Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

The World at Her Feet: An Exploration of the Experiences of Cultural Distance for Professional Female Footballers

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in
Social Anthropology
at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand

Sarah Gregorius
2017

Abstract

This research explores the experiences of five professional female football players from Australia and America who have spent time playing professional football in either South Korea or Japan. Qualitative data was collected from the participants through semi-structured interviews at, or near, the conclusion of their experience. Research participants' insights were added to by the researcher's own experiences of playing professional football in Japan. This exploration is an anthropological enquiry into the effect of playing professional sport in a culturally distant environment on a player's sense of identity and their perceptions of success. Analysis of interviews revealed that success is both personal and subjective, and cannot be judged solely on the traditional empirical measures of success in sport, such as wins and losses, goals scored, or trophies won. A positive sense of personal growth and development was also expressed by all the athletes in the study, demonstrating that the effects of playing and living in a foreign country extend well beyond the playing field.

Using Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus alongside ideas drawn from occupational science, sports anthropology, and sociology, the findings show that cultural distance in a professional sporting context can both challenge and empower an individual in ways they often neither predict nor anticipate. This research contributes to an academic field that is relatively small, and demonstrates that sport can be an important domain where wider cultural and societal values are evident. This thesis illustrates the importance of acknowledging how players' experiences on and off the field influence identity, personal growth, and success as they negotiate cultural distance while playing in foreign environments. The findings in this research can help players, coaches, managers, and sports administrators better understand and consider these effects to implement integration programmes and frameworks for smooth transitions into football, and life, for players from different cultural backgrounds. This research provides a foundation for further research into sports anthropology and professional women's football, something that is vital as the popularity and participation in this global game continues to increase.

Acknowledgments

I would first like to acknowledge my participants, whose cooperation, openness and honesty about their experiences brought this research to life in ways that I had not anticipated. I would also like to thank High Performance Sport New Zealand and the Prime Minister's Athlete Scholarship programme, which has financially supported me throughout my graduate studies and allowed me to pursue an academic career alongside my football career.

To my supervisors, Dr Robyn Andrews and Dr Juliana Mansvelt, I extend my gratitude for their support, belief, and encouragement throughout my research journey. I truly appreciate the effort made by both to consider my unique schedule at times, having accommodated time zones and locations around the world over the course of this research. They have challenged and inspired me throughout this study, and I have also enjoyed supplying the odd football lesson in return!

Thank you to my wonderful family, who are the best cheerleaders I could ever ask for no matter what I pursue in life. Particularly my parents, who have always listened, asked after, and expressed confidence in my work. And to my grandmother, who passed away before I could complete this qualification, I thank for teaching me to never stop learning, and to always remain curious about the world.

And, lastly, I acknowledge my second family; the women I have played alongside over the years in football. This research is about giving voice to some of your stories, and is a small dedication to your truly remarkable, inspirational, and amazing selves.

Table of Contents

Abstract i

Acknowledgments ii

Table of Contents iii

Chapter One: Introduction 1

Chasing the Round Ball 2

Research Aims and Objectives 6

The Field of Play for Women's Football 7

Professional Women's Football in Japan and South Korea 9

Thesis Outline 11

Chapter Two: Literature Review 13

Introduction 13

Part One: Sport and Anthropology 14

The Culture of Sport 16

Part Two: The Field of Sports Studies 16

Team Sports and Cultures of Success 17

The Emergence of Elite Women's Team Sports 18

The World of Female Footballers 20

Football, Migration, and Globalisation 21

Team Efficacy, Group Confidence, and Performance Identity 23

Part Three: Concepts That Inform This Research 25

Habitus 25

Discipline, Structures, and a Carnal Knowledge of Sport 26

Facets of Identity in Changing Environments 27

The Accumulation of Being 31

Summary 32

Chapter Three: Methodology 35

Introduction 35

The Team Sheet 35

Extended Introductions - Kate 37

Claire 37

Amanda 39

Jane 39

Dana 40

The Interview Process 41

Personal Reflections and Notes from the Field 43

Auto-Ethnographic Elements 44

Data Analysis 44

Ethical Considerations 46

Summary 47

Chapter Four: Packing the Boots – Motivations and Expectations 49

Introduction 49

Individual Motivations 50

Personal and External Expectations 53

Discussion 59

Conclusion 60

Chapter Five: Being, Becoming, Belonging - Life on the Ground 61

Introduction 61
How To Be 62
Initial Impressions and the First Days on the Job 63
Food and Fuelling the Athlete 66
How to Become 68
Finding Your Feet and Finding Routine 69
Different Dynamics – Coaching, Playing, and Developing 71
Challenges Beyond the Football Field 75
How To Belong 76
Becoming One of the Team 77
The 12th Man – Significant Support People 78
Broader Cultural Observations 80
Discussion 81
Conclusion 83
Chapter Six: Personal Development – Growing as an Individual 85
Introduction 85
Adapting to the World Around the Athlete 88
Managing Language - From a Barrier to an Opportunity 89
Adopting Culture and The Reflexive Self 90
Accumulating Being 92
Perceptions of Success 95
Discussion 99
Conclusion 100
Chapter Seven: Conclusion 101
Findings: A New Playing Field 102

Potential Applications of Research Findings 106

Opportunities for Future Research 107

Summary 108

Appendices 110

Appendix A: 110

Appendix B: 112

Appendix C: 113

References 114

Chapter One: Introduction

Described as “the beautiful game”, the global reach of football is extraordinary. With more member associations to its governing body than the United Nations, and with in-home television coverage of the 2010 Men’s World Cup allegedly reaching 46.4 percent of the world’s population – almost half of humanity – football is well and truly the “global game” (Ruggie, 2016). The largest participation sport on the planet, there are over 265 million registered football players and an estimated fan base of over 3.5 billion people (Ruggie, 2016). It is a sport played not just by supremely talented, famous, and wealthy professionals in state-of-the-art stadiums and facilities, but also by children on random dirt patches, using anything round they can find as a ball and sticks as goal posts. Not only are people passionate about playing the game, the levels of attachment to football displayed by fans are also significant. A survey of European fans found that over three-quarters said they had hugged or kissed complete strangers at games (Ruggie, 2016). Two-thirds admitted to having cried at football games, either through total elation or bitter disappointment (Ruggie, 2016). Bill Shankly, a former player and Liverpool Football Club manager was famously quoted saying “some people believe that football is a matter of life and death. I can assure you, it is much, much more important than that” (Grove, 2015).

I have dedicated well over half of my life to football. This sport has taught me some of life’s great lessons – teamwork, resilience, dedication, hard-work, persistence, just to name a few. My passion for “the beautiful game” has been the catalyst for my anthropological academic career, and this research. This thesis uses the sport as its area for examination, to conduct enquiry into facets of human experience and culture that speak as much to sports as it does to life – that of identity, belonging, and personal growth.

At 29 years old, I am a recently retired member of the Football Ferns, the New Zealand Women’s national football team. I was part of the team for seven years, through a period of unprecedented growth for the sport both at home here in New Zealand, and internationally. With consistent qualification achieved for major

tournaments by the Football Ferns, global events such as World Cups and Olympic Games, and an increased number of competitive results against high-ranking opposition, the team rose to an all-time high *Fédération Internationale de Football Association* (FIFA, the sports global governing body) ranking of 16 in the world. These achievements have brought about new opportunities for the top female players in New Zealand that were not available in previous years. With the team's arrival on the world stage, individual opportunities for players arrived as well. Professional contracts for leagues around the world were placed in front of well-performing members of the Football Ferns, and one of these opportunities was offered to me after a successful FIFA World Cup tournament in 2011. I was offered my first professional contract, which I eagerly accepted. My professional football career had begun. I was living the dream, playing football full-time on a professional club team in Germany.

This research centres on the experiences of professional female football (soccer) players. I have defined, for the purposes of this thesis, professional women's football as the game as played in leagues (groups of teams in competition with one another) where there are professional playing opportunities, with the athletes paid and competing as their full-time vocation. I have also defined cultural distance (a term I will elaborate on in chapter two) as the gap between the culture that a person knows in their home country, and the new culture that they come into as they move to a different country.

In this introduction chapter, I provide further context around women's football, outline the research, and state my research questions. The inspiration for this research is personal, as I explain in the next segment.

Chasing the Round Ball

My first international, professional, club football experience took me out of my comfortable employment in Auckland, New Zealand, to the tiny village of Bad Neuenahr in western Germany. As well as being my first playing contract, it was the also the first true cross-cultural immersion experience of my adult life. Everything was different – from the language, to the environment, to the food, to the style of

training and coaching, to the attitude of my new teammates. It was the exposure to these differences, and their accompanying challenges, that led me to an interest in exploring culture and its social influences in an academic setting.

I was uncomfortable, humbled and embarrassed at times about my lack of understanding in this new environment. My inability to communicate and express myself with the ease I was used to, such as when I was with my national team or in football club environments in New Zealand, frustrated me. Simultaneously, however, I was fascinated by what I was experiencing and observing. I was not the only foreigner in my team in Germany, and though I felt isolated at times, I was equally uplifted by the effort some of my new teammates were making to include me. I was also able to observe my own reactions to this, and the reactions of the other foreign players to the same circumstances. Thus, after a year overseas, I began a Graduate Diploma in Social Anthropology via distance learning at Massey University, later joining the Masters programme. With cross-cultural football as my original anthropological inspiration, it felt appropriate and rather poignant to delve deeper into my experiences, and the experiences of others, in an academic research capacity. Since my time in Germany, I have travelled to many destinations as a part of my professional football career, met many people from all walks of life along the way, whilst experiencing the innumerable highs and lows that accompanied chasing that football around the world.

My final contract as a professional footballer brought me to Japan in August 2014 to play for a club in the Nadeshiko League, which is one of the few but ever-increasing women's leagues around the world that offers professional playing opportunities. An example of this type of growth, and the impact it has had for New Zealand female footballers, is that prior to the Women's World Cup in 2011, New Zealand had only two professional female footballers. Currently, that number sits at around fourteen, with approximately two thirds of the team having accumulated professional playing experience at some point over the last five years. From previously having just two professional players, who were playing in two of the rare sustainable professional women's leagues at that time, there are now female footballers from New Zealand with international club experiences in upwards of 10 leagues around the world, in countries such as America, Sweden, France, and Japan, as examples.

Japan was the most challenging, and rewarding, experience of my professional football career. My contract was originally for only four months, but I ended up staying for two and a half years. Despite having accumulated many years of previous overseas experience, the intensity of the emotions and the challenges I faced were multiplied in this vastly different society. I ran the gamut of emotions, particularly in those first four months; from that unique elation and euphoria that comes with achieving shared outcomes and goals with the team, to incredible bouts of loneliness and isolation, adrift in a country where natural, easy communication seemed so much further out of reach than it had ever been before. I became highly self-aware and reflective, spending large periods of time in my own head wondering about the impressions I was making on those around me. How was I being perceived, I wondered? I would hear my name – so I knew I was being talked *about*, but I was unable to be talked *to*, with the language feeling so much more unfamiliar than German had ever felt. The sensation of feeling watched was not unfamiliar. I had sensed that in other professional environments in Germany and England, but this was like being under a microscope. I felt scrutinised, not just for the way that I played football, but for the way I conducted myself generally. I would forget to take my shoes off going into the locker room. I would laugh at something during a training session when nobody else was laughing. My extroverted personality craved conversation – I longed to make jokes to break up the monotony of training as I would in any other team environment. I was *culturally distant* from my peers for the first time in my experience of being part of a team.

Not only was I more aware of myself, I also become more aware and interested in how other international players interacted within their new environments, how they faced these challenges, and if they felt them as challenges at all. After a year in Japan, I was joined by two other teammates from the New Zealand Football Ferns who came over to play for my team on short-term contracts. I felt as if I was reliving all my early experiences again as I watched them come to terms with the same differences I had to come to terms with, navigating a new and foreign social and physical environment. This lead me to reflect, to question them, and to wonder about what made our experiences and interpretations the same, and what made them different. I observed how the introduction of more foreign players affected aspects of

my Japanese team, such as team cohesion, team culture, and the general sense of unity felt amongst the group members. I watched the way in which my compatriots internalised their new surroundings, both on the football field and away from the football field. Their responses were different, not only from each other but also from my initial responses. We could empathise with one another, of course, but the variations in each of the experiences, particularly the perspectives, fascinated me.

Over the entirety of my time in Japan, I would see more 'foreign' players come and go from teams I was involved with, both as a teammate and as players in opposition club teams in the league, with varying levels of what I saw as 'success'. I would wonder why certain players would choose to come here. What would motivate a high-performing athlete to make such a leap into the unknown, especially if they came from countries where there were professional football opportunities available to them? For example, New Zealand does not have professional or semi-professional playing opportunities available for female footballers, but America certainly does. Were players choosing to play in a foreign country for financial reasons? A desire for new adventures? Personal reasons that were not football related? If the motivations for going into a foreign environment weren't football related, how might this affect what they wanted, and took, from the experience?

My own personal and primary motivation for going overseas was to improve my football. I wanted to become a better player, to take my skills to the world and have them sharpened, tested, and developed in new and exciting professional environments so that I could better serve the New Zealand national team. What I ended up experiencing was far more than I could have anticipated when I set out all those years ago. I changed on the field, without a doubt – my football improved markedly over time, as I had hoped it would. But the change I experienced *off* the field was beyond anything I could have prepared myself for or predicted. It has changed my life. My outlook, my sense of identity, the ways I view myself and the ways in which I view the world have all been shaped by my experiences overseas playing football. While I was overseas *in* the experience, I wasn't aware of the changes and shifts in identity that were taking place within me. I measured my success on how I was improving as a footballer, what contribution I was making to my team, and most importantly, what contribution I was making to the New Zealand

team whenever we reassembled to compete. It wasn't until I began studying that I began to reflect on the multiple dimensions there were to my experience, and consequently questioning whether these were common with other players in similar conditions.

Research Aims and Objectives

I decided to investigate these experiences and their potential meaning to others who had experienced similar situations. I wanted to explore how a person could be shaped by cultural distance and diverse social environments in elite sport. I also wanted to study what others viewed success as in these circumstances. Often in sport, success is measured in strict empirical measures – wins and losses, goals scored, trophies, or accolades. Therefore, my primary research aim and objective is to explore the way in which cultural distance in a professional sports environment can shape, influence, and effect the identity of an athlete, and that athlete's perception of success. Underpinning this primary research objective, I also wanted to understand any challenges felt by the athletes away from the sporting field. Therefore, my key questions and sub-questions are as follows:

- How does a professional female football player experience *cultural distance* in a professional team environment?
    - What impact, if any, was there on their general sense of identity?
    - How did they manage impressions and performance in these unfamiliar circumstances?
- What is *success* for the individual player?
    - What is success to a football player within a culturally distant team environment?
    - How might being in a culturally distant social environment influence how an athlete perceives success?

What I strived for was a platform provided by the research that allowed these women to discuss their experiences holistically, with the emphasis placed not just on the traditionally asked and studied aspects of sport and athletic performance. I wanted to give visibility to their experiences using their own words, to gain understanding and

insight into this type of experience that went beyond what I had ascertained on my own.

To answer these questions, I have sought out professional female football players as participants who are in situations where there is significant, perceived cultural distance between the athlete's home environment, and the country in which they were playing. The five women selected for this study are from western countries, all of whom have recently spent a significant amount of time playing professionally in Japan or South Korea. The next segment introduces women's football, to set the context for my anthropological exploration.

The Field of Play for Women's Football

Football is the highest participation team sport for females in the world. Globally, over 30 million girls and women play the game, with the total number of registered players being 4,801,360 as of the last FIFA Women's Football Survey (FIFA, 2014). As a part of its 2016-2026 "FIFA Forward" initiative, FIFA have set a target for 60 million girls and women to be playing football by 2026, and for 60% of the world's population to be involved in the sport in some capacity (FIFA, 2016). With 209 countries registered as member associations to the governing body, the sport and the organisation has the reach to attempt to make this happen (FIFA, 2014).

Alongside the growth of the sport in terms of participation, there has been increased visibility of the elite women's game. The FIFA Women's World Cup Canada 2015 set new attendance and viewership records, both in Canada and internationally. It dominated social media, even outperforming the 2014 FIFA Men's World Cup in terms of monthly views to the official FIFA YouTube channel (KantarSport, 2015). More than 750 million television viewers watched the event, underlining the global success of the competition and the growth of women's football (KantarSport, 2015). The Women's World Cup final in 2015 between USA and Japan was the most-watched football match in US history – for either gender (TV By The Numbers, 2015). It shattered the previous record for a women's football match by +41% (TV By The Numbers, 2015).

Amongst the strides taken in the development of women's football has been the implementation and sustaining of professional and semi-professional football leagues for women around the world. This has supplemented the elite game, as it provides full-time employment for the sports best athletes. The game has progressed to new heights, and with this increase in standards, the ability and commitment required to compete consistently at the elite level has also increased. Increased visibility has helped, but the professional game is still very much in its infancy, with the percentage of full-time professional opportunities growing, but still limited – particularly in comparison with the men's game.

The Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) compiles data for both male and female players in Europe, which is the continent with the highest concentration of professional leagues and professional players for both male and females. For example, in Europe, UEFA researched and estimated that the number of professional and semi-professional female players has increased by 119% from 2012/13 to 2016/17, reaching approximately 2,853 players (UEFA, 2017). Comparatively, however, FIFA estimated, back in 2006, that there were 60,000 professional men's players in Europe (FIFA, 2006). This demonstrates that there is a gulf in opportunity between men and women in professional football, as based on those numbers there are approximately 20 times more professional opportunities for men than there are for women in Europe alone.

In my search for this information, I was surprised at how difficult it was to obtain official empirical data and statistics on professional football, even in the men's game. Approximate estimates are available, but that largely depends on member associations' willingness to be transparent and therefore may not be a reliable snapshot of where the professional game is at worldwide. My experience and knowledge of the women's football landscape allows me to make informed estimates about the number of women's football leagues in the world that provide professional playing opportunities. I put that at around ten, whereas in Europe alone there are over 870 professionally registered leagues for men's football (European Professional Football League Association, 2016).

It is not only women's football that faces challenges when it comes to opportunities for the athletes. Women's sport in general has evolved slowly, still struggling for recognition and acceptance, particularly outside of major sporting events such as Olympic Games and World Cups. Two areas where there is evidence of this are in media coverage, and sponsorship. A 2013 study done in the United Kingdom found that the top five women's sponsorship deals totalled £1.4 million, compared to £590 million for the top five men's deals (Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation, 2014). The same study found that women's sports accounted for just 7% of all sports media coverage in the UK (Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation, 2014). Women's sports in general, not just football, has a long way to go.

Gathering any information about professional leagues for women, and the players, was difficult, as there are few, if any, public records with reliable data on the state of the professional game in women's football. With quantitative data difficult to find, it is no surprise that there is even less qualitative data available about the experiences of professional female footballers. Without much official research, even into the basic metrics surrounding the professional women's game, there is clearly an opportunity to better understand, explore, and discuss the experience of being a female athlete in a globalised sport such as football through an anthropological lens.

Professional Women's Football in Japan and South Korea

The two football leagues that I have focused my research on are the Japanese Nadeshiko League, and the South Korean "L" League. The Nadeshiko League in Japan runs from approximately the beginning of April until the end of October with an additional post-season knockout cup tournament which finishes in December. The Nadeshiko League has been around for several years, but the League was greatly boosted in popularity and recognition after the Japanese women's football team won the FIFA Women's World Cup in 2011. This was the first time an Asian team had won a world football tournament at any level, and provided the Japanese people momentary respite from the aftermath of the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami, and the continuing crisis of at the Fukushima nuclear power plant (McCurry, 2011). The emotional win gave the entire country a boost through a difficult time, and women's football in Japan experienced a rapid rise in popularity as a result. After the

tournament concluded, the opportunity to see those stars of the Women's World Cup team, now back at home and playing for their Nadeshiko League clubs, became an attractive prospect. Attendance at matches featuring those players rose significantly. With this boost in attendance and attention, increased revenue became available to the clubs involved in the League. Clubs began to look offshore for players, bringing in some international players to the League. This happened slowly at first, but over the last few seasons the number of international players in the League has climbed each year. However, in comparison to other professional women's leagues around the world, Japan still has far fewer international players. While a professional team in the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) in America may average around five foreign players per squad, it has been rare to have more than five foreign players in the entire league in Japan.

South Korea has had even fewer foreign players than Japan. The South Korean national women's team is not the powerhouse that the Japanese women's team is in international football, and as a result their league is not as strong. This makes playing in South Korea an even more unusual proposition, as it is not considered one of the top leagues in the world and does not have a reputation for being a country that produces, or attracts, some of the best female players in the world. South Korea's best players tend to go overseas themselves to play professional football in some of the more reputable leagues in other parts of the world. Ji So Yun, for example, the captain of the South Korean national team plays for Chelsea Ladies in the Women's Super League in England, and has previously played for INAC Kobe Leonessa in the Nadeshiko League in Japan (Chelsea Football Club, 2017).

Therefore, to go and play football in these countries is a relatively new and uncommon experience. I was the first female footballer from New Zealand to play in Japan, and at that time there were only three other foreign players in the entire league. In 2016, there were three Australians playing in South Korea, with only four foreigners in the entire league including those three. With such small numbers, it could be argued that the teams in these leagues would perhaps not be as equipped to welcome players from foreign countries as teams in other countries might, without any history or tried and tested systems in place to manage integration. This could contribute to the cultural distance, making the experiences for these women more

challenging than what a foreign player may experience in going to a team in Germany or America, where a lot more players from other countries have played historically for many more years.

Thesis Outline

As stated earlier, the objective of this research is to explore the way in which cultural distance in a professional sports environment can influence the identity of an athlete, as well as how that athlete may perceive success.

In this first chapter, I introduced myself as the author and as a former professional player, to explain the personal inspiration that has led to this research. I have stated my research aims and objectives, as well as the sub-questions I have sought to address. I also provided context for professional women's football, both globally and in Japan and South Korea.

The second chapter of this thesis is a literature review, comprised of three parts. In the first I introduce sports anthropology, including some ethnographic work carried out with women participating in sports. The second part reviews research on women's football, international migration in football, team sports, and the individual in sport, from multiple disciplines. The literature is drawn from anthropology, but is also informed by research in sports psychology, sociology, and occupational science. In the third part, I introduce the key theoretical concepts I have used to help interpret the findings of the research.

In chapter three I explain my methodology for conducting this research. I introduce the participants, discussing how they came to arrive in their host countries, as well as the way in which they describe themselves as individuals. I discuss the techniques I used to gather the data and conduct the research, explaining both the benefits and necessary considerations of such techniques. In this chapter I position myself in the research alongside my participants, explaining the way in which my own experiences have been interwoven with the participant's experiences to provide additional context where required. As well as explaining the data gathering techniques, this chapter also outlines the techniques used to analyse the data, and

how the themes of this research emerged. I also discuss the ethical considerations for the research.

After describing the methodology, the next chapters discuss the three major themes that emerged from the research. The first of the findings chapters explores the motivations and expectations held by the participants. This provides insights into how the athletes felt prior to embarking on the experience, as well as how they had to manage their own expectations against the expectations others had of them.

The second findings chapter, chapter five, focuses on the experience of living in Japan or South Korea; that is, “life on the ground” for the athletes. The participants discuss the way they managed their initial first impressions, the challenges they faced, the process of routinization, and the cross-cultural elements of the experience that dominated their new lives. It is an exploration of how the participants learned how to be, how to become, and how to belong, in their new homes and teams.

Chapter six discusses the final major theme that emerged from the research, that of the personal growth and ‘accumulation of being’. I discuss what these terms mean, and the effect that the participant’s felt the experience had on their personal development. Much of the discussion in the chapter is the athlete’s thoughts as they reflected on their time playing, which brings the threads explored in the previous findings chapters together to provide insight into the entirety of their professional footballing experience overseas.

