore, it also demonstrates that the social capital created within this group can be mobilised to help and support others who may be disadvantaged in some way (e.g., no private transport) (Patnulty & Svesdon, 2007). Furthermore, this could also demonstrate an unofficial hierarchy within the sports club, with those who have access to vehicles holding more recognisable capital in the rural field (Bourdieu, 1986). Therefore, they may sit at the top of the hierarchy but positively use their power to help others who are in need (Bourdieu, 1990).

Another indication of social capital being created was demonstrated by those participants who had played within multiple clubs, such as Yas, Roger and Bobby. In this sense, these participants can mobilise and reproduce their social capital among a wider group of connections, which according to Bourdieu (1986) enables an individual more avenues to invest their social capital. A key advantage of this is that the social actor can multiply their stock of capital, gaining new knowledge and resources from multiple environments (Bourdieu, 1986; Portes, 1998; Portes & Landolt, 2000; Moore, 2012). Furthermore, this also demonstrates how capital can be exchanged for other forms of capital which is then recognised by a wider set of social actors (Bourdieu, 1986; Portes, 2000). Moreover, this can influence their position within the social hierarchy, as they generate and mobilise more capital social actors are perceived and

recognised as being more powerful or someone important to know (Bourdieu, 1986; 1990; Portes, 1998; 2000; Moore, 2012; Yang, 2014).

Types of social capital created.

To further extend this idea it is necessary to delve into the types of social capital that have been formed within the sports organisations. Using the notion of Putnam's (2001) bonding and bridging capitals we can begin to understand the types of capital that are formulated within the voluntary organisations. Further, this will offer an insight into the quality of capital produced within these areas, and the relative prosperity of the surrounding areas (Putnam, 2001a; Patnulty & Svesdon, 2007; Claridge, 2018). Additionally, the type of capital produced offers insight into the levels of trust present in the organisation (Putnam, 2001a; Patnulty & Svesdon, 2007).

Participants in this study often cited that they joined their respective clubs because they were friendly with someone who was already a member of the organisation. This was evidenced by Angela who joined Oakley Rugby club after her previous club no longer provided training for ladies, she said; "So then (friend) cause her sister played...I went in the summer and started training and then I started to invite people they invited people." (Angela). This quote demonstrates the friendly nature of sports and how clubs can grow through word of mouth, but it also demonstrates bonding capital in the way that individuals will only join the club if their friends or family are there (Putnam, 2001a; Morgan, 2013). This was also evidenced by Mark who recently started playing for another Rugby team as he had "a few mates up at (new Rugby club) and therefore "helped them out with numbers."

There was an indication of this noted by the researcher as they observed training sessions; often new members would come to their first session with a friend or established member of the group. It was also backed up by discussions with coaches at the Rugby club who claimed that this was their main source of growth, and they would encourage their players to bring a friend. This supported the integration of new members to the group as they already knew someone before starting and could use them as a means to network with other members.

These experiences also further endorse the belief that sports clubs are made up of people who are characteristically similar and have a related set of interests (Cusklley, 2008; Okayasu, et al., 2010). Christina supported this by stating: “It was really inclusive, got straight into it because it’s a sport we all play so we had something in common straight away anyway” (Christina). This quote shows that despite some uncertainties in the initial; realising that the established members of the group were like them helped them to feel more comfortable and fit in with the group easier (Cusklley, 2008; Nicholson & Hoyer, 2008). This was also confirmed by William who noted that “it is a team sport, so we’d get together and talk more.” This quote demonstrates the embedded nature of teamwork in the achievement of shared goals which helps to forge connections with members of the group and break down any social barriers of being new to the group (Harvey, et al., 2007; Auld, 2008; Walesth, 2008).

Another reason for this may be the perceptions of young people who joined sports clubs on their own. One participant, Margot, recalled her ‘daunting’ experience and Angela who was ‘intimidated’ by the older girls in her new team. While these experiences may offer the ideal environment for bridging capital through meeting a group of new people, it was clear that there could be some social barriers present which made this experience uncomfortable for young people. Further, it may be inferred that rural young people are more prone to this feeling as they are more likely to have to travel further distances to their nearest sports club or team; meaning there is a higher likelihood of them having to join on their own (Shucksmith, 2004; Farrington, 2006). This could also further demonstrate the potential social barriers present when creating bonds with people who do not look like us and how this can hinder people from creating diverse connections (Putnam, 2001a).

Similarly, Bobby echoed these difficulties of making friends when joining a new club: “(football) I was obviously very new, so I started on my own...I didn’t know anyone’s name”. But in time noted how these people became close friends of his “I think the people I play sport with I have closer connection (compared to college friends)”. He further illuminated this may have been because the people he played football with came from a “similar background” with the “same interests” as he has. Bobby’s journey

demonstrates the dynamic nature of social connections that are formed in sports clubs (Coalter, 2013; Claridge, 2018). The process of socialisation homogenises a group's values, as individuals conform, they become more inwardly looking which characteristically represents bonding social capital (Putnam, 2001a; Kay & Bradbury, 2009; Coalter, 2013; Claridge, 2018). Furthermore, this is more likely to occur when an individual remains in the same environment for an extended period, as they are only maintaining their social capital with the same type of people and so the exchange and maintenance of social capital becomes limited (Portes, 1998; Cuskelly, 2008; Kay & Bradbury, 2009; Coalter, 2013).

Additionally, the participants in this research project also highlighted the importance of socialising after their competitive fixtures. Primarily this was achieved by inviting their opposition into the clubhouse where there was food and drink provided for players. This was commonplace with Angela speaking of its importance in their club, "It's a big thing how we all come in here". Similarly, Roger spoke of wearing "suits...and hanging out in the bar." Often the accompanying food was made for both teams in an attempt to bring both teams together at the end of the match. These experiences were not rugby specific as Yas spoke of having "tea" during her cricket games, and both Hayley and Margot spoke of having "cakes" after their horse riding and rowing competitions. This can be linked to the notion of habitus as it is within the values of grassroots sport for the team hosting a fixture to invite their opposition into their clubhouse for a drink or some food (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990; Nicholson & Hoyer, 2008). This has become a norm which members of a sports club will have inherited from their earliest experiences of sport, and replicated (Seippel, 2006; Nicholson & Hoyer, 2008; Beames & Telford, 2013).

Furthermore, these participant accounts can be linked to the notion of class, as the values of sport demonstrate higher level cultural practice, as theorised by Bourdieu (1984; 1986; 1990). For example, the discussion by Hillside Cricket Club with Yas and Lorraine about having "tea" and socialising in the clubhouse relates to the historical connotations of cricket being a 'gentleman's game' played by the higher classes as a means to socialise with one another (Leffere & Ohi, 2012; Jewell, Reade & Singleton, 2022). Similarly, the notion of Roger and Mark "wearing suits" after rugby matches demonstrates the middle-class practices of the sport which are present in its public-

school history (Grenfell, 2012; 2015). Furthermore, the researcher observed many middle-class practices such as the freedom of being able to stay behind after training and freely buying drinks with members of the Hillside Cricket Club; or many of the members living out of the rural area and travelling across the county to play at both Hillside and Oakley Rugby Club.

Another lens to view this notion of class is by looking at the field of sport in its totality, thus meaning a comparison can be made from one sport to another based upon the provision needed to participate (e.g., the amount of capital required to participate) (Grenfell, 2012; 2015). Some sports such as rowing (Margot) or Horse Riding (Hayley) require a high level of provision as there is a great amount of financial (buying a boat/horse) and cultural capital (e.g., maintaining a horse) needed to begin participating in these activities compared with other sports. In contrast, football (Bobby; Roger) and rugby (Mark) require much less provision and therefore can be played by a larger group of people, which has also led to their general popularity (Leferve & Ohi, 2012; Grenfell, 2015). Utilising Bourdieu's theory of distinction, it can be suggested that activities like horse riding and rowing demonstrate more distinction as they are more luxurious to play and cannot be accessed by everyone (1984; 1986). Therefore, it may be suggested these are the activities of the elites. Furthermore, this also illustrates the dynamic notion of class in rural Britain, with there being no clear class boundary, which is something we may see in urban Britain (Shucksmith, 2012; Shucksmith, et al., 2023).

Moreover, we can also begin to evidence the notion that sport can provide an inclusive environment for individuals to develop diverse social connections (Seippel, 2006; Coalter, 2007; Nicholson & Hoyer, 2008; Long, 2008; Spaaij, 2011). Over time members will have recreated this in their teams without questioning its meaning, which demonstrates the characteristics of doxa (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990; Deer, 2013). It could be inferred that in many cases the objective of this practice, to bring people together from different teams, has become lost or is misrecognised (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990). This also validates the notion that Bourdieu's concepts are interrelated and work together to form social practice (Schwartz, 2008; Grenfell, 2012). It is in the nature and values of these sports that the club provides an opportunity for teams to come together and socialise with one another (Seippel, 2006; Nicholson & Hoyer, 2008).

These often begin within the adult teams and are replicated by youth teams, over time they become grounded in the 'taken for granted' values of the sport (Bourdieu, 1990; Deer, 2013).

However, it was equally clear that the interactions between teams were limited at this time and instead, teams became very insular with most participants noting that they talked amongst themselves. Further to this end, when asked, Angela and Lottie from the Rugby club both noted that the willingness to talk "depends on the team" (Lottie). This was further elaborated on by Angela who said, "Some teams are very nice and very friendly...(others) take the in-game aggression outside of the game and be rude after we are eating our sausage and chips" (Angela). Another example of this would be Margot who suggested that at times the competition would get in the way and despite her travelling all around the country to compete there was a sense that "your club was yours" and that interactions among participants were infrequent. Further, Margot explained this was often caused by tension on the river in regattas when boats would come close to touching one another. This can be linked back to the creation of strong internal bonds through competition and the construction of an enemy (Long, 2008; Walesth, 2008). When others are seen as rivals or competition this appears to get in the way of the creation of social connections with members of other organisations (Walesth, 2008; Lake, 2013). While additionally aiding stronger in-person bonds between members of the same club as they venture to defeat the 'enemy' together (Cuskelly, 2008; Walesth, 2008; Morgan, 2013).

