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Mechanisms and experiences of exclusion: A cultural analysis of dual career sporting pathways in England

Lauren Melanie Kamperman

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Durham University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

March 2024

Abstract

Since the 1990s, academic and practical interest around athletes combining sport with education or work, known as a "dual career", has steadily increased. To date, most dual career studies are written from a Eurocentric perspective and sample funded athletes in education, largely overlooking unfunded athletes and athletes combining sport with work or other life pursuits; indicating a rigid perception of what constitutes "dual career". Due to these trends in the literature and the lack of examination of exclusion and inclusion in dual career sporting environments, it is challenging to identify who is currently included or excluded, and how. Wider consideration of this issue is vital as both elite sport and education have been criticised for perpetuating social inequalities. Thus, this thesis explores experiences of exclusion amongst unfunded dual career athletes and identifies mechanisms of exclusion within the cultural and procedural norms of the English dual career sport system.

Through undertaking a critical institutional ethnography of the leading dual career support scheme in England – The Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme – this thesis provides a cultural analysis of England's dual career sport system. This research was undertaken using a qualitative methodology with data collection methods of in-depth semi-structured interviews with TASS staff, practitioners, and dual career athletes alongside a focus group, document review, and observation. Data was analysed through reflexive thematic analysis and document analysis, coupled with the theoretical frameworks of culture, power and ordering. Findings indicate that: i) unfunded and non-traditional pathway dual career athletes experience structural and interpersonal exclusion which contribute to harmful outcomes, ii) power relations and misinterpreted eligibility criteria influence athlete nominations to TASS, iii) due to limited power, TASS' attempts to enact inclusion are constrained, and iv) England's dual career system exists at the intersection of higher education and high-performance sport, and thus reflects similar barriers, inequalities, and exclusionary cultures.

Collectively, the major contributions of this thesis are to address the gaps in dual career research by examining, through a novel application of self-ordering, the lived experiences of exclusion of athletes typically ignored in dual career literature, identify structural and cultural exclusion within dual career systems, and propose new arguments about the culture of England's dual career system. Underpinned by my data, I generate recommendations for how dual career systems might be refined to combat exclusive practices.

This thesis is dedicated to my late Aunt Saundra Ann Cable (1959-2014), who inspired my passion to help others through her loving work with children in need and who taught me to keep my creativity alive throughout adulthood.

I hope to make you proud…

Student Declaration

I confirm that the thesis is my own work and that all published or other sources have been acknowledged in notes to the text or the bibliography.

I confirm that this work has not been submitted for any other academic degree.

Lauren Melanie Kamperman

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Publications

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Acronyms

BUCS: British Universities and Colleges Sport

DCMS: Department of Culture, Media, and Sport

EDI: Equality, diversity, and inclusion

EU: European Union

FE: Further education

GB: Great Britain

HE: Higher education

LGBTQ+: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, etc.

NCAA: National Collegiate Athletics Association

NGB: National governing body of sport

TASS: Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme

UK: United Kingdom

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

US: Unites States

Contents

Abstract……………………………………………………………………………...iii

Dedication……………………………………………………………………...…iv

Student Declaration……………………………………………………….….......v

Acknowledgments…………………………………………………………….....vi

Publications………………………………………………………………….……vii

Acronyms ……………………………………………………………………….. viii

Contents…………………………………………………………….……........ix

List of Tables…………………………………………………………….….…..... xiv

List of Figures……………………………………………………......……....xiv

1. Chapter One: Introduction……………………………………………………..…1

1.1 Personal interest and experiences in relation to inclusion in dual careers in sport2

1.2 Introducing dual careers and the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme..............5

1.2.1 Dual career definitions..6

1.2.2 The Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS).......................................9

1.3 Difficulties defining inclusion in sport policy and research 11

1.4 Purpose of the research...13

1.5 Structure of the thesis: Chapter overview..14

2. Chapter Two: Situating the research: A literature review of social inclusion and exclusion in sport, talent pathways, and dual careers...17

2.1 Social inclusion and exclusion in sport..18

2.1.1 Conceptualising social inclusion and social exclusion in sport....................18

2.1.2 Approaches, debates, and gaps...22

2.2 Talent pathways and talent research in sport...28

2.2.1 England’s talent pathway..29

2.2.2 Talent identification and pathways: Approaches and debates......................32

2.3 Dual career research: origins, topics, and perspectives....................................40

2.3.1 The emergence of, and defining, dual career athletes and dual career pathways 40
2.3.2 Overview of topics and perspectives in dual career research 41
2.3.3 A key challenge: Homogeneity in dual career research 45
2.4 Systemic mapping review of dual career literature 46
2.5 Research significance and justification 49
3. Chapter Three: The British sport landscape: Governance, funding, and EDI policy 50
3.1 Sport governance and funding in the United Kingdom 50
3.1.1 History of sport funding and policy 52
3.2 Equality, diversity, and inclusion policy in British sport 56
4. Chapter Four: Theoretical concepts and approaches 68
4.1 Theorising culture 68
4.1.1 Cultural studies frameworks 70
4.1.2 Critiques of cultural studies and ‘good’ cultural studies 74
4.1.3 Feminist cultural studies 75
4.1.3.1 Inclusion work within institutions: challenges of cultural change 77
4.2 Theorising power 82
4.2.1 Three-dimensional power 83
4.2.2 Normalising power, governmentality, and power/knowledge 87
4.3 Ordering: A conceptual lens 91
4.3.1 Modes of ordering and organisations 91
4.3.2 Ordering, culture, and governance 93
5. Chapter Five: Methodology 97
5.1 Positionality and reflexivity 97
5.2 Research paradigms and philosophy 103
5.3 Qualitative methodology 109
5.4 Research design 110
5.4.1 Critical institutional ethnography 113
5.4.2 Data collection methods and sampling 118

5.4.3 Data analysis methods....133
5.5 Ethical considerations....143
6. Chapter Six: Findings: ‘Athlete Voice’....147
6.1 Traditional and non-traditional dual career pathways....148
6.2 Self-ordering in education pathways....151
6.2.1 Early entry.... 151
6.2.2 Late entry....157
6.3 Self-ordering in work pathways....163
6.4 Self-ordering in multi-career pathways....168
6.4.1 “Spinning plates”: Multi-career pathways as a balancing act....169
6.4.2 Multi-career paths of international athletes....173
6.5 TASS athlete experiences....176
6.6 Conclusion....179
7. Chapter Seven: Findings: TASS procedures: From selection of sports and athletes to monitoring service usage....184
7.1 Process stage 1: Initial decisions on sports and TASS athlete awards....185
7.2 Process stage 2: Athlete nomination....191
7.2.1 Education criteria.... 195
7.2.2 Misinterpretations....199
7.3 Process stage 3: Post-selection communications....202
7.4 Process stage 4: Data collection through athlete portal....203
7.4.1 Low completion rates and missing data....204
7.4.2 Exclusive language and limited options....207
7.5 Process stage 5: Support provision....209
7.5.1 Service monitoring.... 209
7.5.2 Lack of service usage....211
7.5.3 “Double-dipping”.... 212
7.6 Conclusion....214
8. Chapter Eight: Findings: ‘The System’....216

8.1 TASS commitment to inclusion..217
8.1.1 Equality and diversity policy..218
8.1.2 TASS inclusion efforts 221
8.2 Higher education influences and replications...224
8.2.1 Synonymity with education...225
8.2.2 Pre-existing student-athlete support structures and physical overlap........227
8.2.3 Institutional influences and cultural replications.......................................232
8.3 High-performance sport influences and replications.......................................236
8.3.1 Situating high-performance sport culture.. 237
8.3.2 Nationalistic funding structures...239
8.3.3 Paths of power...241
8.3.4 Cultural influences – replicating an exclusive culture................................244
8.4 Remit, responsibility, and blame..247
8.5 Conclusion..251
9. Chapter Nine: Conclusions..252
9.1 Revisiting the research questions...252
9.2 Key Findings...254
9.2.1 Key Finding 1: A diversity of dual career pathways exist...........................254
9.2.2 Key Finding 2: Structural and interpersonal exclusion are evident and contribute to harmful outcomes..255
9.2.3 Key Finding 3: Power relations and limited power constrain TASS' attempts to enact inclusion...258
9.2.4 Key Finding 4: Existing at the intersection of higher education and high-performance sport, the English dual career system reflects similar barriers, inequalities, and exclusionary cultures...259
9.3 Contributions to conceptualisations of inclusion and exclusion in sport............260
9.4 Theoretical contributions to dual career literature and knowledge....................262
9.3.2 Ordering and self-ordering 263
9.5 Limitations..266
9.6 Reflections on positionality and the research process.....................................268

9.7 Recommendations for future practice and research..269
9.7.1 Applied implications for TASS..270
9.7.2 Recommendations for making dual career systems more inclusive...........271
9.7.3 Future research..274
9.8 Concluding thoughts..275
References 276
Appendices... 334

List of Tables

Table 1. Summary of systematic mapping review results, inclusion themes in title....47

Table 2. Stages of research..112

Table 3. TASS staff and TASS practitioner interviewee profiles................................124

Table 4. Athlete interviewee profiles..130

Table 5. TASS athlete portal data capture: Gender, disability, and ethnic origin.......205

List of Figures

Figure 1. A schematic to demonstrate the typical stages of the talent development pathway. The left-hand side denotes an England/Commonwealth team pathway and the right-hand side represents an Olympic/Paralympic pathway. (Sport England, 2018)..31, 187

Figure 2. The governance of English sport, adapted from Coakley & Pike (2014).......51

Figure 3. A diagrammatic representation of the TASS athlete nomination process...192

1. Chapter One: Introduction

Since the turn of the century, there has been a steady increase in equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) initiatives in sport globally. In the United Kingdom (UK), there has been a rise in inclusion efforts in sport especially following the 2012 London Olympics and Paralympics. The host nation faced many critiques and criticisms around the lack of diversity on Team Great Britain (GB), namely that the athletes representing Team GB did not reflect the national population. In particular, a study by Sutton Trust (2012) reported that 36% of British medal winners attended fee-paying schools, contrasting with only 7% of the national school population. Presently, the British elite sport sector is grappling with multiple accusations and reports of exclusionary, toxic, or destructive cultures across multiple sports (Whyte, 2022; Sky Sports, 2023; The Guardian, 2023). As such, there is a current need for further research considering inclusion and exclusion within British sport talent pathways.

Within British performance sport and talent systems exists a subsection of talented athletes in dual career pathways, many of which go on to represent Team GB at the Olympics and Paralympics (BUCS, 2021). Dual career involves combining a sporting career with education or work (Ryba et al., 2015). This thesis explores experiences and mechanisms of exclusion in England’s dual career system, through a critical institutional ethnographic case study of the leading dual career support institution in England – the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme. The research and approach used sought to critically examine the engrained structural and cultural norms of dual career systems which contribute to athlete experiences of exclusion. Such experiences are also highlighted and centred within this research to contribute to

understanding the lived experiences of athletes who are absent or underrepresented in current dual career literature.

This introductory chapter presents the practical context of this programme of work which is followed by a literature review in Chapter 2 and outline of British sport governance, funding, and EDI policy in Chapter 3. Here in Chapter 1, I discuss my positionality as the researcher followed by an introduction to dual career and the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS), a conceptualisation of "inclusion", and the purpose for this doctoral research. Lastly, I present an overview of the remaining thesis chapters.

1.1 Personal interest and experiences in relation to inclusion in dual careers in sport

My interest in this subject – inclusion and exclusion in dual career sport systems – stems from my own personal (past) experience as a dual career athlete in the United States (US) as well as my professional experiences working as an EDI in sport practitioner, and previously working at an American non-profit sport organisation focused on increasing access to sport for women and girls. I am extremely passionate about inclusion and its transformative ability to make a positive impact on athletes across all sports and all levels. I am therefore also fiercely driven to inspire cultural change and to challenge and eliminate barriers within sport systems so that more people can access sport.

Sport has always been central to my life. From the age of eight years old I was playing multiple grassroots-level sports until I eventually specialised in swimming. At age twelve, I was nationally ranked in two events and swimming became a huge piece

of my identity and life. Following that year of success, I found myself diving into the pool before sunrise for morning practice and then rushing to school with wet hair, struggling to stay awake during first period, and sneaking protein bars and apples into class whenever I could. At the height of my dual career, I was an NCAA Division I scholarship athlete while studying at university. My school was academically rigorous, and it was a very difficult balancing act to maintain my performance level in the pool alongside my studies. I also swam at British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) level while getting my master's degree in England. So, I bring to this study my own lived experiences as a dual career athlete in both the US and the United Kingdom (UK).

Professionally, I have developed and delivered multiple inclusion-themed workshops and trainings to sport organisations and national governing bodies (NGBs) in the US and the UK. This experience occurred before and during the undertaking of this PhD and continues today. Through my experiences delivering trainings in the British sport sector, I have found that there is an appetite for more education and guidance around inclusion. In my trainings, I teach and guide attendees to intentionally apply an inclusive perspective in their everyday practice. While working at the Women's Sport Foundation, a non-profit sport organisation in the US, I contributed to community sport development and athlete leadership initiatives, advocating for increased access to sport particularly for African American and Hispanic girls and disabled athletes. During that time, I gained understanding around the financial challenges that talented female athletes face in US sport environments. I heard story after story of female athletes struggling to afford their travel and training costs due to a lack of organised funding and support. These athletes often took on additional jobs

to make ends meet while training to meet national and elite-level standards. I learned that this was a typically overlooked group of athletes – athletes balancing work with sport – and that they had few opportunities for funding support. I also recognised that this situation was not limited to American athletes or to female athletes, but that it could be a pervasive struggle for many kinds of athletes in other nations. Eventually, I aspired to expand my work towards more inclusion-focused pursuits and discovered this PhD studentship, initiated and co-funded by TASS. I jumped at the opportunity to undertake this doctoral research programme looking at inclusion in England's dual career system.

My own lived experience of being a dual career athlete helped me to connect with my athlete participants and deepened discussions around the everyday challenges of balancing sport with the rest of life. Due to the complexities and weight of the subject matter of exclusion, some athletes appeared hesitant at first to open up about their experiences or shared that they could not quite find the words to explain. On these occasions, I was able to share examples of my own experiences of exclusion during my athletic career and this vulnerability contributed to increased comfort and trust between myself and my participants. Many athletes indicated that they enjoyed sharing and discussing their experiences and that they felt happy to be "heard". On the other hand, my experience as an EDI practitioner provided me with a strong skillset to be able to carefully introduce the topics of inclusion and exclusion and instilled in me an awareness of the larger context of the phenomenon of inclusion in sport. I came into this PhD with important knowledge around how inclusion work is done in practice and the challenges of doing such work. This especially contributed to deepening

discussions during interviews with TASS staff and TASS practitioners. I extend discussion and reflections of these aspects of my positionality in Chapters 4 and 8.

With an impact focus guiding the undertaking of this doctoral research, I was situated as both an observational researcher and as someone working towards greater inclusion in the field I was studying (i.e., TASS and England's dual career system). This positionality inspired me to intentionally centre athlete experiences of inclusion and exclusion to not only increase understanding of this phenomenon but to use the increased understanding to critically examine and challenge existing dual career systems and structures in order to affect cultural and systemic change.

1.2 Introducing dual career and the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme

More and more athletes are pursuing dual careers and research on this subject is steadily increasing (Vidal-Vilaplana et al., 2022). Dual career research is popular, in part, due to the view that pursuing education at the same time as sport will assist in an athlete's transition after their sporting career ends. As literature on dual career steadily grows, sport psychology studies currently dominate with research largely focused on athlete development and identity, dual career balance, and career transitions. In Chapter 2, I review past and current dual career literature and identify the gaps within, namely that the subject of inclusion is largely absent from current research as are experiences of athletes who are unfunded and/or pursuing non-traditional pathways to their dual careers. Here, I outline the different perceptions and definitions of "dual career", clarify the working definition and boundaries of dual career within this thesis, and introduce the TASS organisation as the leading entity tasked with supporting England's talented athletes in education.

1.2.1 Dual career definitions

Despite *dual career* gaining attention in sport discourse, there are varied definitions of what constitutes a dual career athlete and these are predominantly driven by researchers and/or policymakers residing in European nations. For example, an early key point of reference, *The Handbook of Best Practices in Dual Career of Athletes* by the Dual Career for Athletes Centre (DC4AC) defines dual career as the "possibility for talented, professional and elite athletes to build an educational or job path simultaneously with a sport career" (Boboc et al., 2017: 5). The 2012 *EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes* also refers to dual career as combining sport with education or work (European Commission, 2012). In contrast, the *Gold in Education and Elite Sport* (GEES) Handbook, co-funded by the European Commission and the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union (EU), defines a dual career athlete as "an athlete recognized by an elite sport organisation as competing at (minimum) national level AND registered/listed as a pupil or student in a secondary or higher educational institute" (Wylleman et al., 2017: 18). This latter definition limits a dual career athlete to a student enrolled in education and as a result, excludes athletes who, for example, pursue sport and work simultaneously.[1] Secondly, this definition sets a particular performance level (i.e., national) for dual career athletes, a distinction which is not present within other definitions and relevant sources, as there are multiple levels of athletes within dual career literature from adolescent athletes (Stambulova, Engström, Franck, Linnér, & Lindahl, 2015; Knight, Harwood, & Sellars, 2018) to elite

[1] Here and throughout this thesis, sport is not conflated with the term "work" to maintain clarity between the different types of dual career pathways taken by athletes and previously categorised pathways included within dual career sport literature. It is recognised that there is existing literature that considers sport, namely professional sport, as a type of work or employment (e.g., Roderick, 2006; Matuszak, 2020).

level athletes (Debois, Ledon, & Wylleman, 2015; Harrison, Vickers, Fletcher, & Taylor, 2022). Wylleman et al.'s (2017) definition also limits the types of educational providers, excluding vocational or technical programs from the greater network of dual career sport systems and practitioners. Lastly, it provides a lower age limit for dual career athletes, that is, entry to secondary education. These parameters around what is and is not considered "dual career" have inevitably lead to confusion and uncertainty over the term, especially amongst athletes (see Chapter 6). As the UK has recently left the EU, it is uncertain to what extent these definitions will continue to be applied, or whether there will be new UK-specific resources for dual career athletes and practitioners. This research sought to discover dominant perceptions and perspectives of the term dual career in the British sport context.

As there is a lack of consensus around dual career definitions, it is imperative for me to outline the clear parameters that I use to define what constitutes a dual career athlete within the context of my thesis. For the purposes of my research, I was interested in the experiences of British athletes balancing their sport with education and/or work. Therefore, I did not limit types of careers that athletes could have in addition to their sporting pursuits so long as they pursued one or more careers concurrently with their sporting engagement. It was then challenging to determine the performance level of the dual career athletes who would be included in my study, that is, at what level might sporting pursuit be considered to be, or crucially, could have the *potential* to be, a parallel 'career'. Across dual career literature, there is a lack of consistency around the performance level of dual career athletes. For example, some dual career studies (e.g., Tshube & Feltz, 2015; Hallmann & Weustenfeld, 2024) focus on "elite" level athletes but typically do not define what "elite" means. As dual career

research is dominated by studies on athlete transitions into, during, and out of education (see Chapter 2), the majority of dual career studies focus on athletes at university (e.g., Brown et al., 2015, Lupo et al., 2015) or adolescent student athletes (e.g., Stambulova, Engström, Franck, Linnér, 2015; Sallen, Wendeborn, & Gerlach, 2023). These trends create inconsistencies across the literature around the performance levels and ages of dual career athletes studied.

In the interest of reaching athletes who may be excluded from talent funding programmes, I took a broad approach to the performance level and funding status of my athlete participants. The performance level of my participants was set at a minimum of regional or BUCS level up to national and international levels of competition. There is variation in consideration and/or definitions of the forms of support that dual career athletes may receive. In this study, the receipt or otherwise of "organised support" is a key dimension which was taken as one or both of the following: i) financial assistance provided by a sporting institution such as Sport England, UK Sport, TASS, or any sporting NGB, and/or ii) access to certified practitioner support through talent programmes or awards (e.g., TASS). For my study, I set an age limit of 18 years old and higher. Given the huge variation of performance level required to compete at university or regional level between sports, my criteria could include athletes whose sporting pursuit is not, or is not likely to be, a career per se; this conflation of engagement in sport with having a parallel career is something the dual career literature as a whole needs to more closely address. Further detail surrounding my selection criteria for athlete participants is outlined in Chapter 5.

1.2.2 The Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS)

At present, support provision for dual career athletes in England is predominantly provided through the Sport England-funded Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS). TASS, the organisation at the centre of my critical institutional ethnography, is focused on supporting athletes eligible to compete for England who are in education. As such, the parameters of this study are largely focused on England's talent pathway as opposed to another home nation talent pathway such as Wales, Scotland, or Northern Ireland.

TASS' main function is to provide access to support for talented athletes nominated to their scheme. The core services available through TASS are: strength and conditioning, physiotherapy, lifestyle support, psychology, nutrition, a medical scheme, and access to mental health support. TASS staff manage the access to support, but do not deliver support provision to TASS athletes. Of the above support services, sessions related to strength and conditioning, physiotherapy, lifestyle, psychology, and nutrition are delivered by certified practitioners in the TASS network, known as TASS practitioners. These TASS practitioners deliver this support at the 38 TASS delivery sites across England, discussed further below.