The final chapter of this thesis draws the themes together to conclude the research. This chapter highlights the contribution of the research for anthropologies of sport, including the potential impact and value it could have for stakeholders in the professional sporting world. I also discuss the possibility for future research, and the potential and scope in this field of academia. This thesis makes visible the rich experiences of professional female football players, contributing insights into a field of increasing significance, and into a sport that continues to grow both in reach and popularity for women and girls around the world.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

“Anthropology, as a discipline, has never warmed up to the notion that sport is an important cultural domain worth studying” (Sands & Sands, 2010, p. 1). This statement became increasingly accurate the more I explored the literature the close to my research. As I have further investigated first into sports anthropology, then into women in sport, followed by professional women’s sports, and lastly into the individual in professional women’s sport, the experiences of women have not been well researched.

As discussed in the opening introduction to this thesis, a scarcity of anthropological literature may be because professional women’s football is a new and growing phenomenon, still very much in its infancy in comparison to other sports, particularly men’s sport. However, this does not explain why there is such a small amount of anthropological study into sport in general. As Sands and Sands (2010) state, anthropologists who do work in the field of sport and culture wonder why such a popular human endeavour, that generates billions of dollars shared by billions of people, and, every four years commands the biggest global and cross-cultural stage (the Olympic Games), is not seen as a more viable course of study. Traditional academic fields that have studied sport, such as sociology, psychology, philosophy, and history, have given rise to endeavours that either study sport specifically (i.e., sports studies), or include the study of sport in their “field of focus” (i.e., feminist and queer studies) (Sands & Sands, 2010, p. 6). Therefore, my literature review extends into academic work done in those other areas, particularly psychology and sociology.

The literature reviewed in this chapter is presented in three parts. The first discusses the relationship between sports and anthropology. The second part of the chapter focuses on the field of sports studies, presenting literature on team cultures and success, the emergence of elite women’s sports, female footballers, football studies, and team efficacy and performance identity. In the third part of the review I introduce the key theoretical perspectives that will feature in my data analysis and findings,

highlighting the concepts and various applications that have helped inform my findings and conclusions. I conclude the chapter with a discussion about where my research fits in the current academic landscape.

Part One: Sport and Anthropology

The quote used in the opening line of this chapter is from *The Anthropology of Sport and Human Movement* by Robert Sands and Linda Sands (2010), one of the few academic books that directly discuses sport as a cultural and universal expression through an anthropological lens. The book is a biocultural exploration of sport and human movement, examining the intersection of biology and culture. Sands and Sands (2010) speak about biological features and their influence on universal cultural expression, finding that our condition as humans is the result of culture as it impacts on our biology. It is an "initial foray in exploring the biocultural foundation of human movement patterns as it relates to the human propensity of sport in all its manifestations" (Sands & Sands, 2010, p. 1). This foray spans from health and human wellbeing, to human performance, to performance through genetic engineering (Sands & Sands, 2010). The book's focus on the evolution of the body alongside the evolution of culture is not a subject explored in this research. However, the text was informative for my research as it makes the important connection between sport and anthropology, and the necessity of undertaking research into culture surrounding sport.

Another piece of academic work relevant to my study is a book titled *Athletic Intruders: Ethnographic Research on Women, Culture, and Exercise* by Anne Bolin and Jane Granskog (2012). The book itself evolved from the intersection of the authors lives as anthropologists, feminists, and athletes (Bolin & Granskog, 2012). It gathers nine ethnographies of women playing sport, each focusing on a different activity. The sports explored include triathlons, aerobics, basketball, bodybuilding, weightlifting, motorcycle riding, casual exercise, and rugby. As with my motivations for this research, the authors state that:

> *A critical component for instigating such research for each of us lay in the fact that we both first became participants in the sports we chose to investigate. It was, in fact, the impact that such participation has had on our lives overall that*

> *led us to explore the impact of such activities, and the embodiment of the self that emerged as a result, upon women in general.* (Bolin & Granskog, 2012, p. 1)

These motivations echo my own, demonstrating how one's own experience can be a catalyst for academic examination. They engaged in reflexive ethnographic research, and selected the other ethnographies in the book because they too engaged in that type of research. The purpose of the book was to articulate the interrelationship of physical activity and issues of gender relations, asymmetrical ideologies of gender, and embodiment through a feminist and interpretive lens (Bolin & Granskog, 2012). The ethnographies within the book were informative for my research as they discussed the role of sport in creating positive change for women in a myriad of ways, such as through empowerment, positive body image, and in overcoming societal stereotypes for women. In the ethnographies presented in their book, the experiences of the female athletes are discussed in terms of foci such as societal expectations placed on women, male hegemony, or image and media bias towards women playing contact sports.

Another anthropological text drawn on in this research is the work done by Takie Sugiyama Lebra on Japanese patterns of behaviour. This is not a sports anthropology text, but the explanations of Japanese culture and behaviour have helped inform what myself and the athletes based in Japan (and to some extent South Korea) have encountered. Lebra's account is based on personal experiences, as a "native" and as a critical observer. Additionally, she draws on literature available on Japanese people and society, both scientific and non-scientific, while also paying as much attention to what the Japanese have written about themselves (Lebra, 1976). Her book sheds light upon Japanese behaviour in a cultural context, and it has been an informative aide in explaining how the sports context can provide insight into culture and society, as the team can be an example of life in that country and culture in microcosm. She signalled the importance of hierarchy, collectivism, group identity and individual responsibility in Japanese culture, concepts which inform the interpretations of the new social environments of my participants

Culture and Identity in Sport

Anthropological studies into the culture of sport have focussed on some of the peripheral elements of playing sport, such as fan culture. As stated in the introduction, football fans are passionate and avid supporters, and research has been carried out, for example, into national identity and global sports spectacles such as the Olympic Games and the FIFA Men's World Cup. Tomlinson and Young's (2006) study discussed how such global sports events generate enormous audiences from a cultural standpoint. Another example of academic sports culture investigations is the work by Back, Crabbe, and Solomos (1999) on football culture in relation to "hooligans", and the way violence and racism has been expressed in contemporary football culture. My thesis does not address fan culture, but this has been an area of interest to other sports anthropologists.

Other research on the culture of sport has looked at the positive effect sport can have on developing social identity for children and adolescents. Kleiber and Kirshnit (1991), for example, discuss the link between sport involvement and identity formation in the different stages of development for children, and sport as an organizational culture that can influence identity formation. This exemplifies a great deal of research in the field of sports and culture tending to look at identity in non-professional sports activities, and the influence sport participation can have on young people. It is important to highlight these works, but I do not draw on them to inform my findings.

Part Two: The Field of Sports Studies

This section of the literature review takes a broader look at the current landscape of sports studies outside anthropology, focusing particularly on literature close to my research. Football is a team sport, so examining studies that discusses team culture and cultures of success is relevant. So too is looking at team efficacy and performance identity in the pursuit of success. This section also explores literature on female footballers, and other football studies.

Team Sports and Cultures of Success

Sport as culture, and team sports culture, is not an unchartered subject in sports studies. The focus of the literature in this field is largely on performance culture in sports, paying particular attention to what elite sports teams do **off the field** that contributes to their success **on the field**. An example of this is the work by Johnson, Martin, Palmer, Watson, and Ramsey (2013) in the *International Journal of Sport and Society*, where one of the opening lines is a Vince Lombardi quote, saying that "if it doesn't matter who wins or loses, why do they keep score?" (Johnson et al., 2013). This, to me, sums up the standard approach taken when looking at sports teams and their cultures. If the respective team didn't win, why would we explore how that team functioned? So much of the research into elite sport focuses on what it takes to sustain a 'winning culture', rather than the influence of culture on the individual no matter what the outcome is, or the influence of personal identity on what it even means to be successful.

What I found in reviewing the literature of academic knowledge about elite team sport, was that the literature speaks of culture at the group level and often about how the coach would create and drive a "winning culture", such as in Romanos (2007) book on champion New Zealand coaches and their secrets to creating winning ways amongst their athletes. The literature in this area is less concerned with the individual experience in the sport other than the "cultural ingredients" required in group environments, such as selflessness or comradery, as a recipe for cohesion, eventually leading to success.

The work by Johnson et al. focuses on the All Blacks, the New Zealand men's rugby team, their extraordinary 75% success ratio in test matches over their 109 year history, and the core values of the team which has led to this sustained winning culture (Johnson et al., 2013). It explores these values against the backdrop of external societal changes, such as New Zealand moving towards being a multicultural society, but that is the extent of the exploration into individual culture and identity (Johnson et al., 2013). Success is what it is all about, best summarised in the opening line of the conclusions:

> *Winning, and the search for excellence in performance through a pride in the legacy as well as a willingness to adapt in order to maintain a winning ethos, is part of the values, standards, and goals of being an All Black*. (Johnson et al., 2013, p. 13)

Whilst winning is clearly important in sport, especially in professional sport, I wanted to explore how success was experienced and evaluated at in individual level within the team, rather than the more obvious empirical measure of team success such as winning ratios. The notion of success is one of the key themes in my research with my participants, understanding how perceptions of success may shift at an individual level when there are changes to one's social (team) environments and to the social context in which one plays.

Johnson et al. (2013) discuss culture, and defines it as the pattern of shared assumptions and beliefs that shape the way people in a community behave, with an emphasis on history. Organisational culture is further inferred through symbols, stories, rites, and rituals (Johnson et al., 2013). In the example with the All Blacks, Johnson et al. (2013) found that the symbolism and power of the team's "black jersey", and the haka (Maori war dance) as a pre-game ritual, are the important cultural ingredients that comprise crucial parts of this winning culture. The selected individual learns these "cultural practices", thus becoming part of the All Blacks legacy. As part of the team, it is their responsibility to make sure that the culture and legacy remains strong while they inhabit the "jersey" (Johnson et al., 2013). The enforced message is that the athlete is part of something greater than themselves. This work is useful in thinking about my research, as it discusses how a group (or team) can have its own culture and identity and how belonging to that group and sharing that identity can drive performance. However, there is no discussion of personal identity, and how this may shape the way the individual might perform, or, conversely, how the host culture could come to affect the culture and personal identity of the individual in reverse.

The Emergence of Professional Women's Team Sports

There was also a limited amount written about women's elite, professional team sports. Tucker (2015) carried out a study on the women's rugby seven's and its

emergence onto the world stage, a result of it becoming an Olympic sport for the 2016 Rio Games. As with my own research, a qualitative approach was taken, with semi-structured interviews conducted with thirteen key stakeholders. Only five were with female rugby players themselves, the others being coaches, staff members, and members of the New Zealand Rugby Union (NZRU), the sport's governing body in New Zealand (Tucker, 2015). The study explored the transition of the sport from obscurity into a global sporting phenomenon (Tucker, 2015).

The findings from Tucker's study show that the decision to include rugby sevens in the Olympics has contributed greatly to the transition from obscurity in elite sport into a global and local sporting phenomenon (Tucker, 2015). With the Olympics as the catalyst, the NZRU have positioned themselves accordingly, with importance placed on winning Olympic gold medals in rugby sevens, an emphasis that began with the Rio Olympic Games in 2016. Developmental programmes specific to female athletes, together with high performance resources and financial support, have enabled the NZRU and their partnership with High Performance Sport New Zealand to prepare the women' national team for global competitions and incentivise true professional rugby Olympians (Tucker, 2015). These global and local processes have contributed to raising the profile and growing women's rugby both in New Zealand and worldwide (Tucker, 2015). Tucker's conclusions show that an increasing profile and popularity in women's sport warrants research, and the contextual moments provided by something as pivotal as Olympic Games inclusion can be the catalyst for further explorations and investigations into the sport. Tucker's (2015) research parallels what is taking place in women's professional football. As the professional of the game becomes more globalised, as is occurring in women's rugby sevens, the experiences of the athletes will be highlighted. With the increasing profile, professional women's football is beginning to be explored.

An example of this is the study by Botelho and Agergaard (2011) into the international migration of female footballers into Scandinavian countries. This research gathers information on where the migrating players come from, and begins to identify some of their motivations for migrating to the football leagues in Scandinavia. Some of those motivations include "love of the game", economic gain, football experience and ambitions (Botelho & Agergaard, 2011). This research does

not explore the experiences of the athletes as they were living in their new countries, but presents some motivations as to why a female footballer may move to another country to play. My research elaborates and extends this study, introducing more of the actual experience of playing in a foreign country, including and going beyond those initial reasons for migrating. My research aimed to extend the scope initiated by Tucker's (2015) research and continued by Botelho and Agergaard's (2011) study.

The World of Female Footballers

Where I have discovered literature based directly on female footballers was in the field of sociology. For example, a study by sociologist John Harris (2007) examines "the World of Female Football Players" and the way in which they experience gender on and off the pitch. Harris's work is based in the South of England, where he looks at the experiences of female football players at a College of Higher Education playing Association Football, which is at the amateur level of sports participation (Harris, 2007). He employed observation and semi-structured interviewing for data collection. However, the focus was primarily on the sport's 'image problem', which creates tension both on and off the field (Harris, 2007). The study found that of central importance to the development of a female footballing identity are issues surrounding sexual orientation within the football world (Harris, 2007). It purports that, within the contemporary game, the female footballer represents something of a contested ideological terrain, a terrain that includes a negotiation of femininity, masculinity and sexual orientation as the women make sense of their own involvement in the game (Harris, 2007).

The other relevant academic work on women's football is by Cox and Thompson (2000), based on Barbara Cox's 1998 research. This study is almost twenty years old and therefore set in a different landscape to the one women's football is in now. It is the last, and only, female football focused study carried out by a New Zealander in New Zealand. The sixteen participants were all amateur level players from one team, competing in an Auckland women's football league. Cox is also a former national team player for the New Zealand national women's team, giving her the same insider

status with her participants that I have. She used in-depth interviews and participant observation to gather her data.

Cox focuses her study on how female athletes experience their bodies, within discourses of sexuality and sport (Cox & Thompson, 2000). Her findings suggest that female players experienced four distinct, yet interconnected inscriptions of the body: the football body from the experience of playing the sport; the private body which, through the act of unchanging and showering in the dressing room, becomes open to public surveillance; the female body from being categorised as a woman; and the symbolic lesbian body that is often assumed, and assigned to female athletes who demonstrate physical prowess and athletic competence (Cox & Thompson, 2000). These bodily experiences are not drawn upon to inform the experiences of my participants in their football team environments, though I do examine the assumptions players hold about the way in which they should perform as athletes in an unfamiliar cultural environment, a different dimension of experience to what is discussed in Cox's study.

I believe I can expand on the discourse already started by theses sociological studies on identity to explore it beyond sexuality and bodily experiences. I can also introduce and incorporate experiences from the professional game. The football career opportunities present now were not present when Barbara Cox was an active player. Similarly, since Harris's 2006 study in England, the game has become professional in England, with the successful launch of the Football Association's Women's Super League (FA WSL) in 2011 (Women in Sport, 2017). The dynamics in an amateur sport team, where participation is voluntary, are different to the dynamics of a professional sports team. For example, an amateur player can leave a team at any point without consequence for any reason they deem important enough, such as social discomfort. A professional player does not have that option, and is obligated to remain with the team for their negotiated contract length or risk breach.

Football, Migration, and Globalisation

Most football studies, particularly those that discuss football migration, globalisation, or culture in the sport are focused on male players. What can be learnt, however,

from those studies, is the way in which professional football can quickly become globalised in a way that encourages rapid migration by footballers towards new and emerging football leagues. An example of this is in the men's Premier League in England, one of the most popular professional football leagues in the world. As stated in the previous section, comparison is possible with the 2011 formation of the Women's Super League by the Football Association in England, which began as a semi-professional league but has since grown into a professional league, now with two divisions (Women in Sport, 2017).

Matthew Taylor (2006) did a study into football, migration, and globalisation, focusing on the history of football migration around the world, with his findings echoing general migratory trends and patterns. He discusses the men's English Premier League, saying that there were just eleven foreign players in the Premiership in the 1992/93 season, but this figure rose to 66 in 1995/96, and then reached 166 by the 1998/99 season (Taylor, 2006). By the 2005/06 season, there were 60 nationalities represented in the League. (Taylor, 2006). This exponential growth, year on year, of foreign players entering the league, demonstrates that growth will happen, and happen quickly, as players are attracted to the opportunity and clubs look offshore for talent as financial resources are boosted through increased professionalization and popularization. Taylor's study looked at the effect of that migration on the teams, and the leagues, but did not discuss the effect of football migration on the player, which is where my work can extend the understanding.

A 2004 study by done by Takahashi Yoshio and John Horne investigated the experiences of Japanese male players going abroad, rather than foreign players coming to Japan, as I have done in my study. This study in focused on the effect this has on the individual, and the characteristics and circumstances that may encourage a player to go abroad. The study finds that the primary motivators for heading to a league in a foreign country are based around financial incentives, with more lucrative contracts available in some of the bigger European leagues than what is available to the player in the Japanese league (Yoshio & Horne, 2004). The standard of play is perceived as being higher in those leagues as well, making it a choice centred on individual athletic improvement as well (Yoshio & Horne, 2004). Only one example was given where a player did not have a financial or footballing reasons for heading

overseas. Nakata Hidetoshi was this player, saying he did not want to be a person who knew only football, and he did not want to narrow his world (Yoshio & Horne, 2004). Yoshio and Horne (2004) categorized a player such as Hidetoshi as a "nomadic cosmopolitan", someone who is motivated by a desire to experience different nations and cultures throughout their senior playing careers. I do not categorize my participants, as Yoshio and Horne (2004) have done, but I do discuss motivations that are more experiential, rather than football related.

Not many studies into football gave equal attention to male and female perspectives. A 2014 multi-level study done by (Filho, Gershgoren, Basevitch, & Tenenbaum) on high-performing college soccer (football) teams in the American college system offered some insight into individual and team level factors related to team success, investigating male and female players. Their analysis was across 17 teams with 340 college players, and an almost even split across male and female athletes (Filho et al., 2014). They specifically assessed the influence of football players' personal characteristics on team performance, a socio-cognitive approach based on the notion that teammates' social dynamics influence individual beliefs and cognitions, which in turn influence team members' social dynamics (Filho et al., 2014). In their analysis, they identified that there were differences between the international ('foreign') and local players and their perception of team performance (Filho et al., 2014). Filho et al. (2014) also noted that few researchers have examined the characteristics and components that predict successful performance in sports teams. This is something I have already raised in this literature review, noting that the trend in academia in this area is more towards studying successful sports team *after* the success has occurred, rather than exploring characteristics that may help influence individual success or shape success differently.

Team Efficacy, Group Confidence, and Performance Identity

Team efficacy and interdependence among team members are important factors in a teams' success. Members rely on each other to complete a shared task and to achieve collective outcomes (Bruner, Eys, Blair Evans, & Wilson, 2015). Each member of the team must perform and contribute, so that the team can perform and achieve outcomes. Football is played with eleven players on the field, with squad

numbers of around 23 players. Exploring the literature in this area is important, as I wanted to study individual perspectives of success and the way it can be shaped by experience within a team environment. I have drawn on sports literature to explore this, as well as an occupational science study by Suzanne Laberge and Debbie Rudman (2010) which discusses performance identity in international migration.

I sought out literature that identified important aspects of team efficacy and cohesion, ideally from a cultural perspective. The ability of the group to perform as a collective can be shaped by what the group agrees to as its priorities, with motivations and expectations also emerging as themes in my research. Petitta, Lixin, and Palange (2015), researching for the discipline of sports psychology, state that group collective efficacy is defined as a set of group members' shared beliefs in the group's ability to follow the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainment – furthermore, these beliefs are grounded in specific team members' abilities (Petitta et al., 2015, p. 187). They add that understanding motivations and expectations for individuals involved would go a long way towards determining what success will be for the team, something that is explored in this thesis.

Social cognitive theory also identifies that the higher the group members' confidence in its conjoint capability to execute actions required to attain specific goals, the better the group results and the higher the group performance (Petitta et al., 2015). This is to say that the more a team believes in the individual ability of each team member, the higher the team's confidence and belief will be that they can win. What is interesting about the athletes in the situations I have explored in my research, is that they do not have the language ability to explicitly express to the rest of the group what their motivations, expectations, and abilities are. They can only *demonstrate* those abilities, and possibly communicate them with the help of others, such as through a translator or an English-speaking teammate. Without the ease of communication through shared language present amongst teammates and teams, one may become exclusively reliant on performance or actions that demonstrate one's ability to contribute to the shared outcomes. Huot and Rudman (2010) discuss this notion of 'performance identity' in their study of occupation, identity, and place in the process of migration. This is a study in the field of occupational science, but the discussion of the idea of 'doing identity' in relation to place speaks to the

experiences of my participants. Identity performance is done through demonstration and practice, as one performs mainly through ‘doing’ in order to be, to become, and to belong (Huot & Rudman, 2010).

Part Three: Concepts That Inform This Research

In this section of the literature review, I introduce the theories and concepts that I have applied to my research to help analyse and interpret the findings. I will describe the concepts, identifying their relevance to my work and how others have applied those concepts to academic research in similar areas to mine.

Habitus

One of the key theoretical perspectives I have employed as a tool for understanding my research data comes from Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist, philosopher, and anthropologist. This concept is that of *habitus*. Habitus is a concept that has been applied, extended, and re-defined by several authors, and I employ their redefinitions in this research. Bourdieu’s description of habitus is:

> *The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce **habitus**, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organise practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them*. (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53)

I have chosen this as the foundational concept in this research because of the way in which habitus recognises the past experiences that make up the nature and characteristics of an individual, and the way in which it acknowledges the effect “structuring structures” on practices and representations. While Bourdieu’s description does not directly speak to an individual playing sport, it does illuminate the idea that regulating conditions could affect how one may behave or perform in shifting structures and social environments. As others have, I take Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and apply it to the circumstances of my participants.

I have applied habitus to help explain why the athlete's personal identities, perspectives, and own cultural leanings is important to understanding how they process the experience of playing professional sport in a foreign environment. Habitus helps inform what they have observed in their new team environments, and how they transform those observations into ways of behaving and interacting, both with their new teams and with the social environments beyond the football team and its structures. The "structuring structures" that Bourdieu identified are, in the context of my research, the norms of the team environments, such as accommodation options, training schedules, team hierarchy, and coaching styles. Away from the football team, it would be the values and structures of the local, wider society that permeate and influence the athletic experience. These could be the emphasis placed in the host society on deference to people older than you, language (spoken and unspoken), customs, and perhaps differences in food practice.

Discipline, Structures, and a Carnal Knowledge of Sport

As stated earlier, there is limited literature focusing on an individual experiencing sport from an ethnographic perspective, but what there is also draws on Bourdieu's ideas. One sociologist, Loïc Wacquant, has carried out research on sport from an auto-ethnographic perspective. Wacquant is a French sociologist who spent three years at a boxing gym in a "black" neighbourhood in Chicago's South Side. Wacquant applied himself to the sport of boxing, using Bourdieu and his concept of habitus as both topic and tool (Wacquant, 2005). Wacquant uses his own experiences to capture the "taste and ache of action" by using ethnographic fieldwork and auto-ethnographic observations (Wacquant, 2011). In a similar manner to Wacquant, I wanted the experiences of my participants in their environments to be visible: to be heard and felt.

The major distinction between Wacquant's work and my research, is that boxing is an individual sport, whereas football is a team sport. Further, Wacquant was very much an outsider in relation to the other athletes he was working with at the boxing gym, as he had no prior boxing experience before he embarked on his auto-ethnographic journey. He develops his model of a "carnal sociology", and found that the boxing gym he became a part of turned out to be a complex microcosm with a

history, culture, and an intense and rich social, aesthetic, emotional, and moral life of its own (Wacquant, 2005). I already possessed this 'carnal knowledge' of my sport before undertaking this research, so I could understand and identify with Wacquant and his findings of how meaningful this understanding could be. Similarly, I can relate to his discovery of the richness and complexity of a sporting environment, and how this is worthy of ethnographic study.