Furthermore, these types of behaviours were observed within the Ladies Rugby club and could be related to the nature of the sport and the values or training methods of the coaches. While never taking the competitiveness too far (e.g., advocating violence) the coaches felt a need to motivate the players by demanding a high level of commitment particularly within contact sessions. This was with the intention that it would translate to a higher level of commitment in the games at the weekend and a will to defeat the opposition. Moreover, coaches would facilitate 'team-bonding' drills within the warm-up of training sessions, generating a greater sense of self-identity and togetherness (Auld, 2008). However, it may also be inferred from the above comments that at times this became a barrier and created a tense atmosphere between opposing teams (Walesth, 2008). This could be indicative of the 'dark side of social capital' as it

demonstrates negative externalities which arise from closely bonded social groups; which in turn creates uncertainty for those who reside outside of their established group (Portes, 1998; 2000; Portes & Landolt, 2000; Cusklley, 2008; Auld, 2008; Long, 2008; Walesth, 2008).

One determining factor in the interaction among opposition teams appeared to be age. Discussions between Bobby and Mark who both played in adult Rugby teams suggested that in these teams' opponents were much more approachable. Bobby says, "From Under 18's and below that it boils on after...as soon as you hit men's...you buy them a pint and they buy you one". Mark resonated with this saying that aggressive acts or fights are "bound to happen" but that "usually most of them (opponents) are real nice people...it's quite easy to get along with most of them". Both accounts demonstrate the difference in socialising between adult sport and youth, the influence of drinking at the bar and maturity allows people to sit down and talk more freely compared to what they had experienced in youth sport. In contrast, age was deemed a barrier to socialising with opposition teams Yas, who said, "It depends on almost the age of the team" This was identified as their team being a "young team" (Yas). Often their opposition would be made up of older players which they felt made it trickier for them to interact during social times in the clubhouse. Therefore, this demonstrates the dynamic nature of both sports and the creation of social capital (Grix, 2004). Furthermore, this explains the importance of experience in defining our perceptions of the social world; linking to social constructionism the meaning that participants ascribe comes from their experiences and this defines their perception of adult sports and their ability to socialise with the opposition (Crotty, 1998; Grix, 2004; 2019; Andrews, 2012). However, this does, therefore, make the generalisation of social research more difficult (Gubba & Lincoln, 1989; Grix, 2004; Savin-Baden & Howells-Major, 2011).

These contrasting experiences and perceptions also illuminate the difficulties that researchers must contend with to fully understand the distribution of social capital within a variety of social contexts, its determinant is social actors, who are naturally dynamic (Grix, 2004; 2019; Claridge, 2018). Therefore, the measurement of social capital can be disputed and is certainly not definitive (Grix, 2004; 2019). This can be linked back to the ideas of DeFillips (2001) and Fine (2010) who both identified key issues with the concept of social capital in Putnam's conceptualisation. The most

notable in this scenario is that sometimes people do not get along with one another, or that despite being a part of something similar there may be other factors that inhibit the creation of social capital among similar people (DeFillips, 2001; Fine, 2010).

It has often been suggested that close bonds created in organisations such as sports teams produce negative externalities, termed the 'dark side of social capital' (Portes, 1998; Coalter, 2007). However, this is not always the case, and these environments can also be key to members supporting one another (Putnam, 2001a; Patnulty & Svesdon, 2007; Gelderblom, 2018; Elkholm, 2019). Bobby describes this occurring within his experience of playing sports and making friends: "If they're feeling quite down or something, or they're feeling or they've done something like really good, obviously meet up with them, we have a chat about it, I help them." (Bobby). This shows the generation of a community that comes together to support one another (Putnam, 2001a; Patnulty & Svesdon, 2007; Gelderblom, 2018; Elkholm, 2019). As identified by a range of academics this is often observed in areas where support is needed more such as rural areas, or disadvantaged populations, as it helps to elevate the social, and economic challenges that could be more prominent in these environments (Tonts, 2005; Patnulty & Svesdon, 2007; Fletcher & Richardson, 2020). Furthermore, we can infer that there may be more emphasis within sports clubs for this support system to develop because of a shared identity offering a collective identity between members which creates a sense of solidarity (Auld, 2008; Coalter, 2013; Ekholm, 2019).

Similarly, the notion of supporting one another was discussed between the researcher and coaches concerning the current economic challenges facing families in the United Kingdom. It was felt that the club had a role to play in supporting their players and families to make the sport more affordable or offer benefits (such as food in the clubhouse; 'hand-me-down' equipment). This was reinforced by the ladies at Oakley Rugby Club, who felt there was a "different type of bond "cause you play rugby with them" (Christina). This suggested a particular supportive nature to their connections which they agreed they did not get from school friends.

In contrast to this dominant theme of sports clubs creating tight bonds heavily associated with bonding capital is Heather who talked about how she got 'excited' by

“fresh meat” (new people) turning up to play their club. Jokingly, Heather said that sometimes she was a bit “bored” of people she had been playing with for a long time. This comment was agreed with by other members of the focus group demonstrating an overall welcoming attitude to new members which was further reinforced by observations made by the researcher. Moreover, this contrasts the findings of Lake’s (2013) study which argued that established members may ‘gatekeep’ their teams making it harder for new members to establish themselves and feel included. Further, this can represent a more generalised sense of trust being exhibited by participants such as Heather, as she is open to connecting with a more diverse population (Uslaner, 1995; Putnam, 2001a). Further, this enables participants to build a wider set of social connections which helps to facilitate the overall growth of different capital as new knowledge is shared among new and established members (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2001a). Correspondingly, this demonstrates the ‘multiplier effect’ of social capital, in generating social connections a social actor will be able to also exchange the other knowledge (capital) they possess by multiplying the amount of capital they acquire and increasing their power within a given field (Bourdieu, 1986; Portes, 1998; Portes & Landolt, 2000).

One reason for this may be that many of the players have had experiences within performance teams (e.g., the county team, regional sides, etc.). This had a profound impact on the way they viewed the sport and socialising. As Lorraine noted within the county cricket squads there was a “week away” cricket residential. This was seen as an essential part of bringing the team together, training and socialising with one another to get to know each other; Heather stated it was something “everyone looked forward to.” All these experiences can be linked to the production of bridging social capital, as the ladies developed friendships and socialised with a more diverse group of people (Putnam, 2001a; Nicholson & Hoye, 2008; Kay & Bradbury, 2009). Alternatively, through a Bourdieuan lens we can infer this environment would harbour the exchange of higher quality capital, particularly sporting (cultural) and social capital (Bourdieu, 1977; 1986; 1990). This could sustain a greater sense of power among the individuals as they exchange a higher quality of capital with a more diverse range of people (Bourdieu, 1986). Furthermore, this disinterested capital has been formally recognised by people as there would be a trial to enable an individual to be a part of these teams in the first instance, making it more authentic (Bourdieu, 1986).

Idyllic or isolating?

The perceptions of rural Britain by young people.

This chapter will be focussed on analysing the different perceptions young people have of living in rural Britain. It will aim to further understand the lived experiences of young people, the challenges they face and the things they enjoy about rural life. The discussions within focus groups offered two contrasting opinions of living in rural Britain, either participants felt that it was a place of idyllic beauty which they were lucky to live in, or it was restricting and isolated them from wider society.

A common theme presented by participants was that living in rural areas was idyllic with participants specifically commenting that is, “peaceful” (Roger) or “safe” (Bobby), which were seen as highly positive aspects of rural life. This enabled a sense of freedom and ability to enjoy the outdoors, for some participants like Bobby this was particularly important as he noted the “roughness” of local urban areas compared with where he lived. Other participants also expressed the importance of safety and how this enabled a greater sense of freedom, for example, Margot talked about being able to “walk through the fields” and “go down to the river”. This was echoed by Mark who said, “five minutes in any direction you are in the woods” which was great for him to “walk the dog”. All these comments created a picturesque view of Britain and the countryside, demonstrating its natural beauty (Collins & Kay, 2013). Furthermore, this perpetuates the common discourse often pushed in the media that highlight the idyllic nature of life in rural Britain (Glendinning, et al., 2003; Milbourne, et al., 2003; Shucksmith, 2006; 2023; Bernard et al., 2019). The idyllic representation of rural life has been one of the leading factors in the rise of population and the migration of families from urbanised towns to the countryside, termed the counter-urbanisation movement, which has resulted in more young people growing up in these areas than ever before (Shucksmith, 2006; Collins, 2010; Harmer & Tyrell, 2010; Leyshon, 2010; Marsden et al., 2012; Willet, 2021).

Furthermore, another perspective which these comments can be analysed from is Bourdieu's concept of habitus (1977; 1984; 1990). Our habitus is generated through the embedded experiences and beliefs that we often inherit from our environment including our primary caregivers (Bourdieu, 1977; 1986; 1990; Beames & Telford, 2013). Moreover, by continually being in the outdoor environment and experiencing the enjoyable aspects of the countryside it can be argued that there is a natural disposition for these young people to enjoy. One example of this was Yas who currently lives in the local town but commented, "I think when I get old enough to buy a house and settle down, I want to come back to the countryside." Similarly, Bobby noted "It's nice where I live" as he compared his home village to the other more urbanised places nearby. Similarly, Roger claimed that the peaceful nature of the environment resonated with himself and his personality stating he lived in a "very chill area." These examples demonstrate the guiding role of the habitus, working as an internal framework in the way that social actors perceive the world (Bourdieu, 1977; 1984; 1990).