Athletes in receipt of TASS are allocated one of three types of support: red, blue, or white awards. These colours of awards carry specific expectations for athlete engagement for specific support services. For example, athletes on the red award have minimum service engagement expectations (Doc. 12, Appendix 11). Red award athletes are required to attend a minimum of 25 strength and conditioning sessions per year and a minimum of 3 lifestyle sessions. Blue and white awards have different

minimum expectations (Doc. 10 & Doc. 11, Appendix 11). All TASS awards also include a cash award of £500 which is delivered in two instalments.

TASS (2024) is described on the TASS website as a "Sport England funded partnership between talented athletes, delivery sites and national governing bodies of sport." These partnerships bring support for dual career athletes directly onto university campuses within the TASS network; the selection of supported dual career athletes coincides with "delivery sites" where services are rendered and organised by dual career practitioners within this greater dual career network. At present, 36 of the 38 TASS delivery sites in the UK are located at higher education (HE) institutions (i.e., universities) with the exception of two further education (FE) colleges, the Royal National College for the Blind and Hartpury College. While this structure may have been developed for pragmatic reasons, there are a number of limitations. Athletes who do not live near universities in the network, athletes pursuing non-university level qualifications, and athletes who pursue a work pathway instead of an education pathway may find it harder to access and use these delivery sites. The geographic limitations of this dual career athlete support network, along with the lack of funding available for dual career athletes not in education, creates a divide and thus a gap between dual career athletes who receive support and those who do not. These varying experiences and opportunities are one of the foci of this research.

TASS requires supported athletes to be enrolled in a "learning programme" with a minimum of 300 learning hours and states that their mission is focused on helping dual career athletes balance athletics with education (TASS, 2020a). In practice, however, there are exceptions. It is important to note that in September of 2016, TASS established a partnership with the British Army, which has its own selection board for

athletes to gain TASS awards, to support the current Army Elite Sports Programme (AESP) (TASS, 2016). Therefore, there is an avenue for athletes not in learning programmes to receive TASS awards if they are affiliated with the AESP.

Separate from the TASS main scheme of supporting talented athletes, is a second programme called the TASS Dual Career Accreditation Scheme. This scheme recognises “an education institution’s commitment to dual career support for talented athletes who are in full time education” (TASS, 2022). To be formally recognised as a TASS Dual Career Accredited Site, FE and HE institutions are “assessed based on their ability to support talented athletes on the academic side of their development” and selected relative to their level of academic flexibility and commitment to supporting student-athletes. This second scheme, while not within the scope of this study, further indicates TASS’ status as the leading dual career institution in English sport.

1.3 Difficulties defining inclusion in sport policy and research

At the root of this thesis is the subject of inclusion and exclusion within dual career systems. Therefore, it is essential to conceptualise the term inclusion as it relates to the purposes of this thesis. Although present in sport development and policy literature, inclusion and exclusion are phenomena that are still relatively under-investigated in relation to athlete lived experiences. These topics are also, as discussed later in Chapter 2, largely absent in dual career literature.

Inclusion, while currently a common term used in sport policy discussions (e.g., Sport England, 2019, 2020b; Sport England & UK Sport, 2019; UK Sport, 2016, 2021), is a nebulous term that continues to be open to numerous interpretations (Lewis,

2016). Inclusion is part of most sporting organisations' and federations' mission statements and action plans (e.g., Activity Alliance, 2018; Sport England, 2019, 2020b; Sporting Equals, 2020; Women in Sport, 2020) but within these documents and statements inclusion is rarely defined. In contrast, a useful definition of *inclusion* has been provided within global sporting discourse, for example at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) fifth International Meeting of Ministers in Sport (MINEPS V):

> Inclusion is understood as a sense of belonging, which includes feeling respected, valued for who you are, feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others. There should be commitment to embrace difference and value the contributions of all participants, whatever their characteristics or backgrounds (UNESCO, 2013: 23).

However, it must be noted that this definition of inclusion is constructed with regards to sport participation generally and not specifically within high-performance sport spaces. The supposedly meritocratic and practically hierarchical elite sport space, consumed by measuring levels of performance, seems to wrestle with the ethics and philosophy of inclusion. This study looks further into this phenomenon, particularly how athletes and stakeholders in the English dual career sport system perceive inclusion. As there are multiple and varying definitions and approaches to inclusion and exclusion in the literature (see Chapter 2.1), I root this study's definition of inclusion within the perceptions, feelings, and experiences shared by my research participants. As such, the definitions of the terms develop iteratively as the research progresses.

Even with a clear definition of what *inclusion* means within the context of sport, Spaaij, Magee, and Jeanes (2014: 12) observe that the term requires critical questions including, "Inclusion into what? On whose terms? In whose interests?" Furthermore,

non-participation does not necessarily equate with social exclusion, as not everyone chooses to play sport, and conversely participation does not equal inclusion. A critical view of sport spaces and sport cultures is necessary to critique and investigate the environments athletes are being included in or excluded from and if their terms and interests are respected or considered. Through this programme of research, the concept of inclusion develops iteratively from the data, especially from dual career athletes and their views of what inclusion means to them.

1.4 Purpose of the research

The purpose of this research is to understand how inclusion and exclusion operate and are experienced in England's dual career sport system. To achieve this aim, this doctoral research was guided by the following research questions:

1. Who is included in and excluded from dual career systems?
2. How do dual career systems include and exclude athletes?
3. How can dual career systems be more inclusive?

In Chapter 2, I provide academic justification for undertaking these research questions through a literature review of research considering social in/exclusion in sport literature, talent pathways, and dual careers in sport. In Chapter 3, I position the research in the contexts of British sport governance and fundings structures and EDI sport policy. In the larger thesis, I examine the above questions through a critical institutional ethnography, which utilised data collected through different methods of

document analysis, observation, a focus group, and in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews with dual career athletes as well as TASS staff and practitioners working with TASS athletes. The first two research questions guided two stages of data collection and analysis, as outlined in Chapter 5. They are linked to two key objectives: i) to develop understanding of the inclusivity of the English dual career system, particularly through examining policy, practices, and procedures, and ii) to provide a voice for and understanding of the needs and experiences of those excluded from or within British dual career systems and pathways. The third research question was originally intended to be pursued with a third stage of research (see Chapter 5), however as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and other challenges I was unable to collect data to directly answer this question. Still, due to the impact driven purpose of this study, the research question is considered in the conclusion (9.6.2) where recommendations are made regarding how dual career systems could change to become more inclusive.

1.5 Structure of the thesis: Chapter overview

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 presents a literature review of research on social inclusion and exclusion in sport, talent identification and pathways, and dual careers in sport. This review presents the research context and outlines the gaps that this doctoral programme aims to fill, namely that there are limited studies centred on athletes combining work and sport, unfunded athlete experiences, and themes of inclusion or exclusion within dual career literature. Chapter 3 outlines the landscape of British sport through a review of British sport governance and funding structures as

well as an examination of the history and current influences on equality, diversity, and inclusion policy in British sport.

Key theoretical concepts and approaches used in this research programme are introduced and explained within Chapter 4. Three key concepts underpin this doctoral research: culture, ordering, and power. First, culture is conceptualised and discussed through the tradition of British cultural studies (Williams, 1958; Hall, 1980) and through contributions from feminist cultural studies (e.g., Rowbotham, 1973; Ahmed, 2012). Second, the concept of ordering (Law, 1994; Kendall & Wickham, 2001) is explained and explicitly linked to the study of organisational management and culture. This concept is useful in critically examining the priorities and power relations that drive the procedures of the TASS athlete nomination process. Third, the concept of power is explored through the theories of Foucault (1977, 1980, 1983) and Lukes (1974, 2021).

Chapter 5 outlines the methodological choices and approaches that characterise the research design of this doctoral study. The chapter includes discussion of my positionality and reflexivity as the researcher, research paradigms and philosophy, qualitative methodology, data collection and analysis methods, and ethical considerations.

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 present and analyse the findings from this doctoral work. Chapter 6 highlights unfunded dual career athlete experiences of structural and interpersonal exclusion across three types of dual career pathways and the outcomes of such experiences. The chapter also incudes mention of funded athlete experiences within traditional dual career pathways (6.5). Chapter 7 presents an examination of the TASS athlete nomination process using a document review and analysis, supplementary interviews, application of the concept of ordering (Law, 1994; Kendall

& Wickham, 2001), and considerations of power relations within nomination procedures using the power theories of Lukes (1974, 2005, 2021) and Foucault (1977, 1980). Next, Chapter 8 examines the cultural influences on England's dual career system and the TASS organisation. Namely, the cultural replications and influences from higher education and high-performance sport cultures.

Chapter 9 serves as the general discussion and conclusion of this thesis, containing a discussion of the evolution of my research questions, a summary and extension of key findings, contributions to conceptualising inclusion and exclusion in sport, theoretical contributions to dual career literature and knowledge, limitations, reflections on positionality, recommendations for future research and dual career practice, and finally concluding thoughts.

2. Chapter Two: Situating the research: A literature review of social inclusion and exclusion in sport, talent pathways, and dual careers

In the United Kingdom (UK), a particular philosophy contributes to the model of sport, where sport is perceived to have a positive impact on society. Here, sport participation contributes to a heathier population, sport is seen and used as a vehicle for social inclusion and cohesion, and elite sport success is viewed as contributing to international prestige for the nation (Grix & Carmichael, 2011). In addition to these supposed positive social impacts, sport and physical activity are calculated to contribute £39 billion to the UK's economy (Sport England, 2020a). Thus, the UK and other nations have increased focus on sport development from the grassroots to elite level particularly through developing talent identification processes, talent pathway structures, and funding and support schemes for talented athletes. As nations invest more attention and money into sport, they also increase investment into sport research giving particular emphasis to supporting and retaining their athletes. Just before the turn of the 21st century, there was an increase in attention given to supporting a specific type of athlete, one that combines a sport pathway with education or work; otherwise known as a *dual career athlete*. The term "dual career" arose predominantly from European-based studies and programmes, as discussed in the literature review below, and has now become the primary term to describe athletes and systems where sport is combined with education or work. This chapter situates the research context and presents a justification for this research focus. I first present a literature review on social inclusion and exclusion in sport before then examining research on talent identification and pathways. Finally, I provide a review of dual career literature including a systematic mapping review centred on the presence of inclusion themes within dual career sport studies.

2.1 Social Inclusion and Exclusion in Sport

In this section, I begin with an explanation of key definitions and conceptualisations of social inclusion and social exclusion within sporting contexts. Next, I present an overview of the main approaches, arguments, and debates within sport literature around these phenomena in community and competitive sport. Finally, I highlight observed gaps within existing literature on inclusion and exclusion in sport and outline the ways in which this thesis attempts to fill those gaps.

2.1.1 Conceptualising social inclusion and social exclusion in sport

Here, it is important to clarify the distinction and overlap between social inclusion and social exclusion from sporting inclusion and sporting exclusion. *Social* inclusion and *social* exclusion are predominantly used within sociological literature to discuss access to, or lack of, human rights and resources within larger societies. Within sport sociology these terms are usually used in the context of sport participation across national populations and within community or recreational levels of sport. Sport-focused literature also considers inclusion and exclusion within competitive sport at higher levels, but these studies are typically more focused on sport policy.

Social inclusion is a complex and contested concept that encompasses a blend of social, cultural, economic, and political dimensions (Levitas, 2005; Morgan & Parker, 2021; Sherry & Raw, 2023). At the heart of inclusion is the “fundamental human need” to belong to, and be with, groups of other people (Abrams, Marques, & Hogg, 2004: 27). Such groups could be social circles or communities, political groups, or sporting groups and teams. Individuals can experience inclusion or indeed exclusion

on the bases of individual, socio-economic, or socio-cultural differences and the process is essentially a means of categorisation (Patel, 2012). The history of categorisation within the human species and population has raised much sociological and scientific debate (see Sibley, 1995). As human society has advanced, differences between the “self” and “other” have become exaggerated and reinforce or encourage further divisions between people based upon their differences such as race or ethnicity, sex or gender, social class, disability, and age (Maslow, 1943; Abrams, Marques, & Hogg, 2004). These individual differences, especially when combined or intersected, affect a person’s ability to fully access citizenship, resources, human rights, and sport or leisure.

Social inclusion is not commonly addressed singularly, but instead is most often discussed alongside social exclusion especially within literature on sport for development and sport policies that are intended to combat social exclusion (Sherry & Raw, 2023; Collins with Kay, 2014). As a result, social inclusion usually refers to discussions around improving access to various social institutions or opportunities for decision-making (Oxoby, 2009; Sherry & Raw, 2023). Existing literature approaches social inclusion as a concept that has shifting meanings and is often deployed flexibly to serve specific political purposes (Haudenhuyse, 2017). Such purposes are quite visible within sport policy, where the conceptualisations of social inclusion and social exclusion are often conflated or used interchangeably (Morgan & Parker, 2017). I further discuss sport policy-based definitions and usage of the term inclusion in section 3.2 below.

Recently, new arguments have been presented about how inclusion should be considered, as it continues to be approached in varied and inconsistent ways. Haegele

and Maher (2023) conducted a thought-provoking study to better understand and thus conceptualise the term “inclusion”. Answering calls to amplify the voices of disabled persons and their subjective experiences (e.g., Pellicano et al., 2014), the authors centralised the lived experiences of disabled students in their work to strengthen understanding of the concept of inclusion. Haegele and Maher (2023) conceptualise inclusion as intersubjective experiences associated with feelings of belonging, acceptance, and value. They argue that these feelings are “dynamic, ephemeral, spatial, and in flux” and therefore inclusion is not static but instead fluid as an individual’s feelings of inclusion can change depending on what they are experiencing (Haegele & Maher, 2023: 387). Similarly to these authors, I root this study’s definition of inclusion within the lived experiences of my research participants.

As with social inclusion, there is no agreed upon singular definition of social exclusion. Instead, there is a history of its use and dominant approaches to the term and phenomenon. The term “social exclusion” originated in France and is often attributed to Lenoir who published *Les Exclus: Un Français sur dix* (1974) concerned with “les exclus”, or the excluded, people (e.g., the elderly, disabled, abused children) who were deprived of social protection. This first usage of the term largely centred on issues of class and financial resources. Since its conception, the term social exclusion has been, and can be, defined in various manners. Collins (2003), as key author in the sport and social exclusion literature, viewed poverty as the core of social exclusion. Lister (1990) and Scott (1994) argued that poverty can be further understood as exclusion from aspects of citizenship. For example, poverty can prevent individuals or families from participating in social events or leisure activities that require financial resources related to ticket pricing, travel expenses, and more. In a similar vein to

Collins (2003), Levitas et al. (2007: 9) broadly define social exclusion as a multilayered process characterized by “the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas”. Jakubowska (2018) further adds exclusion from the legal benefits of society to Levitas et al.’s (2007) above definition.

In the 1990s, the concept of social exclusion took over from the use of poverty as seen below in a statement from the European Commission (1994: 12):

> “Today, the concept of social exclusion is taking over from poverty, which is more static . . . and seen far more often as exclusively monetary poverty. . . . Social exclusion does not only mean insufficient income, and it even goes beyond participation in working life.”

Room (1994) stated that social exclusion shifted the focus to the social in three ways: from income to multi-dimensional disadvantage; from a state to a process; and from a focus on individuals or households to local communities. As such, social exclusion and poverty could be both a process and an outcome (Berghman, 1995) and, as suggested by Room (1995), poverty is distributional while social exclusion is relational. If exclusion is a process, it is imperative to consider who is doing the exclusion. Sometimes it is the wider structures in society, sometimes it is people in power, and sometimes it is citizens themselves (Collins with Kay, 2014). As such, exclusion can occur due to interactions with multiple factors at different levels such as environmental, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and familial (Van der Veken, 2021). Individuals who are typically excluded from parts of society or an activity are usually minorities who “deviate from what is considered to be the norm of that society or activity” (Patel, 2012: 38). As inclusion involves belonging to certain groups, exclusion often involves the

isolation of an individual or group of people from a larger entity of greater size, power, or influence.

Exclusion from sports participation can be affected by different factors and multiple constraints (Collins with Kay, 2003: 25). Collins, Henry, and Houlihan (1999), for example, distinguished three types of constraints to accessing sport: i) structural/environmental factors (e.g., poor social environment, lack of transport); ii) personal/internal psychological factors (lack of time, fears for safety, poor body image); and iii) mediating factors. Mediating factors refers to 'gatekeepers' such as coaches, managers, and teachers who decide who is included and who is excluded from a particular activity or, in the case of competitive sport, from high-performance teams and facilities or talent funding. Informed by this work, within this thesis I take into account these three types of constraints and use data from Study 1 and Study 2 to chart the mechanisms of exclusion that lead to such constraints and challenges within the English dual career sport system.

2.1.2 Approaches, debates, and gaps

Today, social exclusion is recognized at an international level as a key social concern to be addressed (D'Angelo, Corvino, & Gozzoli, 2021). Social exclusion is one of the most critical and complex challenges in global society, as it extends beyond local or national contexts and has been exacerbated by globalisation (Spaaij, Magee, & Jeanes, 2014). Globally, sport plays an increasingly important role for those who seek to promote social inclusion and has been embraced by policy makers and researchers (European Commission, 2007; Bailey, 2008; Kelly, 2011; Spaaij, Magee, & Jeanes, 2014). The influence of sport toward initiatives of social inclusion, to combat social

exclusion, are largely debated in the literature. This section discusses such debates, highlights the barriers and constraints to accessing sport, and addresses some gaps within current literature.

Over the last twenty years, sport has expanded its role to also be considered "as an intervention tool in order to pursue wider, non-sporting social goals" (Giulianotti, Hognestad, & Spaaij, 2016: 130). Contemporary research emphasises the potential for sports-based interventions to achieve or work towards social inclusion through enhancing employability, particularly through the development of skills, knowledge, and attitudes to provide employment opportunities (Spaaij et al., 2013; Sherry, Schulenkorf & Chalip, 2015; Morgan, 2018; Morgan et al., 2020). At the root of this push for employability is the aim of shrinking the economic gap between the lower and upper socio-economic classes and to assist individuals in achieving social mobility. However, it has been argued that sport's embeddedness within national, racial, and gender hierarchies can prevent sport from being a site for social mobility and instead interact to maintain sport as a site for social inequality (Spaaij, Farquharson, & Majoribanks, 2015). As such, many scholars question the effectiveness of sport as a means to achieve social inclusion. For example, Spaaij, Farquharson, and Majoribanks (2015: 400) argue that sport is "limited as a source of social mobility for those at the bottom of these hierarchies, despite the rhetorical fairness and meritocracy often attributed to sports." Indeed, sport can reflect and reinforce historical structures and thus can serve as a site for both inclusion and exclusion, "but in ways that work unevenly" (Spaaij, Farquharson, & Majoribanks, 2015: 400). Thus, sport does not necessarily achieve the myth of a level-playing field (Kell, 2000; Eitzen,

2015), but often and instead reinforces social inequalities and hierarchies within greater society.

Bailey (2005) contends that existing research (e.g., Donnelly, 1996; Frieler, 2001) has highlighted important dimensions of social inclusion and that these interconnected dimensions could help provide a theoretical entry point to consider how sport can contribute to social inclusion. Bailey (2005) states that the four dimensions of social inclusion are: i) a spatial dimension, which is concerned with highlighting and addressing social and economic disparity; ii) a relational dimension, where social inclusion is based on an increased sense of belonging and acceptance; iii) a power dimension, where inclusion involves challenging the status quo or changing the locus of control by empowering individuals to enhance community cohesion or develop social networks; and iv) a functional dimension, which involves the enhancement of knowledge, skills and understanding in individuals to enhance inclusion. It is the second and third dimensions, relational and power, which are of particular interest to this thesis alongside those constraints to accessing sport outlined earlier by Collins, Henry, and Houlihan (1999). Issues of power and relationships within organisational processes, especially those related to athlete nominations and selections to TASS, are of interest as this thesis aims to identify and examine possible mechanisms of exclusion within dual career sport systems.

Extant literature claims that sport participation can facilitate other mechanisms that contribute to social inclusion and assimilation (Hartmann, 2003; Coalter, 2007; Hermens, Super, Verkooijen & Koelen, 2017; Morgan & Parker, 2017). One such mechanism that has received increasing attention in recent years is the quality of relationships between programme participants and program facilitators (see Spaaij &

Jeanes, 2012; Morgan & Parker, 2017; Nols et al., 2019). Crucially, this research concludes that sport-based programs are more likely to assist social inclusion when relationships are constructed which: i) are based upon trust and mutual respect; ii) enable participants to feel valued or that recognize the abilities and contribution that the young person can bring to the relationship; and iii) promote program leaders as role models who understand and appreciate the challenges that participants encounter in their everyday lives (Morgan et al., 2019). As such, relationships within dual career systems and environments were a further topic of consideration in this research programme.