Michel Foucault has also had his theories applied to sports studies, although again from a sociological viewpoint. In the book titled *Modern Thought and Sport*, Cole, Giardina, and Andrews (2004) discuss Foucault's notion of discipline to sport, and the effects of "surveillance" on an individual in a "sporting panopticon". This is relevant to my research as it discusses the effect of scrutiny, and how the body becomes regulated through the discipline and a type of surrender to the governing norms of one's environment (Cole et al., 2004). It begins to illuminate the effect of expectation, of awareness of such expectation, and the way in which that can create an automatic docility where individuals recognize the boundaries of the self, reconsider their own social and cultural production and thus submit to those governing techniques to extend their capacity and usefulness (Cole et al., 2004). I believe that this takes what Wacquant and Bourdieu have explored in terms of capacity and one's carnal knowledge of a sport, and extends it to look at how the individual may begin to comply and regulate itself against the structures that may govern it, placing expectations and pressures upon the individual. Applying this to elite women's sports has not been done, but I believe the circumstances the athletes were in – being away from home in foreign and unfamiliar socio-cultural environments – demonstrate the right context to be able to explore these effects further.

Facets of Identity in Changing Environments

A central tenet of my research is the way in which significantly different socio-cultural environments could influence one's identity. But what is culture? According to Kidd and Teagle (2012), culture means the way of life of a group of people. It includes the customs, attitudes, beliefs, traditions, and rituals of a society (Kidd & Teagle, 2012). They go on to say that if culture is how we behave as a member of a group, then

identity relates to how we think about ourselves as people, how we think about other people around us, and what we imagine others think of us (Kidd & Teagle, 2012). Identity can be expressed through culture (Kidd & Teagle, 2012).

Kidd and Teagle's (2012) definition of culture discusses how culture can be defined as group behaviour. For professional football, the group (team) can be comprised of individuals from different nation states. Mathews (2000) discusses how important one's nation state (home country) can be in defining what culture is for that person. He states that culture, as "the way of life of a people", is in today's world shaped by nation states, and that our cultural choices are not free, but conditioned by the national culture to which we belong to (Mathews, 2000). Patterns of language, knowledge, and social organisation may influence the way of life of people in a society even beyond their own awareness (Mathews, 2000). *Cultural distance* has been defined as the difference between two cultures, based on factors including language, ethnicity, and social standards and values, where the "reference system" for behaviour, actions, and decisions for each culture is not the same (Mayrhofer, 2012). I have used Mayrhofer's (2012) interpretation of cultural distance for this research, which examines players experiences of living and playing in cultural contexts which are very different to their 'home' environments.

As discussed in the previous section, one of the main points anthropological concepts used in this exploration has been applications of Bourdieu's theories into sport and physical activity. Bourdieu considers sport and physical activity as a cultural practice in the same way that listening to music, reading, home-decorating or clothing could be considered as an extension of an individual, providing an insight into personal motivations and identity, which may help in understanding choices or behaviour (Laberge & Kay, 2002). Bourdieu writes about sport in some of his work, and there are others who have applied his theories to sport in an illuminating way, such as Thorpe (2009), and Laberge and Kay (2002), whose applications I discuss in more detail next. The social field, or social environment, in my research is the new football team that my participants are playing in, in countries that are culturally distant from their own. I have also used the term cultural context, to describe the wider culture and society of their new host countries.

Suzanne Laberge and Joanne Key have applied Bourdieu's sociocultural theory to sports practice, looking at the way in which habitus can produce social differentiation in a society. They describe Bourdieu's habitus as an embodied internalised system of schemes of dispositions, perceptions and appreciations, a mediating construct that translates into practices and preferences (Laberge & Kay, 2002). Laberge and Kay (2002) draw on three of Bourdieu's pivotal concepts, 'habitus', 'field', and his socio-cultural theory of 'practice' as applied to sport and physical activities (Laberge & Kay, 2002). What is particularly relevant from their work is the notion that different conditions of existence, linked to different positions in the social space, produce different habitus (Laberge & Kay, 2002). This is relevant as it looks at how habitus and disposition can shift as one moves across different environments.

Holly Thorpe (2009) also applies Bourdieu's concept of habitus to sports, focusing on feminism and female physical culture. She discusses this concept in relation to female snowboarders, which, as an individual sport, offers a slightly different circumstance but nonetheless has elements relevant to my research. One key aspect is the discussion of the accrual of **symbolic capital**, or prestige, through the showcasing of one's abilities and commitment (Thorpe, 2009). Combined with the notion that habitus develops in response to a field, this display of prowess and the awareness of its impact proved to be meaningful for some of the participants in Thorpe's research. Thorpe (2009) also discusses reflexive awareness, and thus reflexive habitus, and the impact of that across new, unfamiliar fields, a key theme that emerged out of my research. This reflexivity, identified by Thorpe in her research and application of Bourdieu, will be discussed in relation to my research in the third findings chapter.

Thorpe's research reveals that symbolic capital can help pave the way towards a higher capacity to act, where one creates distinction as they negotiate their movements within and across fields of social action (Thorpe, 2009). For my participants, the "field of social action" is quite literally the football field, where they practice and train every day with their new teams. Bourdieu's "theory of practice" comprises of not only habitus, but also field and capital and their relationship to each other (Walther, 2015). In this theory, Bourdieu understood resources (such as money, qualifications, and objects) as forms of capital; namely economic, cultural

and social capital (Walther, 2015). Social capital represents the individual's entirety of social relations they can draw on in their career, and symbolic capital is related to recognition, as in being recognised by the peer group in the individual's career field (Walther, 2015). Both Thorpe and Walther acknowledge the importance of symbolic capital, relating it to Bourdieu and to how performance and recognition of performance plays a role in group efficacy and belief in group members' ability. For my research, this idea is useful because the ability to communicate one's talent cannot be achieved through language. It must be performed, shown through displays of one's football ability. Performance on the field becomes important in this communication of ability, and thus the recognition of those performances by the group (the teammates and coach of the new football team) is important in building trust in the ability of the new team member to contribute to the football team's desired outcomes.

Another key part to answering my research question was understanding how the cultural distance they were faced with shaped the women's ability to deploy themselves effectively in their new environment. For Bourdieu, the efficacy of the body's deployment in an environment is always grounded in the efficacy in which the body has internalized this environment (Hage, 2013). For my study, this efficacy is grounded in how the women learnt the appropriate rules and governing norms through their observation of what was around them, and the way in which they processed these observations. This is significant as it begins to draw a connection between the understanding of oneself in an environment and the capacity to perform in that environment, a key aspect of my research findings. Ghassan Hage furthered the discussion of habitus to include capacity and dispositions – capacity as a raw or "pre-social field", and disposition as the social transformation of a capacity in the process of becoming part of a specific social field (Hage, 2013). Hage was not talking specifically about sports at all, let alone elite sports in differing cultural environments, but simply about the way in which a person may react to changes in their world around them. Football, as a physical undertaking, is comprised of biological capacities – the ability to run, to kick, to tackle. How well an individual is capable of deploying itself and those capacities in a particular environment, for Hage and Bourdieu, depends on how well the person has internalized that environment

(Hage, 2013). This concept is elaborated on in the second findings chapter, where observations and their impact on action and behavior is discussed.

The immediate social environments for these women were their new teams. In a professional football team, the team trains together once a day, every day, with the possibility of one day off during the week (usually after a match day to help the athlete recover and regenerate). The team will also play at least one match each week, this typically happening either on Saturday or Sunday. With the leagues in South Korea and Japan, matches are played all over the country, so the teams may also spend at least one day travelling together to those "away" games. The social environment created by the team is experienced regularly and repeatedly by the individual. For those reasons, I have focused on the social environment as created by the football team, as it is so often referred to and spoken about by my participants. With so much compulsory time spent with the team in their new social environment, Hage's discussion on internalizing new environments informs how my participants observed what was taking place around them, and adjusted (where necessary) to "fit in" accordingly.

The Accumulation of Being

As discussed earlier, Bourdieu's concept of habitus has been applied by many authors to a variety of works. One way that Bourdieu has been extended is through Skeggs (2004) *Exchange, Value and Affect: Bourdieu and 'The Self',* who talks of the self as a 'project' to be worked upon, accruing its value over space and time and becoming a "reflexive self" (Skeggs, 2004). In Skegg's (2004) application, Bourdieu's concept of habitus works for the individual to produce strategies, objectively co-ordinated, but also for the future-projected, strategizing, accruing, exchange-value self (Skeggs, 2004). It is this habitus, re-defined to accrue strategies and ways of being, that is important to my research. This understanding of habitus creates space to explore the effect of the athlete's experiences in Japan and South Korea on their being.

Greg Noble also discusses being, and the way that this can be increased. His research is based on material culture in the home, and he argues that as one

accumulates objects, the owner of those objects accumulates being (Noble, 2004). He too draws on habitus as embodied history, but argues that there is a link between the past and future action which propels the *accumulation of being* as a process of augmentation that preserves being and increases power of action (Noble, 2004). Accruing layers of experience, as my participants did with their international club experiences, enables the accumulation of being, which increases the resources that one has to act in their world (Noble, 2004). Though Noble's study was based on the accumulation of material objects, it can be extended and applied to the accumulation of experiences leading to an accumulation of being, as I have done for my research.

Applications of Bourdieu to encompass a self that accumulates strategies and ways of being to exist in new and different social environments speaks to the experiences of the athletes in my research. Their personal, performance and social identities were challenged in new ways, and the effects this had on their sense of self can be understood using these re-defined concepts of habitus. In reviewing the literature on Bourdieu's concept of habitus, I recognised that habitus is not only useful in helping to understand the athlete's personal identity, it is also relevant in understanding how their identities were further shaped by the experience. Observation, awareness, and reflection enabled the accumulation of being, and the accrual of strategies that transformed into higher capacities to act.

Summary

This literature review has noted the limited nature of the literature related to the experiences of professional female footballers playing in 'foreign' countries. While there has been some literature on women's sport participation in sports anthropology, it has focussed on sport at an amateur level, or women as they look to overcome stereotypes or male hegemony, as examples, rather than individual experiences in professional environments. Where scholars have examined success, it has often centred on measures of success on the field, and these studies don't consider more holistic impacts of the experience on the athlete. Nor do they explore the nuances of shifting culture and identity, which has been so much more a part of my own journey. There is a lack of research with professional female footballers in any context, let alone any in which the participants are confronted with having to

adapt and adjust to differing socio-cultural environments in a professional sporting context. Much of the work in sociology and anthropology on female athletes provides a gendered analysis, with dimensions beyond those issues not often discussed. My research can address this gap, building on existing literature to provide a different picture and rich understanding of the experience of being a professional football coming to terms with life in another country that is different to one's own.

As mentioned earlier, it was possible to find literature on team culture and success, particularly from sociological and psychological perspectives. However, there was a clear gap in the sporting literature around the individual's journey and perspective on success, particularly with regards to subjective personal motivations and expectations. In terms of anthropological or ethnographic literature, there were few studies close to my research, and none which spoke directly to professional women's football. Studies that explored professional football and athlete migration, as far as I have been able to ascertain, have primarily focussed on men's football.

As Sands and Sands (2010) identified in their book on the anthropology of sport and human movement, sport is a cultural and universal expression of humankind. Its importance to human interaction, indeed its reflection of human culture, is apparent (Sands & Sands, 2010). While my research differs from theirs, which explores the biocultural foundation of human movement, it does echo the same sentiment – that sport is ubiquitous, it transcends culture and is woven into all cultural fabric (Sands & Sands, 2010). As with the other key academic book most closely relevant to my research, *Athletic Intruders: Ethnographic Research on Women, Culture, and Exercise* (Bolin & Granskog, 2012), the instigator for this research was my own transformational experiences playing sport. Where my research differs, however, is that I am not applying a feminist lens, nor do I broaden sporting activity and exercise out in the way that Bolin, Granskog, and their collaborators do. My primary focus is the subjective, personal experiences of the athletes, focusing just on the sport of football.

In conclusion, there is a clear gap in the literature that my research fills, and I believe that there will be future research into not only the growth of women's elite football as a sport, but also future anthropological studies on the role of sport in shaping

individual identity in cross-cultural environments. Applying concepts such as Bourdieu's habitus allows an exploration into this new and largely unexplored reality with an anthropological and ethnographic lens. In the next section, I discuss the methodology I used to gather and analyse my research data, and I introduce my participants.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology used to gather, interpret, and analyse the data. I introduce my participants, those on the research "team sheet", familiarising the reader with the personalities and the contexts of the women.

I discuss the interview process and how my "insider status" and position influenced the discussions I had with my participants. My own reflections and field notes feature in this methodology section, and I discuss this and the auto-ethnographic element to my research. The data analysis process, which lead me to the major themes, subthemes, and findings presented in this thesis, is also highlighted and explained. Ethical considerations are also examined, where participant consent and anonymity are discussed. To begin with, let's meet the athletes.

The Team Sheet

I have exclusively chosen female footballers as participants. The main reason for this is because of the significant gap in income and earnings between male and female football players. Men get paid significantly more than women do in professional football, and therefore male players are in a much better position to take support with them when they embark on overseas playing opportunities should they wish to. For example, Steph Houghton, captain of the England women's team and professional player for Manchester City football club, earns approximately £65,000 a year, while Wayne Rooney, England's former captain and Manchester United player, receives around £300,000 a week (Wigmore, 2016). Female athletes, consequently, have less of an opportunity to create a "bubble" of support when they go overseas. Therefore, they may feel 'cultural distance' more significantly than a male athlete who is more likely able to bring family, partners, or friends on the journey with him.

Due to the small player pool of professional female footballers with professional club experience in another country and culture significantly different to their own, I had no

problem identifying potential candidates for the research. Some of them I had encountered whilst playing football in Japan during the 2016 season. Others I knew through the football world – I had played against them in international matches, or I had heard about their experiences through others or in the media. While this made selecting participants easy, it also meant it was important to make efforts to ensure a level of anonymity for the players who participated in the research. I have therefore used pseudonyms in this thesis, to ensure as much anonymity for the participants as possible.

After identifying potential candidates for participation, the next step was to make contact. For players' I had played against in the league, it was relatively easy. For example, I approached Amanda, who was playing in the same league as me in Japan, after a match we played against each other. I briefly described the qualification I was studying towards and the research I was planning to undertake, invited her to consider being interviewed, and we swapped contact details. It was a similar friendly approach with Kate and Jane, who were in locations close to me.

For the two players in South Korea, it was a little bit more challenging. I was effectively "cold calling" them, as I had not met either of them before. I had obtained the email addresses of two players in South Korea courtesy of another teammate on the New Zealand national team, who spent some time playing in Australia and knew these two women well. However, I ended up only getting a response from one of them: she had responded simply because she had recognised my name. The other player never got back to me, so for a while I thought I would be able to speak to only one player with an experience in South Korea. Fortunately, after interviewing Claire, the participant who first responded, she gave me the contact details of another player who had just completed a full season there as well. This led me to Dana, another player I knew of but had no contact details for. This turned out to be extremely valuable, as her story and experiences differed significantly from Claire's. I have also had no experience of professional football in South Korea, so having two accounts of life as a professional footballer there was invaluable to gaining a broader understanding of what one might experience in that environment.

Extended Introductions - Kate

One thing I noted in the journal I kept throughout the research was how the participants were all very different from one another. There was a real range of situations, so I believe it is important to provide extended introductions of each person. Where they are at in their lives, their age, how they talk about their own personalities, all help to provide a richer understanding of who the athletes are as individuals, and how they came to be in their given situations.

The first interview I conducted was with Kate. This was relatively easy to arrange, as at the time of the interview she was living close to me in Japan. Kate was aware that I was studying towards a Masters' degree, and was interested in the research already. She was very willing to be a part of it, and it was the only interview I could conduct in person. We sat down one afternoon in the local coffee shop, with the interview feeling more like a discussion than anything formal. Kate is quite a bit younger than I am, only in her early twenties at the time of the interview. Her contract length in Japan was for six months, which is not quite a full season. An American from a large family, she had been interested in playing abroad in Asia due to her family ties to China (they had a Chinese exchange student in their household when she was growing up), with her siblings having been involved with the Chinese culture and speaking Chinese through their own academic studies. She stated that:

> *I felt like focusing my search area on Asia would be the most comfortable for me in terms of what cultures I thought I was familiar with.*

This was Kate's first professional football contract, having just graduated from college (university) in America, where she had been on an athletic scholarship for football. Kate described herself as:

> *I think I come off as quiet and reserved at first. I think it takes me quite some time to open up to people. I like to consider myself a friendly person when I get along with someone well.*

Claire

The second participant I interviewed was Claire, an Australian who had just completed a full season in South Korea, which was approximately eight months long.

In her mid-twenties, this was her longest professional club contract of her career, as well as the longest time she'd ever spent away from home. We conducted the interview over Skype, starting with a few minutes spent on simply introducing ourselves to each other. As we had never met before, those introductions were necessary and helped build rapport. She was the only foreigner on her team in South Korea. However, she was not the only foreigner in the league, and met with the other Australian players as often as their schedules would allow. Claire had always wanted to play football at a professional level, having got a taste of it through a small stint in America prior to taking up the opportunity to come to South Korea. The opportunity to come to South Korea came completely out of the blue for Claire, as she said she wasn't even aware there was a professional league in South Korea before she got "a phone call from a random guy". She said that researching the opportunity was also difficult, as all relevant websites were in Korean. Initially she was very sceptical, but as time went by and more information was gathered and given, she made her mind up to go, saying:

> *I didn't have anything stopping me, I didn't have a job yet back home, and I was just going to play Premier League* [State level amateur football] *here and I was almost going to go over to AFL – because you know how that's big in Australia? So I was very close to jumping on-board to AFL instead, and then I got the contract and I was like well, let's just do it!*

AFL is the Australian Football League, or "Aussie Rules". It is a sport in competition with football in Australia for female sporting talent, as a professional women's AFL league in Australia has recently been established that runs at the same time of the year as the Australian W-League, the semi-professional football league for women in Australia. Some players from football have "jumped codes", switching from football to AFL to pursue those professional opportunities. With little holding her back, and the possibility of her leaving the sport altogether, the timing for Claire could not have been better.

She headed to South Korea with a positive outlook, ready to face the unknown but pleased with the opportunity to do so. An extrovert, Claire described herself as:

> *I'm very open, I'm a very open person. I can talk to a complete stranger about absolutely anything, and just go from story to story. I make friends very easily, I'm a people person for sure. I can connect with people on anything.*

Amanda

The third participant was Amanda, a member of an opposing team I played against in Japan. In her late twenties, Amanda was the oldest participant in the group, and the same age as me. She had also been away the longest – she was currently in her third season with her club team in Japan. Amanda is American, and had grown up in an area that she described as a "melting pot" for different cultures, with friends from all over the world and across a variety of cultures. For this reason, she felt she was "ahead of the curve" in terms of her cultural awareness, which she believed helped her in making the decision to come to Japan. She felt no fear in embarking on her experience, and was excited about the challenge of living amongst another culture despite having not travelled too much outside of America before moving to Japan.

Amanda's own cultural background is also interesting, as she was raised in a single parent household by her "white" mother. Her father is "black", so she discussed "searching" for her own personal identity and culture. She had asked herself questions such as "who do I resonate with?", "are you white or black?", and "what culture do you roll with?" We discussed this quite a bit, as I have mixed heritage as well, with a Dutch father and a Haitian mother. We related to each other well – not just in our shared experience of playing professional football in Japan, but also through the experience of growing up feeling as if our own culture was something we had to search for, rather than it being a given. I certainly felt as if I had the most in common with Amanda out of all the participants. In addition to this, when asked to describe herself, Amanda said that she was:

> *I'm definitely a people person. Growing up in high school I was voted class clown. I have a lot of friends in plenty of different circles as far as ethnicities, social demographics, that type of stuff. For sure a people person.*

Jane

The fourth participant was Jane, an Australian who was playing in Japan, but was playing in the division below the top league – the one that Kate, Amanda, and I were playing in. Therefore, we did not play against each other but I knew Jane and we had

met during the year on a couple of occasions. We were quite familiar with each other, having also played against each other, for New Zealand and Australia respectively. Jane has played internationally for Australia, travelled with her national team and been a fulltime footballer with the Australian national team for about a year prior to her heading to Japan. This was her first overseas professional club contract.

Jane was quite different to the other participants in many respects. For one thing, she was heading to a league and a team that was not competing at the highest level available. She had taken an opportunity that appeared to be beneath her ability, as she was more than capable of playing for a team in the highest division. She was also accompanied by her boyfriend while she was overseas – he was with her for six months out of the approximately eight months she was under contract. Jane was the most reserved of the participants, and described herself as:

> *I'm probably an introvert. I like socializing and I'm ok socializing, but I'm also very happy to be by myself. Big groups and that sort of thing are a bit daunting.*

Dana

The fifth participant was Dana, the second Australian I interviewed who had played in South Korea. Dana was in her mid-twenties at the time of the interview, with no previous professional club experience prior to the opportunity to play in South Korea. She had juggled a teaching career alongside her football career, something she described as "hard but definitely worthwhile". Like Claire, she was approached quite unexpectedly with the opportunity to play in South Korea, which she initially turned down out of a sense that the agent that approached her "was a little bit dodgy". However, after that initial contact, another agent contacted her from the same club, and she worked with him to clarify the opportunity and then the final contract.

What was interesting about Dana's situation is that initially she wasn't the only foreigner on her team in South Korea. Another player she had been playing alongside in Australia was also contracted, but left after their first month. I asked if this affected her experience, to which she replied:

Not really. I'm pretty open-minded with most things so I just kind of went with it. I'd committed to doing something and I wanted to see it out.

This practical, resilient, and open attitude showed through most of her interview. She further described herself as:

I'd probably say I'm pretty quiet around people that I don't know. But once I kind of get to know someone then, yeah, you can't really shut me up I suppose. I'd probably say that I'm – people would probably describe me as a little bit quiet.

This was quite different to Claire, who was far more extroverted, and animated, about her experience and about her South Korean professional football life. I was grateful to have had the opportunity to speak to Dana, as it gave me two different accounts of life as a professional footballer in South Korea.

The Interview Process

I conducted my research as semi-structured interviews with each of the women, recording each so that I could transcribe it accurately afterwards. The interviews followed a list of broad topics and open-ended questions (Bernard, 2011). The interview schedule can be found in the Appendices (Appendix C). This schedule was important as I had the opportunity to interview each participant only once, and Bernard (2011) affirms that in situations where one won't get more than one chance to interview someone, semi-structured interviewing is best. I also abided by the rule to "get people onto a topic that interests them and get out of the way. Let the informant provide information that he or she thinks is important" (Bernard, 2011, p. 216).

Bernard (2011) states that the benefit of semi-structured interviewing is that it is an efficient use of time and demonstrates control, but leaves both the interviewer and interviewee free to follow new leads. I also used this method as my qualitative data gathering tool because of the limits to the ways I could engage with my participants. The most significant of these limitations was that it was not possible for me to "witness" their experiences in an observational sense, so I was unable to engage in participant observation. I did not have the time or the resources to visit other regions of Japan, nor to travel to South Korea in a participant-observational capacity, as the

timeline of the research thesis would not allow for this. It is also difficult to strictly "observe" how someone is coping in a foreign environment. There would need to be some degree of conversation about the level of integration and comfort felt by the athletes personally in their host countries, so any process would have required qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews to obtain such information.

As noted, only the interview with Kate was conducted in person. For the others, I used either FaceTime, Skype, or Facebook Messenger calling to conduct the interview. The interview was conducted in two parts. The first part included questions that focused on the personal identity of the participant, and the second part of the interview centred more on if, why, and how they deemed their experience as successful. This involved asking them about their motivations for going to play football abroad, their expectations of the experience, and about any outside pressures or influences on their performance and overall success.