Furthermore, it can be inferred that these notions were continually reinforced in the lives of the participants who had lived in the same area their whole life. Therefore, their habitus has not been influenced by outside stimulus and the notion that rural areas are 'good and 'safe' places to live is continually reinforced meaning it is unquestioned by social actors (Bourdieu, 1990; Deer, 2013). One comment by Rosie demonstrated this: "It's very refreshing going out and walking out in the morning with your cup of coffee." Other participants described this freedom of being able to go "across the road...for long walks" (Heather). For many people, this would be seen as a luxury, but to people in the countryside, it was the norm. This links to the presence of doxa in the perceptions of young people and rural life (Bourdieu, 1990; Deer, 2013). Moreover, neither the social actors nor the people they live with question what is happening, in this way, doxa is represented through 'shared beliefs' (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990; Jenkins, 1992; Deer, 2013, p.116). This is noted by academics such as Jenkins (1992) that the average person does not have the time to question every aspect of their life and therefore they take what they have for granted allowing it to go unquestioned.

By contrast, some participants such as Amy found living in the countryside was hard and at times, she felt isolated, stating, "It is quite isolating because I go to school in (nearby urban town)". Furthermore, Amy perceived in comparison to this she lived "in

the middle of nowhere". Amy's school received pupils from across the region and therefore many of her friends travelled some distance, meaning she was unable to meet up with them outside of school. "My best friend is over an hour away" (Amy). Similarly, Heather who went to school with Amy related to these experiences and noted her frustration at her closest friend being so far away. Furthermore, Yas, reflected: "I've gone to school in (urban town) ...I've been isolated from my friends and there was probably a bit of frustration there" (Yas). All these accounts show the desire for young people to socialise with one another and the need for space or provision to make this possible (Tyyrell & Harmer, 2010; Leyshon, 2010). Without this ability to 'hang out' and meet up with friends, feelings of isolation begin to emerge, causing young people to question whether rural life is really for people like them (Shucksmith, 2004; 2006; 2012; Leyshon, 2011). Moreover, this can lead to young people leaving their village as they transition into adulthood (Shucksmith, 2004; 2006). Furthermore, this can be linked to a sense of internal conflict which can emerge in the habitus when social actors are exposed to a new environment or stimulus (Bourdieu, 1990; Raey, 2002; 2015). At times, the habitus is vulnerable to emotions, and this can impact and transform our perceptions of the world (Raey, 2015). The feelings of isolation expressed in accounts from all three participants demonstrate these internal conflicts as they have been exposed to a new urban field. In this new urban environment, they have experienced the convenience of transportation as well as an ability to socialise more readily with their friends, and as a result, this changes how they perceive the world (Bourdieu, 1990; Raey, 2004). Over time an individual's habitus can be changed through continued exposure to new stimuli, which subsequently can change one's behaviour (Bourdieu, 1990; Raey, 2004; 2015; Sayer, 2015), and as shown with Yas this may influence a decision to leave the local village as one approaches adulthood (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990).

These discussions also enabled some participants to reflect on the importance of being a part of their sports team or organisation and the role this had in creating a community in their local area. Importantly, this gave them an environment in which they could see their friends and socialise without needing to travel long distances. One example of this was Carol, who talked about how Oakley rugby club enabled her to socialise with her friends from outside of school - "I don't go to school with any of these guys" (Carol), later adding "I see loads of these guys Sunday and Monday." While Yas

stated, "Having a cricket club or having a social thing in a village is so important because we haven't got that is really isolated", which was also reinforced by Lorraine and Rosie who believed the club had become a "focal point" (Lorraine) for the community. "The more like 'viral' the club is, I feel like the locals and the people in the club are more likely to join in" (Rosie). Equally, Heather commented on how the club helped her family settle in when they moved across the country "cause we were new my mum got all the parents together to go for a few drinks (at the club)" (Heather). These comments were equally reinforced by the researcher who observed the social benefits of being a member of the cricket club, all members, regardless of age, would come to the clubhouse to have a drink and talk after training sessions. Moreover, this can be linked to studies that have suggested the inclusive role of sports clubs in rural communities, acting as a 'focal point' for the local community (Tonts, 2005; Atherly, 2006; Skinner, et al., 2010). Further sports clubs need many volunteers and social members to make sure they continue running, and these provide important roles for all members of the rural community to feel included and valued (Auld, 2008; Morgan, 2013).

In contrast, some participants lived near their friends and family, and therefore, could visit them more often. This was described by Lauren who said, "Everyone is so close together so you can see your friends". Moreover, Rosie talked at length about how she was "very lucky" to have her best friend live next door to her, which contributed to her love for the countryside. A similar experience was described by Angela who said, "Well me and 'Christina' only live ten houses away, so we see each other a lot." Additionally, William discussed being able to "go around my mate's house" illustrating the proximity he lived to them. In this regard, the perception of young people creates images of community often associated with rural life (Shucksmith, 2006; Rye, 2006; Sorosen, 2016; Shucksmith, et al., 2023). A sense of community is a common theme with club members coming together to help support one another (Milbourne, et al., 2003; Shucksmith, 2006; Rye, 2006; Sherman, 2013). Additionally, this links back to the concept of bonding capital, which has been cited as a characteristic of countryside communities, as it enables the local people to cope with the unique characteristics and demands of rural life (Tonts, 2005; Rye, 2006; Patnulty & Svesdon, 2007; Milbourne, et al., 2016). Moreover, it can be argued there is a need for this tightly bonded

community, due to the lack of welfare services present within rural areas (Milbourne, et al., 2003; Shucksmith, 2004; Collins, 2010). This decline in services has been the result of neo-liberal ideology creating an 'arms-length approach' to governance, often leaving communities to support one another (Morgan, 2013; Milbourne et al., 2016). Equally, significant is the economic crisis which has occurred in both 2008 (stock exchange crash) and 2022 (COVID-19 pandemic), leading to a period of austerity in the United Kingdom (Milbourne, et al., 2016; Morgan, 2013; Black, Scott & Shucksmith, 2019; Shucksmith, 2023). Instead, these services have been centralised to larger towns and cities and given a broader remit, making them harder to access for those who are in a rural setting (Milbourne, et al., 2016; Klarner & Knabbe, 2019). Consequently, the need for supportive social networks holds a higher purpose in rural areas as they offer support to those in need who are unable to receive it from welfare services (Sherman, 2013; Milbourne, et al., 2016; Klarner & Knabbe, 2019; Shucksmith, 2023).

It appeared that a key determinant in the debate over isolation or idyllic was the relative closeness participants were from their nearest town. Often these towns were still quite rural but, had more activities and better infrastructure which enabled people to get transport links to urban cities. The lack of infrastructure within their local community was often a frustration for young people and Lauren exemplified this with her comment, "I think it would be nice to have a place where we could go with our friends to eat...rather than having to travel." This was echoed by the other participants in Lauren's focus group who all agreed that it would be nice to have some big businesses in their local area "McDonalds" (Carol) "Costa and Primark" (Angela). This highlights the impact of globalisation, and how we now live in a society that is dictated by the 'ease of access' to certain institutions and businesses (Williams, 2003; Shucksmith, 2004; 2016; Tyyrell & Harmer, 2010; Bernard, et al., 2019; Atterton, et al., 2020). However, the modern world is dynamic and moves at an incomprehensible pace compared to traditional rural society (Shucksmith, 2006). Therefore, it can be argued that if these globalised companies established themselves in rural areas, they would lose the unique characteristics of rural society (Collins, 2010; Tyyrell & Harmer, 2010). Nonetheless, it appeared as though young people were frustrated that they were unable to easily enjoy certain popular establishments that were commonplace in urban areas (Williams, 2003; Tyyrell & Harmer, 2010). Correspondingly, this also highlights

the vital role of transport links which enable access for young people to these modern establishments which have become popular spots to socialise (Bernard, et al., 2019; Shucksmith, 2023).

Furthermore, other participants such as Hayley commented on how rural areas are “kinda boring...because you’re a bit like ‘what do I do’...so I have to travel to (local city) to do something somewhere else” (Hayley). Amy also reflected on the lack of things to do “We live in (village) but that’s sort of nothing, there is not much there”. Equally, Heather who moved to her village at a young age stated, “To be brutally honest, we moved to the village and there is nothing to do” (Heather). This was also reinforced by Lorraine who stated, “We had a village shop for about two months and then it closed down” These examples can be linked to Bourdieu’s (1977; 1984; 1986;1990) concept of field and the hierarchical nature of social life. The above accounts and quotes from participants demonstrate the reproduction of a society which is predisposed to adults; creating an environment with a distinct lack of space and general infrastructure for young people (Hendry, Kleop & Wood, 2002; Williams, 2003; Hickey & Pauli-Myler, 2017; Black, Scott & Shucksmith, 2019 Shucksmith, 2006; 2023). Typically, young people are perceived to hold fewer capital resources when compared with adults, due to their age and responsibilities (Hickey & Pauli-Myler, 2019) Therefore, young people are often seen as being at the bottom of the social hierarchy and can feel ‘othered’ by the adults in their community (Bourdieu, 1984; 1986 Shucksmith, 2006; Leyshon, 2011). The power exhibited by adults in rural areas enables them to sustain and reproduce a village society that is defined by their personal or traditional norms and values (Shucksmith, 2006; Tyrell & Harmer, 2010). In a Bordieuan sense, this means they can mobilise their power more effectively to meet their personal needs (Bourdieu, 1986; Black, Scott & Shucksmith, 2019). Furthermore, this reproduction of society and power structures also illustrates a sense of ‘doxa’ as the traditions of rural life are continually reproduced from one generation to the next (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990; Deer, 2013).

An effect of the rural doxa is that young people can begin to believe that rural areas are not for them, as they do not believe their needs are being met by other members of the community (Shucksmith, 2006; 2023; Phillips, 2010; Hickey & Pauli-Myler, 2017). This has been identified as a contributing factor in the rise of young people

leaving rural areas as they enter adulthood, which has been observed by many other rural-focused academics (Glendinning, et al., 2003; Williams, 2003; Shucksmith, 2004; Tyyrell & Harmer, 2010). However, it should be noted that some participants had differing experiences from the literature above.