As with sport facilitating mechanisms of inclusion, above, existing literature has also identified mechanisms that contribute to exclusion in sport. An ongoing body of research suggests that discriminatory attitudes, such as racism, sexism, ablism, and homophobia/transphobia, exist at all levels of sport (e.g., Baker-Lewton et al., 2017; Fink, 2016; Brittain, Biscaia, & Gérard, 2020; Hargie et al., 2017). These attitudes contribute to individual athletes feeling unwelcome, devalued, excluded, and unsafe in sport environments (Jeanes & Lucas, 2022; Hargie et al., 2017; Shields, Synnot, & Barr, 2022). When individuals experience exclusion, this can lead to vulnerability, isolation, aggression, self-defeating behaviour, and negative moods and emotions (Jakubowska, 2018). Intersecting with such discriminatory attitudes, extant research has identified that structural, environmental, and institutional mechanisms also contribute to exclusion in sport (Jeanes & Lucas, 2022). Structural mechanisms can contribute to exclusion both within and outside of sport contexts and involve factors of poverty, ethnicity, gender, and disability (Collins with Kay, 2014; Collins & Haudenhuyse, 2015). Poverty, as outlined above in section 2.1.1, is a key element of

social exclusion from sport participation at multiple levels including elite sport, as financial resources are essential for talented athletes to progress to elite levels (Collins & Buller, 2003; Kay, 2000). Environmental mechanisms of exclusion can involve location and access to resources which can lead to exclusion from sporting opportunities (Spaaij, Magee, & Jeanes, 2014). Structural factors, like poverty, can be connected to environmental mechanisms of exclusion as, for example, lower socioeconomic neighbourhoods often lack sport facilities. Importantly, access within sport facilities and spaces can also be partial, or indeed exclusive, when environments hold traditions and ideologies that dictate who can and cannot gain full access to resources or spaces at the facilities (Pavlidis, 2018). Lastly, institutional mechanisms that contribute to exclusion from sport include ingrained institutional practices, beliefs, and values which are often based on discriminatory attitudes (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2012). For example, studies have highlighted the impact of institutional racism in excluding black and ethnic minority groups from positions of power in sport, predominantly leadership and coaching roles (e.g., Norman, North, Hylton, Flintoff, & Rankin, 2014; Cashmore & Cleland, 2011).

The field of sport sociology has increasingly focused on the relationship between sport, social inequalities and exclusion, and social change, with some authors (e.g., Eckstein et al., 2010), pushing for more analysis into sport and social power. Spaaij, Farquharson, and Majoribanks (2015: 400) view sport as “a contested site of power relations” which are embedded in systems of inequality at varying levels from local up to national and global levels. In this way sport can act as “a site of belonging”, as it can both include and exclude groups of people within the national society (Spaaij, Farquharson, & Majoribanks, 2015: 404; Burdsey, 2006; Spaaij,

2012). Here, inclusion into or exclusion from national performance levels of sport intersects with other social relations such as gender, race, and disability (Van Sterkenburg, 2013). As such, although sport is seen as a vehicle of inclusion, it can also differentiate, marginalise, and exclude (Elling & Knoppers, 2005; Anderson, 2010). Organised competitive sport, in particular, performs a type of exclusion through its emphasis on performance results and winning (Donnelly & Coakley, 2002). Young people with lower socioeconomic status are often not provided with equal opportunities to perform at the highest levels (Spaaij, Magee, & Jeanes, 2014). Furthermore, Collins and Buller (2003) found that high-performance sport programmes do not cater equally to all; rather that they are mediated by social stratification, which provides a filter for who gets in at the beginning of the talent selection process. In sum, as Kay (2000: 66) contends, participation profiles of athletes “from the humblest levels of mass participation through to the pinnacles of performance” are “skewed away from the less privileged sectors of our society”, indicating that social inequalities are reflected throughout all levels of sport.

Importantly within discussions of inclusion in sport, nonparticipation does not equate exclusion, as individuals have a choice in the matter and not everyone wants to participate in sport. Just as nonparticipation does not equate exclusion, participation does not equal inclusion. To determine how social inclusion affects sport participation, or nonparticipation, Donnelly and Coakley (2002) contend that researchers must consider issues of access and opportunity as well as structural and cultural conditions of sport activities and programmes that may promote or inhibit social inclusion and exclusion. This approach is undertaken within this thesis, as I centre structural,

procedural, and cultural conditions that influence or create mechanisms and experiences of exclusion in England's dual career sport system.

While there is ample literature on social inclusion and exclusion of young people at foundation and participation levels of sport, there remains a striking need for further academic research into exclusion within higher levels (i.e., talent, high-performance, elite) of sport (Spaaij, Magee, & Jeanes, 2014). When the literature does include elite level athletes, studies primarily focus on athletes who have achieved professional status (Spaaij, Farquharson, & Majoribanks, 2015). In this way, the picture that current literature on exclusion in elite sport presents is unbalanced as it does not account for the fact that for every elite athlete, there are many aspiring athletes who never reach professional status (Messner, 2007; Poli, 2010). As such, there exists a representation gap in the literature between youth athletes and professional athletes. A missing aspect is ample or deep investigation of the experiences of exclusion amongst athletes who exists between these two groups, that is athletes of 18 years and above who are in talent pathways but who are not professional. Not only is this group rarely included in the literature, there are also gaps in understanding the consequences or outcomes from such experiences of exclusion within sport spaces beyond potential drop out from sport (e.g., Henry, 2013; Morley et al., 2018; Rothwell, Rumbold, & Stone, 2020). This thesis aims to fill this gap through highlighting experiences of amateur dual career athletes in England's talent pathway.

2.2 Talent pathways and talent research in sport

With origins from the mid-1800s (see Galton, 1869), the scientific study of talent in sport has increased exponentially, especially since the early 2000s, due to the

international interest in sport as a source of revenue (Heitner, 2019) and national prestige or political capital (Houlihan & Green, 2008) usually through professional and Olympic sport. As discussed earlier, talent is a key focus for current high-performance sport systems with much government funding and attention given to the area in the hopes that such investment can yield financial revenue and national prestige. This section outlines the structure of England's sporting talent pathway (2.2.1) and highlights the various approaches, debates, inconsistencies, and weaknesses to talent identification and development in the sporting talent literature (2.2.2).

As this thesis is centred on experiences of talented athletes pursuing dual careers and involves a case study of an organisation catering to talented athletes, it is imperative to explain the concept of the term "talent" and the approaches to how talent is identified and developed in competitive sport. Although the term is commonly used globally across high-performance sport, conceptualisations of talent are "muddled" (Baker, Wattie, Schorer, 2019: 28). Talent is most often described as an innate ability, but this usage could mean different things in different contexts (e.g., biological predispositions or the athletes themselves). For example, one definition that Colbey, Schorer, and Baker (2012: 3) suggest for sporting environments is that talent is "the presence or absence of particular skills or qualities identified at earlier time points that correlate to or predict expert future performance". More recently, there have been calls for and attempts at clearer definitions of talent with Baker, Wattie, and Schorer (2019) indicating that talent is also multi-dimensional and dynamic. Due to varied interpretations of what constitutes the level or categorisation of "talented" as well as "elite" athletes, there is a lack of clarity and consistency in nomenclature or taxonomy within the literature (Baker et al., 2020).

2.2.1 England's talent pathway

Once athletes are identified as "talented", they are then selected onto a formalised sporting talent pathway. A talent pathway refers to the formalised and systematic operation of an athlete's route through structured selection, coaching, competition, and transition from junior to senior age groups (Williams, 2023). Talent pathways are selective as athletes must achieve a specified level of performance or repeated selection to talent trial events (i.e., training camps, trial matches) to enter the formal pathway of their sport. Part of this selection is the involvement of gatekeepers who assess and judge whether or not the athletes reach these levels of achievement. Such gatekeepers are usually NGBs, with the assistance of talent coaches. This phenomenon of gatekeepers selecting talent is explored within the context of talented athletes being nominated and chosen to receive TASS awards in Chapter 7.

In the UK, England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland each have their own national talent pathway which then feeds into the larger British high-performance pathway overseen by UK Sport. For the purposes of this thesis, it is the England talent pathway that is of focus and interest. Figure 1, below, showcases a visual of the England Talent Pathway and its overlaps with the British Olympic/Paralympic performance pathway.

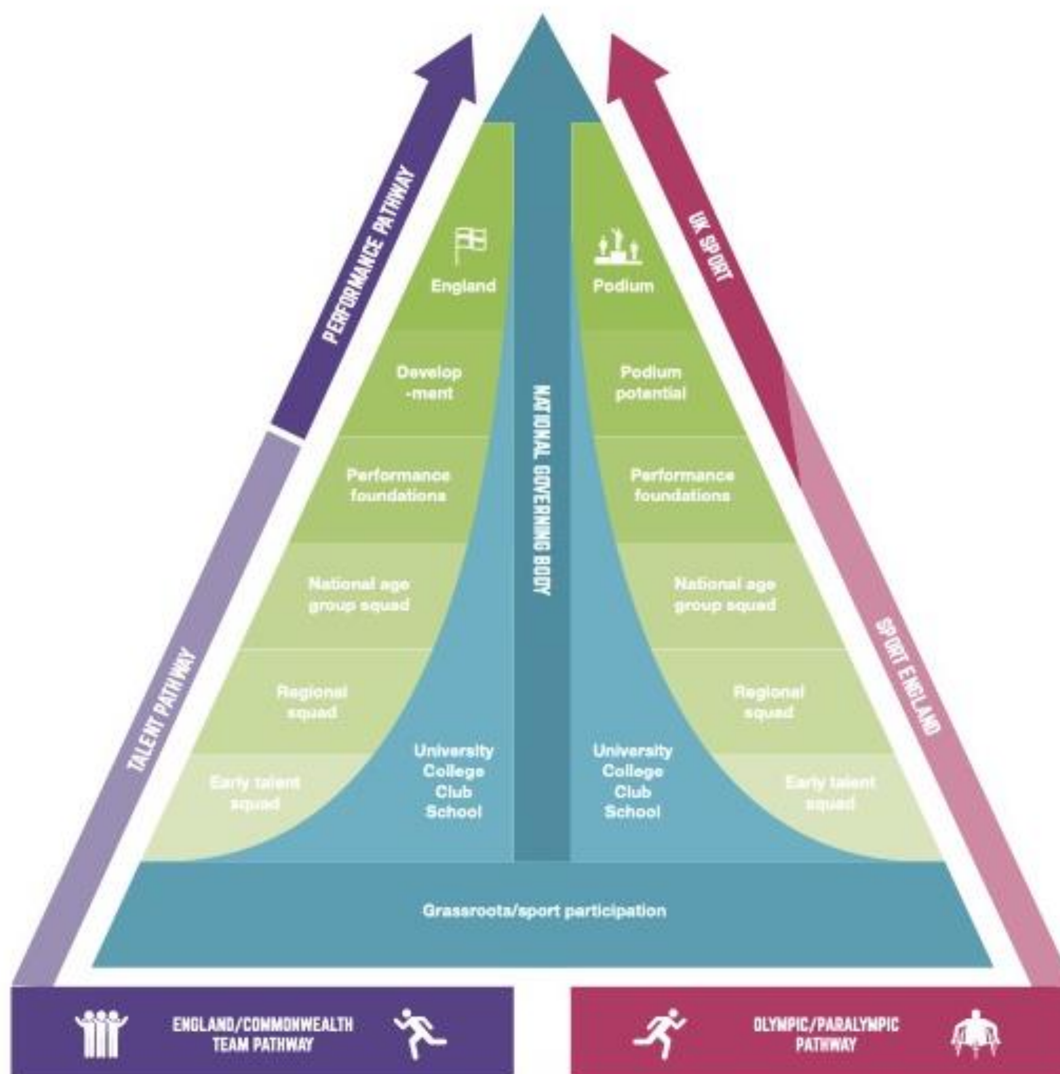

Figure 1. A schematic to demonstrate the typical stages of the talent development pathway. The left-hand side denotes an England/Commonwealth team pathway and the right-hand side represents an Olympic/Paralympic pathway. (Sport England, 2018)

Sport England (2024) defines the England Talent Pathway as “a route of development of talented athletes” that is comprised of organised “stages, structures, policies, practices, and partners/stakeholders”. They further describe the England Talent Pathway as “all the moving parts that support the development and progression of the athletes” which includes sport NGBs that organise their athlete support around

age groups, stages of development, and performance. In the England Talent Pathway, athletes progress through gradual stages of performance by way of formalised events and competition results. Importantly, within and alongside established sporting talent pathways are a distinctive group of athletes pursuing their sport alongside other career pursuits – dual career athletes. Section 2.3 below places focus on this population of athletes and the literature base that has explored dual career sport systems and dual career athlete experiences.

2.2.2 Talent identification and pathways: Approaches and debates

Talent identification is the process of recognising current participants with the potential to excel in a particular sport (Vaeyens, Lenoir, Williams, & Philippaerts, 2008). Such identification often includes the allocation of resources (e.g., funding, access to organised support, performance level coaching) towards the athletes deemed to be talented. Talent identification commonly begins during an athlete's early years, with some sports starting earlier than others (e.g., gymnastics), to allow athletes to develop in the most beneficial environments (Baker et al., 2020). Such early identification assumes that talent is an innate characteristic that is possible to identify early in an athlete's career and a characteristic that will predict later expertise and success in the sport (Howe, Davidson, & Sloboda, 1998). There has been much recent discourse surrounding selection onto talent pathways, in part because athletes are being recruited into formalised talent pathways at an increasingly younger ages (Baker, Schorer, Wattie, 2018). One critique of this trend is that labelling high-performance young athletes as talented can create pressure and expectations that they will be successful and this can be damaging to young athletes (Baker, Schorer, & Wattie,

2018; Barreiros & Fonseca, 2012). Part and parcel of early selection to talent programmes is the practice of early specialisation where talented athletes are encouraged to choose, or specialise, in one sport instead of sampling or playing multiple sports. Some sports (i.e., gymnastics, figure skating, diving) have larger amounts of athletes who specialise early than other sports (Güllich & Emrich, 2014). However, there is evidence that points to the potential risks associated with the heavy training and competition associated with early specialisation, such as exhaustion, burnout, injuries, athletes experiencing less enjoyment, and increased risk of dropout (Law, Côté, & Ericsson, 2008; Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2008; Gould et al., 1996; Strachan, Côté, & Deacon, 2009; Wall & Côté, 2007). Scholars (see Rees et al., 2017) have recommended that policy makers and practitioners minimise these risks through promoting opportunities for young athletes to sample a variety of sports and engage in non-organised active play.

Despite the trends in early talent identification and early specialisation, data suggests that late entry athletes can perform just as well as early entry athletes. For example, data suggests that British athletes who are selected from 'Talent Transfer' programmes at ages 16-25 years can reach the performance of their elite peers within one year (Vaeyens et al., 2009). Furthermore, the careers of athletes who achieve elite or higher levels of sport appear to have non-linear performance trajectories (Gulbin, Weissensteiner, & Oldenziel, 2013) and can include repeated selection or deselection from talent pathways or support programmes (Güllich, 2014). As such, Rees et al. (2017) recommend that policy makers, stakeholders, and practitioners recognise that early or junior success is not necessarily significant in predicting long-

term success and that support programmes should be open to athletes of all age ranges, with de-selected athletes monitored for potential returns.

Talent identification includes the assessment of various performance indicators, of which there remains some debate. Most sport scholars studying talent agree that genetics are a component to sporting performance, however there is debate amongst which genetic profiles make the greatest contribution (Eynon et al., 2011). Talent is most commonly assessed based on anthropometric and physiological factors, with the literature base showing high quality evidence and agreement that factors such as height, weight, lean body mass, limb length, strength, jumping and sprinting ability, aerobic capacity, and anaerobic endurance and power are appropriate performance indicators across a wide range of sports (Kerr et al., 2007; Roescher et al., 2010; Lawton, Cronin, & McGuigan, 2012; Williams & Reilly, 2000). However, some researchers caution that biological maturation (e.g., puberty, physical body changes) should be accounted for in talent identification (Hirose, 2009; Vandendriessche et al., 2012) as this may help to re-capture lost or missed late maturers in sport (Rees et al., 2017). There is also debate in the literature as to the use of athletes' birthdate to indicate talent, with some authors (e.g., Baker & Logan, 2007; Figueiredo et al., 2009; Schoerer et al., 2009) arguing for the effectiveness of this metric while other authors (e.g. Rees et al., 2017) argue against using birthdate due to moderate to low quality existing evidence, with Wattie and Baker (2018: 121) further claiming there is "no evidence that relatively older youth are naturally better athletes; they are merely advantaged by favourable circumstance." Psychological factors are also considered within talent identification, as there is a vast amount high quality of evidence revealing that such factors contribute to performance. For example, at elite levels and higher,

research indicates that more successful athletes display higher levels of motivation, confidence and perceived control, better ability to cope with adversity, higher levels of mental toughness and resilience, and hold a number of other mental skills such as goal-setting (Mahoney & Avener, 1977; Gould, Eklund, & Jackson, 1993; Jones, Hanton, & Connaughton, 2002; MacNamara, Button, & Collins, 2010; Gublin et al., 2010).

Despite the increase in interest and studies on the topic of sporting talent, many researchers (e.g., Issurin, 2017; Johnston, Wattie, Schorer, & Baker, 2018; Bergkamp, Niessen, den Hartigh, Frencken, & Meijer, 2019) have noted an alarming lack of a strong foundation of evidence for understanding talent in sport as well as the implications of this absence for explaining the multiple factors of human potential in sport. Cahill and MacNamara (2024) argue that talent identification research, especially recent work, rarely considers environmental factors. Within the literature there are also inconsistent definitions and treatments of talent which have led to a varied range of methodologies (Baker & Wattie, 2018; Collins, McNamara, & Cruickshank, 2019; Baker, Wattie, & Schorer, 2019), low rates of predictive validity in talent selections (Koz, Fraser-Thomas, & Baker, 2012), and poor quality of existing evidence (Johnston et al., 2018).

In a recent scoping review (see Baker et al., 2020) of talent research in sport from 1990 to 2018, researchers found that there were dominant trends pertaining to samples, nations, and sports across 1,899 articles. They identified that there was an overrepresentation of articles focused on men only (43.8% of studies) and cross-sectional designs (68.2%). Additionally, this review found a heavy majority of papers focused on the sport of football (22.4%) with 442 total studies compared to the second

most common trend of mixed sports (15.3%) at 302 studies and basketball at third with 102 studies (5.2%). Finally, it was apparent that athletes from two nations accounted for the largest amount of talent studies with Australia having the most representation at 173 articles (8.9%) and the UK closely following at second with 172 articles (8.8%). Indeed, current understandings of talent identification and development are largely impacted by the systems and sports of Australia, the UK, Europe, and North America (Henrich et al., 2010). Interestingly, of the studies in this review, over 437 (22.2%) did not report the specific nation from which the athlete sample came from and another 292 studies (14.8%) did not report the sex of the athlete participants. Baker et al. (2020) propose that perhaps the authors felt that sex or nation details were implied or that readers could easily infer these specifics, however such assumptions are inappropriate to conclude given that many research teams are international and athletes of both sexes could compete in many sports. Of note, Baker et al.'s (2020) scoping review did not report on other aspects of athlete participant identities across the literature such as race, ethnicity, cultural background, disability, or sexuality, so it is therefore uncertain if these features are also not reported in the research. These trends in current talent in sport literature reflect a need to diversify the samples of athletes and national contexts of studies, improve reporting of key information (i.e., sex, nation), and expand work in commonly understudied sports.

Although talent is typically identified in athletes at young ages, Baker et al.'s (2020) scoping review revealed that most of the literature centres on adult-only samples (41.8%) while adolescent-only studies accounted for only 18.1% of the research base, with mixed ages accounting for the remaining studies in the review (19%). Additionally, there is a considerable lack of longitudinal or lifespan studies on

talented athletes, which some authors (e.g., Johnston et al, 2018; Baker et al., 2020) argue is problematic due to creating gaps in developmental data and variation amongst elite/talented athletes. These characteristics of the literature appear strange given that talent identification begins very early in an athlete's career, usually when they are of adolescent age. As such, it raises the question of how coaches or practitioners can accurately select or identify talent amongst youth athletes for selection onto teams or talent development programmes if the majority of research (which influences practice) is focused on adult athletes. In the same vein, this raises questions as to how gatekeepers of talent funding and organised support programmes can make qualified and informed decisions about which athletes are talented *enough* for funding or support with a dearth of vital data on performance and development variables and changes over time. With this in mind, current processes of talent identification and development appear to be driven by untested assumptions and inaccurate information due to the gaps in understanding of talent in sport. This has critical implications for athletes and stakeholders across the talent pathway, as inaccurate or ineffective decisions around talent identification can lead to athlete dropout, decreased motivation, and misplaced investment or resources (Baker et al., 2020).

Despite the strong trends of selecting increasingly younger athletes onto talent pathways, the effectiveness of such an approach, as well as the talent pathways themselves, have been questioned. Several studies have documented low conversion rates of athletes selected onto talent pathways to senior level success (Ackerman, 2013; Gullich, 2014; Honer et al., 2015; Barreiros, Coté & Fonseca, 2014). For example, a recent study centred on the sport of athletics found that only 9% of males

and 13% of females ranked in the top 20 as UK senior athletes were ranked within the top 20 as under 13s (Kearney & Hayes, 2018). Similar findings were reported by a study on rugby union athletes with 76% of players competing at a national level as 13-year-olds who were then not competing at a national level in the under 18 age group (Durandt, Parker, Masimla, & Lambert, 2011). Importantly, evaluating the effectiveness of the talent pathway with one quantitative measure of output fails to consider other factors that may be related to talent development (Williams, 2023). As such, there is a critical need for more qualitative work that increases understanding of the athlete experience along the pathway.