With my "insider status", it was relatively easy for me to find common ground with the participants. I didn't have to familiarise myself with the sport, I only had to familiarise myself with the specific circumstances of each participant. There was an established connection through the shared experience of being footballers, and this connection was particularly strong with the players who had been in Japan, through that shared experience. There were comparisons made throughout the interviews of specific experiences and instances, where we could empathise with each other about the peculiarities and details of living as a foreign player in Japan.

With the players who were based in South Korea, there was less immediate rapport. I did not directly know either of the players in a friendly or competitive capacity. Therefore, there was more of an introductory feel to their interviews, particularly initially. I had to get to know them a bit more, and they also had to get to know me, before I started asking research questions. It was also crucial, in that sense, that I spoke to more than just one player who had a South Korean experience. It helped broaden my understanding of the conditions and culture there, and meant that I could compare their experiences and personalities, learning more about the way in which their own identities and outlooks shaped the lens through which they viewed the experience.

I found that some aspects of the interview did not go to the same depth with the players based in South Korea as they did with the players who had been in Japan. It felt more superficial, as we could not compare or discuss cultural nuances, for example, as freely. The data from those players was still very rich, but the conversation felt more like an interview than it did a discussion. It was also interesting to hear how the two players who had been in South Korea described how they thought the other had managed. Again, this meant that the opportunity to speak with each of them separately was crucial to achieve that greater understanding and balance of their opinions in comparison with each other.

Personal Reflections and Notes from the Field

In addition to the interviews, I kept a journal of my time with my new team in Osaka, Japan, to record my experiences. I observed other international players coming and going to this team, and reflected on my own experiences in comparison to how I perceived theirs to be. Further to this, I kept additional research notes that detailed my journey through the researching experience, particularly through the interview process. I believe that this has been crucial, and helped me to dig deeper into my own experiences and to understand my own culture and identity in comparison my peers. I have reflected on *living* this experience, and *researching* this experience through the pages of this thesis.

Being able to relate to my participants as a peer was of great value, but it also presented a risk of potential bias to the data. Bernard (2011) describes this as the "expectancy effect". This is the term he uses to describe the tendency for researchers to obtain results that they expect, not simply because that have correctly anticipated responses but rather because they have helped to shape that response through their expectations. I had a great deal of "assumed knowledge" because of my experiences, and I did use this to help guide some of my research questions, but I tried to not let it influence the responses. I did not want my participants to reiterate and affirm my own experiences. I wanted their stories to stand on their own, their own unique and individual voices heard.

Auto-Ethnographic Elements

Whilst I have not used auto-ethnography to position myself as the “sixth participant”, I have drawn upon some of the ideas of auto-ethnography. I have used my own professional football career to help provide more context to the playing experiences of the athletes, giving additional information where necessary to provide more insight. I have also drawn on my reflections about how I was processing my own experiences, understanding that whatever it is that simply captures my attention, what I chose to report, is an expression of my own cultural code and identity (Boufoy-Bastick, 2004). The intent of auto-ethnography is to acknowledge the inextricable link between the personal and the cultural, to acknowledge that “I am the world, and the world is me” (Custer, 2014). For example, I have used some of my own playing experiences to give a framework for what could be considered as “normal” for a professional footballer. There are certain universal expectations that athletes possess about what constitutes a professional environment, and I wanted to elaborate on those with additional evidence from my own experiences.

Data Analysis

For the examination of the data itself, I have employed thematic analysis. I produced transcripts of the interviews, and read through these texts repeatedly. I identified the potential analytic categories – or themes – that arose, and as these emerged I pulled all the data from those categories together to compare them, as instructed by Bernard (2011) in his description of the mechanics of thematic analysis. I then examined the data for repetitions - finding the topics that occur and reoccur to build themes and subthemes (Bernard & Ryan, 2009).

Bernard and Ryan (2009) state that themes come from both the data and from the investigators prior theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under study (an *a priori* approach). Thematic analysis seemed especially appropriate as *a priori* themes come from local, common-sense constructs; and from researchers’ values, theoretical orientations, and personal experiences – as well as from already agreed on professional definitions found in literature reviews (Bernard & Ryan, 2009). My insider status meant that I could provide those “local, common-sense constructs” and

personal experiences quite easily and naturally. What was common-sense for me was also common-sense to the “locals” – the participating players I interviewed.

I was constantly comparing the data from each participant to the others. I wanted to find similarities, the recurring regularities, to identify the concepts that would form the key themes of the research. As well as searching for similarities, I wanted to identify the differences between each participant’s experience, to determine the degrees of strength in each of the themes. The degrees of strength in the themes led to the naming of subthemes, a comparative method also discussed by Bernard and Ryan (2009).

Eventually, investigators must decide which themes are most salient, and which themes relate to each other best (Bernard & Ryan, 2009). This involves judgment on the part of the investigator, which means that my position as an investigator must be clear, and one that I have acknowledged and reflected upon. Bernard and Ryan (2009) also suggest examining the setting and context, the perspectives of the informants and the informants’ ways of thinking about people, objects, processes, activities, events, and relationships. I have therefore also drawn on s*elf-reflexivity* and *context* in the analysis of my data.

It was important I engage in self-reflexivity because of my insider status and potential for the “expectancy effect” to feature in my data analysis. This has meant keeping those field notes, taking extra care when inserting my own voice into the work, and the feedback from my supervisors has been critical to maintaining integrity in my work and allowing the participants’ voices to be the primary focus. According to Tracy (2013), self-reflexivity is about acknowledging and celebrating the researchers’ way of seeing and being in the world. This is especially relevant as I shared the social world my participants did – that of being a professional footballer in an unfamiliar overseas environment. My values, beliefs, and my experiences, shape the way I approach and conduct my research (Tracy, 2013). I needed to be honest and reflexive every step of the way, so that my place in the research could be acknowledged and drawn upon, rather than something that could cloud my judgment.

It was also important to provide detailed context, which would allow the reader to become familiar with the social world myself and the participants were involved in. Social theories are based in the ever-changing, biased, and contextualised social conditions of their product, and I wanted to seek and provide rich detail to allow for interpretation and construction of meaning to take place (Tracy, 2013). To achieve this, I sought out the relevant details my informants gave me in the interviews, drawing them together to provide the reader accurate descriptions required for the context the women were in to come to life.

Tracy (2013) talks about the importance of exemplars and vignettes. Exemplars and vignettes illustrate the full complexity of the data (Tracy, 2013). As well as using the quotes as exemplars, I have used vignettes when presenting the data and emergent themes, as seen in the upcoming findings chapters. Vignettes are a focused description of a series of events taken to be representative, typical, or emblematic (Tracy, 2013). At times throughout the data analysis, I, as the researcher, had to construct or reconstruct examples from within the transcripts by purposefully collecting and piecing together data, rather than finding the complete exemplar within the data (Tracy, 2013). Rather than relying exclusively on quotes, I have pieced together the relevant information from what the participants provided throughout the interviews to illustrate to the reader the important structures of the host countries and team environments.

Ethical Considerations

There are ethical considerations with any form of social research. Before undertaking the research, I sought a “low risk” ethics approval from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC), which was duly granted in September 2016. I also provided my participants with a consent form and participant information sheet, which we discussed in detail prior to the interview, which can be seen in the Appendices (Appendix A and B). They were confident and comfortable with the process, and understood that I would be unable to provide them with complete and guaranteed anonymity. They understood that the pool of players to select from was small, so they may be able to be identified. All participants were aware of this small risk, and consented to participate.

For my encounters with my participants, I called on relational ethics as the guiding ethical principle to adhere to. Relational ethics requires researchers to act from their hearts and minds, to acknowledge the interpersonal bonds to others, and to initiate and maintain conversations over the course of the fieldwork and beyond (Ellis, 2007). My participants were not considered vulnerable, and as I approached them as peers there were no real power relationships to contend with. We are equals, and I consider them to be colleagues and friends. Therefore, relational ethics in research with intimate others is how I considered and worked through the ethical concerns. I believe this spoke powerfully to my fieldwork.

With my insider status and personal experiences playing professional football, I had to be aware of the risks of that type of position as an investigator. There are dangers in 'standpoint' epistemologies, and I have been reliant on the feedback from my supervisors as well as constant reflection and introspection to ensure that there is scholarship, not merely storytelling, resent in my work (Dauphinee, 2010). This was critical to ensure that my participants' words were not used to just reflect or reinforce my own experiences, but that they were representative of that individual.

Summary

I conducted five interviews with participants from America and Australia, who all played professional football in either Japan or South Korea. These interviews were semi-structured to extract rich qualitative data. My insider status greatly assisted me in gaining such rich data, as I connected with my participants as a peer and equal. My participants responded well to my approach, interview questions, and intended use of their words. They all consented to be interviewed and for their responses to be included in this final research.

Further to this, there are not many elite female footballers who are experiencing their professional career in situations where there is significant cultural distance. This makes my participant's experiences unique, as well as my own. It is for this reason that the selection of participants was simultaneously easy and difficult. It was easy in the sense that I only had a handful of players to choose from who matched my

criteria. The difficulty was in obtaining sufficient participants, and in ensuring the anonymity of my participants as much as was possible.

The process of the data collection and analysis was another journey that I have been on courtesy of this research experience. My reflections, specifically those written once the interviews had concluded, discussed how, at certain points, I felt less like the interviewer and more like the interviewee. This highlighted how much the interviews were affected by our shared experience of playing in a foreign country, and how approaching subjects as a peer can enrich the data gathered, if done in a self-reflexive manner.

For the analysis of the data, I used thematic analysis, identifying themes and subthemes. I then used my judgment to decide which were the most salient. The emergent themes are: motivations and expectations; “life on the ground”, which explores the lived experience of the athletes; and personal growth, which discuss the development of the individual and their perception of the success of the experience. These form the basis of the next three chapters.

Chapter Four: Packing the Boots – Motivations and Expectations

Introduction

What is it that motivates an athlete to pack their bags, their boots, and head off towards the unknown? As I discussed in the introduction, improvements as a footballer had been my primary motivator. I had a World Cup or an Olympic Games to prepare for, and I needed to be in the best environments possible to ensure that I was the best Football Fern I could be. Unfortunately, the women's game in New Zealand currently does not provide professional playing opportunities. Financially, it is not viable to remain in New Zealand and play football fulltime, even for players in the national team. Taking opportunities to play overseas was the best scenario for me to achieve my dreams and potential on the world stage. Anything additional I gained from the experience was a bonus, such as learning an additional language, or being in a location close to friends, family, or a partner. Going overseas offered that rare opportunity for a fulltime career in football, and I wanted nothing else.

When it came to interviewing the participants for my research, I was ready for similar responses about their motivations. In fact, as I was researching and investigating the potential participants, I found I was already making assumptions about what their individual motivations could be. Surely, I thought, for a player to move to northern, rural Japan (where the 2011 tsunami had devastated most of the countryside, including the team stadium), it must be for financial gains. For another player to head to South Korea, I thought that there would be aspirations to play for the Australian national team, since playing professional football would offer her the opportunity to improve quickly. For a player to have signed for a second division team, it must be about specific training conditions in preparation for a major tournament. In almost every scenario, my theories were incorrect. Therefore, paying close attention to the personal and subjective reasons these women had was important in dispelling assumptions such as mine.

This first chapter on the emergent themes of the research explores the motivations and expectations held by the athletes who participated in the research. Questions discussed in this section are: What were the factors that encouraged these women to embark on their journey? What, if anything, possibly held them back? What were the circumstances in their life that allowed them to make such decisions? The women also discussed the expectations they held and what they believed they would encounter. Further to this, what were the expectations, if any, held by the other stakeholders in this endeavour? This is competitive elite sport so there is investment and expectations from clubs, coaches, management, agents – how were these expectations communicated and managed? How were they mitigated by the athletes? We begin by examining the individual motivations held by the women.

Individual Motivations

The reasons for heading overseas were multi-faceted for my participants, with there never being one pure motivation, or one purpose alone that sent the athlete overseas into their respective environments. Some were aligned with my own motivations, and were more typically what I had expected as a response.

For two of the women, the motivations to go overseas to play football were interwoven with a desire for something not offered in their home countries – the opportunity for fulltime, professional football. For Claire, this was a major motivating factor.

> *I guess that since I was coming back from injury, the thought of going somewhere and playing professional football and just training non-stop, I think that was exactly what I needed. I needed to get away from having to work a full-time job, and then having to train and play – it was running me down, it wasn't working for me. I've always wanted to just focus on football and I guess, before I got* [overseas] *I was like "this is my chance"*.

The opportunity came at a crucial time for Claire. She was struggling in her personal circumstances, where balancing her passion and pursuit of her sport was taking a toll on her financially. This financial pressure was also taking a toll mentally and physically, to the point where it was becoming unsustainable. The chance to go overseas presented a solution to this situation, where she could pursue her sport as

a career and not have to compromise herself financially, mentally, or physically from attempting to balance football with another job.

One of the benefits of professional football is, of course, the income that comes with it. Both Claire and Dana stated that this was a motivating factor, needing to alleviate that pressure that came from balancing football at a high level with employment outside of the sport. The both wanted to escape the pressures this balancing act had placed on them. For Dana, however, there was also an escape needed for other, personal, reasons:

> *I suppose my… my Mum passed away last year so it was kind of not a bad time to get away from* [home country] *and just kind of deal with things that way. So I guess it was kind of just good timing and the money as well. We* [her and her partner in Australia] *just bought a house while I was in South Korea. So just a combination of a few things*.

These are examples of how the decision to play overseas can be for reasons that are personal and subjective, and sometimes cannot be attributed to a single issue.

What was similar for all the participants, though, was how much of an unknown they were embarking on. Aside from the odd sojourn into other parts of Asia, none had had any significant stays or visits to the countries they were now heading into. This meant that they were going with only preconceived notions rather a real understanding of what they were going to encounter. But, in some way or another, the women were all looking for something "different", whether this was an escape from what they'd known, or the challenge of a new experience. One expressed it this way:

> *This was kind of an opportunity to go to another country, and to use football as a way to experience another culture as well as another football style*.
> (Jane, on moving to Japan)

Common across a few of the participants was an element of wanting a new experience. This formed a large part of their motivations for first seeking, and then taking up the opportunity to play overseas. For Kate, her primary foci were equal part football and cultural, and she specifically wanted to come to Asia to play for those reasons. She stated that:

> *I would say for me it was experience focused because I've never been on the* [her home country] *national team – there was really no future for me in soccer beyond professional so this is the highest that I will go with soccer. So, I think for me I wanted both a cultural experience and soccer experience which is the main reason why I chose not to stay in* [her home city].

This is an interesting point, as it identifies aspirations and the role that they may play in one's career choice. Part of Kate's motivation to go overseas lay in the fact that she had relinquished ideas of taking her football career further in terms of international football. Therefore, she felt the freedom to take a step in another direction.

For Amanda, she saw this as an opportunity to live overseas, a possibility that may not be available to her for much longer. She expressed that:

> *I just thought it would be cool to live overseas for a year. I wanted to try something different. And you know, I feel like I'm getting older now and my window of opportunity to live in another country and try something, this was kind of my window of opportunity.*

The timing of the opportunity was important for Amanda, as she saw this as a chance she should take before that "window" closed. She also spoke about aspirations for her football, and felt that she was no longer a candidate for higher honours with her national team. She said that:

> *I had played in America for so long and I was just like "I'm just kind of tired with soccer, to be honest". I had a go at the national team, and I didn't make it. I'm getting older now and the national team thing* [possibility of being selected to play for her national team] *is probably over. I'm 29, you know? And so, I just decided okay, why not give the Japanese league a shot?*

Jane seemed to have similar motivations, even though she had already represented her country at senior international level for the national team. She wanted the seriousness of football to take a backseat to the opportunity to have a life experience. She said:

> *I was looking for something a bit more relaxing in football. I wasn't really interested in doing* [national team] *stuff so this was kind of an opportunity to*

go to another country… so that kind of pushed me in that direction, after already being kind of ready to make the change.

Jane, having experienced football at the highest level, wanted to step away from that and into something more experiential. Japan was an opportunity for a different cultural experience, with football as the vehicle to get her there.

Filho et al. (2014) talk about how studies into high-performing sports teams should gather qualitative data, using in-depth interviews, to gain access to players' thought and personal characteristics. By doing so, we may see how the subjective and personal reasons for being in the team could influence performance (Filho et al., 2014). With Claire and Dana's examples, it is evident that an element of escape from circumstances, or stresses of life, in one's home country plays a role in the decision making. For the other participants, their personal motivations were different again, bringing in desires that were more experiential, and again subjective in a way that makes the judging of motivations, and perhaps therefore expectations, complex.

Personal and External Expectations

In this section, I explore the expectations held by the athletes prior to the experience, and how these matched the expectations of other stakeholders. These stakeholders could be coaches, agents, management or owners of the football club. Expectations, alongside the player's motivations, largely impacted the early stages of the experience. Examining the dimensions to these expectations helps in understanding how the athletes began to adapt to the situations they were in.

Many of the participants were not given clear expectations from their clubs or agents before they arrived. Much was implied, and even if expectations were stated, they were not communicated clearly. For example, Jane commented that:

I didn't realise how much they expected from the international player until I got there! When they were saying score a few goals I kind of, you know – the coach jokingly said 30 goals in a season, which, looking back maybe he wasn't joking so much. But yeah, I did feel quite a bit of pressure after I realized how much they thought they needed the international player and then thinking that it was too much of an expectation. So, I kind of went through a

period of feeling pressured by it, and then feeling that it was unfair, and then deciding to forget about it.

Jane's motivations for heading overseas were centred on wanting a cultural experience, where football took a backseat, as discussed in the previous section. There was clearly a disparity between what Jane wanted from the experience, and what the football team wanted from her. She felt that responsibility and pressure, but ultimately decided to "forget about it" and not let it impact her overall experience.

For other participants, expectations from their new professional teams were primarily implied, rather than being stated explicitly. This created a space for personal motivations to remain prominent in the player's minds. No other player articulated feeling stressed or pressured for too long about what their professional team might want from them. Pressure to perform can be a feature of life as an elite athlete, and is certainly something I have felt during my own playing career. When playing for the New Zealand national team, or with professional club teams in other countries, I felt significant amounts of pressure to perform that came from more than just the pressure and expectation I placed on myself. Comparatively, I felt less of that "external" pressure when I was playing in Japan, something that was echoed in some of the responses from my participants.

For example, Amanda's club in Japan did not give her clearly articulated expectations, but she found that she adopted expectations for herself along the way that fitted into what the team required. She set goals for herself and was satisfied with her achievements, and received validation and recognition from her club and teammates at the end of the season.

I mean I felt like I still was playing at a high level. Becoming MVP and recognizing that, which I felt was good.

MVP stands for Most Valuable Player, which is a clear indication that Amanda's contributions to the team were highly valued. In fact, they were valued above anyone else's contributions for that season.

Despite a lack of stated expectations from the club or coaches, Amanda still commented on how deeply she cared about how her team was doing – not from a personal point of view, but from a team-first attitude. She perceived this lack of

articulated expectations to be symbolic of norms and values in Japanese society. Amanda discussed how she felt there were assumptions with her Japanese team about how team members were to contribute to the shared goals of the group, rather than individuals given explicit roles and responsibilities. She said that:

> *I don't know if the Japanese really do that as a culture…do you think they do that? ... I feel like Americans are just more clear cut on like, responsibilities and expectations. Whereas with the Japanese, everything is to be assumed. Or no one tells you what they think, how you're doing, or what you're doing or your job. Like your job is almost to be assumed*.

The "job" she is referring to is typically the responsibility an individual has in relation to the position they hold on the team. This is quite literal, as one's position is where they setup on the field when the team plays. Amanda position is goalkeeper. Her job is to "guard the goal", as she is the last line of defence to prevent the opposition from scoring. My position is a forward, or striker. A striker's primary responsible is to score the goals, as they are often the most advanced forward player on the team. These jobs, and their accompanying expectations, appeared not to have been explicitly discussed by Amanda's team in Japan.

What Amanda's comment, and the discussion we had about it during her interview, revealed was how an awareness of cultural norms influenced Amanda's understanding of why she had not received precise expectations with regards to performance. Coming from America, she had always felt her role and the accompanying expectations were very clear, and perhaps the difference she noticed was more about a difference in culture than it was about the specific conditions or attitude of the team she was playing for. I have also felt this in my own experience. I have played for two separate clubs in Japan, in different parts of the country. I had noticed this approach of not giving players' clear expectations, as Amanda had described and we discussed in her interview. Expectation, and pressure, very much came from within.

Evidence of this more internalised expectation can be seen in Amanda's experience. She said she went from being purely competitive for the sake of competition, to putting pressure on herself, but "more for the team". She remarked that:

> *I think now I put a lot of pressure on myself to do better, I would say. Which sometimes I think I probably didn't do enough of in America. Now I'm like "ok, you have to prepare for this". Like more preparing for games and stuff – internally you know? I need to be my best to help the team. So now, I might be putting too much pressure on myself that I wasn't used to. I definitely feel like I've put some pressure on myself more for the team*.

This was a comment made while we were discussing the difference between internal and external pressure. In fact, Amanda almost surprised herself when discussing how much she had adopted that approach herself with regards to her own expectations. We shared the opinion that a feature of Japanese culture was how selfless they were, how tirelessly they would strive for outcomes that were about something beyond themselves.

This pattern of behaviour in Japan has been noted by social scientists and anthropologists who have studied Japanese culture. Lebra (1976), for example, describes the individual's total commitment and loyalty to the group as a major feature of Japanese society. The Japanese concern for group membership urges the individual to contribute to the group goal at the expense of their personal interest (Lebra, 1976). Amanda seemed to have adopted this feature of Japanese society, releasing personal interest in favour of striving towards shared outcomes for the team.

For other participants, there was agreement between the expectations held by stakeholders and the expectations and desired outcomes held by the athlete themselves. For example, Claire's desired outcomes aligned with the desired outcomes her club had for her. There was an expectation from Claire's club that she would deliver goals for them. Claire wanted the same, and the close alignment benefited both parties.

> *I didn't know what to expect but I knew I was going in as a striker* [forward position in football] *and I just needed to score goals, I wanted to score goals. And I guess for me, I just wanted to get on top of my fitness – to do everything that I could to get myself into peak performance again. My coach, he laid it down for me – straight up, I wasn't fit enough, so he helped me with my*

> *fitness. And throughout the season, he was like "just score goals". And it was everything that I wanted it to be, it was everything that I needed.*

What Claire wanted out of the experience matched exactly what her football team wanted out of her. This resulted in a great sense of mutual satisfaction, a point elaborated on in chapter six when I discuss perceptions of success.

In contrast, Dana spoke often of how little she knew about what the team wanted from her, what the expectations of her coach were, and what they thought of her throughout the season. From what she had indicated, however, it appeared that she met the expectations of her team. Aside from when she picked up an injury, Dana played every minute of every game during the season, and trusted this as evidence that she was doing the job they wanted her to do. There wasn't a lot of positive reinforcement or assurances about how she was doing. All feedback was only implied, leaving Dana a bit isolated as to whether she was fulfilling expectations. However, Dana managed to turn her isolation into a positive, and viewed the lack of feedback or expectation as a type of freedom. She states that:

> *Early in the season they pretty much told me to do what I do in the* [player highlights] *video that they saw of me. They were like just go and play, so that's what I did. But, in saying that, it was kind of nice to have freedom, and to kind of have to make your own decisions. So I really enjoyed that aspect of it. Game day would have definitely been my favourite.*

Even without well-communicated expectations, Dana was still able to contribute positively to her team. She took the only instruction she had been given, and just went and played. She focused on her own game, and when I asked her if she believed she did well, she said:

> *I think I did my job, but I don't know if they were happy or not happy. They never communicated anything, they never told me to do anything differently, or to kind of keep doing something that I thought I might have been doing well. I just had to play. I just had to go and play football.*

Dana never mentioned feeling anxious or uncertain about her role in the team. She took the lack of objection about her performance as affirmation that she was performing well in the eyes of her team.