Contrastingly, both Roger and Margot talked about how they and their families lived in agricultural areas but had a special relationship with local farmers to play in their fields; “I’m allowed to go there...I ride my bike around there” (Roger). “One we are really friendly with, so they let us do whatever we want around there” (Margot). Furthermore, William said he would often (meet friends) “at their house or at the park...stuff like that”. Similarly, Hayley didn’t feel restricted by people she lived near, joking, “No, the only thing they disapprove of...is I got yelled at for fast driving” These examples revealed that there are times when adults can accommodate the needs of local young people, and this was often the case when those young people held a close social connection with their neighbours. Therefore, it could be argued that this is the product of social capital, as a benefit is accrued to an individual or group because of the social relationship people have with one another (Bourdieu,1986; Putnam, 2001). Furthermore, it also demonstrates how trust is formed within these communities (Putnam,2001; Halpern,2005), with neighbours helping one another out which creates a network of support to help any individuals who reside within (Gray, Shaw & Farrington,2005; Shucksmith, 2006; 2012; Hickey & Pauli-Myler, 2017).

The trials and tribulations of transport in Rural Britain: a young person’s perspective.

This chapter will outline the demand and dependence on transport for young people in rural areas. The transport system provides access to wider society; enabling movement to nearby urban areas which may influence employment opportunities and social experiences (Glendinning, et al., 2003; Shucksmith, 2004; 2006; 2023; Farrington, 2004; Eime, et al., 2010; Tyyrell & Harmer, 2010; Bernard, et al., 2019; Black, Scott & Shucksmith, 2019). As this chapter will further analyse young people had a vast range of experiences and opinions on the role of the transport system and the role that it played in their lives. Those who were able to access transport were able to access new experiences and gain a greater sense of independence and freedom.

While those people were less able to travel, often felt more isolated in comparison. Overall, it was evident that transport was a divisive and important topic that young people spoke passionately about at length. The semi-structured design of the focus group also allowed the conversation to be driven by the participants, and therefore talk about what was significant to them (Savin-Baden & Major-Howells, 2011; Bryman, 2016).

The initial discussions within this research project highlighted the importance of the public transport system for young people. For participants such as Angela who stated, "I've only just been allowed to take public transport recently." Similarly, Mark noted before he was able to drive, he would use the bus; "Before I had my car, before I passed my test, I'd catch a bus." (Mark). Roger recalled using the bus to get to school as a teenager; "For secondary I would be sometimes excited to catch the bus." It can be inferred from these comments that the public transport system represented their first experiences of travelling independently, and therefore gave them the initial sense of freedom. Overall, young people felt that the public transport system served a purpose often linked to them travelling to school, "For secondary I would be sometimes excited to catch the bus as well cause my mates on the bus, and they come to school with me" (Roger) "So we had a school bus that would pick us up to take us to secondary school"(Margot). Additionally, Mark who stated "coming to college in Gloucester, before I had my car, before I passed my test, catch a bus (Mark). While others felt that the use of private transport supported them seeing friends, "all my friends were going out on buses and going out" (Angela). This comment by Angela, was backed up with nods and positive body language of Christina and Rosie who were both present in the focus group. Therefore, it can be inferred that public transport played an important and varied role in facilitating movement and access to wider society (Shucksmith, 2004; 2006; 2012; 2023; Tyyrell & Harmer, 2010; Lucas, et al., 2016).

The first positive experience of the public transport system came from Oakley Rugby Club. This was explained by Angela, who commented that the local transport system allowed her to travel to urban cities and towns with her friends and family, "like you can get a bus to (local city) or a bus to (local town) then (onto new further city)"

(Angela). Moreover, Christina noted that this acted as a "little day out" in which catching the bus or train played an exciting role. Similarly, the others in this focus group agreed and believed that these days out were "something to look forward to" (Lauren). Furthermore, using the public transport system to move around to nearby places was perceived as a part of rural life, which influenced their positive attitude towards longer journeys. This can be linked to Bourdieu's (1977; 1990) notion of habitus which claims that our experiences influence the way we navigate and perceive the world. The comments from participants display an overall positive experience of using the public transport system, which in turn influenced their positive outlook towards using it. The habitus works as an 'internal framework' and navigates social actors' practices', which are influenced by their previous experiences. Thus, a positive interpretation of the public transport system will influence one's future behaviour, making them more likely to use it (Bourdieu, 1977;1990; Yang, 2014). Additionally, some of the participants commented that their parents did not drive, therefore, public transport was the common way in which they and their families travelled around. Further linking the perceptions of transport to the habitus as these behaviours (e.g., travelling on the bus) will have been learnt and reinforced from their earliest life experiences. This is a time when individuals are most easily influenced and these practices become internalised in their habitus (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990; Beames & Telford, 2013; Yang, 2014).

In contrast, Mark who resided within the same rural area, and played for Oakley Rugby Club felt the public transport system was not fit for purpose. He added that the bus coming "once an hour...(was) not the most convenient thing." Unlike the other participants, Mark used the bus services on a near day-to-day basis, as he took the bus to college. Moreover, Mark's negative experiences were influential on his perception of the service, and it was clear he found they had been unreliable and "not convenient" compared to other forms of transport. This resulted in him trying to gain his driving licence as quickly as possible so that he no longer needed to rely on the bus. Equally this was expressed by Christina "I really want to own my own car". Christina was not able to drive due to her age but clearly saw this as the next step towards independence and away from the uncertainty of public transport. Furthermore, this demonstrates the conflict that can be created in one's habitus when someone faces many new experiences (Bourdieu, 1990). When this occurs, Mark will begin to change his practice as his disposition towards the public transport system begins to

change, a process which Bourdieu claims is not 'wholly conscious' but is the product of an internal conflict (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990; Raey, 2005. 2015). Rather, he claims that the social actor's habitus guides one through life influencing their perceptions (Bourdieu, 1990; Raey, 2005). However, it was evident in Mark's example that he made a conscious decision to learn to drive which was based upon his circumstances and his experiences of the public transport system. This links back to some academics who challenge Bourdieu's concept of habitus and agency (e.g., Evens, 1999; Sayer, 2010), rather they suggest that Bourdieu often neglects the subjective notions of human agency within his theory (Jenkins, 1992; Raey, 2004; 2010; Sayer, 2010).

Furthermore, this also demonstrates the different ways in which participants can perceive reality. In Lauren and Christina's experience, public transport enabled them to socialise in new areas and have enjoyable days out. Conversely, Mark's experience was based on his need to use the bus every day for college, therefore, he needed a service that was reliable and convenient, potentially Mark's experiences of being late to college due to the late bus meant he held a more negative perception of the local transport service. This representation of multiple realities is consistent with the ideas of social constructionism (Crotty, 1998; Andrews, 2012; Serge, 2015). The way one perceives life is accounted to their experiences, as this dictates the meaning they ascribe to certain objects, events and experiences (Crotty, 1998; Grix, 2004; 2019; Savin-Baden & Major-Howells, 2011). Therefore, Mark's perception of the public transport system is negative because of his negative experiences of its services; further, this contributes to the individual meaning that Mark has of the services' seeing them as unreliable and "inconvenient" (Grix, 2004; 2019; Savin-Baden & Major-Howells, 2011).

Similarly, some participants discussed the distance they had to travel to get to the nearest bus stop or train station, this would often mean long walks on foot to the nearest station. Margot exemplified this by talking about her walk-in to get the bus - "To get the bus is like an hour's walk...I have to walk from where I live to the main town." Moreover, Heather echoed these issues "I have to be taken by my parents...and wait in (nearby village) for 30 minutes and wait for another bus...which only runs once every 30 minutes" and this happened every day for her to get to school and work. As this bus only runs twice every hour and so she noted the consequences of being "late"

(Heather) to the bus stop. Likewise, Hayley also noted that “it was quite a long walk” to the bus stop, which impacted her wanting to take the bus. This links to Farrington’s (2010) notion of access poverty, which describes the inability of people to be able to travel due to their geographic position. This can lead to people being unable to access opportunities that occur outside of their immediate locale due to the lack of transportation options available to them (Farrington & Farrington, 2005; Farrington, 2010; Lucas, et al., 2016). Furthermore, young people can feel isolated and ‘cut off’ from mainstream society with the inability to easily socialise with friends (Shucksmith, 2006; 2012; 2023; Bernard, et al., 2019). This was certainly the case with Margot who commented on how easily her friends from the local town were able to nearby towns and ‘hang out’ compared to her own experiences. This increased her personal feelings of being left out or “isolated” (Margot) (Rose, et al., 2012).

In addition, these negative comments and experiences from participants such as Mark, Heather, Amy and Margot also reflect the larger issue of public spending in the United Kingdom which has heavily impacted the public transport service (Shucksmith, 2004; 2006; 2012; 2023; Collins, 2010; Lucas, et al., 2016; Bernard, et al., 2019). Public service funding has been continually reduced since austerity measures were implemented by the Coalition and Conservative led governments, this was initially due to the 2008 economic stock exchange collapse (Collins, 2010). This has been since further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing economic crisis, which is responsible for the rising cost of living (BBC.co.uk, 2023; Shucksmith, et al., 2023). The latter has led to widespread industrial action being taken by workers to address issues such as pay and working conditions (BBC.co.uk, 2023). Therefore, the reduction of services has been further amplified (Shucksmith, et al., 2023) and this adds to the chances that young people are at risk of being isolated within the rural context, unable to access the public transport system; or with rising costs unable to afford to use the services (Farrington, 2004; Luck et al., 2016). In this sense there is a restriction in the movement of young people which does not enable them to access opportunities, and resources which are readily available to their urbanised peers (Shucksmith, 2004; Lucas, et al., 2016; Atherton, et al., 2020).

In addition, Bobby talked about the expense of using the public transport system, “I had to get a job, and most of that I spend on transport” (Bobby). Further noting that

this would leave him needing to “walk for miles” (Bobby) to get to sports fixtures or training. This can be linked to Lucas et al. (2016) who argues that government policy often will take a ‘blanket approach’ to supporting people to use services, such as discounted prices for the elderly and disabled. While this is important and supports vulnerable groups, they argue that this does not target those individuals who are in need such as rural youth (Mackett, 2014; Lucas, et al., 2016). Moreover, targeted government policies to meet the needs of individuals who are vulnerable to ‘transport poverty’, such as Bobby, could be an important factor in providing a role for rural youth in wider society (Farrington, 2004; 2010; Lucas, et al., 2016). Without this more youth could feel “suffocated” (Bobby) by their local environment and inability to travel.