Within the literature on talent pathways, there is a lack of work exploring athlete experiences of inclusion and/or exclusion or indeed how talent pathways might be structurally exclusive. Although there are some studies that consider and propose geographic location as a major factor affecting talent pathways (e.g., Baker & Logan, 2007; Bruner et al., 2011; Balish & Côté, 2014; Turnnidge, Hancock, & Côté, 2014; Steingrover et al., 2017), there is a lack of explicit connection to financial factors compounding such barriers and constraints. As such, the socioeconomic status of the athlete and/or their family is often overlooked (e.g., Côté et al. 2006; Reeves et al., 2018; Burgess & Naughton, 2010; Turnnidge et al., 2014; Taylor & Collins, 2015; Winn et al., 2017). There are, however, a few exceptions to this trend that highlight the impact and role of socioeconomic status and financial constraints on the experience of athletes in talent pathways. Dagkas and Stathi (2007) argue that socioeconomic status is a constraint on sport participation as it may lead to a decline in training and participation, thus hindering opportunity to develop and progress. Extant literature (Holt, Kingsley, Tink, & Scherer, 2011; Nielsen, Grønfeldt, Toftegaard-Støckel, &

Andersen, 2011; Steenhuis, Nooy, Moes, & Schuit, 2009) has demonstrated a link between sports participation and financial constraints, but these studies are typically focused on overall sport participation or specific socioeconomic populations, thus not centred on talent pathways.

In high-performance or talent pathways, some literature has considered the influence of environmental constraints in the development of talented athletes (Baker, Cobley, & Schorer, 2012; Baker et al., 2003; Bloom, 1985), but little has been published regarding the financial constraints within talent pathway systems. Sports Aid's (2013) survey that reported nearly 40% of athletes in the UK identified the cost of participation as the single greatest barrier to their success. Baker et al. (2003) suggest that limited financial resources create challenges for athletes to accumulate the levels of practice necessary for high levels of performance. Morely et al. (2018) explored the financial constraints affecting athletes on the England Talent Pathway from the viewpoint of talent leads who were employed within a range of NGBs of sport to lead the development of talented athletes. This study reported a prevalence of financial constraints on individuals within the talent system and outlined three key findings: i) costs (e.g., travel, equipment) escalate as athletes move along the pathway, ii) the structure of the pathway appears to influence the escalating costs, and iii) future funding opportunities are necessary but methods of deploying funding are inconsistent, with many talent leads lacking formalised mechanisms to identify financial hardship amongst athletes at the lower levels of the talent pathway (Morely et al., 2018). Speaking to exclusion in talent pathways more generally, Vaeyens, Lenoir, Williams, and Philippaerts (2008: 771) concluded that traditional talent identification and talent development models are "likely to exclude" many talented

children, “especially late maturing” children, from talent support programmes and that there is inappropriate investment of available resources. Similar to studies above that identified weaknesses in talent identification, the authors point to part of the problem lying in talent models failing to take growth and maturation into account.

The above trends, inconsistencies, and weaknesses in the literature base present clear gaps in the knowledge and understanding of talent in sport and indicate a pressing need to expand research in this field through increasing diversity in sampling, national contexts, and alternative methodologies (Baker et al., 2020). Similar gaps in knowledge and research trends exist in dual career sport literature, examined next.

2.3 Dual career research: origins, topics, and perspectives

This section presents a critical review of research findings relating to dual career athletes. I first consider the recognised types of dual career pathways. Second, I review dominant findings and approaches to dual career research generally. Third, I make a case that these elements are relatively homogeneous and therefore likely to have constrained both practice and associated research in important ways.

2.3.1 The emergence of, and defining, dual career athletes and dual career pathways

Since the 1990s, interest around athletes combining sport with education or work has steadily increased due to claims regarding the positive impact of sport on individuals and society (Guidotti, Cortis, & Capranica, 2015). In the early 2000s, the European Parliament commissioned a series of studies to research dual career athletes across

European Union (EU) member states (European Parliament, 2003; Amara et al., 2004; INEUM Consulting & TAJ, 2008). The studies found that support for dual career athletes differed greatly by country and that dual career pathways did not have clear or uniform structures. In 2007, the European Commission (EC) produced a *White Paper on Sport* that outlined sport-related challenges in EU member states (EC, 2007). Within this text, specific focus was placed on sport having a societal role and, additionally, addressed the challenges athletes face, especially related to balancing sport with education. The term “dual career” arose from these studies and has now become the dominant term to describe athletes and systems where sport is combined with education or work.

2.3.2 Overview of topics and perspectives in dual career research

It is important to recognise that sport research on dual careers is part of a longer tradition of researching athlete careers. Roderick and Kamperman (2022: 701) maintain that “the career trajectories of athletes” have always been of interest to “supporters, spectators, journalists, and commentators of sport”, but academic studies of athletes’ life histories often lack the depth of athlete career discussions held in public domains. Furthermore, there are few considerations of athletic careers as work or of athletes’ working lives. Instead, athletes’ lifespans or biographies have been approached through the idea of a “career” (see Ball, 1976; Ingham, Blissmer, & Davidson, 1999). The term “career” has been long-used in research around athletes’ journeys from the beginnings of their sport to retirement. It is from this history that “dual career” research emerged and, as such, similar topics are considered such as trajectories and transitions during and after athletes’ sporting careers. In dual career

literature, sport is a type of “career” and distinguished from other “careers” such as academic pursuits and commitments to paid work. Here, importantly, I view “work” and the work pathway, as including paid work pursuits outside of sport competition that are professional and vocational, as well as paid work that may be undertaken to make ends meet such as part-time and temporary jobs.

The landscape of dual career sport research largely focuses on three thematic areas: (i) career development of dual career athletes (ii) transitions of dual career athletes, (iii) and athlete perspectives. Early dual career literature sought to describe the career development and transitions experienced by dual career athletes. Later, dual career literature began exploring athletes’ own perspectives in-depth, with a focus on challenges and support needs. Key findings from current dual career literature are outlined below.

Dual career research has been predominantly shaped by Eurocentric studies (e.g., Amara et al., 2004; Aquilina, 2013; De Knop et al., 2009; Debois et al., 2015; Ryba et al., 2015; Stambulova, 2009, 2012; Stambulova et al., 2009; Stambulova & Ryba, 2013; Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004). Key authors in this field - such as Aquilina, De Brandt, De Knop, Lavallee, Ryba, Stambulova and Wylleman - predominantly research athlete careers with the aim of understanding the experiences and challenges of pursuing a dual career. Current literature is especially centred on athlete retirement and transitions. The emphasis on transitions may stem from the view of sport as a social and economic contributor to EU nations, as can be seen in the key dual career resources coming from or sponsored by the EU (European Commission, 2007, 2012, 2020; European Parliament, 2003).

As white Euro-centric perspectives and studies dominate the current landscape of dual career literature, little mention is made to the role of cultural, racial, or ethnic backgrounds of dual career athletes. For example, the race or ethnicity of dual career athletes is rarely considered in general and within particular studies in which dual career athletes were interviewed or surveyed. It seems that participants are either assumed to be white European, or race/ethnicity was not considered when selecting participants or, more importantly, when reporting and analysing data. For example, in a study on elite level swimmers and basketball players, the age, education level, subject of study, and current occupation of each participant was recorded, but race and ethnicity were not recorded or considered (Tekavc et al., 2015). Similarly, a study on dual career elite male athletes did not record or consider the race or ethnicity of its participants (Debois et al., 2015). This is the norm for dual career athlete research.

Furthermore, interest in dual career is in part due to the inevitable retirement of athletes and the view that undertaking a dual career will assist with the transition out of sport, as multiple studies report the results of undertaking dual career pathways being that athletes are better equipped for life after sport. For example, dual career athletes have been reported to have better time management skills (Tekavc et al., 2015) and retirement planning (Aquilina, 2013). Other studies indicate that dual career athletes have more balanced lifestyles, identities more strongly linked to domains outside of sport, and larger social networks (Linnér et al., 2019; Torregrosa et al., 2015).

Research on athletes' career development and transitions reveals the various challenges athletes face (e.g., Debois et al., 2012; De Brandt, 2017; Gomez et al., 2018; Stambulova et al., 2015; Vickers, 2018) and point to a need for enhanced dual

career systems with increased athlete support (Alferman & Stambulova, 2007; Stambulova & Ryba, 2013; Vickers, 2018). There are also sport-specific and nation-specific publications on the experiences of dual career athletes within those environments (Debois et al., 2012; Stambulova et al., 2015; Tekavc et al., 2015; Wylleman et al., 2013). Collectively, these papers have highlighted that dual career athletes have specific demands and challenges, namely identity confusion, social and athletic challenges (Vickers, 2018), and suggest that the development of talented athletes should be holistic and gradual (De Brandt, 2017; European Commission, 2012). The literature base, as reported through a systematic review by Li and Sum (2017), speaks to three overarching factors that influence, positively or negatively, dual career development in sport: individual factors (e.g., physical and psychological conditions), interpersonal factors (concerning interactions or relationships with coaches, teammates, and employers), and external factors (e.g., opportunities, barriers, support, conditions, environments, and finances). In sum, dual career athletes are required to manage these three factors to maintain their dual careers.

The dual career literature base primarily examines athlete experience from a student-athlete perspective, with minimal research related to dual career athletes who pursue work pathways instead of education. In Stambulova and Wylleman's (2019) critical review of dual career studies, only 2 studies out of 42 considered dual career in the work pathway. A more recent notable outlier is Moreno, Chamorro, and López de Subijana's (2021) study on employee-athletes in Spain and their perceptions of combining sport with work. Moreno et al. (2021) reported that employee-athletes, competing at elite levels in sport, felt that they were developing better coping strategies for their eventual retirement from sport, but also reported experiencing "psychological

overrun” due to the challenges of changing identity in workplace environments and the lack of flexibility from some workplaces in supporting their pursuit of sport.

2.3.3 A key challenge: Homogeneity in dual career research

Here, I have argued that there is a homogeneity in terms of perspectives, populations, and methods across dual career research. It is perhaps unsurprising that this lack of consideration of diversity of experience permeates dual career research, while resources specifically tailored for dual career sport systems are also lacking emphasis on racial and ethnic diversity in particular. For example, the EU Guidelines on dual careers states that, “All guidelines have been developed in reference to all athletes – men, women, boys and girls, without and with disabilities” (European Commission, 2012: 5). Gender is presented as binary, and mention of other protected characteristics, for example race, ethnicity, sexuality, and religion is missing from this statement of inclusive focus.

As stated above, there is an apparent homogeneity across dual career research in terms of being dominated by European researchers and European centred studies. There is also more literature on younger dual career athletes at developmental levels, indicating a need to include more studies on dual career athletes competing at higher performance levels such as talent, performance, elite, and professional levels. To further examine trends in dual career literature, I conducted a systematic mapping of dual career literature using an inclusion-focused lens. The following section outlines my approach to this mapping exercise and shares the findings.

2.4 Systematic mapping of dual career literature

To assess the prevalence (or absence) of diversity and inclusion themes within dual career literature, I conducted a systematic mapping review of the literature in June of 2020, using the methods of Perryman (2016) and Petticrew and Roberts (2006). I created a set of keywords, using equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) terminology, to chart the number of papers with those themes. The keywords were joined with connectors to find works with each theme in either the title of the article, within the abstract, or anywhere in the article (see Appendix 12 for full mapping review results).

I considered socio-demographics using the PROGRESS-Plus characteristics (Cochrane Methods Equity, 2020), recommended by the Cochrane Public Health Group, and created to identify characteristics that stratify health opportunities and outcomes. The acronym PROGRESS is a framework that is useful in ensuring that an equity lens is applied in the conduct, reporting, and use of research (O'Niell et al., 2014). The PROGRESS acronym refers to: place of residence, race/ethnicity/culture/language, occupation, gender/sex, religion, education, socioeconomic status, and social capital (Cochrane Methods Equity, 2020). While the "Plus" adds age, disability, sexual orientation, other vulnerable groups related to family, household, criminal justice system, school, and relationships (Cochrane Methods Equity, 2020). Table 1, below, illustrates a snapshot summary of the results from this mapping exercise, highlighting inclusion-themed keywords searched within research titles (full results in Appendix 12).

Primary Keywords	Connecting Keywords	Results with all keywords in title
dual career sport	diversity	0
dual career sport	inclusion	0
dual career sport	exclusion	0
dual career sport	culture	0
dual career sport	race or ethnicity	0
dual career sport	Black	0
dual career sport	Asian	0
dual career sport	gender	0
dual career sport	female	0
dual career sport	male	0
dual career sport	disability or disabled	0
dual career sport	para sport(s)	0
dual career sport	poverty	0
dual career sport	socioeconomic status	0
dual career sport	sexuality	0
dual career athlete	diversity	0
dual career athlete	inclusion	0
dual career athlete	exclusion	0
dual career athlete	culture	0
dual career athlete	race or ethnicity	0
dual career athlete	Black	0
dual career athlete	Asian	0
dual career athlete	gender	1
dual career athlete	female	2
dual career athlete	male	1
dual career athlete	disability or disabled	0
dual career athlete	para sport(s)	0
dual career athlete	poverty	0
dual career athlete	socioeconomic status	0
dual career athlete	disability or disabled	0
dual career athlete	sexuality	0

Table 1. Summary of systematic mapping review results, inclusion themes in title

The main finding from this mapping exercise was that no dual career literature focused on any of the following as central themes of research (i.e., reflected in the

title): diversity, inclusion, disability, race, ethnicity, Black, Asian, sexuality, or poverty. There was also only one dual career article title including “gender”, with two including “female”, and one including “male”, in the title. Although the word inclusion featured in “anywhere in the article” results (Appendix 12), these instances did not correlate with inclusion as it is covered here (i.e., feelings of inclusion and inclusion efforts), but rather referred to inclusion *criteria.* Such criteria usually lacked mention of diversity characteristics such as race, ethnicity, disability, and sexuality. Together, these findings highlight the absence of demographically-focused or indeed intersectional research surrounding the multiple facets of athlete identity in the dual career space. It may be that research samples pick up athletes who are in these groups, but researchers may not record these characteristics or explore these differences as important. In sum, this mapping exercise has revealed that current dual career literature does not investigate how difference (related to EDI themes above) might shape the dual career experience and athlete needs in important ways.

These trends also appear to have continued, as there remain limited studies around the above themes in dual career literature. Since this mapping exercise in June 2020, there have been some notable subsequent published studies centring disabled dual career athletes (Maciá-Andreu et al., 2023; Leiva-Arcas, Comyns, & Ege, 2023; Maganini, Isidori, Fazio, & Cioni, 2023). These advancements come, again, from European sporting contexts and appear to correspond with the general increase in dual career studies.

2.5 Research significance and justification

The preceding literature review and systematic mapping exercise has identified that consideration of diversity and inclusion in dual career research is minimal. Dual career athlete experiences of exclusion are largely missing from the greater landscape of dual career literature. The majority of dual career literature is focused on the experiences of athletes included in and supported by dual career sport systems, mostly focusing on their development and understanding transitions (as elaborated previously). Missing are the voices of athletes who have been shut out of dual career systems, as well as those who pursue work pathways. It is imperative that these voices are heard, and this research programme intentionally included such athletes to advance understanding into their lived experiences of inclusion and exclusion while pursuing their dual careers.

3. Chapter Three: The British sport landscape: Governance, funding, and EDI policy

As stated above, social inclusion and social exclusion are key issues in the sport sector with national governments influencing policy and initiatives to foster inclusion and combat exclusion within their populations. Inclusion efforts in British sport are thereby drive by sport governance through funding and policy. In this chapter, I explain the current landscape of British sport through outlining governance and funding structures as well as the historical and current developments of equality, diversity, and inclusion in sport policy.

3.1 Sport governance and funding in the United Kingdom

Sport governance in the United Kingdom (UK) is comprised of a hierarchal system of organisations that oversee, partner with, fund, or support one another (see Figure 2, below). The Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS), a government entity that has responsibility for culture and sport in the UK, funds five sport councils. As the UK is comprised of four countries (England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland), there are thus four home sport councils that represent each country: Sport England, Sport Wales, Sport Scotland, and Sport Northern Ireland. Each of the home councils are responsible for the delivery of grassroot sport in their countries, namely they are focused on increasing participation in physical activity and sport. In addition to grassroots level sport, these four sport councils also have their own talent pathways consisting of athletes who progress to regional and national levels in which they could compete for their home nation. There is a fifth sport council, UK Sport, which oversees the development and funding of elite athletes from all four of the countries who will

likely compete at international or Olympic/Paralympic levels. On the international sport stage, the British Olympic Association (BOA) and the British Paralympic Association (BPA) oversee the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland's participation in the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

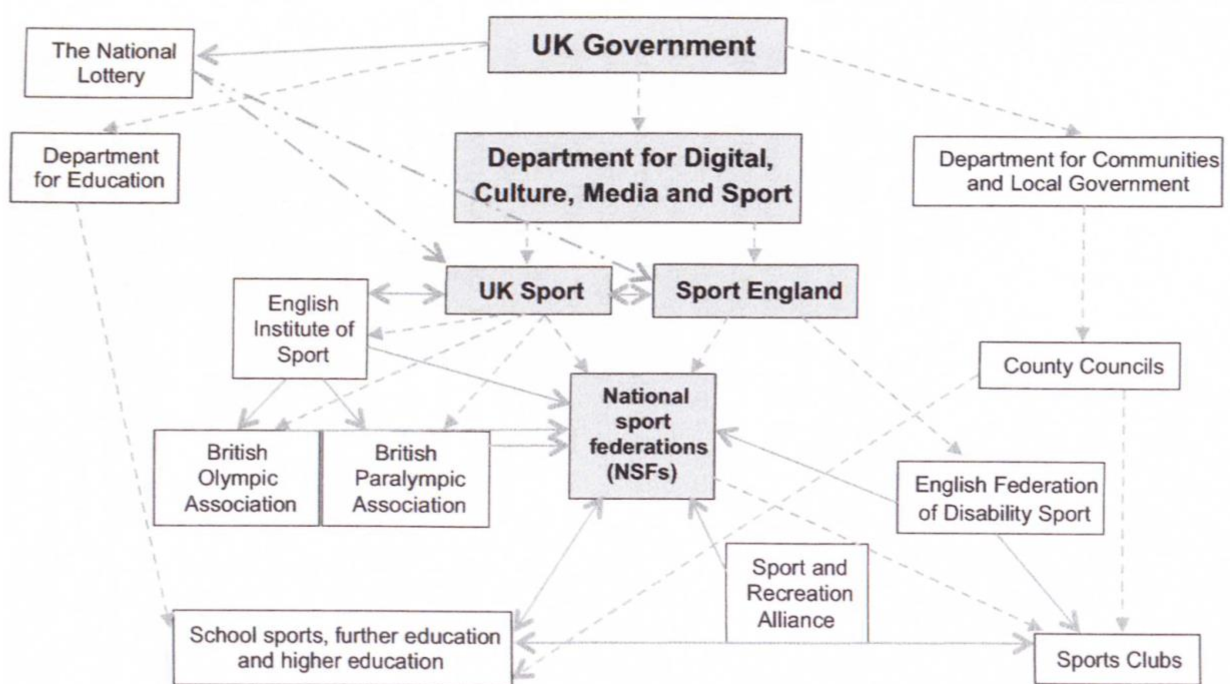

Figure 2. The governance of English sport, adapted from Coakley & Pike (2014: 443)

UK Sport and Sport England are also funded in part by the National Lottery, which is overseen by the UK government. UK Sport and Sport England jointly fund the national governing bodies of sport (NGBs) that oversee development and participation in each individual sport across England. However, some NGBs are split into either "British" or "English" federations while others are not. For example, there is both British Swimming and Swim England. British Swimming is funded by UK Sport, as it is

focused on supporting elite athletes who will most likely compete at international level, while Swim England is funded by Sport England as it is focused on increasing participation in swimming at grassroots level. UK Sport also partners with and funds the English Institute of Sport, an organisation that provides support services (science, medicine, technology, and engineering) to British Olympic and Paralympic sports.

3.1.1 History of sport funding and policy in the UK

As sport scholars have expounded (Houlihan & White, 2002; Hylton & Totten, 2013), there was essentially no government sport policy in the UK before World War II and through the early 1960s. It was not until the Wilson-Heath-Callaghan administrations of 1964-79 that the government began to create a sport policy (Jefferys, 2012). The Wolfenden Report (Central Council for Physical Recreation, 1960), which argued that state funding was necessary to enhance community sport, was highly influential but did not immediately affect the government's approach to sport funding or policy. Change finally came when the first Minister of Sport, Denis Howell, was appointed in 1964 and established a Sports Council (Jefferys, 2012). British amateur teams who competed at international events, such as the Olympics, were supported by the Sports Council through travel and expense funds. Due to the council's financial support of international and local sport, there was a significant rise in the number of indoor sporting facilities in Britain (Jefferys, 2012). In 1972, the Advisory Sports Council became the Sports Council of Great Britain and began to commit funds to elite and high-performance sport through national governing bodies (NGBs) (Jefferys, 2012). The Sports Council used the "Sport for All" slogan in the 1970s to promote opportunities for people with disabilities to play sport. From the 1970s up until the

1990s, sport policy was largely focused on participation initiatives and improving and creating sport facilities.