There were varied experiences with regards to expectations for the athletes. The women were in the situations they were in because of their perceived athletic ability (i.e., the ability to play football at a high standard), but expectations were still largely implied and not explicitly stated. It could be argued that the social structure, that is being under contract to a professional sporting team, puts a level of expectation and pressure on the athlete anyway, and it is up to the athlete to recognise that and perform to the best of their ability. In other words, it is simply the job of the professional athlete under contract to train and play at their best regardless. In my own experience, contract details can have an element of performance-related financial incentives in them, such as win bonuses and appearance bonuses. I did not discuss private contract details with my participants, but there could also have been this type of expectation incorporated into their agreements with their clubs, meaning that expectation reinforcement from coaches or teammates was not necessary and perhaps, therefore, not given.

Many of the participants spoke of being open minded about their desired outcomes for the experience. They were ready to take on the challenge as it came, rather than feeling the weight of expectations. This may stem from the unknown factor they all commented on feeling prior to taking up the experience, but could also stem from the fact that their motivations were multi-faceted and not tied to one specific area. When I reflected my own experiences, my desired outcomes were underpinned by my aspirations to improve as a footballer. The club team outcomes were a bonus, but, ultimately, I expected the experience to assist me in tracking as an athlete towards pinnacle events, such as the Olympic Games. Similarly, any developments or strides made off the field, such as personal growth, relationships, or learning a different language, were just happy bonuses, rather than expectations or outcomes that I had specifically strived for. Yet, in discussion with my participants, I came to see how football improvements were only a fraction of what could be gained from an experience such as we'd had. The open-minded attitude of these women proved not only that motivations and expectations amongst female footballers are complex, but that they are personal and subjective and worthy of exploration and investigation.

Discussion

Jane Granskog, in her ethnography of women competing in triathlons and duathlons, explores the reasons for participation in multi-sport events for women who are at different life stages (Granskog, 2003). Granskog (2003) speaks to participation in sport as a creative force in the development of identity and provides a view of identity as dynamic, a growing and active part of an individual's life. Looking at the motivations of the athletes to participate in the experience of playing professional football overseas enabled us to better understand who these women were, and what reasons they held for embarking on the opportunity to play in such foreign countries. Granskog's theory allows a space where the influence of an athletic experience can be measured as much on the development of the identity of the individual as it can be on the development of one's athletic ability. For Jane and Kate, their participation in the experience was about development off the field, with cultural exposure being a crucial part of their desired outcomes.

What surprised me the most was how few of the motivations had to do with only football. My own motivations were equally personal and subjective, as none of the other participants shared my motivations in perfect agreement. There were shared elements with others, but overall there was no simple alignment between myself and the participants, nor between the participants. As discussed in the literature review, success is the motivation most often discussed in sports studies, and attention is limited to what is found on the sports field. Winning, and the search for excellence in performance, is the key motivating factor in setting the values, standards, and goals for the All Blacks, for example (Johnson et al., 2013). While this is relevant for the context of that study, it does not consider the subjective motivations that could be behind an individual's reasons for participation. Rather, it discusses only team motivations.

Filho et al. (2014) state that the dynamic nature and complexity of team sports (e.g. coordination, communication, and cohesion) makes it difficult to study the relationship between individual characteristics and team characteristics, and team performance. Therefore, qualitative perspectives such as the ones my participants provided, that focus more on the individual, are important in building a multi-level

understanding. A more complete understanding of what may drive and motivate the athlete is also achievable through qualitative research that allows the informants to speak about what is personally important to them, rather than assuming all athletes are motivated by success centred on winning.

Expectations are closely linked to individual motivations, but external expectation from other stakeholders may also be present in the professional experiences of the athlete. Sometimes, the expectations between stakeholders and the individual are aligned, as they were in Claire's experience. A player may even formulate their own expectations based on culturally informed notions of collectivism and attitudes towards what it means to belong to a group, as demonstrated by Amanda. Players may also feel a positive sense of "freedom", as it was with Dana's experience when explicit expectations were not communicated to her. Others, such as Jane, could keep their own motivations at the forefront of their minds, even when those motivations were not football focussed.

Conclusion

This chapter shows that an athlete's motivations for "packing the boots" are personal and subjective. Being a footballer myself did not matter, my assumptions about my peers were still incorrect and founded in my own experiences. Their motivations, in combination with the expectations held by the women, has made visible the attitude of these women as they came into their professional experiences. This has enabled a greater understanding of the way in which they were going to interpret their new environments as they entered them, which was the next major emergent theme in this research. The athletes were also able to find value in the experience even if success was not found on the sporting field. Having held such varied and personal expectations, they were able to feel satisfied with their experiences when their sporting efforts were not going as well. I explore experiences of adjusting to life in a new country in the following chapters, where what it's like to experience "life on the ground" is discussed.

Chapter Five: Being, Becoming, Belonging - Life on the Ground

Introduction

As stated earlier in this thesis, cultural distance can be described as the gap between the culture that the participant knows and is comfortable with in their home country, and the new culture that they come into. The aim of this chapter is to examine the ways in which the cultural distance manifested in the experiences of the participants.

To achieve this, I discuss several experiences the athletes had in their new environments. As well as dealing with a different cultural context with regards to being in a foreign country, they also had to deal with the new social environment present in their team. As shown in this chapter, cross-cultural comparisons were often made by the women between what they knew in their home countries, and what they were discovering about the social structures of their new countries, which they mostly encountered in their new football teams. Social structure is a way of describing the make-up of the features of a society (Hendry, 2008). For the participants in this research, the team provided specific situations that allowed cross-cultural comparisons to be made between social structures that the women were used to and what they were now encountering in their new experiences.

Many of the researchers involved in the ethnography of physical activity are full participants in their sport/exercise research (Bolin & Granskog, 2012). Bolin and Granskog (2012) go on to say that anthropologists may indeed “be” or even “become” who they study in terms of self-identification as a member of a sport subculture. Such a “becoming”, or “being” ushers in a new dimension for the study of women, culture, and sport/exercise (Bolin & Granskog, 2012). This takes anthropologists into a dimension of research that Bolin and Granskog conceptualize as “extreme ethnography” in which one is “being” or “becoming” whom one studies, or in the classic anthropological term, “going native” (Bolin & Granskog, 2012). While the participants in this research were not anthropologists seeking to engage in

ethnographic fieldwork, this chapter does explore how they were observing, engaging, and beginning to self-identify, as they sought to be, become, and belong in their new environments.

I use the concepts of ‘how to be’, ‘how to become’, and ‘how to belong’ to help guide the narrative in this chapter of what life was like on the ground for these athletes. In learning how to be, the athletes discuss their first impressions of their new homes, and how those significant first few weeks played out for each of them. In learning how to become, they discuss how they then began to settle into routine, and how through the process of routinisation they became more used to what was happening around them, and how the extraordinary started to become ordinary. In learning how to belong, the athletes discuss how they became more at ease in their new environments, as their adjustments began to feel more embedded and natural. The participants also talked about how observed differences were negotiated, and if those differences were problematic, welcomed, or simply accepted. Lastly, they discuss how larger cultural and societal differences impacted on them. The challenges they faced away from the football field, and some broader cultural observations that played a role in their experience, are also discussed.

How To Be

In Huot and Rudman’s (2010) study on the performances and places of identity, the authors discuss the transitions that take place in relation to place and occupation in international migration. They discuss the performative aspects of identity, arguing that identity performance is occupational in nature, to a large extent, as one performs mainly through ‘doing’ in order to be, to become, and to belong (Huot & Rudman, 2010). As noted above, I have also used this concept as a guide for this chapter, beginning with how they first came to ‘be’. It is the description of the adjustment the athletes had to now make, how they had to immediately be, with regards to the new behaviours they had observed in others that were required for manageable existence in their new environments.

The first areas to look at are the initial impressions the women had of their new homes and their new teams. The ethnographic task of understanding and

interpreting a new way of life involves the identification and interpretation of impressions, both in what is conveyed by the individual and what is impressed upon the individual (Berreman, Robben, & Sluka, 2012). For the athletes in this research, the early impressions were dominated by the physical environment, the culture, food, and language of their new host countries.

Initial Impressions and the First Days on the Job

As well as confronting any expectations that were held by themselves and others, as discussed in the previous chapter, the athletes had to confront the preconceptions they held about what they would encounter in their new host countries, particularly culturally. For some, such as Kate, this was about coming to terms with just how 'foreign' Japan was to her, even though she had previous experience with other Asian cultures. Japan had different challenges, as Kate articulates here:

> *I think I realised, fairly quickly, that – I mean I knew not all Asian cultures were identical but I thought they might be more similar than it turns out they were. I was definitely more used to the Chinese culture where things are happening very quickly. The personality of the Chinese people in general is way more aggressive than Japan. And so coming here I was pretty shocked right away at how reserved individuals are, how many rules there are, as well as the fact most Japanese don't speak English. Whereas in China first and foremost I knew the language, and most individuals spoke English if I couldn't communicate in Chinese. So I think that was probably the biggest difference and shock in coming here.*

Language was a major contributor to the cultural distance felt by the participants. Kate was aware that she was not coming to an English-speaking country, but was still surprised by just how little English was spoken. She had an expectation that the general level of proficiency in English would be higher than it turned out to be. She found this "extremely frustrating" as well as "overwhelming", and adjusting to this became difficult as the significance of it affected not only her football experiences, but also the general experience of managing life in Japan, which is explored again later in the chapter.

Jane's first impressions of Japan were also quite different to what she had anticipated, and, like Kate, she had made assumptions because she had visited other Asian countries. She said she was initially surprised at:

> *I think how different culturally Japan was to Australia. I didn't really think of Japan as that different, for some reason to start. I'd been to China, and Vietnam, and Korea – all those Asian countries before, but Japan I hadn't been to. And I thought they were a little more Westernized than some of the other countries around there. Which I still think in some ways they are. But culturally, just how people treat each other and treated us - so welcoming and that sort of thing - that was really awesome to see.*

Even with the surprise at the different culture, what made the impression positive were the interactions she had with others. The above quote also shows that the way people in the host culture behave towards someone new can have a powerful impact on how one may be, feel, or behave reciprocally.

As well as the adjustment to language and culture, the athletes had to adjust to being away from home, and going through the accompanying emotions involved in being in an environment that was different in many ways. Claire, upon arriving in South Korea, had a bit of a rough period, which took both a toll on her mind and body:

> *Well, when I first got there I actually hated it. I'm not going to lie – the first two weeks I hated it! I was on the phone to Mum like "what am I doing, I can't do this, I'm not cut out for this". I guess it was hard because my fitness wasn't 100% because I had surgery last year on my shoulder, so I was still coming back from that. I think that's what was scary. I wasn't 100% so I was nervous, and because I had no idea about it I was like "what if go over there and I'm shit and they kick me back?"! There was always that risk. But I guess when I first got over the wow factor was just that absolutely no one in my team knew English, except one girl and all she really knew was "hey how are you?". And then I was like "oh my gosh she speaks English!". And I was like "oh I'm good! How are you?"… And then like, nothing back. I was like ok, I'm just going to sit in my shell... I guess that was one of the scariest things. And just generally talking to the team – I know football's football but you have to be able to gel with your players and so that was… It was just so overwhelming.*

There were many dimensions to Claire's early experience that comprised her first impressions and made the first few weeks in South Korea difficult. In encountering the language barrier, her initial reaction was to go into her "shell", but eventually she came to realise that this was not a strategy that would make the situation easier. With the use of body language, and learning some simple Korean language, she began to better communicate with her teammates and the people around her.

One of the initial challenges facing the athletes were the abrupt changes to their physical locations and living environments. For Dana, who had made the move from Australia to South Korea, there was a drastic adjustment required from the lifestyle she had known in her home country, to the one that she encountered in South Korea. She had only known very supportive family environments before this time, having lived with her immediate family, and moved from her family home in to a place with her partner in Australia, before going overseas on her own. She was leaving that home support behind, and coming into not only a foreign culture, but a foreign form of housing. What she described to me was a physical environment that was all-encompassing, but socially an isolating experience.

Dana's first impressions of South Korea related to food, culture, and the physical environment she found herself in. As stated in the methodology section, Dana's unique living situation featured in her comments about those early impressions:

> *The weather. It was freezing! It was like minus 7 at one point. But just the culture in general really. The food. What else? That the whole squad lived together. The entire squad lived together in like a dormitory kind of thing. There were about 2-4 girls in a room, and they lived there for the entire season… but us as the internationals, we got an apartment to ourselves. So we ended up with a room each, which was perfect.*

Despite finding the living situation different, once she settled and adjusted Dana was pleased with the arrangement. She had her own space, one that she said she could retreat to at the end of the day to just do simple things, like watch a movie. She could relax in that space, a sanctuary that was important to her within the immersive nature of the other aspects of her new home.

Food and Fuelling the Athlete

Another part of those early impressions that all the athletes brought up was food. This is a crucial part of any overseas experience, particularly for athletes. Good nutrition is critically important to sports performance, encompassing a significant part of one's ability to train and play at the highest level. Therefore, it was no surprise that it was important to the participants and raised during the interviews. How they managed and adjusted to the change in diet featured heavily in their experiences, particularly at the beginning. There were different strategies taken, but it was certainly an area that dominated life on the ground for these women.

For professional footballers, there are always situations where you eat a meal together with your team. For most athletes, this occurs when you are on the road, travelling to matches held in different parts of the country. This may involve being away with the team for the entire weekend, staying in a hotel and in a situation where one is not in full control of their nutrition. The menu is set for the team, and everyone sits down and eats the same food together. The food is often quite general, cuisine deemed to be appropriate for athletes to eat close to competition. If an athlete is in Japan, with Japanese teammates, that menu is going to consist of Japanese cuisine, as that is what the overwhelming majority of the team will be used to as their "fuel" for performance. Therefore, it is up to the foreign player in that situation to adjust, rather than to expect that their own dietary needs and what they are accustomed to will be provided. In some participant's experiences, such as Claire and Dana's in South Korea, most meals, if not all, were eaten with the team as they shared accommodation with the entire team even when they were not on the road.

Therefore, the adjustment to a new diet had to be done quickly, and some felt this change more than others. For Claire, this took a toll on her health:

> *I'm not a fussy person – like I'll eat anything you put in front of me but I don't do spicy too well… and everything was spicy! So that was rough. Within two weeks, I think just with the change of diet, I got quite sick. I got some bad diarrhoea and it was not a fun time.*

The consequent sickness from the change to in diet must have been difficult to manage for Claire. That, combined with trying to train and perform with a new team, contributed to an early period of “hating it”.

However, for others, food was a positive change that led to positive outcomes. Amanda, coming to play in Japan from America, for example, said that the biggest adjustment was:

> *Obviously the food… I mean it’s just so different to American food. That was probably the one thing that took a little bit of getting used to as far as like, soup and salad… My diet I would say – that’s probably one of the biggest things. I’ve lost 30 pounds since being here.”*

Amanda said she adopted pretty much all the Japanese eating habits she was exposed to, irrespective of whether they conflicted with what she was used to in America. She shared that:

> *As Americans’ we don’t really eat rice. Unless you’re going out for Asian food! You don’t eat white rice as like an everyday thing. Or soup, even salad for breakfast was a very foreign thing. Not now! I mean salad for breakfast is very normal to me now. Food was a huge factor, that I was like wow, this is kind of crazy! Or eating like stir-fry for breakfast… like fish? What am I eating salmon for breakfast for?? It was so weird! That was one big thing.*

Whether it was when she was away with the team and the meals were provided for her, or whether it was in her own home in Japan, Amanda tried to assimilate as much as possible, taking on those dietary changes on until they started to become normal.

Amanda made a big effort when it came to local food practices, going out of her way to avoid food that she knew she would have access to in America. Her reasons, as an example, for avoiding a restaurant close to her home in Japan that served American style burgers, were:

> *I never eat it because I live in America! So I’ve never gone there. I can get that every day* [when she is home in America]*. But when am I going to be able to go buy a bento box down the street?*

She was determined to embrace the culture, and that included embracing the food. While she acknowledged that it might be different for others, who would perhaps

actively look for food from home for comfort, she said that this was not what she wanted for herself, commenting that “the only thing I have in my house that’s American is peanut butter”. This led to very positive outcomes for Amanda. Over the three years of Amanda’s professional career in Japan, she adopted local food practices, losing weight through those healthy habits.

For Dana, it was not so much about adjusting to the South Korean diet, but more about finding her own nutrition plan within the structures around her. She did not take on the challenge of adjusting to South Korean food, despite having to eat all her meals with her teammates. She commented that:

> *Our meals, everything, was compulsory. You had to do everything together. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner. It’s not like you could go out, get a coffee during the day, miss lunch, and then come back for dinner. It was pretty full on.*

Dana actively chose not to eat what her teammates were eating. Rather, she said:

> *We had a chef - a personal one for the entire team. So, for eight months I had chicken, sweet potato, broccoli and carrots. Every day, twice a day.*

This was an unusual arrangement, and something that wasn’t common in the experiences of other participants. However, it allowed Dana to retain control over her nutrition, something she felt was important. She did not embrace or adjust to the local food in the same manner that some of other athletes did.

Other athletes appeared to have much more flexibility, being in less “full on” environments with respects to not having to eat all meals with the team. Regardless, there were always instances where the athletes had to eat what their teammates were eating, and there were varying degrees in how far they took their integration and efforts to successfully ‘be’ in their new environments.

How to Become

Berreman et al. (2012) state that once the task of how to ‘be’ is accomplished, the ethnographer can proceed to the task of seeking to understand and interpret the way of life of the people they are encountering in the field. This accomplishment could only be judged by my participants, as the nature of this research did not allow me to observe and judge for myself if and how they had come to ‘be’. It could only be done

by self-identification, and I am guided by how my participants went on to discuss other aspects of their experience that seemed to be borne from overcoming those first few weeks of adjustment and impressions. Once the first impressions of their new environment had been managed, the athletes were able to use this understanding to settle more into life in their new homes.

Huot and Rudman (2010) state that once initial impressions are formed, interactions (or performances) are likely to be influenced by how they see others, and how they wish to be seen by them. An individual's ability to 'perform' stems in part from the familiarity they develop with routines (Huot & Rudman, 2010). Huot and Rudman also discuss how the workplace is an interesting example of this dynamic, since certain expectations might be outlined and individuals wishing to be regarded as 'good' employees will compose and present themselves as such. Expectations were discussed in the previous chapter, and here the weight of those expectations are explored further, to see if they impacted how the women began the process of "becoming" a part of their new environment.

In this section, the participants discuss the way in which they formed routines. This helped them become what they believed was contextually 'good' in their new workplace environments, that of the new football teams they were playing for. This section also discusses how they began to interpret and understand the behaviours and norms of their new football teams through observations made of the wider society they were living in, and how they managed the challenges this presented them.

Finding Your Feet and Finding Routine

As time passed, the athletes began to find and settle into a routine both on and off the field. Through this routinization, they gained a sense of normalcy. Those initial surprises became part of the experience as they became more accustomed to them. Claire spoke of how, over time, what she had initially considered challenging became her new "normal". This was part of her life now, and she said:

> *There were so many things that were incredible but then once you're there for a little while, it just becomes normal. But then, when you tell people back*

home they're like "oh my God that's so weird!". And I was like "yeah it is" but then it just felt so normal.

Life had settled down for Claire, and it was only once she was back home did she begin to see again how extraordinary some parts of her experience had been.

Claire also quickly "found her feet" on the football field, making immediate contributions towards, quite literally, the team goals. She commented that:

My very first game that I played, because I wasn't fit enough, I came in from the bench. We were drawing 1-1 and in the last minute of the game – I played the last 20 – the last minute of the game I scored the winner! That could not have been better, the best start! And I think from that point, I guess from the soccer side of things, I earnt my respect with the team.

Claire demonstrated, through her performance in that opening game, that she could be the player the team needed. One that they could trust and rely on to perform, creating a "massive bond" which formed a base for other positive relationships that she created during her time in South Korea.

For others, settling in became easier through assistance from teammates. This was the case for Jane, which made a noteworthy difference for her right from the beginning. She said that:

The team were really nice. Like from the outset they were all really welcoming, and would try and speak English or teach me Japanese, that sort of thing. Always checking that I'm ok and making sure I'm comfortable, and taking me into account. Like say we are on an away trip, they'd always make sure that I would have something that I could eat. Even though I ate all their food anyway!

Jane also spoke of how, through routine, things that were strange began to be "normal" as she became more familiar with what was taking place around her. Once she returned to Australia, she was reminded how unusual some of the things she encountered were, especially when explaining them again to others. Having returned home, she said that she has renewed appreciation for what she experienced:

Some of it, which I come to think of as normal over there, you come back and say something about it here and it does get that sense of being really strange.

> *Whereas it had become the norm in Japan – like, I don't know – whenever we had trainings on a weekend we'd train for about four hours or five hours or something like that. Which, I'd tell a coach here and they think it's really strange – that sort of thing. Whereas at first, I thought it was really strange, and then it just became what we did.*

The average length of a team training session Australia or New Zealand is approximately two hours. To train for any longer, especially up to twice that long, is certainly "really strange" for a player who is conditioned to only training for two hours. Being out on your feet for that length of time takes adjustment, but after a while one adapts and it becomes less strange, more normal, and just a part of what one now does with their new team.

For Jane and Claire, aspects of the experience that were at one point 'strange', became ordinary once enough time had passed and they had adjusted. Only once they were out of the experience again, back home and describing what they encountered to others, did they begin to see how extraordinary some of those aspects really were. Adapting to those changes was part of their process of "becoming".

Different Dynamics – Coaching, Playing, and Developing

The players also had to adjust to their coaches and the different styles of team management in their new environments. In my playing experiences, there were always differences in coaching and playing styles wherever I went in the world. This meant that not only did I have to adapt to a new home, new types of food, and possibly a new language, but I also had to adjust to the different way in which a team was coached and the way in which they played. Different coaching styles could require a major adjustment, as it always took time to learn the way in which the coach would approach training, games, individual feedback and development, and general team management.

Japan was no different in this sense. In fact, I felt that the adjustment and change from what I was used to was greater than what I had experienced moving from Germany to England. For example, hierarchy and "team structure" was familiar for

me in those two countries, as it was more aligned to what I was used to in New Zealand. The coaches would have the final say on team strategy and direction, but there were formal and informal lines of communication between the coaching staff and the players. Therefore, coaches in Germany and England were, generally, reasonably approachable. My Japanese coaches were different. It wasn't so much about their personalities but more about how coaches seemed to be more separate from the team. There was far less collaboration between the players and coaches, with a clear hierarchical structure in place that had the coach firmly at the top. It was a situation I was not used to. My participants also raised the subject of differences in coaching styles and team dynamic.

Kate found the differences in coaching challenging, particularly the player/coach relationship in comparison to what she was used to in America. We discussed feedback and communication from coaches about football performance quite a bit during her interview. I asked her to expand on the performance feedback, if any, she had received during her time in Japan, and if this had been satisfactory. She explained that:

> *I would say no. It* [the feedback] *hasn't been good. And I think, one a lot of it comes from this massive language barrier, and two I don't know if it's a cultural difference. But at school* [with her college team in America] – *I was the captain of the team so I was constantly meeting with my coach or coaches, both from a team perspective and an individual perspective. Bigger picture, like "how is our team doing?", "what do we need to do differently as a team?", "how can I help the team do X, Y, Z?". And, from a player perspective, I was watching film* [video footage of games] *one-on-one with my coaches. Having my film broken down, player specific, field specific… just all these tools that I don't think have been provided to me here.*

As I had experienced myself, there seemed to be less collaboration and feedback with regards to individual player development in Japan than there was in other countries. Kate had to adjust to this, and she had some approaches to do so which are discussed shortly.