A common alternative to the public transport system was for young people to ask their parents for ‘lifts’ using the family's private vehicle. Many participants saw this as a convenient alternative to using the bus or train. For some this was a positive, whereby the young people saw the benefits of their parents helping them out, enabling them to see friends or play sports. Moreover, this was certainly the case with Roger who said his dad would, “offer sometimes” to take him to places, including his sports fixtures. Moreover, Carol, Lauren and Angela echoed similar needs for their “stepmum” (Lauren) and “dad” (Carol; Angela) to transport them to sports fixtures. Additionally, Lauren noted “it is helpful” to know that there was someone there to give her lifts to rugby and believed that without that support they would “probably not play as much” (Carol). These comments were reinforced by the researcher's observations which showed that many of the players were brought to training sessions by their parents and guardians. Furthermore, this can be linked back to Eime et al. 's (2010) study, which notes the role of parents in transporting players to events, and the support this brings is often more important than even the development of skill. Moreover, it can be inferred that this holds even more importance in rural Britain as the distances needed to attend sporting events are generally further when compared to urban clubs (Eime, et al., 2010; Tyyrell & Harmer, 2010; May, et al., 2020).

Contrastingly, some of the participants felt “guilty” (Margot) for having to ask their parents for lifts which often affected their social lives. One example of this was Amy who talked about being asked to attend parties or other social events from school friends. In this instance she felt obliged to ask for a place to stay the night stating that

it is “so annoying for my parents to come and get me at midnight” (Amy). Similarly, Margot discussed how she knew how busy her parents were and how she was “sceptical” about asking for lifts in the past. Furthermore, she was conscious of how her brother also had events they wanted to go to (e.g., football training) and therefore, her parents needed to take him to these places too. In both instances the participants discussed how they “missed out” (Amy) on certain opportunities due to the guilt they faced needing to ask their parents for lifts. Likewise, Lorraine said that her parents would often refuse to take her to places - “we can’t really do that” - as they felt that she had the opportunity to see friends during school time. However, Lorraine also noted that her parents had recently become more “lenient” with her younger sibling, offering more lifts to social events, she reflected:

“We still live quite far away and my parents kind of like you see them Monday to Friday at school, so you can kind of (see them) ...whereas now my mom kind of saw the struggle with me, So, she kind of like was and I was a little bit more lenient with (younger sister) and she’s like, “I’ll take you there” (Lorraine).

The comments made by the young people reflect similar findings as Tyyrell and Harmer’s study (2010). This highlighted that young people believed they needed lifts from their parents as they were an easier way to travel compared to public transport, but often felt guilty asking because of the perception that their parents were busy or would refuse to if they did ask (Shucksmith, 2004; Tyyrell & Harmer, 2010; Eime, et al., 2010). Equally, the desire for young people to be more independent and freer but having to rely on parents also reflects the wider socio-economic issues that face young people in contemporary Britain (Shucksmith, 2004; 2012; Black, Scott & Shucksmith, 2019; Sport England, 2021). This has become a poignant issue within the United Kingdom (Collins, 2010) because of various economic measures (e.g., austerity; and COVID-19). Ultimately, this has led to increased socio-economic barriers which have made it harder for young people to move away from the family home (Collins, 2010; Black, Scott & Shucksmith, 2019; Atherton, et al., 2020; Shucksmith, et al., 2023). To this end, there is now more responsibility on parents to support their children for longer than ever before, as young people find it harder to be self-sufficient in an increasingly costly world (Collins, 2010; Black, Scott & Shucksmith, 2019; Sport England, 2021).

The final means for young people to travel was via their private vehicle after they had passed their test, this was often seen as the best form of transport which positively affected their lives. One example was Mark who talked about being able to go to new places further from home with his friends since learning to drive, “We go to like viewpoints and stuff, just to chill out”, this reveals a new sense of freedom and adventure which allows Mark and his friends to explore new places. Another perspective from Hayley suggested that driving enabled her to go to the local towns and cities whenever she liked, as well as making her way to college - “if I want to go somewhere I just go” - which like Mark demonstrates the newfound sense of freedom that owning a private vehicle can give young people. This could be linked to Bourdieu’s (1984; 1986; 1990) notion of capital, those who can drive or own a private vehicle have a higher stock of capital, due to the economic demands of learning to drive, owning a vehicle, fuelling and maintaining it (Glendinning, et al., 2003; Shucksmith, 2004; 2006; Tyrell & Harmer, 2010; Cullianey, 2014; Atterton, et al., 2020). This may disproportionately affect rural dwellers more as they must travel further distances to get to places and activities (Tyrell & Harmer, 2010; Cullianey, 2014; Bailey, et al., 2016). Additionally, the newfound sense of freedom which is described by participants such as Mark and Hayley may also reveal that young people can increase their cultural and social capital as they participate in new experiences, explore new places and meet new people (Bourdieu, 1986; Portes, 1998; 2000). Therefore, through the process of exchange, they are building a higher stock of capital (cultural and economic), which in turn will enable them to hold a higher level of power and climb the social hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1986).

Alternatively, Mark’s comments about meeting friends at ‘viewpoints’ show that young people still choose to engage with rural life, and that transport is not purely a form of escapism. This can be linked to Tyrell and Harmer’s study (2010) which noted that despite young people having certain issues with living in the countryside they generally enjoy the area and feel lucky to live there.

In addition to this Roger commented on how his car was “mainly for work” offering him the chance to earn money and gain a sense of independence. Moreover, we can infer that Roger lived in a more agricultural area of the countryside as demonstrated by comments such as, “I live by a farm, so like a lot of tractors come up and down, and

horses as well.” It could be strongly suggested that the breadth of employment opportunities is limited for Roger, potentially only being related to the farming industry. A similar opinion was voiced by Yas who spoke of her joy of working and living in the local town, while still being able to frequently see her family in the countryside. These comments exemplify the role of the private vehicle and the opportunities to be independent and find employment outside of their location (Cullianey, 2014; Klaner & Knabbe, 2019). Furthermore, this also shows how employment opportunities outside of the local village are often more lucrative and appealing to young people (Glendinning, et al., 2003; Cullianey, 2014). This is a contributing factor for many young people leaving countryside areas, with the allure of higher-paid work in nearby towns becoming ever-present, the amount of young people leaving is also increasing (Shucksmith, 2006; 2023; Cullianey, 2014; Black, Scott & Shucksmith, 2019).

In a similar vein to Roger and Yas needing their private vehicle for work Lorraine and Rosie, both discussed the distance needed to travel to get to the nearest shops, supermarket and fuel stations. “It’s like 20 minutes there...20 minutes back (Lorraine). “If you’re going out you’ve got to do everything” (Rosie). These emphasise the time and economic demands of living in rural Britain, an increased distance to do ‘basic tasks’ like going to the shop (Glendinning, et al., 2003; Shucksmith, 2004; 2006; 2012; Klaner & Knabbe, 2019; Glass, Bynner & Chapman, 2020). The impact of this is an increased demand on young people economically to run, fuel, and maintain their private vehicles (Lucas, et al., 2016; Bailey, et al., 2016; Klaner & Knabbe, 2019; Glass, Bynner & Chapman, 2020). In extreme circumstances, individuals and families alike may have to make the difficult choice between necessities such as food, and being able to buy fuel (Bailey, et al., 2016). Further reinforcing the importance of private transport in rural areas (Shucksmith, 2004; 2006; Tyyrell & Harmer, 2010; Bailey, et al., 2016; Lucas, et al., 2016; Klaner & Knabbe, 2019; Glass, Bynner & Chapman, 2020).

By contrast, there was a group of young people who wanted to be able to drive, seeing it as a key to extra freedom, and new experiences. However, they were unable to, commonly, this was due to their age, but also the financial cost of learning to drive was a contributing factor to this (Shucksmith, 2006; 2012; 2023; Tyyrell & Harmer, 2010). Furthermore, those young people who were unable to drive felt more isolated due to

this lack of freedom, which overall influenced their perception of the countryside (Tyrrell & Harmer, 2010). One example of this was Heather, who said, "Once you can drive, it's amazing. Until then, you can't and it's a bit shit". Similarly, Christina was looking forward to driving to give her a greater sense of independence and freedom stating that it would enable her to "play her music" and be able to "go like go places when you want...not when your parents wanna go out." While Lauren commented "you can go to places on your own without your parents." This can be linked to the idea of place, and the need for young people to find their own identity (Leyshon, 2011).

Moreover, the availability of private transport can help to identify the social classes present in this study due to the heightened costs needed to maintain and run private transportation in rural Britain (Shucksmith, 2006; 2012; Tyrrell & Harmer, 2010; Glass, Bynner & Chapman, 2020). It was observed that participants such as Yas, Hayley, Lorraine, and Roger were able to maintain their private vehicles demonstrating a higher level of financial income compared to other participants in this study (Amy and Carole). The ability to travel freely and access wider society also enables a growth in capital stocks perpetuating their relative status in the rural hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1984; Grenfell, 2015). However, it was observed by the researcher that the most common way of travelling to training for participants was private transport, with cars at Hillside Cricket Club lining the boundary line. In contrast, only Bobby discussed having to "walk miles" to make training sessions. However, he did conversely add that often "people would pick me up" (Bobby) which demonstrates the use of social capital to secure a tangible benefit. Furthermore, this shows the embedded supportive values that are upheld in many rural communities enabling people to bond together and push through some of the challenging situations which may arise within their communities (Putnam, 2001; Patnulty & Svesdon, 2007).

As many academics have noted young people feel that there is no place for them in their local villages, and therefore, the freedom of a personal vehicle offers a chance for them to find this sense of place, and identity (Punch, et al., 2007; Tyrrell & Harmer, 2010; Leyshon, 2011; Rose, et al., 2012). Further linking to the lack of place and space for young people to socialise in rural villages without feeling as though they are being watched by adults (Tyrrell & Harmer, 2010). Additionally, it reinforces the perception that a private vehicle is needed when living in rural areas, as Heather argues this offers

a “best of both worlds” (Heather) enabling them to appreciate the beauty of the countryside but the access to friends and urban landscapes (Glendinning, et al., 2003; Shucksmith, 2006; Tyyrell & Harmer, 2010).