It is important to note that competitive sport was not considered much of a priority by the British government until around the 1990s. Margaret Thatcher was known to be indifferent to sport and, under her leadership, the government did not make progress in sport policy or funding until her successor arrived in November of 1990 (Houlihan & Lindsey, 2012). The new prime minister John Major placed more government focus on sport by putting it back on the public policy agenda (Jefferys, 2012). At the start of the 1990s, sport in the UK was underfunded, under sourced, lacked strategic leadership, and was a low priority for the government. But the mid-1990s saw a significant shift in this landscape as more focused was placed on international sport achievement.

The 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta proved to be a turning point for British sport, as Team GB finished in 36th place, a significant drop from the previous Olympics where they finished in 13th place. Swift change and reorganisation came the year following the poor performance at the 1996 Olympics, as a new high-performance focus created tensions with participation-focused "Sport for All" initiatives. In January of 1997, the Sport Council for Great Britain evolved into UK Sport and Sport England after first receiving a Royal Charter in September of the previous year (DCMS, 2017). The change represents a split in the sport council's functions into the UK Sport and Sport England bodies (with the latter then having similar status as the sports councils for the other three home countries). That same year, the National Lottery began funding elite sport. While the National Lottery Bill was passed in 1993, its first draw wasn't until 1994 and the money did not yet go towards elite level sport. The National

Lottery Bill stated that 28% of money spent on ticket sales would be allocated to: sports, arts, heritage, charities, and projects to mark the millennium (Houlihan & Lindsey, 2012). The distribution of these funds was the responsibility of eleven bodies, including the sports councils for each of the home countries.

In 2002, the DCMS published *Game Plan: A Strategy for Delivering Government's Sport and Physical Activity Objectives* (DCMS, 2002). *Game Plan* set out new objectives for elite sport and changed the organisational structure of sport, while there was also clear emphasis on participation as a vehicle for achieving greater social inclusion (Houlihan & Lindsey, 2012: 61, 115). Sport England became responsible for the delivery of the strategies and objectives outlined in the *Game Plan*. Two years later, Sport England published a report on the national framework for sport in England and set a mandate for "Making England active" (Sport England, 2004). That same year, UK Sport (2004) issued a statement indicating the development of a new funding model for Olympic sports, calling it "a tough, no compromise approach that will strengthen the best, support the developing and provoke change in the underperforming. Future funding of sports will take account of both past performances, which demonstrate whether the sport has a winning formula, and future potential". This "No Compromise" funding model was activated in 2006, once UK Sport assumed full responsibility for all Olympic and Paralympic performance-related support in England and the UK (UK Sport, 2006a, 2006b). The "No Compromise" funding policy indicated a clear prioritisation of elite sport funding that targeted resources "solely at those athletes/sports that are capable of delivering medal winning performances" (UK Sport, 2007: 1). This new funding policy essentially reshaped the relationship between UK Sport and NGBs into a resource-dependent one where a sport receives funding if they

achieve specific performance targets (Green, 2009), giving UK Sport the power to withdraw funding from NGBs who fail to achieve performance targets. The "No Compromise" policy set a precedent for funding that prioritises performance results above all other metrics and is still influencing British sport policy today.

In 2017, a case study was published that investigated how three NGBs responded to the funding cuts driven by the "No Compromise" policy framework for Olympic funding (Bostock et al., 2017). Over a 12-month period of turnaround management, the NGBs were observed to determine how they responded to the funding cuts and findings indicated that the "No Compromise" policy undermined future success due to the NGB's extreme dependence on the funding (Bostock et al., 2017). Bostock et al. (2017: 35) outlined that NGBs clearly do not plan or prepare for severe funding cuts and that their reactions are often not strategic or effective:

> "I just hope we haven't lost them, but I fear we've lost far more than I would like. If there's nothing for them to target or to aspire to ... I have 28 [athletes], men and women who no longer have anything to aspire to ... We have gone back 25 years. We've gone backwards" (CEO, NGB 3).

Here, the "No Compromise" funding structures put pressure on NGBs reliant on government funding, leading to substantial ripple effects across organisations who have their funding cut or removed. Such reliance on funding can influence the priorities of organisations and their overall effectiveness in meeting funders' expectations and their own agendas. Wrapped up within the effects from funding decisions are the lives and careers of athletes who are funded by NGBs and who are dependent on the existence of performance pathways in their sports. Later, this thesis explores how funding structures influence the experiences of dual career athletes.

Since *Game Plan* (DCMS, 2002), sport organisations and NGBs seeking public funding have been pressured to consider, and make plans to take action on, increasing diversity within sport. For example, Sport England's *On Board for Better Governance Strategy* in 2012 first addressed the underrepresentation of women leaders in sport governance. This strategy set the expectation that national sport federations applying for public funding had to aim for their boards to consist of at least 25% women by 2017 (Piggott, Pike, & Matthews, 2018). Since the release of this strategy, the same topic was first addressed in a government national strategy for sport in *Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation*, released by the DCMS (Piggott et al., 2018).

In 2016, *A Code for Sport Governance* was jointly created by UK Sport and Sport England to establish standards of governance for organisations seeking (and those in receipt of) funding from UK government and National Lottery funding from UK Sport and/or Sport England. Since its launch, this code has been applied to more than 4,000 organisations ranging from national charities down to grassroots organisations. Following this code of governance, more top-down pressure was placed on sport organisations and NGBs to increase diversity and be more "inclusive". The following section switches focus from funding structures and policies to more EDI-specific policies, with attention given to the historical developments of EDI policy in British sport.

3.2 Equality, diversity, and inclusion policy in British sport

As this research also focuses on athletes in the talent pathway and above, it is important to consider the context of inclusion policy within British competitive and elite sport. Policy-driven attempts to tackle inequalities, discrimination and exclusion in

sport have been a key feature of UK governance since the “Sport for All” discourse in the 1970s. Mandatory requirements from equality legislation and wider awareness of inclusion in society have arguably strengthened the narrative of equality progress within UK sport organisations. However, huge disparities and inequalities still exist across the sporting landscape from grassroots participation to board leadership. As such, the actual engagement with and implementation of equality policy legislation into practice by sport organisations and NGBs has been a recurrent subject of debate (Shaw & Penny, 2003; Lusted, 2014; Spracklen, Hylton, & Long, 2006; Turconi & Shaw, 2021).

As discussed in 3.1.1, sport became a public policy concern from the late 1960s with focus on encouraging and increasing participation, with a particular agenda to combat social exclusion through sport. The 1970s also represented a key point for the introduction and enactment of major statutes against sex and race discrimination in the UK (Dickens, 2007). Key legislation included: the Race Relations Act (first legislation in 1965, amended in 1976 and 2000), the Equal Pay Act (1970, fully implemented in 1975 and amended in 1983) and the Sex Discrimination Act (1975). Twenty years later, the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) (1995, updated in 2004 and 2005) was finally enacted. Thus, to oversee these statutes, three equality organisations were established: the Commission for Race Equality (CRE), the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), and later, the Disability Rights Commission (DRC). The baton has since been passed in recent years to organisations working directly in sport, including Sporting Equals, Women in Sport, and the Activity Alliance (Kamperman & Rankin-Wright, 2023).

In the 1980s and 1990s, the equality agenda in sport largely focused on promoting women's representation, rights, and inclusion. The Women's Sport Foundation (now rebranded as Women in Sport) was founded in 1984 as the first charity to campaign for women's rights in sport. Women in Sport, along with the sports councils and the International Olympic Committee organised the first International Conference on Women and Sport in 1994. This led to the publication of the *Brighton Declaration on Women and Sport* (International Working Group on Women and Sport, 1994), which placed gender equity as a central agenda for sports organisations (Shaw, 2001) and was subsequently adopted by 200 countries.

During this time, several activist groups and some NGBs began to address racial equality in sport through anti-racism initiatives and campaigns (Long, 2000; Long & Spracklen, 2011). Examples included the Let's Kick Racism Out of Football (now known as Kick It Out) campaign, jointly launched in 1993 by the CRE and the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA), and the Tackle It campaign initiated by the Rugby Football League. Following recommendations from Sport England's Racial Advisory group, in 1998, the CRE in partnership with Sport England established 'Sporting Equals', a sports equity organisation orientated to advancing racial equality in sport. For Sporting Equals, it was a logical move to re-write the CRE's standards for monitoring and evaluating racial equality for the sport context. The CRE standards had been primarily aimed at the public sector but were being applied indirectly to sport through local authorities for grassroots sports development (Hylton & Totten, 2013). With the backing of Sport England, Sporting Equals (2000) launched *Achieving Racial Equality: A Standard for Sport*, specifically for sports organisations and NGBs (Long & Spracklen, 2011). This document provided a tool to plan, develop and achieve racial

equality, as well as evaluate progress against set levels of achievement. Crucially, evidence of achievement against the objectives of this standard was later linked by Sport England to continued funding of NGBs (Long & Spracklen, 2011). This led to every NGB funded by Sport England bar one achieving the preliminary level of the racial equality standard by the end of March 2003 (Spracklen, 2003).

From 1997, after a New Labour government was elected, several policy documents were published that linked sport to a broader policy rhetoric of social inclusion, equality, and diversity (Long & Spracklen, 2011). Key equality policy documents from this time included, but were not limited to: *Making English Sport Inclusive: Equity guidelines for governing bodies* (Sport England, 2000), *A Sporting Future for All* (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2000), and *The Equality Standard: A Framework for Sport* (Sports Council Equality Group, 2004, re-launched in 2012 and updated in 2014).

Policies in the 1990s centred on “equity” and “equality”, with little explanation of the terms themselves, and now today “inclusion” is the dominant term. Lusted (2014) claims that early equality policy documents were radical in their aims and objectives, as they were rooted in a wide scope and specific approach to social equality that included cultural and structural change. For example, Sport England’s (2000: 4) *Making sport inclusive: Equity guidelines for governing bodies* document defined ‘sports equity’ as being:

> “about fairness in sport, equality of access, recognising inequalities and taking steps to address them. It is about changing the culture and structure of sport to ensure that it becomes equally accessible to all members of society, whatever their age, ability, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality or social/economic status. Sports equity, then, is more concerned with the sport itself.”

Here, sports equity is pointed towards a need to change broad cultural and structural conditions within existing sport structures and environments, and that the responsibility for such change is placed on the leaders and stakeholders currently controlling the sport (Lusted, 2014). Interestingly, and also echoed by Ahmed (2012) in the context of inclusion work in HE institutions, the term "equity" is less used in current equality policy rhetoric of British sport, instead being replaced by "diversity" and, most commonly today, "inclusion". With the changes in terminology, there have also been changes in the content of equality policy documents as plans to promote organisational and cultural change have largely been replaced by softer focus on including underrepresented groups and increasing opportunities without organisational reform (Lusted, 2014).

A Sporting Future for All (DCMS, 2000) formalised the mainstreaming of disability sport policy, a process started in 1989 (Minister for Sport Review Group, 1989), as there is no separate disability sport policy in the UK. This plan made the development and promotion of equity and inclusion a prerequisite for state funding, a trend that has since prevailed in subsequent strategies and codes for sport governance. However, studies have shown that incorporating disability sport into mainstream sport has not necessarily led to successful inclusive outcomes (Kitchin & Howe, 2014; Thomas & Guett, 2014). In the UK, disabled people are the biggest underrepresented group when it comes to sport participation, with 47.5% of disabled people participating in sport compared to 68.1% of non-disabled people (Sport England, 2023a). Currently, the Activity Alliance (formerly the English Federation of Disability Sport) drives and supports the inclusion of disabled people in sport, alongside Disability Rights UK.

With the launch of *The Equality Standard: A Framework for Sport* in 2004, a shift towards an integrated and intersectional approach to equality was signalled (Sports Council Equality Group, 2012). The Standard provided some standardisation for NGBs and sports organisations in providing key definitions of terms, such as equality: ‘the state of being equal – treating individuals equally which is not necessarily treating people the same’ (Sports Council Equality Group, 2014: 6). The purpose of this equality framework was to support NGBs and organisations to develop structures and processes to become more equitable in organisational and service development. Performance was assessed against four levels: foundation, preliminary, intermediate, and advanced (Shaw, 2007). As an impetus for NGBs to engage with this standard, key sport funding organisations (Sport England and UK Sport) set measurable targets linked to the achievement of the various levels of *The Equality Standard*.

The establishment of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) in 2007 marked a shift from single-issue politics to an overarching approach to equality, as the commission then subsumed the three previous separate equality bodies. The EHRC along with a single Equality Act, which was introduced initially in 2006 and then rewritten in 2010 (see Gedalof, 2013), replaced the numerous discrimination statutes, regulations, and orders (Dickens, 2007) and enforced ‘equality’ as a public duty by law within publicly funded organisations across sectors. Within several NGBs, *The Equality Standard*, along with the equality statutory legislation documented in the Equality Act (*Equality Act 2006, C.3*; *Equality Act 2010, C.15*), had a major impact in terms of updating policies and documents to ensure that they were compliant within the new legal framework. The *Equality Standard* was later re-launched in 2012 and is now the longest-standing effort by the combined UK Sports Councils to address

inequality in sport and a range of factors that impact upon inclusion/exclusion (Turconi & Shaw, 2021). *The Equality Standard* identified the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation, with the addition of political opinion and dependents for Northern Ireland only (Sports Council Equality Group, 2012).

Following a few years of grappling with *The Equality Standard* as well as celebrating accomplishments at the 2012 Olympic Games in London, the UK government's *Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation* was published which placed renewed focus on getting more of the population active and addressing lack of diversity, especially in sport leadership (DCMS, 2015). This led to UK Sport and Sport England (2016) to establish *A Code for Sports Governance*, as referenced above, which established requirements for organisations seeking public funding. Within this document, five core principles are listed and expanded upon: structure, people, communication, standards and conduct, and policies and processes. The second principle, "People", calls for organisations to engage with and recruit "people with appropriate diversity, independence, skills, experience, and knowledge to take effective decisions" (UK Sport, 2016: 11). This begs the question of how the five sport councils intend to determine what is "appropriate" diversity. This is further muddied with a vague explanation about why diversity enables "good decision-making" (UK Sport, 2016). Such guidance gives open ended or indeed unclear direction to sport organisations seeking funding, making it difficult for them to understand how to practically achieve increased diversity within their specific sporting contexts and whether or not such efforts are beneficial to their goals and operations. Dickens (1999)

and Lusted (2012) argue that sport organisations in the UK tend to engage with equality and diversity issues only when prompted by legislation and government policy. Lusted (2014: 87) further argues that such legislation acts as a “stick” to compel engagement with EDI issues, while government policy involves “carrot” or incentives used to sell equality and inclusion as beneficial to all.

Sport policy researchers have questioned the effectiveness of EDI sport policies and the issue of responsibility in achieving goals set out in those policies. In the UK, increasing devolution has led to national governments (e.g., Welsh government or English government) having to create their own sport and leisure policies (Dashper, Fletcher, & Long, 2019), as the central UK government pushes more responsibility onto the home nations. Most national NGBs (e.g., Sport England, Sport Wales) have a dual policy agenda of increasing participation in sport and physical activity while also striving to achieve elite sporting success (e.g., Sport Wales, 2012), both of which are influenced by top-down drive, or mandated, EDI policies and initiatives. Researchers have pointed to a gap between the creation of government sports policies and the delivery of those policies by NGBs and volunteer-driven sports organisations and clubs (see Harris & Houlihan, 2016; May, Harris, & Collins, 2013; Rowe, 2015, 2017). This gap between funders and those charged with implementation of policies on the ground creates a lack of clarity over who is responsible for ensuring policy goals and agendas are met (Dashper, Fletcher, & Long, 2019; Harris & Houlihan, 2016; May, Harris, & Collins, 2013). The shift in responsibility for addressing issues of in/equality away from the government onto individual sports organisations raises questions and concerns about whether such organisations want equality, or indeed inclusion, and “whether they are motivated and equipped to achieve it”

(Dashper, Fletcher, & Long, 2019: 765; Carrington, Fletcher, & McDonald, 2016). Adding further challenges, key stakeholders within NGBs sometimes resist EDI policy initiatives in part because they find such policy agendas as an accusation of discriminatory practice within their own organisations, and reject such criticism (Lusted, 2009), while others appear to see inclusion efforts to be at odds with the high-performance drive for medals (Kamperman & Rankin-Wright, 2023). Thus, EDI policy makers and implementors face a continual challenge to overcome scepticism from some sport stakeholders toward the need for EDI interventions (Lusted, 2014).

There have been recent critiques and raised awareness of the lack of diverse representation in both British sport participation and sport leadership (Fair Play Talks, 2023; MacNicol, 2019), as well as past critiques following the 2012 Olympic Games in London (Independent, 2012; Sutton Trust, 2012). For example, the 2018/2019 Diversity in Sport Governance Report found that the boards of bodies funded by Sport England and UK Sport comprised only 3% Black, 3% Asian and 1% 'other' membership, and were 93% White (Inclusive Boards Ltd, 2019: 19). In response to these critiques, Sport England and UK Sport have taken measures to create inclusion plans and initiatives to combat low levels of diversity within sport systems (Sport England, 2019a, 2019b, 2020b; Sport England & UK Sport, 2019). Although these plans outline commitment to increased diversity, there are few specifics given about how sporting organisations will change their structures to be more inclusive towards diverse populations aside from setting goals for hiring more women and ethnic minorities in sport leadership. This lip-service has been critiqued by others, most recently relating to diversity in sport leadership by Arun Kang of Sporting Equals who stated, “No amount of positive messaging can hide the lack of opportunities for BAME

in senior management, talent, coaching or board leadership. That is how you can gauge if an organisation is truly inclusive" (Kang, 2020).

In 2020, the global Covid-19 pandemic seemed to exacerbate and raise public awareness of ongoing societal issues in the western world such as the cost of living crisis, police brutality, racial inequalities, and other social injustices (Kamperman & Rankin-Wright, 2023). During this time, the Black Lives Matter movement filtered into the international sporting world as athletes showed their solidarity with the cause through kneeling before competitions, wearing slogans on their clothing, and making posts on social media accounts (The Guardian, 2020). Athletes in the UK and the US began to "take a knee" on their respective playing fields before competitions (Premier League Football News, 2020). The Black Lives Matter movement also had an influence on British sport policy and practice. First, the Sports Minister decided to review the Sports Governance Code, previously set in 2016 (Sky Sports, 2020). Following this announcement, the Sport and Recreation Alliance initiated a pledge to commit to tackling inequality, which had over 120 signatures from sport and recreation organisations across the UK. This pledge stated that "it is time to confront racism and inequality" and that "systemic change must be made at all levels" (Sport and Recreation Alliance, 2020). Organisations like Sport England made their own individual pledges to commit to increasing diversity (Sport England, 2020b), as did many organisations outside of the sporting world. Black Lives Matter activists advocates quickly critiqued such pledges as performative activism (see Jenkins, 2020; Kalina, 2020; Malone Kircher, 2020) instead of the necessary investment and real commitment to structural change (see Evans et al., 2020; Hylton, 2020).

In the UK, Sporting Equals (2022) responded to the pledges made by sport organisations by creating the Race Representation Index (RRI) to hold organisations accountable and to monitor progress. The RRI scores the progress made by sports bodies on policy and strategy, workforce, coaching and elite talent profile. The Sport Monitoring Advisory Panel, also launched by Sporting Equals, oversaw the RRI and published the inaugural results in March 2022. Additional responses to BLM and the need to challenge racism in the sport sector include Sporting Equals' Race Equality Charter (2020) and the Tackling Racism and Racial Inequality in Sport Review (Shibli et al., 2021).

Lastly, the Covid-19 pandemic led to England/the UK having to 'lock down' and impose restrictions on access to sport and physical activity for many months during 2020 and 2021. This pause in play led many sport organisations to adopt new strategies and equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) plans to combat surging inactivity as well as the systemic and intersectional inequalities raised during this time. Sport England unveiled their *Uniting the Movement: A 10-year strategy for 2021-31*, which initially came with a one-year implementation plan until March 2022. The strategy's key mission involves 'tackling inequalities' and highlights the need to better support disabled people, those in lower socio-economic groups, women, and people from Asian and Black backgrounds (Sport England, 2021). Following suit, UK Sport (2021b) announced their new EDI strategy for 2021-2025, *The power of our differences*, which was drawn from their new strategic plan. At the heart of this EDI action plan are four priority areas: "(i) power a more diverse and inclusive team that delivers more diverse champions, (ii) increase the diversity of leadership on national and international

sporting bodies, (iii) promote and embed inclusion across UK Sport's programmes and (iv) drive the EDI agenda with accountability" (UK Sport, 2021b).