Jane also had to adapt to a different style of coaching. It was a coaching style that she found herself frustrated by, particularly as she believed it impacted on her team's

performance. Jane's team was in the second division in Japan, and, by her own admission, the team's football quality "wasn't very good", and they were coming close to last in the league standings. She personally felt that some of the responsibility for those poor team performances lay with the coach, but that wasn't where the blame or responsibility lay in the opinion of others. She said that:

> *I wasn't able to question why or that sort of thing. Our team didn't do very well, we were coming close to last, but no one stopped to question whether the coach had a role in that. Which was… interesting. They'd take the blame onto themselves or blame even other people in the team, rather than thinking maybe he's* [the coach] *not doing the best – maybe we're not playing the right system, or maybe we don't even have a system. Which I thought was a bit frustrating and strange.*

She said that despite results in the games, they would continue to do the same drills at practices the following week. I had a similar experience in my second season playing in Japan, and we discussed how frustrating this was. There wasn't the level of learning, adjustment, and shared responsibility we were used to in New Zealand or Australia. For both myself and Jane, this was not something we considered 'normal', or even particularly useful. Normal for us was the coach taking at least some responsibility for performance. If the team are losing consecutive matches, then this should be addressed at training, perhaps by altering the sessions to work on any weaknesses that could be contributing to the losses. We both had experiences in Japan where the coach did not take that responsibility, and would persevere in training sessions with the same drills no matter what the outcome had been for the previous game. Additionally, raising this issue with the coach seemed out of the question, as the hierarchal system seemed to negate that sort of approach. I remember asking a teammate about this during that second season in Japan if we can suggest to the coach that he adjust some of the training sessions for that week. Her response, seemingly surprised at my question, was simply that "we can't".

This type of cross-cultural difference has been made by social scientists who have identified some 'typical' patterns of behaviour for Japanese people. Lebra (1976), for example, states that in Japan, pressure for conformity often results in a type of restraint, where one refrains from expressing disagreement with whatever appears to

be the majority's opinion. This, in combination with the individual's total commitment and loyalty to the group, another feature of Japanese social structures, would mean that the type of responsibility and collaboration that we are used to in a team environment in New Zealand or Australia would not typically or readily occur in Japan. These types of cross-cultural comparisons and their effect on the experiences of the athletes are explored further in chapter six.

As stated in an earlier paragraph with regards to overcoming a lack of individual player feedback, it was interesting to hear Kate explain that approaching and utilising other foreigners in the team was one of the strategies she used to get a sense of her own performance and development. Expanding on her earlier remarks, she said that:

> *And, I would also say, while that's been frustrating at times, it's also been kind of refreshing, because most of the time I don't know what the coach is thinking. I can kind of get a sense sometimes if the girls* [teammates] *think I'm doing something well or not, because I think that they react a little more than the coaches do. And being able to talk with other foreigners about like, strategy, what we think each other can work on. Especially* [specific player]*,* [she's] *an older player so I respect* [her]*, and I feel like I probably have gotten more coaching from* [her] *than the coaches. Which is really interesting! But I would say there are positives of not knowing kind of what's going on at times.*

In America, she was used to getting consistent feedback in the structured manner, as highlighted previously. In Japan, she had to rely more on her teammates, particularly the other foreign players, for that feedback. And, if she couldn't, she embraced that and treated it as "refreshing", rather than categorising it as only negative.

In my own professional football career, feedback on performance has always been an enormously influential part of my development as a player. When training and playing with the New Zealand national team, feedback was constant. We were always being measured and scrutinized on our progress and development as players, to ensure we were always on the right pathway to perform when we assembled to play international matches together as a national team. Even when I was overseas in professional club environments, I was regularly sending video footage back to the New Zealand coaches so that they could see my progress and

provide me with any necessary feedback. We were also encouraged to develop and conduct our own individual review processes, so that we could manage and evaluate our own development in trainings as well as matches. This self-review process became especially important in Japan, as there were no formal feedback or development procedures in place with the coaching staff of those teams. I took those opportunities to really focus on my own progress. This also seemed to be the case with the other athletes I interviewed.

Jane, for example, also had to reconcile herself to the fact that the feedback and understanding she was used to getting in Australia was not going to occur in Japan. With regards to team tactics and understanding, she said that:

> *I'd want to know what happens if this – let's say defensively, if something's going wrong behind me or whatever, I want to know why and if I'm influencing that. Whereas* [in Japan] *it was kind of hard to get the whole picture of the team's game plan and that sort of thing. So, I'd kind of just have to focus on what I was doing and just leave it at that.*

She had to let go of any expectation around feedback, input, or understanding. She went on to say that this was a challenge:

> *Yeah, it was tough. Like, "why are you doing this?". But then I can't, there's just no point.*

There was nothing she could do about this, so she simply let go of the need, desire, and compulsion to get that level of tactical detail about the team's "game plan". The difference was not resolved, just accepted. Rather than "obsess" about what was going on around her, Jane only addressed what she could directly influence herself, meaning that she focussed more on herself and her own game.

Challenges Beyond the Football Field

The challenges faced by the athletes in adjusting to their new environments were not limited to the football field. One feature of playing in such a foreign country is that challenges can extend into non-football related parts of life. Something as simple as going to the supermarket takes on new meaning, and becomes another encounter to be negotiated, in addition to all the challenges the athletes are already facing in their team environments. In my own experiences, the major difference between playing in

an English-speaking country, like England, and playing in Japan, was that some of the challenges of life off the field were just as immense as some of the challenges of life on the field. What would otherwise be taken-for-granted activities became huge achievements once managed. For me, this included learning to use the public transport systems in Japan. I found a thrilling sense of achievement and independence once I became able to make my way with ease around Tokyo on my days off, navigating and exploring the city on my own without getting lost!

Kate told a story about her struggles with the Japanese language, and how this made even going to the supermarket, for example, so difficult. She explained:

> *It was extremely frustrating and I think it probably was what overwhelmed me the most about this experience was "how am I going to get through this experience if I can't communicate with anyone"! I've never been in a situation where it's been so hard to find peanut butter at the supermarket! To have to take out your phone and Google pictures and show people!*

She told me the story of how she eventually managed her grocery shopping, a simple part of life she had taken for granted back in her home country.

> *Did I not tell you about my friend at the supermarket!? This one woman that worked there spoke no English but I would just Google things and she would literally hold my hand and take me to a specific aisle. That was huge for me - my supermarket runs. It was exhausting! It wasn't like it was in the States where you know where everything is!*

Kate acquired a new approach to complete what was otherwise a straightforward task, which in Japan, had become a challenge. Learning "how to become" in Japan was as much about life off the field, as it was for life on the field.

How To Belong

Eventually, there was a sense for my participants that they were starting to fit more and more in their new environments. They felt as if they had adequately adjusted to the new lifestyle in their host country: to their new team and to a new way of life. They felt they were coping adequately, that they 'belonged' well enough to be comfortable. There were variations to this, both in the areas they felt this sense of comfort, and to what constituted belonging. There were also variations in the level of

adjustment – some coped very well, and felt a real sense of belonging socially, while others felt they had done just enough to be considered a functioning and contributing member of the team.

There were also feelings of belonging that went beyond just the team environment, where the athletes discussed how they felt more at ease with their surroundings beyond the football field. These feelings related to a better understanding of the culture around them, as well as more comfort and ability in performing the simple tasks of life on the ground. However, with the football team being the immediate social environment for my participants, opinions on integration and belonging to that group were mentioned often.

Becoming One of the Team

Claire spoke about having achieved a real sense of social belonging in South Korea, as well as integration into the football team based on her ability to play football well and contribute positively to team outcomes. She said this greatly enhanced her experience, commenting that:

> *I've got friends for life now. I've got at least four of the girls* [her South Korean teammates] *coming to Australia next summer just to come see me here! I'm so glad that I've made that connection with those people. And when I was talking to my parents I accidentally called South Korea home once and they got kind of upset about that! But I made it like my home. I'm super happy with everything that I did. I think the fact that I did do all that stuff, how I went out of my way to make it an even better experience, I think that showed on the field as well. And I think that is what also helped me grow as a player.*

This demonstrates that putting in effort to integrate beyond the sporting field can reap rewards, particularly from a social point of view. It may even contribute to performance on the field, as Claire believed to be the case for her. She gave many examples of how her efforts off the field enhanced the entirety of her experience. She felt that this gave an additional richness to her experience. She commented that the enjoyment she gained in those other areas, outside of just playing football, contributed to a wider sense of satisfaction and belonging that went beyond the football field.

Dana, however, said she didn't feel a sense of belonging in South Korea, except when she was out on the field playing football. She did form some small social connections, but said that she never quite overcame the distance caused by not having a shared language with her teammates to create any meaningful relationships that extended beyond the football field. She commented that:

> *It's really hard because all we kind of had to go off was body language. But there were a few girls in the team that I got along with a little bit better than others, just by body language and only having minimal communication. There would be certain players that you'd kind of say hi to, and ask how they are at training. But once you were playing, you felt a part of the team. So you didn't feel excluded, or anything like that.*

The lack of clear, easy communication was hard for Dana, but she still managed to get a feeling of inclusion and integration through her football. Dana's experience shows that one may feel included, but this does not necessarily translate into social belonging. Dana was happy in the sense that she did not feel excluded, but she did not develop the same sense of belonging that Claire did.

The 12th Man – Significant Support People

Jane's situation was different from the other participants, as her boyfriend was with her for a large part of her time overseas. She commented on how he made efforts to socialize with the team as well, and would involve himself and contribute where he could. She spoke of how important his support was, and how he contributed to her positive experience not only away from the football field, but with the team as well:

> *I think it was really helpful having him there, in terms of my sanity and that sort of thing. Just having someone nearby that you can talk to all the time, be supportive… it was really valuable I thought. I think it would be really interesting doing it without that safety net, see how you go. I actually don't know how I would have gone if I didn't have him there. And with the team – he didn't get to come along to many trainings, but before games and stuff at home where we'd have to set up the field, he would come along to help with that and all the girls would chat to him. He kind of became a little bit a part of the team in that sense.*

The support from her boyfriend, and the effort he made with the team and the reciprocal response from her teammates, created a bond and sense of belonging for them both. These seemingly small efforts can become meaningful, for all involved.

The benefit of having her boyfriend in Japan with her meant that they could share, manage, and enjoy the experience together. She commented that:

> *I think it's really valuable because someone close to you gets to experience what you're experiencing. You know? Like it's not the same as explaining to people how it went after the fact or over the phone or something. They're right in the middle of it, experiencing it culturally, food wise, and everything, just the same as you.*

Going through the experience with her boyfriend enhanced Jane's time in Japan. She also remarked how nice it was to be able to support them both financially, so that he did not have to work while he was over there and they could just enjoy every aspect of the adventure and opportunity of this rich cultural experience together.

Claire found a key support person *in* South Korea, rather than having a support person with her from home. She became close with her assistant coach, a South Korean who had played representative level football for her country and had more familiarity with football players from other countries. Through her, and their team doctor, who spoke a little bit of English, she could get more of a grasp of what the team and coaches wanted from her. Claire said this boosted her confidence:

> *My assistant coach, she was lovely. She always said she believed so much in me, and she would say "with you, we are going to win".*

Claire said that this support, and the belief in her, really impacted her experience positively. Claire put a lot of effort into getting to know her teammates and others at the club, finding and fostering their support. That built a feeling of confidence and belief in Claire and her ability. She stated that:

> *I think the fact that I did do all that stuff* [putting in the extra effort socially]*, I went out of my way to make it an even better experience, I think that showed on the field as well. Once you build a connection, you're going to want to work for each other.*

Claire was a big advocate of this approach, commenting that by not doing so, players who head overseas do not allow themselves the opportunity to be as successful as they could be.

Broader Cultural Observations

As well as looking for social belonging within the football team, the athletes also strived for comfort and belonging in the wider society of their host countries. The women observed some of the broader societal norms in their new country, and reflected on those, often in comparison what they were familiar with back in their home countries. They observed cultural norms both in society and within their new teams. In some instances, what they had noted as present in the wider society manifested itself in the football team environment.

For Amanda, a value in Japanese culture she observed was that of respect, particularly the respect paid to people older than oneself. She noticed how it played out socially, and made comparisons to what she was accustomed to back home:

> *Socially I would say, just as far as like the respect of the "older" versus the "younger". This is a huge thing that stuck out to me. Being here, if you call people "San" or "Chan", that actually means that you're friends with them. If you call them "Chan", you like them. As oppose to just calling them, for example, Yuki. But if you call them Yuki-Chan, you actually do like them. So I thought that was kind of a cool thing. As far as it goes in America, with older and younger, it's not there. There's no real* [recognised] *respect.*

Jane also picked up on the Japanese value of respect, with regards to deference to those older than you. Despite seeing it play out regularly during her time there, it was still not something she said she ever quite got used to. When I asked her about whether the culture had become more familiar over time, she stated that:

> *Some parts of it were still amazing. Something new would happen and I'd be like oh my God, this is a whole new level! I still don't understand the thinking, for some things. Their processes, like never questioning people who are older than you. That sort of thing. They say jump, no one says how high. They just*

do it. Which, I don't know… I don't know if anyone's got it right or wrong, but it is just so amazing.

Despite questioning whether that was the right way to be, Jane accepted it as the cultural norm in Japan, and adjusted her interactions accordingly to be aligned with what she was observing around her.

While Amanda appreciated this aspect of Japanese society, she did see that this impacted on the way her team functioned. The hierarchy that formed from this deference to age had an impact on the way her team would collaborate and work together. As a result, it seemed to Amanda as if the whole team was not contributing to make improvements:

Here, you know, if you're older, what you say goes. Whereas in America, you can challenge everything. And that's the good thing about America and the bad thing. Also, you're always being innovative, because people are always challenging other people. Here, nobody's really… there's no great challenger – nobody saying "no this isn't right, we have to develop something different".

Japanese societal norms and values dictated the way in which a team operated. Whilst Amanda could acknowledge and see how this respect was an amazing part of Japanese society, she recognised that it was perhaps limiting her team's ability to collaborate in a way that could impact performance.

Broader cultural observations and cross-cultural differences were certainly observed, but didn't seem to impact the women to the detriment of their experience. As is important for the researcher, I paid attention to not only what the participants were saying, but also what was not said. During the interviews, none of the participants complained about the host culture they were immersed in. Challenges were discussed, but there was never an outward negativity expressed.

Discussion

As established in the literature review, one of the concepts used throughout this research is Bourdieu's habitus. Habitus has been described by Thorpe (2009) as both the embodiment of one's social *location* and the structure of social *relations* that generate practice and action. It is where one is, combined with the validation of what

one is doing (Thorpe, 2009). For my participants, it is quite literally practice and action as in football practice and football games, as relevant to their new contexts in either South Korea or Japan. This interpretation of habitus by Thorpe is the explanation I have used in describing how the participants began to 'belong' in their new environments.

They observed aspects of their new social environment (the football team) and their new cultural contexts (either South Korea or Japan) and made judgments on how to operate based on those observations of the world around them. Thorpe's description of habitus states that it is context specific, and this chapter discussed the details of the athlete's immediate environments to provide this context. This influenced how life was observed and lived on the ground. As Dana put it:

> *I just went and played, just went and did… so you'd kind of catch on to what they want just by watching, and by the training sessions that we'd do, because we did the same things all the time. You'd kind of catch on and just watch other people around you, and kind of mimic what they did*.

This summarises the process Dana and the other participants went through as they adjusted to their new lives. The way in which they behaved, or "performed", in their new environments was shaped largely by what they had observed in their respective contexts. This occurred both on the football field, as illustrated here by Dana, and away from the football field.

In their study on migration, Huot and Rudman (2010) discuss how the ability to perform plays a crucial role in identity for an individual in their new environments. Performance is used to illustrate how one might 'do identity', and how a person's habitus is embodied through daily routine (Huot & Rudman, 2010). The athletes in this research had to literally 'do' their identity every day, through playing and demonstrating their football ability. This became an important way to communicate with those around them to prove their place in the team and their ability to contribute to shared outcomes.

Huot and Rudman (2010) also identified that when people migrate internationally, everyday interactions may no longer enable what they described as 'impression management' in desired ways. Impression management involves presenting a

particular front in one's interactions, to portray an acceptable perspective of the situation and of the self that promotes recognition among the group (Huot & Rudman, 2010). Thus, the personal and social identity and taken-for-granted elements of habitus are challenged (Huot & Rudman, 2010). All the participants experienced this, and spoke of how challenged they were not only with regards to their football, but also personally through being in such a vastly different country and culture. Jane summed this up, saying that:

> *I'd have to make it a conscious effort to put myself out there and let go – to not be embarrassed, to ask for help or to say hello and try and speak Japanese and that sort of thing. I thought it was cool, to lose a few inhibitions in that sense*.

Putting herself "out there" was initially a challenge for Jane, as she had described herself as an "introvert", but she felt she needed to make this effort, engaging in impression management. It challenged her habitus, where she tended to be shy and reserved, but endeavouring to be more extroverted and pushing herself beyond her comfort zone was positive for her.

Skeggs invokes Bourdieu's concept of habitus to discuss the reflexive self with relation to class struggle and the challenges this presents to one's sense of self, stating that "Bourdieu argues that individuals are always placed in situations in which they will be uncertain of the outcomes, thereby they have to draw on strategies to operate" (Skeggs, 2004, p. 84). This was evident in the experiences of my participants. Uncertain of what was taking place around them, they formed, and then drew, on strategies that would assist them in operating better in their environments. These strategies helped them shift from being, to becoming, to belonging.

Conclusion

Berreman et al. (2012) states that attempts to convey a desired impression of one's self and to interpret accurately the behaviour and attitudes of others are an inherent part of any social interaction. This chapter demonstrates that "life on the ground" in a new country for professional football players bears the hallmarks and characteristics of life on the ground for anyone in a new socio-cultural environment (including an

anthropologist), as these women were contractually obligated to participate in the sports subculture (the team as a subculture of the wider society).

For all the participants, “life on the ground” was testing, as they reconciled themselves to the new social world around them. Those initial impressions had many accompanying emotions, with the athletes’ responses ranging from sometimes loving it, to sometimes hating it, from amazement to frustration, and everything in between. There were parts of the experience where the cultural distance was significant, both on the football field and away from the football field, in the tasks and routine of everyday life. Ultimately though, they all worked through those challenges, negotiating the differences they observed and, where necessary, adjusting their behaviour to better suit what was they had observed as contextually appropriate or ‘good’. They accrued strategies to help deal with what they were facing, and strategies helped them to first be, become, and then belong in their new environments. This, in turn, facilitated a space for them to experience personal growth, development, and success, the subject of chapter six.

Chapter Six: Personal Development – Growing as an Individual

Introduction

As stated early on in this thesis, my football experiences overseas changed my life. It opened my eyes, expanded my horizons and introduced me to a variety of cultures, which encouraged me to explore anthropology in an academic sense. It steered me, literally, towards this research project. I am a different person, with a different outlook on the world around me and a different understanding of my own culture and identity. But how does one understand that? How can that be expressed, both for myself and for others? The change that occurs in a person – that shift from who they perceived themselves to be at the beginning of an experience, to the person they are at the end of that experience, has not only been a theme of this research, it has been the single unifying feature amongst all the participants, including myself. This chapter focuses on that personal growth, and accompanying notions of success, as described by my participants.

But what is culture? What is identity? Kidd and Teagle (2012) describe culture as the way of life of a group of people, and this includes the customs, attitudes, beliefs, traditions, and rituals of a society. If culture is how we behave as a member of a group, then the word 'identity' relates to how we think about ourselves as people, how we think about other people around us, and what we might imagine others think of us (Kidd & Teagle, 2012). One of the emergent themes of this research has been this sense of personal growth and a change in identity that occurred for these women. They were fundamentally affected by their experience, and this chapter discusses those effects in depth.

Skeggs (2004) discusses how the self can be perceived as a project to be worked upon, accruing its value over space and time to become "the reflexive self". The reflexive self is a self that is produced through the technique of biography and the ability to understand and reflect upon the risks that surround oneself (Skeggs, 2004). Individuals may be unable to escape the structured forces surrounding them, but

they can decide which forces to act on and which to ignore, to produce some sense of coherence (Skeggs, 2004). The same concept can be applied to these athletes to help explain how the participants not only observed and reflected, but also how they acted and extended themselves to operate in their new homes and teams (that is, their new social worlds). In the process of learning to be, become, and belong, as discussed in the previous chapter, the women accrued new strategies to better operate in their new social worlds, and thus created a space where they were affected fundamentally in their being.

The notion of the "accumulation of being" was proposed by Noble (2004), as an extension to Baruch Spinoza's philosophy on how an individual strives to persevere in its "being", endeavouring in this way to achieve a greater understanding of the world, to control our passions and to ensure one lives securely and healthily (Noble, 2004). Noble (2004) furthers this philosophy and its link between past and future action, saying that it propels an *accumulation of being* as a process of augmentation, that preserves one's being, and, also increases one's ability to function. Through this process, we develop our capacities as human beings, which are the bases for our individuality and sociality, enabling our recognition by others (Noble, 2004). For the women in my research, they were striving both personally and professionally to live a successful and "recognised" life in another country and another team. To achieve this, they had to combine what they knew and were capable of with, what they were observing and learning in their new countries and with their new teams.

Huot and Rudman's study on the performances and places of identity in the process of migration (in the field of occupational science) states that both occupation and place are recognised as having reciprocal relationships to identity, in that each can be drawn upon to develop who one is (Huot & Rudman, 2010). Combining elements of Huot and Rudman, Noble, and Bourdieu's habitus, I extend Noble's concept of the accumulation of being to combine place, occupation, practice, and identity as the contributors to the personal development of these women.

Discussing how much they felt they had changed, in terms of the effects of the experience on their growth as an individual, was the part of each interview where the conversation with my participants was particularly rich. It was consistently the area in

which I felt there was a mutual understanding between myself and the participant of the wider impact of the experience. I was either nodding along or feeding back into the conversation with my own thoughts or interpretations of similar circumstances or emotions. I could empathise with my participants, genuinely probe and discuss various aspects because of a shared recognition of how significant the impact of experiences such as these could be on how one sees themselves in the world. Playing professional football in Japan or South Korea is such a unique opportunity that only a few may experience in their sporting career and I felt a sense of fellowship with my participants, despite not knowing some of them prior to the interviews. In turn, they questioned me on some of my own thoughts and experiences about different aspects of my experience. Through the interview, we were each able to reflect, consider, and assess our time overseas as people who had experienced something exceptional, that went beyond notions of success on the football field.

In this chapter, I will discuss the sense of accomplishment the athletes felt, and the rewards they believed they reaped as individuals from their experiences that led to a perceived positive change in their social being. Exploring their words and descriptors makes visible some of the unique aspects of their situations and environments that created a space for change to occur. This includes considerations of any hardships they faced, and the way in which they not only adapted but accrued and adopted skills to overcome those hardships, and how this shaped their perceptions of success.

In concluding the chapter, I come back to the theoretical insights of Bourdieu to help to understand and make sense of these findings. The concept of habitus can be extended to encompass the internalisation of the environments these women found themselves in. Using habitus in this way, alongside the experiences of my participants, helps illustrate why accumulating being is such a major feature of the experience of playing sport in unfamiliar and culturally distant settings.

Adapting to the World Around the Athlete

As mentioned earlier, Dana lived with her new team in a dormitory situation, not only living together and but eating every meal together, in addition to training and playing together. Even though she was with her team around the clock, the language barrier prevented Dana from communicating with her teammates or with management. She was advised, initially, that there would be an interpreter, but one never appeared. Dana was frank about this situation, stating that"

> *I kind of just got on with it. I had never really got the chance to be alone* [before her time overseas]*, to kind of have to fend for myself and do my own thing.*

The environment was very foreign for Dana, and produced in her a kind of tenacity and resolve to just get on with it. She had signed a contract and made the commitment to be there, and she was determined to see that through.