5. Limitations and Future Considerations

The findings of this research unearth some limitations, but also some future considerations to further understand rural Britain, social capital and sport. It was evident that the most prominent finding of this project was the impact of transport on the lives of young people, enabling them to meet friends, engage in sports and feel included in wider society. Furthermore, some participants discussed that their ability to transport enhanced their overall generation of capital, through the ability to experience life outside their village, or by securing paid employment in the local town (Bourdieu, 1986). It would therefore be important to further explore the link between transportation and the ability of young people to generate more capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Equally, this is an issue which may carry even more significance as the United Kingdom continues to experience industrial action within the transport industry because of the current ‘cost of living crisis’ and employee disputes regarding pay and working conditions (BBC, 2023; Shucksmith, et al., 2023). This could heavily affect young rural people and make it increasingly hard for them to access experiences and opportunities that reside outside of their local area.

Additionally, this also highlights a limitation of the design of this study which was the inability of the researcher to fully embed themselves in the rural context due to government restrictions placed on movement because of the COVID-19 pandemic. One further limitation to note is that this research project only focussed on those young people with access to sports and physical activity organisations, which as Auld (2008) and Cuskelly (2008) both note often define as the ‘social winners’ of society due to a greater access of disposable capital resource. The use of an ethnographic design would have enabled the researcher to embed themselves within the context and allow for them to gain a more rounded appreciation of what living in rural Britain is like (Savin-Baden & Major-Howells, 2011; Bryman, 2016; Silverman, 2022). Moreover, this would enable to gain a greater understanding of the dynamic and unique

characteristics of rural Britain and the challenges that young people may face, both within their sporting organisations and outside in their day-to-day life (Shucksmith, 2004; Shucksmith, et al., 2023). Furthermore, this would also increase the credibility of this research as there would be more observational data to supplement the focus-group discussions (Savin-Baden & Major- Howells, 2011; Bryman, 2016). While, also, developing a greater understanding towards the extent that these organisations may support the production of social capital specifically, as comparisons could be drawn between members of organisations and those who are not members.

One further limitation to note is that this research project only focussed on those young people with access to sports and physical activity organisations, which as Auld (2008) and Cuskelly (2008) both note often define as the 'social winners' of society due to a greater access of disposable capital resource. Therefore, it can be argued that this study only looks at the social winners of rural Britain who have the capital resources to participate and this likely will mean that they also have the resources to obtain other markers of status (e.g., private transport; equipment; land, etc.). Therefore, it may be important in any future projects to view young people within the rural landscape as a whole as this would enable an evaluation between those who participate and those that do not. This would then also further develop a greater understanding towards the extent that these organisations may support the production of social capital specifically, as comparisons could be drawn between members of organsaitons and those who are not members.

Similarly, the nature of the participants in this study could be seen as a limitation as well. At times it was evident that the participants had not thought about certain elements of rural life, or even their feelings towards it, this meant that the depth of data collected by the researcher was limited in some topics. In a future study, it would be valuable to gain more contextual data from adults in the club such as volunteers and coaches who may be able to offer the researcher a more rounded understanding of the local area, for example, how the local transport system work and have there been any changes in the service recently. However, by only discussing these issues with young people, this research project did offer a first-hand of the lived experiences of young people.

Alternatively, this research could focus on individualised sports such as running, swimming or cycling. It has been the common approach of this research and other similar projects to focus on team-based masculine-focused sports (e.g., rugby, football, etc.) (see, Cuskley, 2008; Coalter, 2013). The common discourse focuses on sports' ability to bring people together (Coalter, 2007; 2013; Spaaij, 2011; Morgan, 2013). However much of this research concentrates on traditional sports so it is not clear what the full extent of this belief is when we consider individual activities. It can be argued that there is less need for people to build reciprocal relationships within an individual sport as the benefits are less obvious to participants. Therefore, a deeper study may be needed to understand if these organisations have the same potential in creating and maintaining one's social capital. Furthermore, this could lead to a comparison between individual and team-based sports and the potential social capital, or type of social capital which is formed (bonding, bridging or linking). This would supplement a fuller understanding of sports' potential to bring people together to form social connections.

Finally, this project has added and extended the knowledge of sport and physical activity within the British rural context. This is an area of research which is lacking investigation and understanding. As this research project demonstrates rural areas are diverse and dynamic, with both social class and deprivation manifesting themselves very differently compared with urban Britain. This effects individual inclusion to wider society, with a need for communities to come together and support one another. For example, in relation to public transportation there is a need for 'car-sharing' to enable young people without private transport to access sports clubs. Furthermore, this illuminates the issues surrounding the rural idyll discourse, which currently views these areas in only positive and therefore, neglects surrounding social issues which can disproportionately effect individuals who reside in these towns and villages.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has made significant discoveries in the answering of its research questions which have underpinned this piece of research. These questions were

- ‘How can sports organisations facilitate the creation of social capital within rural communities?’
- ‘How do young people perceive living in rural Britain through their lived experiences?’

Further adding to the growing interest and understanding of young people’s lives and how the social processes of rural Britain may affect them (see, Black, Shucksmith & Scott, 2019; Bernard, et al., 2019; Shucksmith, et al., 2023).

In the first instance, this research demonstrates that sport provides a positive environment for young people to further maintain and develop their stock of social capital. This is significant as it engendered a sense of belonging allowing young people to identify themselves with a community or organisation supporting them to meet like-minded people who commonly shared similar interests to them. An important influence in this process is the norms and values embedded within both the organisation and the sport itself, these often promote the social aspect of the activity (Halpern, 2005; Auld, 2008; Rostilla, 2011). For example, many participants discussed it was normal for them to socialise with teammates after training sessions or matches in the clubhouse. This facilitated a sense of togetherness and enabled the reproduction and generation of social capital.

Additionally, these feelings of togetherness and belonging also demonstrated the dominant formation of bonding social capital harboured by young people. This is significant as it offers a deeper insight into the type of social bonds that are formed within sports organisations and extends our understanding of the type of social capital that is generated. Furthermore, these results also demonstrated that sport is not always inclusive or a ‘panacea’ for social ills, which is a widely held perception among some sports academics (Coalter, 2007; Spaaji, 2011; Morgan, 2013). However, it is equally important to note that these strong connections were vital for harbouring

supportive social networks enabling young people to cope with the unique characteristics of rural Britain (Briggs, 1995; Warren, Thompson & Saegert, 2001; Patnulty & Svesdon, 2007). Predominantly, this was illustrated by participants who relied on transportation from fellow players to carry on playing, as transport links were unreliable or too expensive.

The second meaningful aspect of this research is the perception of rural Britain among the participants of this study. Among the participants, there was a consensus that the countryside was a positive place to grow up as a child with many natural areas that could be explored often with friends. This is consistent with other pieces of research (see, Shucksmith, 2006; 2012; Tyyrell & Harmer, 2010), and is a contributing factor to the rise in families moving towards rural towns and villages to raise their families (Milbourne, et al., 2004; Tyyrell & Harmer, 2010).

However, of more significance was the perception of travel in rural Britain and its importance in getting around to access work, education, and hobbies (e.g., sports). Further, many young people felt their ability to travel was hampered by a public transport system that lacked consistency or reliability. Without effective transport, young people are at risk of being socially excluded and 'left out' of wider society which can have a detrimental effect on their future opportunities, causing them to need to 'catch up' with their urban peers (Glendinning, et al., 2003; Milbourne, et al., 2004; Shucksmith, 2006; 2012; Black, Scott & Shucksmith, 2019; Shucksmith, et al., 2023). Therefore, the ability to drive and own a private vehicle was identified as a key marker of inclusion (Farrington & Farrington, 2004; Gray, Shaw & Farrington, 2006). Moreover, those participants who could drive already discussed how they went to new places, met new people, and engaged in diverse activities. Overall, this demonstrates that transport can lead to an increase in capital resources (e.g., cultural capital, social capital) which will benefit young people as they enter wider society (Levitas, et al., 2005; Rose, et al., 2012; Black, Scott, Shucksmith, 2019).

Equally, the importance of transportation in rural Britain demonstrates the dynamic needs of rural young people in modern Britain (Mackett, 2014). Often it was discussed that young people want the natural experience of the countryside mixed with the globalised urban world, two concepts that are in contradiction to one another.

Therefore, these findings suggest that using and owning a private vehicle offered the 'best of both worlds' (Heather) allowing young people to explore the natural and the global at the same time. However, to further understand the impact of this more research is needed to gain a greater understanding of how transportation could benefit young people.

7. References

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Appendix A: Example of Field Notes taken.

Appendix A: Example of Field Notes taken.



Appendix B: Familiarisation with data, highlighting and identifying codes, using Notability

The screenshot shows the Notability app interface with a dark top bar containing various icons. The main workspace is white and contains handwritten notes in black ink, audio transcripts in grey, and highlighted text in yellow. Annotations include arrows pointing from notes to specific parts of the transcripts.