The UK sport sector is working towards progress around diversity and inclusion, as shown in recent policies and initiatives. However, there is tension between rhetoric and reality of such pledges and plans (Kamperman & Rankin-Wright, 2023). Inclusion is rarely, if ever, defined in policies (Promis, Erevelles, & Matthews, 2001) or in the sector at large (Collins, 1997; Spaaij et al., 2018; Thomas, 2004). Equality is often conflated with equity and inclusion, with inclusion now being the most common term used to discuss action plans around equality policy. Most sport organisations use vague and aspirational terminology with no explanations for what they mean by inclusion (see Sport England & UK Sport, 2019; Sport England, 2019b). Christiaens and Brittain (2021) believe that there is an implied assumption that people automatically know what inclusion means when they are confronted with the term. This allows for varied interpretations and therefore varied approaches to inclusion work. Without an explicit definition of inclusion, it is challenging to set clear inclusion initiatives and to assess the success of such efforts.

4. Chapter Four: Theoretical concepts and approaches

Three key concepts, widely explored across a range of disciplines, hold theoretical relevance for my study of inclusion and exclusion in dual career sport systems: culture, power, and ordering. Within this chapter I present, delimit, and operationalise each of these concepts in turn, critically reviewing and explaining how these theoretical approaches inform the research undertaken. First, the concept of culture is presented and explained through the lens of cultural theory and the history of the field of cultural studies. Feminist cultural studies is most influential to the theory and methodology of this research study. The work of Ahmed (2012) is highlighted as an example of feminist cultural studies and to showcase the challenges of doing inclusion work within institutions. Second, the concept of power is examined through its application to the study of culture and sport. Key power theories involved in this study include the three-dimensional power theory of Lukes (1974, 2021) and Foucault's (1977, 1997) theories of normalizing power, power/knowledge, and governmentality. Finally, the concept of ordering (Law, 1994; Kendall & Wickham, 2001) is explained through its links to governmentality and technologies of power and governance.

4.1 Theorising Culture

To fully examine and critique the structures, policies, and practices of exclusion, and conversely inclusion, I argue that one must consider the culture(s) being observed. In the following section, I present my framework for understanding the concept of culture by undertaking a cultural studies approach (e.g. the Birmingham School, see Barker & Jane, 2016; Horkheimer, 1982) and particularly a feminist cultural studies lens (e.g., Rowbotham, 1973; Ahmed, 2012, 2017).

In this research study, I observe and critique the structures and environments of dual career sport systems, examining the *culture*, or cultures, of these spaces. While there are diverse perspectives of culture, I focus on Williams' (1958) approach to culture as ordinary and all around us, due, in part, to his position as a founder of cultural studies. Williams (1983) outlines how the original meaning of culture was linked to agriculture (i.e., the tending of crops and animals) before it morphed into a synonym for civilisation by the age of the Enlightenment. After the turn of the twentieth century, the idea of culture shifted again due to the influence of the social sciences. A new focus on the social lives of individuals in societies led to a social outlook on culture. Williams (1961: 57) calls this the "social definition of culture", and offers this explanation:

> Culture is a description of a particular way of life which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour. The analysis of culture, from such a definition, is the clarification of the meanings and values implicit and explicit in particular ways of life, a particular 'culture'.

Moving away from the view of culture being tied to an elite individual or elite fields (e.g., art, literature), Williams (1958) saw culture as something embedded in everyday life. Hall (1980: 23) credits Williams with redefining culture to include not only "texts and representations" but also "lived practices, belief systems, and institutions". With this conceptualisation of culture, daily practices and beliefs hold just as much relevance to the character of culture as documents and policies. As such, this thesis centres everyday lived experiences of athletes and stakeholders within dual career systems.

In addition, Williams' (1958, 1977) work on "common culture" and "deep community" is aligned with my interest in how "structures of feeling" among community members influence senses of belonging. This connects to sports team culture and how individual athletes can feel a sense of belonging to the team, camaraderie, togetherness, or could feel othered, excluded, not belonging to the team. As the athletes within this study are undertaking dual careers, they need to navigate multiple cultures. For example, a dual career athlete may be trying to feel a sense of belonging on their sport team and also within their education environment or at their place of work. Here, a cultural studies approach offers the opportunity to observe, analyse, and critique the processes and mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion that operate within such dual career environments. Next, I discuss theoretical traditions of the cultural studies research field, namely cultural theory, and explain the key concepts within that relate to this study of dual career systems.

4.1.1 Cultural studies framework(s)

Arising from attempts to explain major cultural struggles and shifts in the post-Second World War period, cultural studies emerged from the work of Hoggart (1958) and Thompson (1963) on British working-class culture and thus developed a post-war British cultural theory. Cultural studies has evolved into a diverse field of study encompassing multiple disciplines (e.g. sociology, anthropology, historiography, literary criticism, philosophy, and art criticism). The field was first identified as cultural studies by the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) founded in 1964, before spreading internationally. Early cultural studies researchers, especially those involved in British cultural studies during the 1950s and 1960s (e.g., Hoggart,

1958; Williams, 1958, 1961; Thompson, 1963) portrayed their work as more than an academic discipline in the way that it analysed power, and defined their work as being inter-disciplinary, even anti-disciplinary (Kendall & Wickham, 2001).

At the root of cultural studies is its foundation of British cultural theory. Cultural theory encompasses diverse attempts to conceptualise and understand the dynamics of culture (Scott & Marshall, 2009). Such attempts have involved considerations and arguments about the relationship of culture and society, culture and nature, the differences of high and low culture, as well as considerations of cultural difference and diversity. Before the cultural studies tradition, the study of culture was largely narrow and centred on references to literature or art (i.e. 'High culture'). Both Williams' (1961) emphasis on culture as a "whole way of life" and Thompson's (1963) work on working-class specific investigations of experiencing culture extended the concept of culture, and cultural theory, to include lived experiences and ordinary everyday life. These culturalist approaches to culture were later challenged by developments within cultural theory, namely by structuralists, Marxists, the ideas of Gramsci, and then the work of Foucault, to name a few.

Cultural studies researchers have a political edge to much of their work, having been influenced by Marxism and the New Left (especially British cultural studies). This political 'edge' inspired some to claim that cultural studies is a "discipline of resistance" (Kendall & Wickham, 2001: 15). The relationship and history between Marxism and cultural studies is complex. As Hall (1992: 265) explains, "The encounter between British cultural studies and Marxism has first to be understood as the engagement with a problem – not a theory, not even a problematic". The problem, or problems, with Marxism (and Marx) lay within "great inadequacies", "resounding silences", and "great

evasions" due to the lack of study, or understanding, of culture, ideology, language, and the symbolic (Hall, 1992: 265). As such, cultural studies scholars took it upon themselves to study these subjects. Hall questioned Marxism because it is articulated around a Eurocentric model, a critique that I also have of current dual career approaches and studies (outlined in Chapter 2). Hall (1992: 266) saw theory as something to struggle with, famously using the metaphor of theory as "wrestling with the angels" and not something you speak of with great fluency. I chose to draw from cultural studies approaches because they challenged me to make sense of the power dynamics within the environment of my research inquiry so that my research might make an impact in that space.

I drew from cultural studies due to its central concern of "social significance and systematic analysis of cultural practices, experiences, and institutions" and its focus on the cultural struggles between dominant and dominated or subordinate groups (Hargreaves & McDonald, 2000: 49). It is characteristic of cultural studies research to critically analyse "the everyday world of lived reality" (Blundell, Shepherd, & Taylor, 1993: 2–3). Hargreaves and McDonald (2000: 49) contend that such lived reality involves "the activities that people take part in, feelings engendered by them, and meanings associated with them". As such, this research tradition is applicable to my critical institutional ethnography of the TASS organisation. While critically examining and analysing the processes and practices of TASS, I balance my overarching desire to help dual career systems be more inclusive with a curious and investigative approach to "understand how they have come to be what they are" (Illouz, 2008: 4). In this way, I draw from cultural studies traditions to learn about, understand, and then critique the culture of TASS and the larger English dual career system.

Principally, by drawing on and reworking Marxist (Althusser; 1971; Williams, 1958, 1961, 1977) and neo-Marxist (Brohm, 1978; Lasch, 1979) theories, cultural studies approaches understand the “growing significance of ‘cultural politics’ among marginalised and subordinate social groups that were stratified according to class, youth, gender and ethnicity/race” (Giulianotti, 2016: 53). For example, cultural studies approaches are often used to examine sports media, queer identities, experiences of women, intersectionality within the experiences of black women, among others (Jhally, 1989; Mann & Krane, 2018; Talbot,1988). As this study intentionally included the voices and experiences of athletes typically excluded from dual career literature, applying cultural studies was suitable.

Among the first occasions of cultural studies being applied to sport, social theorists explored and critiqued the ideological and institutional aspects of competitive sport (Brohm, 1978), and sometimes criticised and viewed sport as a spectacle of mass consumption (Lasch, 1979). It appears that these early applications of cultural studies to sport viewed sport in negative ways, with Brohm (1978) rallying for “the right to be lazy” and even shunning calls for “sports as a right”. Later, social theorists and policy scholars began to examine sport in a different, and sometimes more positive, light as a pursuit related to national interest (Houlihan, 1997) and as a means for social integration (Hylton, 2011) or social inclusion (Bailey, 2005; Frisby & Ponic, 2013). I drew from these later studies of sport as a means for social inclusion and endeavoured to expand understanding as well as critique of the culture of sport spaces to initiate more nuanced discussion and applied practice of inclusion efforts in sport. Here, a cultural studies approach offers the opportunity to observe, analyse, and critique the

processes and mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion that operate within dual career sporting environments.

4.1.2 Critiques of cultural studies and "good" cultural studies

The application of the cultural studies approach has not been without criticism. O'Shea (1998) argued that cultural studies has an underdeveloped analysis of its own practices. This may be due to early researchers' (e.g., Stuart Hall and the Birmingham School) push for cultural studies to be not purely academic, but also a means for political activity. Bennett (1992, 1998) and Hunter (1992) made a plea for cultural studies to become more policy oriented so that its more concerned with government programmes and how they influence and are affected by culture. I agree with this plea and personally intend to use my cultural studies approach with sport governance and funding in mind, as I align with the view of cultural studies as a means for political change (Hall, 1992). Grossberg (1992: 21) argues that the aim of cultural studies has always been to strive to "give a better understanding of where 'we' are so that 'we' can get somewhere better". As such, this thesis aimed to provide a better understanding of how British dual career sport systems are inclusive or exclusive so that evidence-based solutions can be made towards making dual career environments and cultures more inclusive.

Hargreaves and McDonald (2000) argue that 'good' cultural studies research in sport has three critical attributes: i) it is receptive to, and engages with, different theoretical traditions, ii) its starting point has been the real world, linking theory to empirical investigations and producing theoretically grounded research, and iii) it has taken sides politically by developing an interventionist intellectual engagement. I

adhere to these three characteristics in my work through applying and engaging with multiple theories (e.g., cultural theory, power theories, ordering and governmentality), highlighting lived experiences through empirical inquiry, and approaching this research with the intention for practical impact and inclusive change. The intended impact of this study is to improve policies within dual career spaces so that barriers to support and participation, as well as exclusionary behaviour are identified, challenged, and eliminated.

I recognise that many of the above researchers (mostly men) in the cultural studies field have been critiqued for ignoring key groups and issues within their work. For example, feminist cultural studies scholar Thornham (2000: 62) argued that Williams recorded a "wholly *masculine*" history of cultural change and that this fact "remains unacknowledged". His work influences the way culture is defined and approached, but he essentially left women out of his concepts and analysis. Williams' work, and that of other "fathers", or founders, of cultural studies "has no place for women" (Thornham, 2000: 61). It is important to note that feminism is not only a theoretical tradition that centres women or differences of gender, it also centres marginalised and historically overlooked, or intentionally excluded, groups. Therefore, I intentionally drew from feminist cultural studies approaches and researchers due to my research aim of including the voices and experiences of dual career athletes who are largely absent from existing literature.

4.1.3 Feminist cultural studies

The CCCS in Birmingham was a male-dominated space with few women in its physical ranks. In subject matter, women were excluded from 'original' cultural studies, as

women’s lives and perspectives were rarely considered. When several members of the Women’s Studies group at the centre published *Women Take Issue* (1978), they outline the challenges and frustrations experienced while attempting to make interventions in the work of the CCCS as well as struggles doing feminist intellectual work. In accounts from women working at the CCCS, many were made to feel outside or supplementary to the men, felt women were mostly invisible in the journal *Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, and saw the centre as a boys’ club (CCCS, 1978). Hall (1992: 268) characterised the influence of feminist work on CCCS as coming from “outer space” and that they were “not at all generated from the inside”. Although female cultural studies scholars were seen as outsiders, Thornham (2000) claims that the concerns of cultural studies in many ways *were* the concerns of feminist theory, particularly as it developed in Britain during the early 1970s. For example, feminist cultural theorists were concerned with culture, class, ideology, and subjectivity – subjects that mirror those within the work of their male counterparts – but with the human actor at the centre of these subjects being a woman instead of a man. As seen in *Women Take Issue* (1978: 8-9, italics in original), the authors proclaimed it necessary to formulate a theory to explain “some notion of women’s *structural subordination*”, which aims to examine the structural *exclusion* of women. As Grossberg (1989: 114-115) contends, cultural studies is an “ongoing theoretical struggle to understand and intervene into the existing organisations of active domination and subordination, within the formations of culture.” It is here, in identifying and examining structural exclusion, or mechanisms of such, that my main interest lies and where I intend for my research to intervene in current dual career sport systems and cultures.

Rowbotham (1973: 34) proclaimed that women "have only myths made by men" and that "all conceptions of female 'nature' are formed in cultures dominated by men". She argued that these man-made abstract ideas of female nature were also used to stop the oppressed from organising, that is to keep the powerful in power and the powerless without power. Rowbotham lay the groundwork for the development of feminist cultural studies. Drawing on the literary writers Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir, she took particular notice of language and who historically had power over meaning-making (men). Rowbothom importantly brings attention to power influencing the way subjects view the world. Influential power is present and pivotal within this study of inclusion and exclusion in dual career systems. Later in this chapter, theories to assist in analysing influential power are outlined and explained (e.g., Foucault's normalising power and power/knowledge, and Lukes' three-dimensional power).

While the concept of culture and its analysis through cultural studies frameworks has been explained above, it is appropriate to also consider how culture is influenced or changed. For the purposes of this study, it is imperative to consider mechanisms of exclusion within dual career culture, or cultures. As such, I now consider the challenge of attempting to change culture, especially the challenge of doing inclusion work within organisations or institutions.

4.1.3.1 Inclusion work in institutions: Challenges of cultural change

Recalling Williams' (1961) view of culture as a way of life, and that culture is located in everyday behaviour, organisational culture too has its own norms or ways of living functioning or operating. While organisations operate both within and across cultures, they also generate their own cultures. I am interested in the ways that dual career

systems might contain mechanisms of exclusion within their cultural norms (i.e., processes, procedures, documents, human relations). Remembering that dual career systems predominantly cater to athletes in education, I drew from the work of Ahmed (2012) who investigates inclusion work within HE institutions.

In the tradition of feminist cultural studies scholars above, Ahmed (2007, 2012, 2017) has challenged the way that inclusion work is theorised and understood. Drawing upon her own experience as a diversity practitioner in Australian HE, Ahmed (2012: 163) views inclusion as a "technology of governance" and describes it as "a way of bringing those who have been recognised as strangers into the nation, but also of making strangers into subjects, those who in being included are also willing to consent to the terms of inclusion". Here, we can substitute British sport (as well as individual sporting bodies) for "nation" and locate those who do not fit the "norms" of sport institutions as strangers who are included into the spaces of the sport by those who are already there. When looking at the larger picture of sport in the UK, the governing bodies UK Sport, together with Sport England and other home nation NGBs, shape the rules of inclusion into British sport. Then on a sport-by-sport case, the leading NGB of each sport (whether British or related to the home nation) shapes the rules of inclusion into that sport. Such rules of inclusion are often not stated explicitly within action plans or by leaders of the NGBs claiming such inclusion initiatives. The rules of inclusion are instead found within the cultural norms of the institutions of each sport and the environments they oversee across all levels.

Ahmed (2012: 42, italics in original) explains that inclusion strategies show how "those who are already given a place are *the ones who are welcoming* rather than welcomed, the ones who are in the structural position as the hosts". So, for example,

while a sport may claim that gay athletes are welcome and included, “the conditions of their inclusion are determined by others”, who then often dictate that their inclusion is dependent on their adoption of mainstream values and cultural norms of that sport team or institution (Bury, 2015: 217). Bury (2015: 217) argues that such an approach allows for the “re-production of exclusion because the exclusionary mechanisms are not examined”, instead cultural norms that often exclude those being included are further cemented.

The study of organisational culture is useful to researchers, such as the feminist cultural studies scholars above, interested in the symbolic dimensions of organisational life and processes of meaning-making (Fedderson et al., 2020). Although a divisive field of inquiry (see Mcdougall et al. 2017; Alvesson, Kärreman, & Ybema, 2017), research into organisational culture has been used to provide thick analyses of organisational life (Alvesson, Kärreman, & Ybema, 2017). There is a distinct field of organisational culture studies that draw from established theories and models of organisational culture (e.g., Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1981; Schein, 1985, 1993, 2010; Hofstede et al., 1990; Denison, 1990). A recent review (see Wagstaff & Burton-Wylie, 2018) found that the majority of sport research examines organisational culture through an integration lens, or paradigm, that centres on the functionality of a culture (Fletcher & Arnold, 2011). Here, culture is viewed as an integration mechanism that teaches new members an agreed upon set of behaviours and can be manipulated by a charismatic leader (Schein, 2010). Such an approach to culture in organisations has been criticised by authors who find this line of inquiry superficial, claim it reduces culture to a consensus-based system (Wagstaff & Burton-Wylie, 2018) which can deny ambiguity and inconsistencies (Mannion & Davies, 2016) and, in these regards, there

are even recent claims that the field of organisational culture studies is “intellectually dead” (see Alvesson, Kärreman, & Ybema, 2017: 105). Although this thesis does not take integrationist approaches to culture, it does, however, value and consider the culture of organisations and the ways in which such organisational cultures can influence larger sport environments or sectors such as England’s talent pathway and dual career pathways. Therefore, it is important to highlight organisational culture within the cultural analysis approach used herein that draws from feminist cultural studies traditions, especially the work of Ahmed (2012).

Over the past two decades, there has been a growing interest in organisational culture within high-performance sporting environments due to its impact and influence on talent development and athlete performance (see Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009; Henriksen et al., 2011; Henriksen & Stambulova, 2017; Papailiou et al., 2023). While individual physical and psychological characteristics have been central in talent identification (as discussed above in 2.2), the role of the wider social and organisational environment in talent identification and development has more recently been acknowledged as playing an equally important role (Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009; Wagstaff, 2017). That is, organisational culture is sometimes seen by researchers as an indicator of success or failure and is thus of interest for many in the performance-focused sport sector.

Sport organisations and NGBs sometimes have win-at-all-costs cultures that can commodify athletes (Mountjoy, 2018), and performance-based funding policies such as the UK’s “No Compromise” policy (see 3.1.1) can create or exacerbate such cultures. As such, current research in sport has considered organisational culture as a source of strain for athletes (Arnold, Fletcher, & Daniels, 2013) that can underpin

unsuccessful talent development environments (Henriksen, Larsen, & Christensen, 2014). Such toxic organisational cultures can deny, ignore, and accept the abuse of athletes (Mountjoy, 2018). In the UK context, with the recent reports of problematic and destructive cultures in high-performance sport (see Grey-Thompson 2017; Fedderson et al., 2020), it is therefore prompt to consider the culture of organisations, especially the less desirable aspects of them.

Drawing from Ahmed's (2012, 2017) theoretical studies on diversity within institutional contexts, Storr (2021) critically explored how sport organisations engage with sexuality and gender diversity. Storr (2021: 414) argued that Ahmed's work is useful in understanding LGBTQ+ inclusion when it comes to day-to-day practices. He centred her work to help consider questions of, "do sport organisations simply pay lip service, are there clear actions that demonstrate institutional support for LGBTQ+ athletes and participants, and are the policies designed to provide safe and inclusive environments for LGBTQ+ people actually being adopted?" Storr (2021: 414) also argues that Ahmed's research on diversity work in institutions (2012, 2017) lends itself well to "critical analysis of sporting institutions, and the impact of perceived institutional support and commitment to… inclusion". Ahmed's work hinges on questions of the effectiveness of institutional policies and practices related to diversity and inclusion, and is, therefore, very appropriate for my case study of the TASS organisation and its operations. Ahmed's critical approach to institutional practice and policy, coupled with the concept of ordering (see 3.4), is fitting for my inquiry into TASS' athlete nomination process.