While it was not easy, it gave her an opportunity to spend time just simply being alone, gaining a sense of independence. Dana had clear football-related motivations for going overseas, as touched on in chapter four, but she had also reflected on how her isolation created opportunity for growth in other areas. Rather than lamenting those challenging circumstances, she was grateful, stating that:

> *I'm glad I got to do it. Because at least now I know how far I can push my body, and how much I can cope with – like being alone, and not having anyone there and having to be independent. So, it was a good learning curve*.

Claire also lived in a housing complex with her entire team, but had more freedom of movement and the services of a translator. In the same way as Dana, she stated that simply by having had this experience, as difficult as it was at times, she had gained confidence about what she could accomplish.

> *It's so hard to explain but I feel like I know myself a lot better. I feel like I can accomplish anything. It was one of the hardest experiences of my life and the fact that I've accomplished that, I feel like I could honestly do anything. In that sense, I've definitely changed. I've grown as a player and a person*.

Both women who were in South Korea felt a shifting sense of self from what they refer to as "getting through the experience", and there was a real sense of

achievement from this. Granskog discussed how participation in sports provided herself, and the other three collaborators in her ethnographic study on participation in multi-sports, with the opportunity to “find themselves, to become more integrated, whole and empowered as individuals” (Granskog, 2003, p. 51). Claire felt similarly empowered, that she could now “honestly do anything”. The context for Granskog’s study was different to Claire and Dana’s situation, but nonetheless living in a foreign country laid a platform for them to change and grow as individuals, not just as athletes.

Managing Language - From a Barrier to an Opportunity

Challenges in communication were identified by all participants as difficult, but also seen as contributing to their personal growth and development. The inability to communicate effectively through shared language meant the athletes had to find other ways of communicating, or to simply let go of the need to understand everything explicitly. Time was therefore spent paying more attention to body language, communicating through charades, or just figuring things out by using initiative. This became liberating for some, Jane especially, as I describe next.

Prior to her experience in Japan, Jane said that she had “a bit of an obsession” with being fully aware of what was taking place around her, as touched on in the previous chapter. She needed to know, for example, if and how she was influencing what was occurring around her in terms of tactics and team structure, particularly relating to the team’s tactics for games. Confronted with the language barrier forced her to let go of that fixation:

> *I think it actually sort of helped, because before maybe I had a bit of an obsession of really making sure I understood what was happening fully, whereas after experiencing that* [the language barrier]*, I realized that you can use a bit of your own initiative or play and still get the job done without understanding everything*.

Rather than being frustrated by her inability to understand, Jane embraced a new strategy, one where she used more of her own initiative to fulfil her role on the team and on the field.

In South Korea, Claire also felt that she grew as a person because of the difficulties she encountered with the language barrier. Overcoming this challenge made her feel intelligent in a way she was not used to:

> *Even with the language barrier, I've learnt other ways of communicating. I feel even more intelligent, and I've never felt intelligent in my life! I don't know, I really feel like I've accomplished so much and that's changed me. My confidence is booming*.

Considering how Claire felt prior to embarking on her overseas contract – struggling financially, unsure about her future in the sport and at a crossroads personally and professionally, it must have been very satisfying to have gained such confidence on and off the field. Both Jane and Claire turned what could have been obstacles into opportunities to learn and grow. Their experiences were transformative, as they accrued strategies to cope with challenges the language barrier presented them.

Adopting Culture and The Reflexive Self

As well as language being a factor in cultural distance, so too was the difference in cultural norms and attitudes in their new countries and social environments. As proposed by Laberge and Kay (2002), habitus considers both the embodiment of our social location and the internalised system of schemes of dispositions, perceptions and appreciations. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the way in which the participants internalised their new environments and explore how this affected their behaviour, and thus, the outcomes of this behaviour on their changing sense of self (Laberge & Kay, 2002).

For Amanda, who had left America to play in Japan, there was a genuine regard for the attitudes she had noticed in her teammates and in wider Japanese society, as mentioned previously in chapter five. This reflective comparison with her home culture was evident throughout her interview. Her motivations, and perceptions of success, changed from individually-centric perceptions of success to a more team-focused approach to performance and achievements. As well as this adoption of a different attitude, she found that her exposure to Japanese culture changed her fundamentally in other ways too. Amanda commented that:

> *Japan has definitely had a big effect on me. I'll never forget it, I'll never forget Japan. What it's made me, and the friends I've had here*.

In fact, so profound was the change she felt, she got a tattoo, たべ の じんせい (tabe no jinsei,) written in Japanese script meaning "travelling is my life", to symbolise how transformative she felt the experience has been:

> *I feel as far as being here I've done a lot of changing, I've grown up a lot since I've been here. And I can tell that, even just as far as my maturity level and how I handle myself, how I carry myself. I'm always going to be spunky and wild and crazy but… it's become a little bit more even keeled. And I feel like just becoming a nicer person, caring about people and how they're doing, asking questions… you know just caring about people. I feel like I've definitely changed. I mean I've got it tattooed on me!*

Amanda, who had been in Japan for over two years at this point, said Japan had calmed her, and engendered in her a sense of team, society, and selflessness that was not part of her identity prior to the experience. Describing herself previously as being "based off of emotion", the balance that she had learned from being in Japan had helped her become a more "even-keeled" individual. There was a change in her, from the person she was prior to her experience to the person she became through her experience. Rather than losing who she was completely, she saw parts of Japanese culture that she appreciated, and she adopted and adapted them to her own personality to develop into, in her own words, "a better person".

Other participants touched on how features of the culture they were immersed in influenced their personality, but none were as profound as what Amanda had described. To inscribe her body with a permanent reminder of the significant change she felt within her is evidence of this, as well as the way in which she spoke so strongly about how the culture in Japan had affected her. Her example demonstrated to me that I was not unique in how reflective and philosophical I had been about my experiences. That awareness and adjustment that I had felt from living and experiencing different places and contexts had also taken place for Amanda, and demonstrates that an individual will recognize and accumulate ways of being that can fuse meaningfully into one's very nature.

A central idea in Bourdieu's work is the contention that habitus develops in response to a field (Thorpe, 2009). Bourdieu (1990) describes 'field' as the practical world that an individual inhabits; the conditions of existence that organize and produce individual and collective practices. For Amanda and the other participants, their field was the practical world of their new football teams, but conditions of existence were also produced by their host country's culture and way of life. The reflexive awareness that Amanda described going through aligns with Bourdieu's view on reflexive awareness – that it arises from the negotiation of differences by individuals in their movement within, and across, fields of social action (Thorpe, 2009). The reflexive possibilities for these women were numerous because of the cultural distance created by language, ethnicity, and societal standards and values. This disruption to what they knew challenged their social identities, performance identities, and their routines, creating an opportunity in which they could add to their sense of self, accruing strategies through reflexivity and renegotiations of habits. Those renegotiated habits revolved around food practices, social relations, and play and practice on the field, for example.

Accumulating Being

All the participants concluded that the personal development they felt off the field played a part in their perception of the success of their time overseas. For most of the athletes, this was a positive but unanticipated result of the experience, rather than something they explicitly set out to attain. However, Kate had the specific goal of "personal growth" that she wanted to achieve from her time in Japan. Like Dana, she was grateful for the opportunity to work on different facets of herself, even when aspects of her professional experience on the field were frustrating:

> *I think soccer-wise it wasn't exactly what I thought I was getting… I think I knew it was going to be challenging and I wanted it to be a challenge soccer-wise, and it was. For one, disagreeing with the coach on games and practices was really frustrating for me. And physically I feel like I burned out really quickly because I'm not used to this style of play and this level – not level, I guess I shouldn't say – but just the intensity of trainings every single day.*

As her primary goal was personal growth, she was not judging her experience on football alone and so did not feel as if those frustrations made her experience negative. She put her frustrations with football to one side, and focused more on the other aspects experience, away from the football field. Therefore, achieving that growth and development as a person constituted as success for Kate.

Skeggs (2004) discusses this concept of the self as a project, one that can be worked upon over time and through reflection, which echoes how Kate wanted to use this experience to extend herself beyond where she was as an individual. Kate believed that she could use the experience to grow, which Skeggs describes as the "formation of personhood generates the possibility of a self that can conceive of a future in which value can be realised" (Skeggs, 2004, p. 77). By having an explicit desire to have an experience in which she could grow as a person, Kate engages in a formation of personhood that allows her to treat herself as a project to be worked upon, and she does this over the space and time of her professional football experience in Japan (Skeggs, 2004).

Coming straight out of the college (university) system in America, Kate discussed how during college she had been constantly comparing herself to others, be it classmates or teammates (in her college team), or both. However, by coming to Japan she remarked that:

> *I would say that probably one of the biggest things that this experience has taught me is not to compare myself to others.*

She explained that being in Japan meant she wasn't confronted by, and therefore didn't think about, what her classmates back home were doing – which was something that had made her anxious in the past. Being unable to make those comparisons meant she could spend more time thinking about her own life and what makes her happy. She also had a realisation of how fortunate she was to be having such a unique experience, and hence how exceptional she was:

> *I think that this experience has provided value to me moving on into the next stage of my life, even though it's not in soccer, because I think… I'm way more marketable as a person because of this experience as well. Which is weird! And that wasn't important to me really - long term my individual growth was, but I think I've also recognized how cool people think it is that I'm a*

woman athlete playing abroad. And while I'm not making tons of money and I'm not like, famous in Japan, but I think even just talking to people in the States, applying to jobs and hopefully down the road applying to graduate school, I think that I'm now extremely marketable because I've had this very unique experience - unfortunately, because women professional athletes are not common, and people don't talk to them every day. And I thought that people would think it's cool and I thought that that might help by coming here, but I never realized the extent of it.

Kate realised, upon reflection, that the benefit of the experience could extend into other parts of her life, and become beneficial in her life beyond her football career. While she was not explicitly aiming to become "extremely marketable", she has recognised that the benefits of the experience could manifest itself in many ways. The reflexive exercise of perceiving oneself as a project has helped her to realise this.

Kate also described having a breakthrough in terms of her confidence and independence, acquired from spending time away from home in a foreign country. She said it gave her a sense of belief in herself and willingness to take more risks, explaining that:

I've lived on my own now for five months and have been super uncomfortable in certain situations with communication, culture and things like that, and have really been pushed in that area. I think that's probably one of the most valuable things that I've taken from this experience. I feel comfortable being alone which, I think as a woman, is a really cool thing, because not everybody does. And I feel like I'm just more willing to take risks and take on more adventures by myself, which is awesome.

She also told a story about a weekend that she had free during the season in Japan, where she wasn't selected in the travelling squad for a game. This gave her a weekend of spare time, so she spontaneously decided to go to Hong Kong! She laughed as she recalled this, saying that doing so was something she would never have done in her college years. She compared it directly to a time when she had to spend 24 hours alone in Seattle during her winter break as a senior. She remembered being "scared out of my mind" because she was all alone in a foreign city. Fast-forward to a year later, and she is ready not only to embrace being alone in

foreign cities, but foreign countries as well. To have acquired that confidence to take on new challenges and experiences she would otherwise have shied away from was a huge positive Kate took from her experience in Japan.

I believe that this extends Bourdieu's concept of habitus to his theory of "illusio". Bourdieu's concept of illusio denotes the mode in which the social subject (Kate, in this case) is affected by the social (being alone in a foreign country and having to rely on herself more) and becomes driven by something (football and a desire to learn about a new culture) that gives their life meaning (Hage, 2013). Illusio is therefore always at the root of the coevolution of bodily capacities and the imperatives of a specific social space (Hage, 2013). The coevolution of Kate's confidence and independence occurred from the way in which she had reflected on herself in a challenging and differing reality, and reorientated herself to a new way of being as she met and overcame this challenge (Hage, 2013). Becoming a part of this new social field, with the professional club team in Japan, meant that some of her "pre-social" field characteristics, such as a tendency to compare herself to others, were transformed within that field into new dispositions. Kate became more disposed towards independence and confidence, and less disposed towards comparing herself with others, which had been a source of anxiety for her.

Perceptions of Success

As identified in the literature review, success and the 'ingredients' that contribute to it is a commonly discussed topic in sports studies. In team sports, such as football, it is the efficacy and cohesion that a team can create that will often lead to successful outcomes on the sports field. Members of a team rely on each other to complete a shared task and to achieve collective outcomes (Bruner et al., 2015). The literature in this area also reveals that a high level of team confidence can be grown from the display of prowess and ability, where an individual can accrue symbolic capital in the eyes of the other group members' (Thorpe, 2009).

The perceptions of success that the participants conveyed throughout the interviews were varied. As I discussed earlier, football is a measurable sport where success and failure can be determined in very clear and largely indisputable ways, such as

winning and losing via goals scored and conceded. What became interesting throughout the interviews was while, empirically, the success of each of the participants seemed to vary greatly, all the participants unanimously declared the experience to have been a success. For example, one participants' club lost quite badly in most matches, and another's team was nearing relegation to a lower division, while other participants' clubs were striving for championships. There were personal accolades for some players as well, such as one being voted the team MVP, and another becoming her league's highest goal-scorer. Despite the range of outcomes, all athletes believed they had achieved success.

Claire, who finished her season as the league's highest goal-scorer, accrued "symbolic capital" in the eyes of her team, as by scoring so many goals for her team she had sufficiently demonstrated her abilities. Shared outcomes were then possible based on the contribution that Claire provided throughout the season. In chapter five, I highlighted the immediate impact Claire made by scoring the winning goal in the opening game of the season. She commented that:

> *After that point* [the opening game]*, the respect just grew and grew and as I kept scoring more goals and doing my job, and doing exactly what they wanted me there for. It just built this massive bond.*

What was also revealing about Claire's experience is that it seemed to illuminate that mutual trust and respect built through performance can additionally build relationships and connections, whilst simultaneously developing a sense of belonging. It built, quite literally, a performance identity for Claire. She also shared that:

> *… they* [her new team management] *definitely made it clear that they just wanted goals, even throughout the season. The girls all knew how to say goal! So whenever they would speak to me it was "ok three goals!" "two goals this week!" And if I wasn't playing they'd be like "aw, you no play, we no win!" I was like "oh shit". They relied on me a lot, which was kind of daunting but it was also like – that boosted my confidence, they really believed in me.*

Claire embraced the pressure that was placed upon her, and in return delivered the goals that her team desired – impressively contributing to the group collective efficacy, and in return, cementing her value and importance to the team, to the point

where they believed that they were not going to be successful without her. She also accepted the pressure and interpreted it in a way that “boosted” her performance. This greatly contributed to the feelings of success and satisfaction Claire felt. She believed she had earnt respect and created meaningful friendships, and spoke about the link between success in one area to success in the other.

Thorpe (2009) discusses the concept of symbolic capital in her investigation of Bourdieu, feminism, and female physical culture. Looking specifically at female snowboarders, she discusses that sportswomen accrue symbolic capital (or prestige) by showcasing their abilities and commitment (Thorpe, 2009). Showcasing one’s distinction, earning respect through physical prowess, skill, aggression, or courage can lead to the conversion of symbolic capital into economic capital (Thorpe, 2009). Claire received clear validation that what she was doing was beneficial to the team, and the respect and prestige she was building in turn became beneficial for her. As a result, she has been contracted to return to her team, showing that conversion of her symbolic capital and economic capital.

As mentioned in previous chapters, Claire often spoke of the connection she built with her teammates, the result of both her on field performances, and her open-mindedness and attitude off the field. She said there was a relationship between her happiness on the field and her happiness off the field, remarking that “once you build that connection with your teammates… you’re going to work for each other”. This demonstrates that a type of social capital was also growing alongside the symbolic capital she was accruing. Social capital represents the individual’s entirety of social relations they can draw on in their career, whereas symbolic capital is related to recognition, as acknowledged by the peer group in the individual’s career (Walther, 2015). Claire demonstrates the synchronous nature of this accrual of social and symbolic capital, leading to economic capital. All these aspects were interwoven not only into her success during the season past, but in how they led to further opportunities in her football career with her club.

Claire’s experience, her perception of success and how she believed she achieved it, demonstrates the relationship between the development of different types of capital. However, Claire’s perception of success was not shared by some of the

other participants. Jane was in an environment in which success, by those same measurements, was more difficult to come by.

Jane's situation was different from the other participants, as she was not playing in the highest division for women's football in Japan. She was comfortable with this at the time, but did say:

> *I think looking back at the time I chose to go, I didn't mind my team being in the second division. But after being in it for a little while, I kind of realized that the team wasn't very good and sometimes the quality was bad. The quality of coaching and the conditions that we played under were quite frustrating. We trained on a synthetic field that didn't have lights, in the dark, most of the time.*

However, even though the conditions were not conducive to having an elite football experience in terms of facilities, coaching, or training, Jane did go on to say that:

> *Looking back at it now I think it was really successful. I got to experience a different culture, and the challenges and the good things associated with it. I got to experience everything. A different football style, and learning how they do things, I think that was really interesting too. While sometimes it was tough, I still think it was really good. I would class it as a success overall.*

Despite the difficult conditions and circumstances, such not meeting her team's ambitions of promotion, and not reaching the coaches expectation of 30 or more goals in the season, Jane still classed her experience as a success. By combining the football experience with the opportunity to learn about another culture and life in a foreign country, she could measure and perceive success across more than just one part of the experience.

Kate was also clear about the fact that while the football didn't provide total satisfaction, because that wasn't her only motivation, she was able to class the overall experience as a success. She discussed that:

> *The soccer aspect of it wasn't ideal, which is another reason that I'm glad I didn't just stay in the States, because if that soccer experience wasn't what I wanted then I wouldn't be getting anything else really out of it. Whereas here, I feel like, okay well I decided to play professional soccer and it wasn't the*

> *perfect professional experience for me, but I had this wonderful cultural experience that 100% outweighs any negatives that came from the soccer.*

This shows that being focused on things outside of football helped her maximise the experience. She, like Jane, had desired outcomes that were experiential. Therefore, she judged her personal success and satisfaction on more than just what the football part of the experience had to offer.

Discussion

As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, I had not anticipated personal growth and the accumulation of being to be such major features of the interviews, and themes of this thesis. I anticipated there might be changes in the participants, but I had anticipated those changes to centre on footballing ability, or the adoption of a second language, for example. I had not anticipated hearing about such profound changes and development in their personal being from every participant.

What was apparent as I read through the interviews was how this was more than just a football or an overseas experience. The football team provided a structure which made the athletes confront various features of the host culture, and some of those aspects had a meaningful impact on the women. It was the combination of place, occupation, practice, and identity that contributed to accumulating being, in a similar manner as that described by Noble. All those attributes were in place for these women, with the conditions of the experience being more intense than what they would have been had the cultural distance not been as significant. Claire summed it up well, saying:

> *It was one of the scariest things, but one of the greatest things I've said yes to… five years ago, even last year, I would never have thought I would go to South Korea – like, it was insane. But it was honestly, probably, the greatest experience that I've ever had.*

Granskog's (2003) ethnography of female tri and du-athletes highlighted the personal empowerment attained as an outcome of the athlete's participation in sport. This phenomenon was echoed in my research. Hage (2002) reaffirms this, saying that one can feel "joy" through the experience of growth from one state of being to

the next. My participants did not use “joy” as a descriptor, but did express feeling satisfaction, pride, confidence, and happiness with the change they felt within themselves. As these women met, mitigated, and overcame the challenges supplied by their experiences, they reached higher stages in their capacities to act, associate with others, and deploy themselves in and with their environments, leading to personal growth (Hage, 2002).

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated that success for the individual is complex, with varying perceptions that are subjective and personal, in much the same way that motivations and expectations are, as discussed in chapter four. Whether there is an explicit expectation or desire to grow as a person through the experience prior to the undertaking, such as Kate and Jane expressed; or whether one’s sense of self grew simply through the experience of “life on the ground” in a different cultural context, such as Dana and Claire experienced; or a profound sense of change and growth was realised and attained through reflection, as Amanda and I experienced, ‘success’ was felt by all. Success, in the professional football experience, is complex and nuanced, especially for women who take their football careers into culturally distant environments. In the concluding chapter of this thesis, I will bring together all the findings and themes from this research, reflecting on the findings of this study in the context of existing literature on anthropology and sport.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

The objective of this research was to explore the way in which cultural distance in a professional sports environment can shape, influence, and effect the identity of a professional female footballer, and how that individual may perceive success. I began this research wanting to give the participants an opportunity to tell the stories of their experiences in their own words. I wanted to give visibility to the entirety of their overseas experiences, not limited to just what happened on the sporting field.

I was well situated to generate this platform for my participants. My insider status as a professional female footballer provided the opportunity in the interviews to discuss aspects of the experience that would otherwise perhaps be difficult to explain or raise with an outsider. Rapport was easy to develop, and the semi-structured interview technique enabled rich and meaningful qualitative data to be gathered. From this data, a variety of themes and subthemes emerged, which became the significant findings of this research. Those themes were: motivations and expectations; “life on the ground”; and personal growth and perceptions of success. These themes created a story of the athlete’s experiences, giving insight into the how the players felt and their attitudes coming into the new host country, their reflections on settling in and playing and living in a foreign environment, and their sense of personal growth as they reflected on what they had encountered, both as a player and as a person.

As mentioned earlier in this thesis there is a gap in academic literature concerning qualitative research into women’s professional sports, and in sports anthropology generally. Much of the academic work focussing on female athletes has given a gendered analysis, discussing female sporting experiences in relation to subjects such as male hegemony, sexuality, and image stereotypes of female athletes in the media and in society. Such studies are important, but this research differs in the sense that it is exploring a different dimension of women playing professional sport. The discussions of the experiences of the women in this anthropological research were guided by a set of open-ended questions that sought to investigate and understand playing and living in a foreign country for professional female footballers.

This thesis explored how the women lived and managed in the culturally distant environments they had negotiated to work in, emphasising the strategies they deemed necessary to learn how to be, how to become, and how to belong, and the sense they made of their time overseas.

Findings: A New Playing Field

Having identified the three key themes that emerged from the research, those of motivations and expectations, “life on the ground”, and personal growth and success, it became clear that the experience of playing professional football in a culturally distant environment is multifaceted. It is difficult to accurately prepare for and predict what the experience will be like, as the environment around the athlete is previously unknown, and the athlete’s response to that is connected to how that person views themselves, and the world around them. There are new living arrangements to adjust to, different food practices, and language barriers; but the players must also adapt to foreign styles of coaching and training, different hierarchal structures within the team, and approaches to personal feedback and development for players at an individual level. My research has found that one’s capacity to act, or habitus, is challenged as the players must begin to comply and regulate themselves against the structures in place around them. This “regulation” takes place through observation, and application of those observations, as the individual begins to navigate and negotiate football, and life, in their new cultural and social context.

Lebra (1976) identifies typical patterns of behaviour, such as collectivism, conformity, and self-restraint in Japanese people, and the participants in Japan identified such traits within the social environments of their teams, and made cross-cultural comparisons. They were then able to apply those learnings as strategies, as a part of their ‘performance identity’. However, all the women in this research had to literally ‘do’ their identity every day, through playing and demonstrating their football ability. The strategies they acquired assisted them to do so, such as reading body language when there was no shared language, taking ownership of one’s own development as a player, or embracing new philosophies with regards to teamwork. These strategies also helped the participants to better integrate into and feel *belonging* within those environments. Additionally, some players felt a meaningful change within themselves

as they became aware of the traits of the host community that had been personally adopted by themselves as a part of their own identity. So meaningfully, in one instance, that the player marked how significant being in Japan was with a tattoo.