Handwritten Notes:

- A community.* (with an arrow pointing to the first transcript)
- encouraging young people to come together.* (with an arrow pointing to the first transcript)
- club culture* (with an arrow pointing to the first transcript)
- facilities for this to happen* (with an arrow pointing to the first transcript)
- fond memories of times in childhood* (with an arrow pointing to the second transcript)
- an enthusiasm about this* (with an arrow pointing to the second transcript)
- funds the clubs well.* (with an arrow pointing to the third transcript)
- lots of chances for lots of kids to come together.* (with an arrow pointing to the third transcript)
- sets up the club for everything* (with an arrow pointing to the fourth transcript)
- building culture grassroots up* (with an arrow pointing to the fourth transcript)

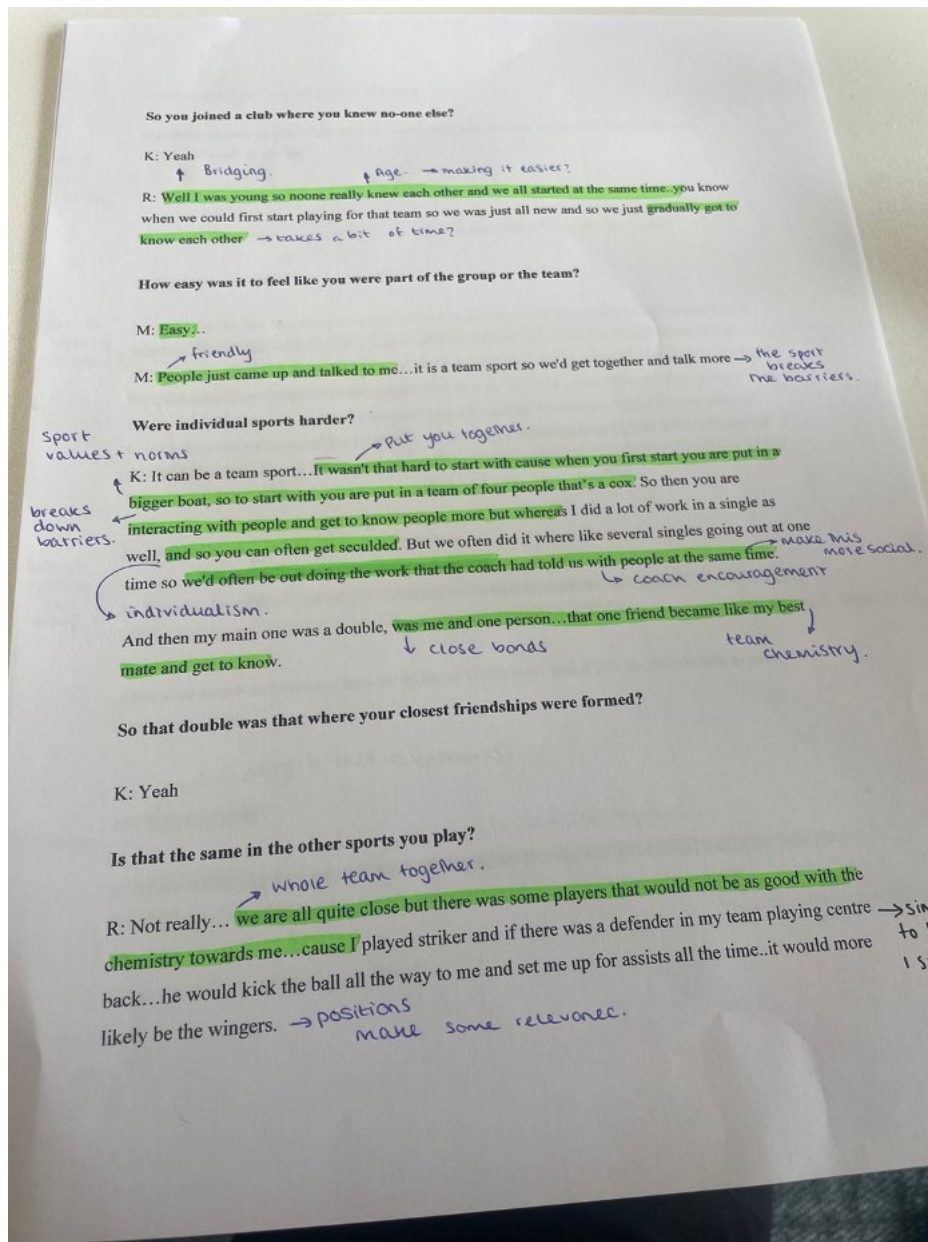
Audio Transcripts:

- [00:11:56.690] - Speaker 1
We use to have all the age groups for like all the kids...And they have a different area on the pitch. And we go right from All Stars all the way up to under 16 and they all have a different place. And at the end of that, **we have a massive sale of hot dogs at like a pound or pound 50.** They are now conversation cause of inflation and you'd stay for hours after you training
- [00:12:17.210] - [REDACTED]
Yeah we'd have water bombs throwing water balloons around and we'd play gymnastics. *a desire to do this more.*
- [00:12:27.550] - Speaker 1
You'd be with all your friends locally plus and also a couple of people that you met through the club on a Friday night. You'd be there for hours until the sun got dark and your parents stumbled out of the clubhouse **"its time to go home lets walk"** → A real community.
does this help young people bond.
- [00:12:39.350] - [REDACTED]
We'd have like 200 kids go. → huge numbers
↳ building culture grassroots up

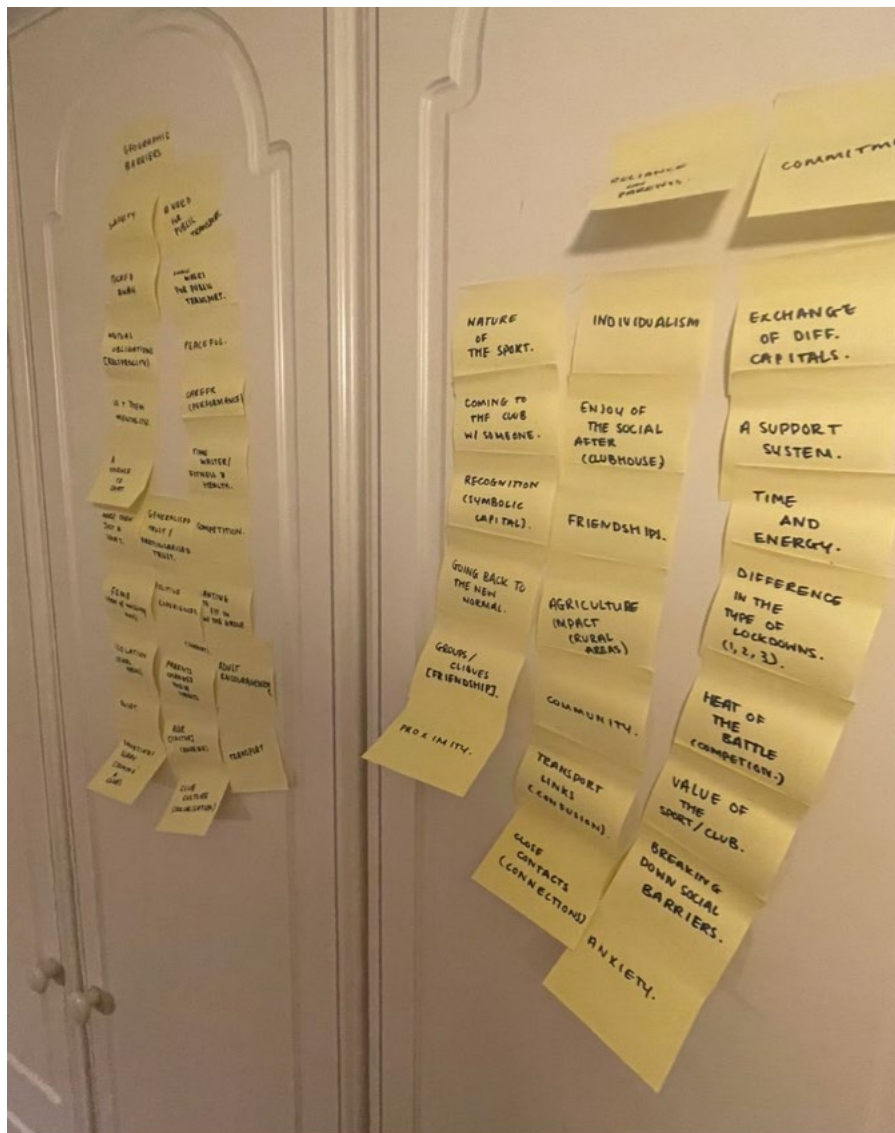
Right Sidebar:

- Icons for various tools (eraser, highlighter, etc.)
- Page number: 9 / 32

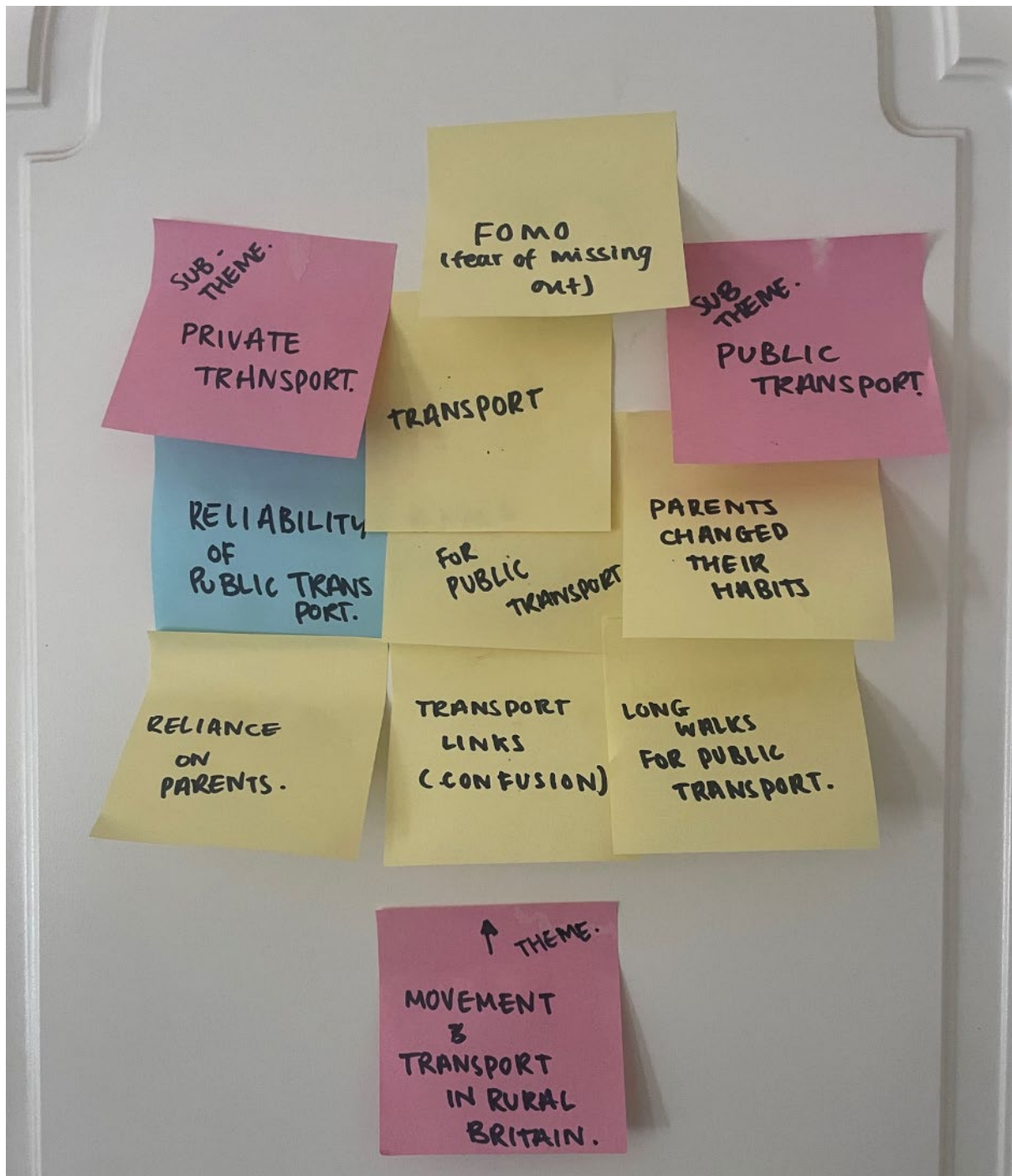
Appendix C: Printed out and highlighted transcripts.