4.2 Theorising Power

Here, I present a second orienting concept: power. Cultural studies, especially British cultural studies, has had a longstanding concern with power (Kendall & Wickham, 2001: 17). John Hargreaves (1986: 8) argued that the relationship between sport and power is premised on the notion that "sport is, above all, best categorised as a cultural formation" and that power networks are comprised of fundamental cultural elements. As such, sport is a prime field in which to explore power relations and their relationship to the culture of sport spaces, as can be seen by the study of power in sport contexts (e.g., Hargreaves, 1985; Sugden & Tomlinson, 2002; McDonald, 2009; Jarvie, 2021). While there is wide variety in theoretical approaches to power, cultural studies scholars, particularly Hall, were primarily influenced by the power theories of Gramsci (1971), Foucault (1977, 1978), and Certeau (1984). This thesis uses Foucault's theoretical approaches to power (see 3.3.2), particularly his conceptualisations of technologies of power, normalising power, governmentality, and power/knowledge. In addition to Foucault, I also draw from Lukes' three-dimensional power theory (3.3.1) as applicable to the examination of types of power related to decision-making at TASS and cultural influences within the English dual career pathway.

The complex concept of power has many definitions and multiple schools of thought. Within this programme of research, I use John Hargreaves' (1986: 3) definition of power as:

> Beyond an entity, the mere possession of which enables an individual or collective agent to dominate another, but to a relationship between agents, the outcome of which is determined by agents' access to relevant resources and their use of appropriate strategies in specific conditions of struggle with other agents.

Hargreaves' definition of power draws upon Hindess' (1982) work on power relations and struggle and Foucault's (1980, 1983) view of power as relational. Foucault (1983: 221) viewed power relations as an action by one person to help guide or influence another's conduct or direct "the possible field of action of others." Two important components of Foucault's understanding of power are freedom and resistance. Foucault (1983: 221) states that "power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free" and that there must be "the possibility of resistance, for if there were no possibility of resistance… there would be no relations of power" (Foucault, 1987: 12). Thus, the ability to respond to or resist power is pivotal to Hargreaves' and Foucault's conceptualisations of power. It is here that the domination that Hargreaves speaks of entails the capacity to influence others, who may resist this influence. Hearns (2012: 3) claims that most definitions of power are fundamentally linked to "the ability to have an effect on the world, to make a difference, to cause things to happen." When actors act with power, they have the potential to influence others and the realisation of their own interests. It is important to consider power as something that is not always visible, especially in the context of influential power. As such, it is appropriate to engage with Lukes (1974, 2021), who theorised power as having a third dimension where power is at its least observable and most influential. In the following section, I examine Lukes' three dimensions of power.

4.2.1 Three-dimensional power

Lukes (2021) views power as a potential, ability, or capacity of an agent, or group of agents, which may or may not be exercised. While also seeing power as relational, Lukes (1974, 2005, 2021) believes that power has three faces, or three dimensions.

This theorisation was outlined in Lukes' *Power: A Radical View* (1974), which has had two other editions since its publication (see Lukes, 2005, 2021), and came as a response to popular approaches to power, as well as debates, during the 1950s and 1960s (e.g., Mills, 1956; Hunter, 1953; Dahl, 1961). Lukes (2021: 11) found those approaches to be too narrow and instead argued for a broader approach to power – to see it in three dimensions rather than one or two – and called for attention to be placed on the aspects of power that are "least accessible to observation". Lukes builds these dimensions from the school of literature concerned with "power over" rather than literature on "power to" (e.g., Arendt, 1970; Parsons, 1963). I too am more concerned with "power over" and my theoretical approaches reflect this focus. Research concerned with "power over" assumes that an agent (individual or collective) acts with power while another individual, or group, is affected by this power. Particular agents thus use their power to realise their interests while those affected can overtly or covertly resist this exercise of power (Scott, 2001). As such, Lukes (2005) believes that the study of power should be concerned with the success or failure in realising the interests of those who act with power to achieve particular outcomes.

The first dimension of power lies in visible decision-making processes. This first dimension of power is often associated with Dahl (1961) who studied decision making and power in a city in Massachusetts in the 1950s. Dahl's theorisation of power was founded in positivist perspectives and was focused on power as a visible exercise within the procedures and processes of decision making where some prevail over others and conflict is overt (Lukes, 2005; Goverde, Cerny, Haugaard, & Lentner, 2000). Lukes (2005: 5) stated that Dahl, and others, saw power as active and intentional and that it could be "measured" by "studying its exercise". In essence, the first dimension

of power allows one to study the power of actors by examining the extent to which actors were able to achieve or realise their interests. Lukes recognises that such interests often fail to be realised.

The first dimension of power is limited, as it cannot reveal the “less visible” ways that systems might be biased in favour of certain groups or biased against others (Lukes, 2021: 44). Bachrach and Baratz (1962, 1963, 1970), argued that one-dimensional power is too concerned with overt, or visible, decision making (Goverde et al., 2000). Bachrach and Baratz contributed to the development of the second dimension of power which concerns agenda-setting by powerful agents to influence political processes (Lukes, 2005). Here, the second dimension of power involves the influences of systemic biases on the selection of issues to be considered (Parsons, 1995). The second dimension of power can be hidden, unlike the visible first dimension, in “non-decisions” that can limit the overt decision making to issues that are in line with or not threatening to the interests of powerful actors (Lukes, 2005; Scott, 2001). By controlling the agenda, powerful agents can limit the scope of what is debated or discussed, thereby confining decision-making to issues that serve their interests. Like the first dimension of power, the second dimension also hinges on the interests of the powerful. While pointing the way to examine bias and control, two-dimensional power “lacks a sociological perspective” to examine how latent conflicts are suppressed within society (Lukes, 2021: 64). As such, Lukes developed his three-dimensional power theory.

Lukes (2021: 5) contends that power “is at its most effective when it is least observable”, and this characterises its third dimension. Hearns (2021: 68) credits Lukes with helping us to “infer the presence of power, when it is often obscured”.

Lukes' (1974) third dimension of power concerns power that is used to elicit the willing compliance of others. As Lukes (1974: 30) explained, the third dimension of power occurs when, "A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B's interests." Thus, the third dimension of power influences agents to believe that their interest "lies in doing something that is, in fact, harmful to them or contrary to their deeper interests" (Scott, 2001: 8). Part of this third dimension is the potential for power relations to exist where neither A or B, in Lukes' illustration, are fully aware of how their relationship is influencing their interests. Lukes' third dimension avoids the necessity for conflict to be inherently connected to power, as the other dimensions often assume. It also presents the possibility of agents being unaware of the full effects of their roles and/or power. This third dimension of power influences individuals to act or think in a way that may go against their own interests, in order to achieve the interests of those in power. For example, a charity organisation might promote the idea that the sign of dedication to the organisation's philanthropic mission is a willingness to work hard and that such willingness to go beyond standard work commitments is a virtue. The charity then rewards some employees who demonstrate such virtue with statements of praise or small promotions. Over time, employees in that environment start to believe that hard work is a virtue. This belief may then influence an employee to work unpaid overtime at their employer's request, thereby acting in the company's interests. As such, the third dimension can be characterised as an ideological power influencing the preferences of others.

Lukes' third dimensional power is similar to what Foucault called "normalising power". Foucault's notions of normalising power, governmentality, and

power/knowledge help to explain how actors within dual career systems influence cultural norms and processes which can lead to exclusion.

4.2.2 Normalising power, governmentality, and power/knowledge

Foucault (1977) argued that the most common kind of power is what he called "normalising" power, which constructs our views on how we see the world and ourselves as well as what we see as "normal". Foucault developed his concept of normalisation, or normalising power, in lectures at the Collège de France in the 1970s as well as within his book *Discipline and Punish (1977).* Foucault described normalising power as emerging from disciplinary practices which sought to control and cultivate the capacities of the human body (Lawlor & Nale, 2014). As normalising power is everywhere, Foucault had the challenging task of speaking to something which was ubiquitous and taken for granted. To theorise and analyse the subject of normalising power, Foucault sought to "defamiliarise the practices and arrangements that make up normalising power" and in doing so distinguish it from sovereign power (Lawlor & Nale, 2014: 315).

Normalising power can lead subjects to conform to and believe in hierarchies and therefore can establish power relations. Normalising power involves interactions with individuals in order to influence opinion or decision-making. Put another way, normalising power is activated through relations between individuals. Foucault (1980: 198) argued, as did Hindess (1982) and Hargreaves (1986), that power "means relations, a more-or-less organised, hierarchal, coordinated cluster of relations". It is within relations that power can be identified, and it is in relations and roles that I examine such power within the TASS organisation and its processes in Chapter 6.

Foucault (1988b) sees relations of power as “strategic games” between liberties, government and domination, that are dependent on the existence of free subjects who can resist such power. Power as strategic games signifies the attempt or structuring of the possible action of others. Strategic games between liberties do not always result in the removal of liberties or options available to individuals, they could instead result an empowerment of others (Lemke, 2002: 52). When considering strategic games of government, government refers to “the regulation of conduct by the more or less rational application of the appropriate technical means” (Hindess, 1996: 106). Here, government is a mode of power, or a “technology” of power (in Foucault’s terms), that follows a specific rationality which defines the aims of those in power and the means to achieve those aims. Lastly, domination refers to hierarchal or asymmetrical relationships of power in which “the margin of liberty is extremely limited” for subordinated individuals (Foucault, 1988b: 12). Importantly, it is technologies of government that regulate or stabilise power relationships that could result in domination (see Hindess, 1996; Patton, 1998).

Throughout his writings, Foucault uses the phrase “technologies of power” to refer to particular actions, or means, that people acting with power use. Technologies of power are imbued with aspirations for the shaping of conduct in the hope of producing certain desired effects and averting certain undesired ones" (Rose, 1999: 52). For Foucault, power relations depend upon the recognition of “the one over whom power is exercised”, who is “a person who acts” and also the possibility of “a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions” (Foucault 1982: 220; see also Deleuze 1988: 70). Here, technologies of power and relations of power are not deterministic. As Hoy (1986: 132-2) explains, “'The technology of power does not

causally determine particular actions; only makes them probable." In this way, technologies of power are not guaranteed to succeed, rather they are attempts to achieve the interests of those operating with power. I thusly apply the use of technologies of power in combination with Lukes' (1974) three-dimensional power theory to extend Lukes' characterisation of attempts at decision-making with the actions, or technologies, that such powerful actors use to achieve those interests.

To better analyse government, Foucault coined the concept of "governmentality" as a "guideline" (Foucault, 1997: 67). Governmentality is an approach to power that emphasises the active consent of individuals to participate in their own governance (Huff, 2020). The term governmentality semantically combines governing with modes of thought, indicating that "it is not possible to study the technologies of power without an analysis of the political rationality underpinning them" (Lemke, 2002: 49). Here, it is important to note that the notion of government extends beyond state or administrative management to also include management within personal lives (e.g., self-control, household management). As such, Foucault (1982: 2020-21) defines government as "the conduct of conduct" which ranges from "governing the self" to "governing others". In his own words, Foucault (1993: 204) contends, "in the broad meaning of the word, governing people is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed of modified by himself". Foucault uses governmentality to link what he called technologies of the self and technologies of domination (see Foucault, 1982, 1988a). Here, Foucault corrects previous studies where individuals were seen as "docile bodies" impacted by disciplinary power, instead

recognising the willing consent of subjects to their own governance (see Foucault 1988a). Such willing consent echoes Lukes' (1974) ideological third dimension of power, where individuals' preferences are influenced by those in power.

Importantly for the current contextual examination, Foucault (1977, 1980) sees power not as a standalone concept but as something intimately bound up with knowledge. Foucault (1977: 194) argued that power produces things: "it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production". For Foucault, power dictates the terms of knowledge and power produces knowledge. Here, therefore, knowledge is a function of power and knowledge is a technology or technique of power. Similarly, John Hargreaves (1986: 4) stated that power and knowledge are "two sides of the same coin" in that "just as knowledge generates power, power enables the process of knowledge-creation to be institutionalised, and knowledge to be applied, developed and reproduced routinely". Here, knowledge is a key component of normalising power, as knowledge is used by the powerful to set new "norms". Sport, especially competitive sport, is a site of normalising power as power/knowledge circulates through sport institutions and (dominant) leaders in sport.

As discussed above, there are multiple dimensions of power and characteristics of power. As power is a complex and contested subject of inquiry, its analysis is difficult. To assist in the application of the above theoretical concepts and approaches to power, I use the concept of "ordering".

4.3 Ordering: A conceptual lens

Ordering, while not necessarily a theory itself, is a helpful conceptual lens that works together with theory to examine the patterns and attempts of management or control within organisations or individual lives. Developed from Law's (1994: 84) "modes of ordering", ordering is a tool for "sensemaking". Similar to Foucault's attempts to defamiliarise the common practices of normalising power, I use ordering to break down and examine the taken for granted processes and procedures inherent within dual career systems. In this thesis, I use ordering to identify, explain, and analyse organisational processes, procedures, policy, and power – all of which contribute to organisational culture – as well as to explain individual practices of athletes managing their dual careers. This section highlights the development of the concept of ordering (i.e., Law, 1994), its application to management and performance of organisations, its application to culture and cultural studies, and outlines its links to the concepts of governance and governmentality.

4.3.1 Modes of ordering and organisations

The phrase "modes of ordering" was first used by Law (1994) in *Organising Modernity,* and the notion extends his concept of social ordering established two years prior (Law, 1992). Law's (1994: 3) book is concerned about "the management and organisation" of a world-class scientific laboratory, which he studied through ethnography. Law (1994: 83) defines modes of ordering as "fairly regular patterns that may be usefully imputed for certain purposes to the recursive networks of the social. In other words, they are recurring patterns embodied within, witnessed by, generated in and reproduced as part of the ordering of human and non-human relations". Simply put,

Law views modes of ordering as the patterns of attempts to organise or manage social networks, such attempts are bound up within human relations. As with Foucault (1980) and Hargreaves (1986) above, it is within relations between individuals where patterns of attempts at power, ordering, and management are located.

Law (1994: 21) contends that modes of ordering stem from narratives, or stories, about the world:

> They tell us what used to be or what ought to happen. Here there are ordering concerns, procedures, methods or logics, dreams of ordering perhaps… Certainly they are not 'pools of total order'.

Law was partly influenced by feminist social scientists who frequently utilised narratives and storytelling, particularly Traweek (1988: 250) who said, "I want to begin by telling a few tales." Law (1994: 3) calls his first mode of ordering, management, "a tale" that he argues "tells us something about" the management of that organisation. Law uses his modes of ordering to help explain the complexity and "mess" of the social world (5). It is through these modes of ordering that Law locates and examines the norms of operation in the organisation that he studies. To justify storytelling, Law points to patterns in how the members of the laboratory tell stories about their work, which he claims provides clues into how the organisation is being performed or embodied across circumstances (19). In this way, the modes of ordering are "more than stories" (19) and, as such, they can be used as "a tool for imputing patterns to the recursive networks of the social" (112).

At the centre of Law's (1994) inquiry was an organisation, similar to this study's focus on the TASS organisation. Law (1992: 385) viewed organisation as a "precarious process" that might fail. Conceptualising organisations, and their orderings, as verbs

rather than nouns focuses on actions and activity – ordering practices – over a stable understanding of *order*. Again, Law believes that attempts at ordering are always present, but order is a rarity. Modes of ordering are activated through performance and embodied, often non-verbally, within the network of relations. Within these relations, modes of ordering are "imputable ordering arrangements, expressions, suggestions, possibilities or resources" (Law, 1994: 21). Seeing the organisation as recursive network of performance, Law argued that the modes of ordering within organisations speak to the character of the nature of organisational relations.

While a useful sensemaking tool, ordering has its critics. Gerson (1995: 386) critiques Law's style of presenting his modes of ordering, claiming they are "not clearly located in actors" due to overly abstracting his orderings. Ordering involves (often implicit) strategies that, like Foucault's (1981: 95) discourses, are "forms of strategic arranging that are intentional but do not necessarily have a subject" (Law, 1994: 21). Lacking a subject, Gerson (1995: 386) claims that "Law's procedures leave us no apparent way to get from observation to abstraction and back again". It is useful then to consider how the concept of ordering has been taken up by others. I argue that the work of Kendall and Wickham (2001) improves upon Law's original application of ordering, due to their insistence on a known object within their formulation of ordering as culture.

4.3.2 Ordering, culture, and governance

Building from the work of Law (1992, 1994) above, Kendall and Wickham (2001) further developed the concept of ordering and applied it to the study of culture. While Law's *modes of ordering* were used to examine and categorise desires, subjectivities,

and masculinities inherent within organisations (see Law & Moser, 1999), Kendall and Wickham (2001) developed their brand of *ordering* through a critique of cultural studies and as a proposed direction forward for the field. For example, the authors characterised cultural studies as being "obsessed" with power and meaning and suggested that the field instead focus on ordering and description. Kendall and Wickham further proposed that if cultural studies scholars and practitioners still wished to analyse power, that ordering would provide them with "a stronger footing" (164). As such, I have used ordering to assist in my examination and analysis of culture and power within British dual career sport systems.

Kendall and Wickham (2001: 2) contend that their brand of ordering is "built on an understanding of governance, that is built on an understanding of Foucault's notion of governmentality." As with governance, Hunt and Wickham (1994: 78) suggest ordering "involves any attempt to control or manage any known object. A 'known object' is an event, a relationship, an animate object, in fact any phenomenon which human beings try to control or manage". In this way, Kendall and Wickham (2001: 27) loosely define ordering as attempts at control or management. Key to this definition, is "attempts", which designates active strategic processes as Law (1994) envisioned within his ordering conceptualisation.

The concept of ordering has been used within tourism studies, with Franklin (2004) arguing that ordering and governance are essentially one and the same. From the standpoint of this thesis, there are certainly similarities between the two, but I do not claim they are necessarily the same. Ordering, like governance, "always falls short of total control – it has some 'failure' built into it" (Kendall & Wickham, 2001: 32). The

ordering of an organisation is built into its structures and policies, but these do not always operate as intended and people can also resist the ordering(s).

Kendall and Wickham (2001) suggest that ordering is everywhere, much like Foucault's power is everywhere. As such, ordering can be found at every level, from the highest levels of government and bureaucracy – such as within sports organisations like Sport England or TASS – to the levels of personal daily life – such as those of a dual career athlete. Organisations by their definition make attempts at order, some attempts larger than others (Franklin, 2004). Organisations have multiple ordering strategies, or "ordering projects", which intersect with one another, sometimes in supportive ways and sometimes in contrast (Law, 2001). Such ordering projects relate to the key values and goals inherent in the mission of the organisation. Law (1994: 115, italics in original) contends that all modes of ordering "tell of *performance of hierarchy as a necessary part of organisational life*". As such, ordering projects are organised within a hierarchy of priority and value.

Although the concept of ordering has not been previously used within sport studies, I argue that the application of this concept to my ethnographic case study of the TASS organisation is apt and appropriate as ordering has been commonly used within organisational studies literature to examine organisational culture (e.g., Hilhorst & Schmiemann, 2002), power (e.g., Roe, 2023), policy making (e.g., Wilkinson, 2011), and performance (e.g., Kalff, 2021). Later in this thesis, I use ordering as a tool to identify and locate types of power (i.e., Lukes' three-dimensions of power) within TASS' athlete nomination process. Ordering (e.g., self-ordering) is also used as a sense-making tool in the analysis of athlete narratives around managing dual careers.

Within this chapter I have explained and outlined the key concepts and theoretical approaches that underpin my examination and analysis of inclusion and exclusion in dual career sport systems. Together, the concepts of culture, power, and ordering assist me in analysing organisational procedures of TASS as well as the cultural norms and power relations within the larger UK dual career pathway. To quote Law (1994: 4), “research, too, is a process of ordering.” Ordering this research programme also involved key methodological decisions and approaches. In the next section, I discuss the construction of my research paradigm along with the qualitative methods involved in my data collection and analysis.

5. Chapter Five: Methodology

In this chapter I explain and justify the research strategy of my PhD study. The pursuit of answering my research questions, repeated below, guided my decision-making around the methodology and methods of my programme of research.

1. *Who is included in and excluded from dual career systems?*
2. *How do dual career systems include and exclude athletes?*
3. *How can dual career systems be more inclusive?*

The methods outlined and explained within this chapter were taken to answer the first two research questions above. As stated in Chapter 1, although the third research question remained a key aim of this study, I was unable to conduct a third study to explicitly answer the question. However, this question is considered later in Chapter 9 in which I share recommendations for making dual career systems more inclusive.

This chapter is split into five sections, expanding upon my positionality and reflexivity, research paradigms and philosophy, qualitative methodology, research design and methods, and ethical considerations. The approaches outlined within this chapter showcase the methods I used to gain knowledge about the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS) and wider dual career pathways in England.

5.1 Positionality and reflexivity

My positionality is situated by my role both as a researcher and as an active equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in sport practitioner. As a researcher and practitioner of

inclusion in sport, I am active in “inclusion work,” work I view as intertwined with “diversity work” described in Ahmed’s (2007, 2012, 2017) research. Ahmed (2017) states that “diversity work” is defined in two ways: work that we do when we are attempting to transform an institution, and work we do when we do not quite inhabit the norms of an institution.

The purposes of this study relate heavily to the first of these “diversity work” definitions in that I aim to use findings to influence inclusive change at TASS and wider dual career pathways in England. As such, this positionality influenced the type of data I sought to collect as well as my analysis approaches which are outlined within this chapter. For instance, I began collecting data related to communications and procedures involved in the TASS athlete nomination process with the aim to locate potential instances or mechanisms of exclusion. I was driven to identify any problem areas within TASS processes that might lead to the exclusion of athletes from their support scheme. It was essential for me to continuously reflect on my positionality and intentions as the study progressed, as I wanted to maintain a focus on impact so that findings from this study could be used to develop inclusion solutions for TASS and dual career systems.