The first of the findings chapters identified that an athlete's motivations for "packing their boots" and heading overseas are personal and subjective. I concur with Filho et al. (2014), who proposed in their study (on high-performing football teams) that skilled athletes perceive their individual contributions to the team in a highly idiosyncratic manner, and that qualitative methods should be used to measure those self-perceptions and experiences. The analysis of qualitative interviews with female footballers has demonstrated that motivations go beyond what one might want to achieve on the football field, and could be as personal as wanting a change because of a family bereavement, desiring a cultural experience and using sport as a vehicle to find this, to wanting to ease financial burdens and stress that comes from struggling to balance a football career with another job needed to pay the bills. Understanding the varied reasons of why footballers might accept playing contracts in other countries is important in dispelling assumptions about the motives of athletes who decide to take their careers in diverse directions. It is not enough to assume all athletes are driven purely by wanting success on the field, or wanting to improve as players. Appreciating the multiple reasons why women might seek and engage in professional opportunities can assist stakeholders in sport comprehend the characteristics and attitudes of their athletes better. This, in turn, may help predict or assist performance.

The second thematic chapter extended on the findings from the previous thematic chapter, showing again how personal and subjective athlete experiences can be. "Life on the ground" was shown to be challenging at times for these women, as they explained how they managed those first impressions of their new homes, how they interpreted what was taking place around them, and how they began to settle into a lifestyle that had seemed so extraordinarily unfamiliar when they first arrived. The cultural distance was felt both on the football field, as they integrated into their new teams; and off the football field, as the challenges and differences extended into what had otherwise been taken-for-granted easy activities back home, such as supermarket shopping trips. Huot and Rudman (2010) discuss how one might 'do

identity' when in a new place, and the way in which occupation (in this case, playing football) plays a role in how one might 'perform' their identity to convey understanding. The athletes were performing through 'doing', or identity performance, in order to be, become, and belong (Huot & Rudman, 2010). For example, Amanda fully embraced Japanese food practices, and simply eating what her teammates were eating helped her cultural integration but also helped her to lose weight and become generally healthier. Another example was from Claire, who felt that all her efforts to spend time and connect with her teammates off the field contributed to team cohesion and belonging on the field. Bolin and Granskog's (2012) study reaffirms those findings, discussing how full participation in athletic activity ushers in a new understanding of self-identification through the process of learning to 'be' or 'become' part of a sport subculture, such as a football team.

The final findings chapter brought the effects of the experience together to illustrate how success is as multifaceted as the other emergent themes have been. With the context and understanding provided by the athletes in the previous chapters, the discussion about how the impact of an experience such as playing football in a culturally distant environment could take place. All the women, unanimously, deemed their experience to be a success, even when they did not experience "on the field" achievements as defined by traditional metrics of success in sport. For all the women, success was measured in what they believed they had accomplished as individuals. For some, that was a profound sense of independence and confidence, an "I feel like I could do anything" attitude that grew from living life in such a different cultural context, and pushing one's boundaries. Some women had specified personal growth and the opportunity to "work on myself" down as desired outcomes they wished to achieve, and were accepting and tolerant of whatever they experienced on the football field as a result. Others simply absorbed what was taking place around them, fully adopting food practices, cultural practices, and societal norms to thus experience a profound change within themselves "for the better". The development of these women as individuals was the overwhelming finding of this research, and aligns with how much of an impact I felt my own professional football career overseas has affected me. As Hage described in his discussion on "joy", these women met, mitigated, and overcame the challenges provided by their experiences, and in doing so they reached increased their capacities to act, associate with others,

and deploy themselves in and with their environments, leading to personal growth as success (Hage, 2002).

This research has been informed by writings in sports anthropology, alongside the ethnographic research done by anthropologists such as Bolin and Granskog (2012). Granskog's (2003) ethnography on triathlon and duathlon athletes demonstrated that the influence of an athletic experience can be measured as much on the development of identity as it can be on the development of one's athletic ability, a theory supported by the findings in this thesis. Participation in the unique experience of playing professional football in South Korea or Japan (as the significantly culturally distant environments) has provided professional female footballers (myself and my five participants) with the opportunity to grow as individuals. Despite the very different cultural environments between South Korea and Japan, the participants demonstrated much in common in their responses. We all felt 'success' because of this personal development, which extends the notion of success beyond what has been traditionally defined in sports studies such as Johnson et al's. (2013) investigation of All Blacks team culture and success.

The application of studies done in areas such as Huot and Rudman's (2010) work on 'performance identity' in occupational science, and Noble's (2004) research into material culture in the home and 'accumulating being', has helped inform the research by providing a way of understanding personal growth as the accumulation of being. I extend both those concepts into a sporting context, and their utilisation in this field contributes to an understanding of the personal and subjective views of success held by athletes, and the process by which an athlete becomes able to operate effectively in a new team environment.

The application of Bourdieu and his concept of habitus has also greatly contributed to the interpretation of the findings of this research, by assisting in the understanding how the capacities a player possesses will influence their dispositions and behaviour in new social fields. The work done by Thorpe (2009), which framed habitus in sports and female physical culture, demonstrated that where one is located, combined with the validation of what one is doing in that location, shapes habitus and can also allow a space for reflexive awareness to take place as one moves across and within

different social environments. This concept is present in the experiences of my participants, as they moved into, and the within, their new social environments and validated their behaviour on their understanding of themselves, and their observations and interpretations of what was taking place around them.

Skeggs (2004) also applies Bourdieu, and her findings identify how a person can perceive the self as a project to be worked upon, another concept supported by the experiences of my participants. There have been many applications of Bourdieu's concept of habitus to sport and physical activity, and this research adds to that body of literature. The application of the concept of habitus places my anthropological research into women playing professional football alongside sociological and ethnographic work done on female sporting activities. It also extends on work already done on migration in women's football, such as Botelho and Agergaard's (2011) study, exploring in richer detail the motivations for moving to another country to pursue professional football.

Potential Applications of Research Findings

This research has the potential to contribute to wider fields of sports management and coaching in several ways, particularly for those who are responsible for recruiting and integrating athletes into professional sporting environments. One of the applications is that it can inform clubs, coaches, and managers about how host culture and environment can affect an athlete. An understanding of this, based on the athlete's habitus, can assist them as they form the structures that will support the team environment – from accommodation, to methods of communication, to cultural programmes or support aimed at assisting in integration. It can also help other stakeholders in the sport, such as national sporting organisations, player associations and unions, as well as personal development managers and league coordinators, to better understand what the athlete may go through away from the sports field and training environment. The transformative change that takes place is also something that can be communicated to young and aspiring pre-elite athletes, to help better prepare them for the journey ahead – particularly when heading overseas to new foreign countries and culturally distant environments.

If stakeholders in professional sport had an awareness of the effects on their athletes, potential barriers to integration might be mitigated through a more holistic understanding of athletes' perspectives and their personal journey. Similarly, the athlete coming into the environment might better prepare themselves for what they could face and experience, not only externally in terms of immediate environment and "structuring structures", but what may occur and shift internally for them in terms of their personal being. It may also be useful for athletes who are actively seeking more of a 'life experience' from their sporting opportunities. For the individual, this research may help them better understand and prepare themselves for an experience that will not only affect their sporting ability, in terms of their improvement as a player, but for an experience that can contribute to their development as a person. All the participants agreed that the benefit of the experience has been found in their growth as individuals. If an athlete comes into an experience fully aware of the potential there is in the opportunity to grow and accumulate being as an individual, they may be able to extract even more from the experience. There is also value in the construction of transferrable skills, assisting players as they transition out of sport and into other fields where empathy, understanding and experience in working in diverse cultural environments is highly regarded.

Opportunities for Future Research

An informative and logical extension of this study would be to undertake qualitative investigation into the experiences of athletes from Asian cultures in culturally distant environments, such as the professional leagues in America, Germany, or England. This would allow for further understanding of the way in which one's culture and identity can shape performance, integration, and perceptions of success, and examine whether similar phenomena take place and if there are generalizable themes and features of the experience.

It is also worth noting that each of the participants selected for this research were athletes, as I am. There are other stakeholders in professional sport, such as administrators, coaches, managers, fans, and national governing bodies, who were not interviewed and therefore their opinions were not considered in this research. These individuals and organisations are certainly involved in the international

migration of professional athletes, and so their opinions would add valuable qualitative data to this field of research, creating a greater understanding of motivations, expectations, and perceptions of success from different standpoints.

Summary

Writing this thesis has been almost as transformative for me as my professional playing experiences had been. I am a passionate advocate for women's sports, and undertaking this research has revealed to me that my passion also lies in the personal development of athletes beyond the sporting field. As I have transitioned away from professional and international football, I have become more involved in player welfare, holistic development programs for athletes, and general advancement and advocacy of players' rights. In the conversations that I have had with organisations and individuals already involved in those areas, such as the Player Associations for both rugby and football in New Zealand, this is an area in sports that needs to be addressed more and more, as poor mental and social wellbeing is a risk amongst elite athletes in the increasingly commodified world of professional sports. Behind every athlete is a person, behind every talent is an identity, and nurturing that person and their identity should be as important as nurturing their talent.

Not only are athletes at risk as they transition out of sport, they are also at risk when they enter elite sports, as academies and organisations are known to identify athletes in their early teens. It could, and probably should, be argued that there is a "duty of care" to these athletes, so that their social and mental wellbeing is cared for in the same way that their sporting ability is. Qualitative research, such as this study, is essential in providing an interpretative lens for the experiences of athletes to highlight the salient aspects of a holistic sporting experience. Acknowledging the many dimensions of players' lives on and off the field can ensure elite sports programmes do not focus on the mechanics of the game or competition alone, and that their personal development as people is as structured as their professional development is as athletes. It may contribute to their on-field performance, or it may not. But that should not matter. Athletes, as well as organisations, should have tools at their disposal to not only deal with life as a professional sportsperson, but also to

maximise the experience and the opportunity of being a professional sportsperson. My research has shown that attention to the holistic opportunities for self-improvement can contribute to a greater sense of joy and achievement from sport and “the beautiful game”.

Appendices

Appendix A:

MAPPING SUCCESS: CULTURE AND IDENTITY IN ELITE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

Participant Information Sheet

Researcher Introduction:
My name is Sarah Gregorius, and I am a student at Massey University, New Zealand, undertaking a Master's Degree in Social Anthropology. The following research is in partial requirement for achieving this qualification.

Project Summary:
I am carrying out research on the globalization of women's football, and the effect that this is having on player identity and perceived success through the eyes of the athlete. I wish to study athletes who are playing football abroad, in environments where there is significant, perceived cultural distance between the host team and the arriving international player. I seek to discover the role personal identity plays in the assimilation and "success" of the athlete with their host team.

Invitation of Participation:
I would like to invite you to participate in this research with me. My research will involve an approximately 90-minute interview conducted either over Skype or, if possible, in person. The interview will be semi-structured, with the questions based around some common themes. Participants will be encouraged to share whatever further they believe could be relevant to the experience. I may request a follow-up interview.

Up to seven other participants will be selected. Ideally, the conversation will take place while the participant is still "under contract", i.e. in the host country of their experience.

Interviews will be voice-recorded and transcribed by me.

Data Management:
- All voice-recorded interviews will be transcribed for data analysis.
- All recordings and associated transcriptions will be kept strictly private and confidential in a secure, password protected laptop.
- I will do my best to protect your privacy by using pseudonyms and discussing with you the degree of your identification within the research results. This will provide you with a level of deniability should you wish.

Participant Rights:
You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:
- Decline to answer any particular question;

- Withdraw from the study at any time, until the completion of the data collection period;
- Ask any questions you may have, at any time, during this process;
- Access to any research findings and the final research report;
- Have any raw information or data destroyed at the completion of the research project;
- Request the voice-recorder to be switched off at any point during the interview process.
- An opportunity to review the transcripts of the interview will be offered. Any edits made by you within a fortnight of receiving them will be discussed and made, if required. Redacted statements will be destroyed.

Research Contacts:
If you have any questions about the research project, please do not hesitate to contact myself or my supervisors through the following channels:

SARAH GREGORIUS (student ID 12181681)
Konomiya Speranza Osaka-Takatsuki FC
Phone: +81 080 2212 8576
Email: sarah.gregorius@gmail.com

DR ROBYN ANDREWS
Senior Lecturer in Social Anthropology
Programme Coordinator;
School of People, Environment and Planning.
Massey University
Email: R.Andrews@massey.ac.nz

DR JULIANA MANSVELT
Associate Professor; Geography Programme
School of People, Environment and Planning
Massey University
Email: J.R.Mansvelt@massey.ac.nz

ETHICS APPROVAL STATEMENT
This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.
If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director (Research Ethics), email humanethics@massey.ac.nz. "

Appendix B:

INTERSECTS, TENSIONS, AND SUCCESS: MAPPING CULTURE AND IDENTITY IN ELITE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I _____ have read the Participant Information Sheet and have had the research details explained to me clearly. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions I have, and have had those questions answered clearly and to my satisfaction. I also understand that I may ask any further questions at any time.

I agree to my interview/s to be recorded, and transcribed. Yes / No

I would like to request my transcribed interview and recordings to be destroyed at the end of the research. Yes / No

I agree to participate in this study as per the conditions set out in the Participant Information Sheet. Yes / No

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C:

Interview Schedule:

IDENTITY:

When speaking to the participants, this will be more of a guided introduction to who they are, how they perceive themselves, and how (and why) they ended up playing abroad in the various environments.

Example questions:
Can you please describe yourself/provide a brief introduction about yourself?

- *Fundamentals e.g. where you are from, age etc.*
- *Socially e.g. introvert/extrovert, well-travelled, outgoing/quiet. More descriptive terms.*
- *Empirical details such as playing years, other (if any) overseas or professional experiences*

Can you please describe the process that brought you to where you are?

- *For example, were you approached, or did you approach teams yourself with a desire to play here?*
- *Who initiated contact? Was it you, the club, an agent?*
- *How did you personally arrive at the decision to sign on? What were the primary motivations?*

How would you describe how you have found this experience? What aspects struck you initially? Has this changed over time?

- *Social aspects e.g. fitting in with the team*
- *Cultural aspects e.g. negotiating a new country in itself, language, housing, finding and cooking food, friends/support.*

Have you spent more time reflecting or considering how you conduct yourself, or how it has altered the way you act, since being in this experience?

- *Use terms they used in their introduction e.g if you describe yourself as quiet, have you felt compelled to come out of your shell more?*

Has this experience changed you? Has it caused you to reflect more on your identity, and/or on your behavior?

SUCCESS:

This part of the interview is about how they believe the experience is going, if it is meeting expectations (both theirs and the organisations'), and what exactly constitutes "success".

If they have had previous professional overseas experiences, I would like to discuss with them if this experience has been significantly different (and how).

Before you left your home country, what would you have deemed "successful" in terms of the outcomes you wanted for this experience?

References

Back, L., Crabbe, T., & Solomos, J. (1999). Beyond the Racist/Hooligan Couplet: Race, Social Theory and Football Culture. *The British journal of sociology, 50*(3), 419-442.

Bernard, H. R. (2011). *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*: Rowman Altamira.

Bernard, H. R., & Ryan, G. W. (2009). *Analyzing Qualitative Data: Systematic Approaches*: SAGE publications.

Berreman, G. D., Robben, A., & Sluka, J. (2012). Behind Many Masks: Ethnography and Impression Management. *Ethnographic fieldwork: an anthropological reader*, 152-174.

Bolin, A., & Granskog, J. (2012). *Athletic Intruders: Ethnographic Research on Women, Culture, and Exercise*: SUNY Press.

Botelho, V. L., & Agergaard, S. (2011). Moving for the Love of the Game? International Migration of Female Footballers into Scandinavian Countries. *Soccer & Society, 12*(6), 806-819.

Boufoy-Bastick, B. (2004). *Auto-interviewing, Auto-ethnography and Critical Incident Methodology for Eliciting a Self-Conceptualised Worldview.* Paper presented at the Forum: Qualitative Social Research.

Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The Logic of Practice*: Stanford Univ Pr.

Bruner, M. W., Eys, M., Blair Evans, M., & Wilson, K. (2015). Interdependence and Social Identity in Youth Sport Teams. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 27*(3), 351-358.

Chelsea Football Club. (2017, n.d.). Ji So Yun. *Player Profiles.* Retrieved from http://www.chelseafc.com/teams/chelsea-ladies/player-profiles/ji-so-yun.html

Cole, C. L., Giardina, M. D., & Andrews, D. L. (2004). Michel Foucault: Studies of Power and Sport. *Sport and modern social theorists*, 207-223.

Cox, B., & Thompson, S. (2000). Multiple Bodies: Sportswomen, Soccer and Sexuality. *International review for the sociology of sport, 35*(1), 5-20.

Custer, D. (2014). Autoethnography as a Transformative Research Method. *The qualitative report, 19*(37), 1-13.

Dauphinee, E. (2010). The Ethics of Autoethnography. *Review of International Studies, 36*(3), 799-818.

Ellis, C. (2007). Telling Secrets, Revealing Lives: Relational Ethics in Research with Intimate Others. *Qualitative inquiry, 13*(1), 3-29.

European Professional Football League Association. (2016). *European Professional Football Leagues Annual Report of Activities 2015/16*. Retrieved from http://www.epfl-europeanleagues.com/files/Annual_Report_15-16(Two-Page).pdf

FIFA. (2006). *FIFA Big Count*. Retrieved from http://www.fifa.com/mm/document/fifafacts/bcoffsurv/bigcount.statspackage_7024.pdf

FIFA. (2014). *FIFA Women's Football Survey 2014*. Retrieved from https://resources.fifa.com/mm/document/footballdevelopment/women/02/52/26/49/womensfootballsurvey2014_e_english.pdf

FIFA. (2016). *FIFA 2.0: The Vision for the Future*. Retrieved from Zurich, Switzerland: http://resources.fifa.com/mm/document/affederation/generic/02/84/35/01/fifa_2.0_vision_low_neu.17102016_neutral.pdf

Filho, E., Gershgoren, L., Basevitch, I., & Tenenbaum, G. (2014). Profile of High-Performing College Soccer Teams: An Exploratory Multi-Level Analysis. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 15*(5), 559-568. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2014.05.008

Granskog, J. (2003). Just 'Tri'and 'Du'it: the variable impact of female involvement in the triathlon/duathlon sport culture. *Athletic intruders. Ethnographic research on women, culture, and exercise*, 27-52.

Grove, D. (2015). 30 Great Bill Shankly Quotes Every Liverpool FC Fan Should Read. Retrieved from https://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2015/03/bill-shankly-quotes.html

Hage, G. (2002). On the Side of Life: Joy and the Capacity of Being. *Hope: New philosophies for change*, 150-171.

Hage, G. (2013). Eavesdropping on Bourdieu's Philosophers. *Thesis Eleven, 114*(1), 76-93.

Harris, J. (2007). Doing Gender On and Off the Pitch: The World of Female Football Players. *Sociological research online, 12*(1).

Hendry, J. (2008). *An Introduction to Social Anthropology: Sharing our Worlds*: NYU Press.

Huot, S., & Rudman, D. L. (2010). The Performances and Places of Identity: Conceptualizing Intersections of Occupation, Identity and Place in the Process of Migration. *Journal of Occupational Science, 17*(2), 68-77. doi:10.1080/14427591.2010.9686677

Johnson, T., Martin, A. J., Palmer, F. R., Watson, G., & Ramsey, P. L. (2013). Artefacts and the All Blacks: Rites, Rituals, Symbols and Stories. *Sporting Traditions, 30*(1), 43.

KantarSport. (2015). *FIFA Women's World Cup Canada 2015: Television Audience Report*. Retrieved from http://resources.fifa.com/mm/document/affederation/tv/02/74/59/85/fwwccanada2015tvaudiencereport_neutral.pdf

Kidd, W., & Teagle, A. (2012). *Culture and Identity*: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kleiber, D., & Kirshnit, C. E. (1991). Sport Involvement and Identity Formation. *Mind-body maturity: Psychological approaches to sports, exercise, and fitness*, 193-211.

Laberge, S., & Kay, J. (2002). Pierre Bourdieu's Sociocultural Theory and Sport Practice. *Theory, sport and society, 10*, 239-266.

Lebra, T. S. (1976). *Japanese Patterns of Behavior*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Mathews, G. (2000). *Global Culture/Individual Identity : Searching for Home in the Cultural Supermarket*. London: Routledge.

Mayrhofer, U. (2012). *Management of Multinational Companies: A French Perspective*: Palgrave Macmillan.

McCurry, J. (2011, 18 July 2011). Women's World Cup Victory Brings Joy to Japan. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jul/18/japan-womens-world-cup-reaction-joy

Noble, G. (2004). Accumulating Being. *International Journal of Cultural Studies, 7*(2), 233-256.

Petitta, L., Lixin, J., & Palange, M. (2015). The Differential Mediating Roles of Task, Relations, and Emotions Collective Efficacy on the Link Between Dominance and Performance: A Multilevel Study in Sport Teams. *Group Dynamics, 19*(3), 181-199. doi:10.1037/gdn0000031

Romanos, J. (2007). *Winning Ways : Champion New Zealand Coaches Reveal Their Secrets*: Wellington, N.Z. : Trio Books, 2007.

Ruggie, J. G. (2016). *"For the Game. For the World". FIFA and Human Rights*. Retrieved from Cambridge, MA:

Sands, R. R., & Sands, L. (2010). *The Anthropology of Sport and Human Movement : A Biocultural Perspective*. Lanham, Md: Lexington Books.

Skeggs, B. (2004). Exchange, Value and Affect: Bourdieu and 'The Self'. *The Sociological Review, 52*(s2), 75-95.

Taylor, M. (2006). Global Players? Football, Migration and Globalization, c. 1930-2000. *Historical Social Research*, 7-30.

Thorpe, H. (2009). Bourdieu, Feminism and Female Physical Culture: Gender Reflexivity and the Habitus-Field Complex. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 26*(4), 491-516.

Tomlinson, A., & Young, C. (2006). *National Identity and Global Sports Events: Culture, Politics, and Spectacle in the Olympics and the Football World Cup*: SUNY Press.

Tracy, S. J. (2013). *Qualitative Research Methods : Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact*: Chichester, UK : Wiley-Blackwell, c2013.

Tucker, N. (2015). *Going for Gold: New Zealand Women's Elite Rugby Sevens in a new Olympic-era.* (Master of Sport and Exercise), Massey University, Palmerston North.

TV By The Numbers. (2015, July 6 2015). 25.4 Million Viewers Watch FIFA Women's World Cup 2015 on FOX. Retrieved from http://tvbythenumbers.zap2it.com/1/25-4-million-viewers-watch-fifa-womens-world-cup-2015-on-fox/

UEFA. (2017). Women's Football Across the National Associations 2016/17. Retrieved from http://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/OfficialDocument/uefaorg/Women'sfootball/02/43/13/56/2431356_DOWNLOAD.pdf

Wacquant, L. (2005). Carnal Connections: On Embodiment, Apprenticeship, and Membership. *Qualitative sociology, 28*(4), 445-474.

Wacquant, L. (2011). Habitus as Topic and Tool: Reflections on Becoming a Prizefighter. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 8*(1), 81-92.

Walther, M. (2015). The Symbolic Capital of International Work Experiences: Applying Bourdieu's Theory of Practice to Compare the Repatriation into the External Labor Markets of the German and French Career Fields. *Management International, 19*, 66-83.

Wigmore, T. (2016, 5 August 2016). Sport's Gender Pay Gap: Why Are Women Still Paid Less Than Men? *New Statesman*. Retrieved from http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/sport/2016/08/sport-s-gender-pay-gap-why-are-women-still-paid-less-men

Women in Sport. (2017). *Media Stat Pack - June 2017*. Retrieved from England: https://www.womeninsport.org/resources/media-stats-pack-june-2017/

Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation. (2014). *Women's Sport: Say Yes to Success*. Retrieved from United Kingdom: https://www.womeninsport.org/resources/say-yes-to-success/

Yoshio, T., & Horne, J. (2004). 5 Japanese Football Players and the Sport Talent Migration Business. *Football Goes East: Business, Culture and the People's Game in East Asia*, 69.