Appendix D: Creation of unorganised codes via Visual Thematic Map



Appendix E: Example of the organisation of visual map to represent sub-themes and themes



Appendix F: The planning stages of the write up.

'your club is your club'.

The facilitation, and types of social capital generated within Rural Britain.

• Opening points → Why do they play sport? } Sport brings people together.
↳ field notes → how did they get involved? } coming w/ friends.

• Multiple new players coming together.

G: for the clubhouse more than the training → an overall enjoyment in the social.

↳ KJ: "ultimately I want this to be a career"

↳ But can also see this as a place to see friends.

Type of Social Capital.

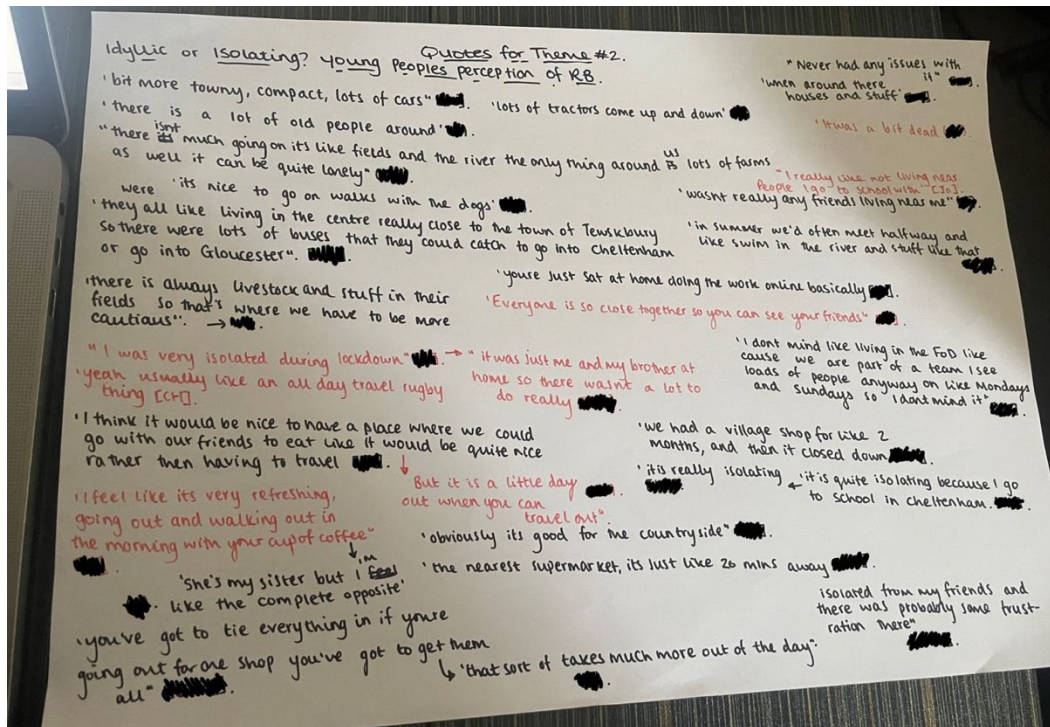
↳ support system.

• Lots of tight connections → Kw - most extreme version of this.

• An overall feeling it is a community

"your club is your club" → KGr → many people didn't feel comfortable talking to opposing teams.

Appendix G: Collection of quotes.



Appendix H: Information Sheet.

Title of the Project:

Rural Britain: Idyllic or Isolating? Physical Activity, Young People and Social Capital

Information Sheet:

This research is seeking to understand the role of physical activity organisations in facilitating social connections for young people. This will take place within rural areas of the Southwest of England. This research is a part of a Masters course which is being supported by the University of Gloucestershire.

What is the Purpose of the Study?

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role that organisations who provide physical activity (e.g., sports clubs) can play in creating social connections (friendships) of young people (15-25) in rural Britain. Young people within this age bracket will be going through an important part of their lives as they begin to think about their future.

A diverse range of social connections is positively associated with gaining new opportunities in both the voluntary and labour markets. However, there is a lack of research to investigate the role that physical activity organisations can play in this. Similarly, almost all research will view this within urbanised cities and towns and therefore, rural areas of the UK have been neglected.

What will happen to the information gathered?

The information will be put together into a thesis/report as part of a Masters award through the University of Gloucestershire. The findings of this will be summarised and help to understand both the opportunities that physical activity organisations provide for young people as well as the unique opportunities that rural life can provide.

Do I have to take part in the study?

Taking part in the study is voluntary. It is your choice whether you agree to allowing your son/daughter to take part in this study. At any point you/they are free to withdraw from the study at any time without stating a reason.

There will be a two to three week 'cooling down' period for you to decide if you would like to take part in the study. In the first week the researcher will explain the study in person to both the participants and parents and guardians. In the second week there will be the ability for any additional questions to be asked of the researcher for clarification. Finally in the third week all participants/parents/guardians will decide whether they consent to taking part in the study.

What will be asked of your son/daughter if you decide to take part?

If you agree to be involved in this research project, you will be asked to take part in a two-step process in order collect data.

The first part of this process will be an observation by the researcher of the physical activity club you take part in. The researcher will take a voluntary role within the organisation over a period of around 3 months. At all times anyone who comes into the organisation will be made aware of the presence of the researcher. Members of the sports organisation will be given written notice at least 72 hours (3 days) prior to the session via the usual communication method (e.g., email, text message, etc.). If you decide against participating in the study, then your son/daughter will still be able to attend sessions at your physical activity organisations. The researcher will be aware of those who are taking part in their study and only focus their attention to those who have consented to take part. Those who have not will not be included in any way in the study. During the time in which the researcher is present they shall be observing the importance of friendships in the organisations and how interactions occur.

The second part of the research process will be a focus group interviews with around six people from the organisation. These groups will hold a discussion to gain an understanding of how young people feel about living in a rural area of Britain; but also, how engaging in activity may influence the friendships they have. This activity is all about gathering the opinions of young people and there is no right or wrong answers to any questions or topics which are discussed.

You will be able to withdraw at any time during this process. If you would not like the information you provide to be used, you must contact us within 4 weeks after the focus group has taken place.

What are the possible benefits to taking part?

The information from this study will help to better understand young people and rural areas and the potential unique difficulties which young people may face. It will also offer insight into the importance of physical activity organisations and the various ways in which they could benefit wider society.

Who has reviewed the study?

The University of Gloucestershire Research Ethics Panel has approved the evaluation. For more information about this process, you can contact Dr. Emily Ryall (eryall@glos.ac.uk)

Who can you contact if you have any concerns or queries about the study?

If you have any concerns then you can contact Dr Emily Ryall (eryall@glos.ac.uk) who is the chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Gloucestershire.

What to do now?

If you would like to be involved in the workshop and study, please complete the consent form (supplied in this document).

If you need any further information on this study, please contact:

Bradley Jacques, University of Gloucestershire. Email – [@glos.ac.uk](mailto:bradley.jacques@glos.ac.uk)

Appendix I: Consent Form (for parents/guardians of Under 18's)

DATE:

CONSENT FORM:

Rural Britain: Idyllic or Isolating? Rural Britain, Physical Activity and Social Capital

Name of Researcher:

Bradley Jacques

Please place your initials in the box to show you agree:

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet and have had an opportunity to ask any questions.
2. I understand that my son/daughter's participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I understand that I am free to request the information my son/daughter provides in the focus groups will not be used in the final analysis/ report. To do so I must contact the researcher within 4 weeks after the focus group has taken place.
4. I understand that the focus groups will be audio taped for the purpose of an accurate account of my experiences and for data analysis purposes
5. I agree to allow my son/daughter take part in the above study

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Guardian

Date

Signature

Appendix J: Assent form (for all participants)

DATE:

ASSENT FORM

Rural Britain: Idyllic or Isolating? Rural Britain, Physical Activity and Social Capital

Name of Researcher:

Bradley Jacques

Please place your initials in the box to show you agree:

6. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet and have had an opportunity to ask any question
7. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
8. I understand that I am free to request the information I provide in the focus groups will not be used in the final analysis/ report. To do so I must contact the researcher within 4 weeks after the focus group has taken place.
9. I understand that the focus groups will be audio taped for the purpose of an accurate account of my experiences and for data analysis purposes.
10. I agree to take part in the above study

Participant

Date

Signature

Appendix K: Ethics Review Approval