My impact driven intentions for this study positioned me as someone who was conducting a critique which could affect how I was perceived by TASS staff members. In studying the TASS organisation, I was critically reviewing their practices and procedures. As Ahmed (2017: 39) contends, “we become a problem when we describe a problem.” I did not want to become a “problem” but still wanted to influence change, with a strong will for action and impact. This wilfulness is used by Ahmed (2017) in connection to her self-described position as a “feminist killjoy.” While this term does

evoke some familiarity, I felt more strongly connected to the term "spoilsport" (Ahmed, 2017: 73) in that by pointing out the exclusive practices within the TASS system I was spoiling or ruining their "sport". In this way, "sport" would be the way things have always been done, or the rules to the game of the way TASS or other sporting institutions are run. The term "spoilsport" evokes Brackenridge and Fasting's (2002) book entitled *Spoilsports,* a comprehensive review of sexual exploitation in sport, however our contexts of examination differ.

As a "spoilsport" researcher in my own work, I was sometimes viewed as an "outsider" and potential "problem". Illustrating this, near the start of my data collection, a member of the TASS team was hesitant to give me access to a call featuring a group of TASS athletes. I was keen to share my research plans with TASS athletes and hoped to gain feedback from them that might help to build my interview questions. I set up a video call with this TASS staff member to further explain my research intentions and reflected upon this interaction in my field notes:

> [TASS staff member] pushed back on my first request to speak with [TASS athlete group]. So, I set up a video call to smooth things out. It seemed that [TASS staff member] was on board for me to connect with the athletes but wanted to oversee how I engaged with them. Their body language was stiff during the call and eye contact was rare. They shared their concerns and seemed a bit nervous. I tried my best to be transparent and non-threatening. I made sure to smile a lot and stay casual, offering [TASS staff member] chances to ask me more questions and seek further clarification about my research and intentions. After this call, which I thought had smoothed things over, they emailed to ask for another call. I agreed but felt that [TASS staff member] was overanalysing things. They seemed overwhelmed with the complexities and variables of my research and were concerned about me taking notes during our first call. [TASS staff member] seemed concerned that I might misquote them or misrepresent TASS in some way. I'm not sure if they were being protective of the athletes or of TASS itself.

I shared this experience with a supervisor who opened my perspective. In my reflection notes, I realised that I was too quick to judge that individual's response.

> After talking with [supervisor] about the calls with [TASS staff member], I realise that I might have been a little harsh when thinking that they were irrationally nervous. [Supervisor] noted that perhaps [TASS staff member] is more savvy and hesitant because they are more aware of what my research could uncover or the potential for TASS to be seen in a bad light. Upon reflection, I realise that they just wanted more specifics around the data I'm looking to collect. They required me to add more about ethics and confidentiality to the short blurb I will be sending out to athletes before sitting in on the call. [TASS staff member's] feedback did help me to make a safer space for the athletes.

My supervisor helped me to consider the valid concerns that the TASS staff member had about my positionality as a critical researcher of the organisation and, in hindsight, I now see that the individual was taking care to protect the TASS athlete group as well as ensuring they had more information about my research and my intentions. I was eventually given access to that athlete call and was able to share details about my intended research with the group. Having those conversations with the TASS staff member allowed me to be more transparent about my research programme which helped to build the trust they needed to feel comfortable giving me access to the athlete call.

Ahmed's (2017) second definition of "diversity work" in respect of varying from the norms of an institution requires further self-reflection and indeed reflexivity. Reflexivity is "a positioning of critical self-awareness whereupon the complex relationships between self, other, and society are made apparent" (Vadeboncoeur, Bopp, Singer, 2020). Reflexivity enables the researcher to "become a knowing subject of and about [one]self" (Carrington, 2008: 426). As a white, middle-class, educated

woman in my thirties, I did inhabit the norm of TASS in that every staff member was also white and most had a similar class and education background to myself. While I am not British, my American heritage is historically linked to British culture and language. Though I have characteristics that would make me "other", they are not physically visible: I *look* to be the norm in many ways. In my reflection notes during visits to TASS headquarters, I wrote that I felt seen as "one of them" at times in that I was instantly welcomed into the space and most staff members seemed to trust me and therefore shared openly with me. There were casual moments when staff members would share their personal opinions on sensitive topics and some of these conversations turned into more organised discussions around particular topics (not related to formal interviews). I usually did not take notes during these casual discussions, as it was agreed that these discussions were to be "off the record". I wished to build trust and rapport with TASS staff and, therefore, the conversations were not used as data. These casual conversations, at times, did influence interview discussions in that I expanded on particular topics (e.g., inclusion and LGBTQ+ terminology and issues) in more depth when the person being interviewed had shared their interest in the topic with me prior to the interview. While these moments of being approached openly for additional conversations outside of my data collection made me appear to inhabit the "norm" of the organisation, there were also moments when I felt that I did not align with the norm. There were times during data collection in the TASS office when I was seen to be an "insider" despite my difference of perspective or opinion. When moments like this occurred, I worked to keep my differing views to myself and keep my researcher "hat" on to learn more about the culture of the organisation.

Reflexivity is a necessity for scholars conducting research concerning diversity, equity, and inclusion, especially white scholars (Vadeboncoeur, Bopp, & Singer, 2020). Frisby (2006) asserts that responsibility falls on the researcher to acknowledge and reflect on their position relative to marginalised communities. As I conducted interviews with dual career athletes, I was particularly aware of my positionality as a white researcher and took steps to create a safe space for my participants to feel comfortable sharing their experiences. Some of my athlete participants had different demographic backgrounds to me and I strived to present myself as a curious researcher keen to engage in a shared discussion rather than a tightly structured question-and-answer interview that might make participants feel surveyed and judged. To do so, I took a conversational approach to my interviews and shared my own experiences as a dual career athlete to build rapport and showcase that I understood the challenges of balancing sport with another life pursuit (in my case, with education). I was especially open about my own experiences when athlete participants seemed unsure of how to answer the question: "Have you experienced exclusion or marginalisation yourself or have you witnessed someone else being excluded?" When athletes were uncertain if their experiences qualified as "exclusion", I would share an example of how I was treated differently than my male teammates as a swimmer. It seemed that when I was open and vulnerable about my own experiences, participants were more comfortable sharing their own stories of exclusion.

To situate myself within my research entailed being aware and open about my own positions and interests (Finlay, 2003). Through reflection notes during my data collection, I consistently considered my positionality as a researcher who had a dynamic relationship with the organisation I was studying. I was not only gathering

data about how TASS operated, but I was also sharing some of my recommendations and watching those recommendations get put into practice. For example, when I conducted a document review (see Chapter 7) I shared some of my concerns about the ways that data was collected through their athlete portal. TASS staff were receptive and responded by using my recommendations to update the language used in survey questions on the athlete portal, particularly around terminology and options within gender and ethnicity categories. I positioned myself as a researcher and a practitioner involved in "inclusion work" at the organisation I was studying.

My personal experiences, positionality, and intentions for this study have allowed me to structure this research programme in a unique way and have particularly influenced the paradigms that underpin this study. In the following section, I will expand on how I combined critical, interpretivist, and pragmatist paradigms to answer my research questions.

5.2 Research paradigms and philosophy

It is important to establish the philosophical and methodological underpinnings that have shaped my research approach and, ultimately, the understanding of the data presented in this thesis (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). As such, in this section I expand upon the research paradigm that grounds this programme of research. The term paradigm is defined by Sparkes (1992) as a particular set of "lenses" for seeing and making sense of the world. To build my lens I adopted a flexible and evolving approach to my research paradigm by combining aspects of interpretivist (e.g., Geertz, 1973), critical (e.g., Horkheimer, 1982), and pragmatic (e.g., Dewey, 1931) paradigms. While there is debate around using more than one paradigm (see Kuhn, 1970; Lincoln, 1990;

Guba & Lincoln, 1994), some researchers argue that it is possible to combine two (or more) paradigms within a single research project. It is argued that combining paradigms may generate "more comprehensive, insightful, and logical results than either paradigm could obtain alone" (Greene & Caracelli, 1997: 10; Frisby, 2005). Frisby (2005) argues for more research, especially in sport management studies, to be conducted from multiple paradigms and that doing so allows researchers to "fully understand all dimensions" of sport organisations (and their management) at the focus of inquiry. Although paradigms may have differences in perspective, Lincoln et al. (2011: 100) recognise that the boundaries between paradigms are flexible and note the potential for the "interweaving of viewpoints."

I have combined multiple paradigms to build the philosophical foundation for my programme of research. The interpretive, or constructivist, paradigm is my main paradigm as it influenced my ontology (reality is created by individuals), epistemology (reality is interpreted), methodology (e.g., qualitative methods, in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews, reflexive thematic analysis) and, most importantly, my theoretical frameworks (cultural studies approach and theories of power). I have taken inspiration from the critical paradigm as well in that it has influenced my epistemology (views of reality are influenced by power relations) and methodology (critical institutional ethnography). Lastly, my amalgamation of paradigms also includes pragmatism in that my methodology (orienting inquiry towards problem-solving) was influenced by the pragmatic paradigm. Next, I discuss each paradigm and the ways in which they connected and overlapped with each other to suit my research intentions.

An interpretivist paradigm (Geertz, 1973) is a natural fit for this study, as I interpret the experiences of dual career athletes to understand inclusion/exclusion in

dual career sport spaces. The ontology of an interpretivist paradigm insists that reality is created by individuals in groups (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In conjunction, the epistemology of this paradigm proclaims that reality needs to be interpreted to discover the underlying meaning of events (Crotty, 1998). My theoretical framework “umbrella” of cultural studies fits within this paradigm and is used often within sport sociology and sport psychology (e.g., Andrews & Loy, 1993; Fisher, Butryn, & Roper, 2003; Broch, 2022). Specifically, it is aligned because the field of cultural studies is “concerned with the social significance and systematic analysis of cultural practices, experiences and institutions” and is useful in my study of the culture and practices of TASS (Hargreaves & McDonald, 2000: 49). Alongside this cultural studies umbrella, I use theories of power (Foucault, 1980, 1983; Lukes, 1974, 2021) and concepts of ordering (Law, 1994; Law & Moser, 1999; Kendall & Wickham, 2001) and governmentality (Foucault, 1977) to examine the structures and processes of the TASS organisation and how they might contribute to athlete experiences of exclusion within the dual career pathway. Additionally, the interpretivist paradigm is aligned with and informs the selection of qualitative methodologies and methods of this study: in-depth qualitative interviews, an ethnographic case study, and observation.

Following my intentions to critique current dual career systems to identify mechanisms of exclusion, I also draw upon a critical paradigm, originating from critical theorists of the Frankfurt School, particularly Horkheimer (1982). Critical theory is concerned with power relations within society. The ontology of a critical paradigm is historical realism, which contends that reality is historically constructed and shaped by the social, political, cultural, ethnic, and gender context (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The epistemology further grounds this paradigm through viewing reality and knowledge as

socially constructed and influenced by power relations from within society (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). As Frisby (2005: 6) argues:

> A key assumption of the critical paradigm is that organisations are best viewed as operating in a wider cultural, economic, and political context characterised by asymmetrical power relations that are historically and deeply entrenched.

As the TASS organisation was at the centre of my inquiry, the critical paradigm is apt to scrutinise the wider context of the organisation (especially the cultural) to challenge the power relations entrenched in the organisation as well as the wider historical structures of high-performance sport.

While operating under a critical interpretivist paradigm, I am also drawing upon the philosophy of pragmatism (Dewey, 1931). As experiences of inclusion and exclusion are the key focus of this study, it is naturally social justice-oriented in that I am attempting to raise awareness of these experiences, as well as understand the structural influences at play, to challenge and change existing exclusive structures in dual career systems. As Cooky (2017: 9) asserts, sport sociologists have a "moral imperative to ensure knowledge is publicly translatable with the potential for change." Due to the impact focus of this research, to work towards solving practical problems of exclusion in dual career systems, and the future intentions of disseminating findings to the sport sector to inspire inclusive solutions and environments, a pragmatic outlook is apt.

Critical and pragmatic paradigms complement each other in that both seek to challenge existing power structures and influence change. Research within the critical paradigm is "not neutral because the goal is to promote change by challenging dominant ways of thinking and acting that benefit those in power" (Frisby, 2005: 6). In

a similar vein, pragmatic research is "concerned with action and change and the interplay between knowledge and action" which provides a basis for research concerned with "intervening into the world and not merely observing the world" (Goldkuhl, 2012: 136). Goldkuhl (2012) argues that such intervention could be organisational change. Furthermore, Kelly and Cordeiro (2020: 1) call pragmatism a "worthy paradigm for researching organisational processes." Therefore, combining critical and pragmatic paradigms was fitting for my research purposes.

Interpretivism and pragmatism appear to be less congruent. Pragmatism and interpretivism have apparent differences in epistemological orientation, methodology, and role of the researcher (Goldkuhl, 2012). They have epistemological differences in that interpretivism seeks knowledge for understanding while pragmatism values constructive knowledge to be used for action and change (Goldkuhl, 2012). Methodologically, interpretivism mainly uses field study (Klein & Myers, 1999) to investigate with data generation conducted through interpretation while data in pragmatic studies is often generated through and used in both assessment and intervention (expanded on by Mead, 1938). Here, an interpretive field study (ethnographic case study) was conducted, and data was generated through interpretation as well as critical assessment of TASS procedures. Data was also used for intervention to influence inclusive change (as expanded on in Chapter 6).

Despite the above differences, interpretivism and pragmatism have some similarities as well. Both paradigms involve inductive data analysis (Goldkuhl, 2012) and share an orientation towards understanding. However, pragmatism sees understanding as instrumental to the change of existence (Dewey, 1931), while interpretivism sees understanding as having its own value (Goldkuhl, 2012). This is

the line I have straddled in my work. On the one hand, I viewed understanding (made through data analysis) as an instrument for change and wanted my data to drive change in the sector. I also viewed understanding as having value in its own right, especially since my focus is on exclusion and inclusion – phenomena that are still not fully understood or well researched in dual career sport literature (see Chapters 1 and 2).

Weaving these paradigms together, my intention with this study was to seek a greater understanding of TASS and dual career systems while also using this knowledge to drive inclusive change within TASS and the greater talent pathway. While pragmatic studies are often inductive, they also generate data through interventions and assessment (expanded on by Mead, 1938) and use that data to intervene and drive change efforts. Through my research I use a field study (ethnography) to investigate a dual career institution (TASS), and I assess and critique the processes of TASS and have shared recommendations for intervention along the way. My positionality as a researcher actively involved in pushing for change combines the "differences" in the role of researcher between these two paradigms: that the pragmatic researcher's role is to promote change while the interpretive researcher's role is to engage in understanding. Naturally, it was essential for me to interpret my data to gain a deep understanding of TASS and the larger English dual career system in order to influence change with solutions driven by that very data. As Goldkuhl (2012: 142) argues, it is "important to see that understanding-oriented descriptions of the world may play important roles in an action context."

During the construction of my research strategy, and in the writing of this chapter, it became apparent to me that previous training during my master's degree in

Women's Studies was undoubtedly affecting some of my research design choices and, more importantly, my worldview and therefore philosophical outlook (Patton, 2002; Lincoln, 1990). While my more recent professional experience working in sport development and advocacy for female athletes certainly contributed to this process, my academic training in feminist theory had influenced the way I approached my research. I was far more interested in considering how culture was formed in dual career spaces, taking note from feminist cultural studies scholars (e.g., Rowbotham, 1973; Ahmed, 2012) as discussed in Chapter 4. I also took note from feminist pragmatists (e.g., Seigfried, 1996; McKenna, 2001, 2003). The fields of feminism and pragmatism share a social or political focus and advocate for cultural change and an epistemology based in experience and relationality (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 2020). I agree with McKenna's (2003: 5) claim that pragmatism is "inherently feminist and that feminism in all its diversity can be informed and modified by pragmatism." My positionality is feminist and pragmatist and thus my paradigm leant feminist pragmatist as well.

5.3 Qualitative methodology

To answer my research questions, and to holistically understand and appreciate how inclusion and exclusion operate and are experienced in dual career sport systems, a qualitative methodology and approach was adopted. As I sought understandings and experiences of individuals to uncover realities of inclusion and exclusion in dual career sport spaces, a qualitative approach was appropriate given that it aims to "understand the social reality of individuals, groups, and cultures" (Sparkes & Smith, 2014: 14). Qualitative research often explores ignored or marginalised populations and focuses

on individual lived experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2011), and is an appropriate fit as I examined individual experiences of exclusion of dual career athletes from backgrounds typically absent in the literature (see Chapters 2 and 6).

Furthermore, it was clear from my initial engagements with TASS staff that quantitative data is scant (e.g., TASS holds no historical records of cohort demographics) and inadequate on its own to appropriately consider cultural diversity statistics related to the dual career athlete cohort in the UK. I did attempt to gather data on TASS athlete identity characteristics through their athlete portal, an online database that monitors service usage of TASS athletes, thus collecting some limited quantitative data. However, this was insufficient to adequately map the demographics of the athlete cohort (see Chapter 7). Furthermore, when I inquired about practices for collecting demographic data across the dual career pathway, TASS staff shared that most organisations (e.g., NGBs) do not keep historical records of such data and that there was no standardised approach as to what data was collected or the terminology used within such collection. Therefore, attempts at limited quantitative data collection were precluded and the study become entirely qualitative in nature. In sum, collecting qualitative data has provided me with rich information to describe experiences and structures of exclusion within England's dual career pathway.

5.4 Research design

To answer the research questions, I undertook a two-year critical institutional ethnography centring on the TASS organisation. This ethnography was organised across two studies: Study 1: 'The System' and Study 2: 'Athlete Voice'. The primary method of data collection across the ethnography was in-depth semi-structured

qualitative interviews. A total of 20 interviews were conducted with participants consisting of 6 TASS staff members, 3 TASS practitioners, and 11 dual career athletes. Secondary sources of data within the ethnography included: a document review; in-person visits to 3 TASS delivery sites involving informal conversations with 6 additional practitioners; a focus group of 9 athletes at one TASS delivery site; in-person and virtual participant observation; and field notes. The stages of research are summarised in Table 2 below.

	Research Strategies	Participants & Sampling	Data Collection Methods	Data Analysis
Study 1: The System	1(a) Systematic mapping of participants and consideration of inclusion within dual career literature	TASS athlete cohort (athlete portal), dual career literature	Systemic mapping review (e.g. Petticrew & Roberts, 2006; Perryman, 2016)	N/A - Reference
	1(b) Document Review	Purposive sampling of documents & communications related to athlete nomination process; review of athlete portal	Document review- documents and communications related to athlete nomination process, athlete portal	Content analysis & reflexive thematic analysis
	1(c) Stakeholder Interviews	TASS staff, TASS practitioners	Virtual in-depth qualitative semi-structured interviews	Reflexive thematic analysis
	1(d) Ethnographic Observation	Environments: TASS office, virtual TASS meetings People: TASS staff, TASS practitioners	Ethnographic field notes, direct and virtual observation, reflections	Reflexive thematic analysis
Study 2: Athlete Voice	2(a) Athlete Interviews	Dual career athletes who: were unfunded, had limited/no funding, balanced sport with work, felt excluded or marginalised	Virtual in-depth qualitative semi-structured interviews with athletes	Reflexive thematic analysis
	2(b) Ethnographic Observation Site Visits	Environment: TASS delivery sites (3) People: TASS practitioners, dual career athletes (TASS and non-TASS)	Direct observation, unstructured interviews, field notes	Reflexive thematic analysis
	2(c) Focus Group	Environment: TASS delivery site Participants: 9 dual career athletes	Focus group interview (audio-recorded), field notes	Reflexive thematic analysis

Table 2. Stages of research

At the outset of this PhD programme, research question three "How can dual career systems be more inclusive?" was originally to be answered through a third study involving co-production events with dual career stakeholders such as dual career support organisations, practitioners, and national governing bodies. Due to delays and challenges inflicted by the Covid-19 pandemic and the evolution of the research, the third study was dropped. However, the third research question was a question asked of all interview participants and is later addressed through understandings gathered from the entire programme of research. See Chapter 9 for a discussion on how dual career systems can be more inclusive.

5.4.1 Critical institutional ethnography

Using my unique position as an embedded researcher within TASS, an ethnographic approach was taken to gain knowledge and insight into the inner workings and functions of dual career systems to ascertain the possible inequities within those systems. This two-year critical institutional ethnography, stretching across both Study 1 and Study 2 (see Table 2), was informed by my critical interpretive pragmatic paradigm. Ethnographic research originated from early anthropology studies of foreign cultures (e.g., Mead, 1935; Malinowski, 2004) and was particularly focused around understanding cultural norms inherent in certain societies. Ethnography has now become a commonly used qualitative method across many academic disciplines, especially sociology. Ethnography can be defined in many ways, as there is no singular accepted definition (Stewart, 1998). Typically, ethnography is viewed as research using "a particular set of methods" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995: 1) that aims to understand a particular group or culture (Fetterman, 2008) within a specific setting, or

‘field’. Key data collection methods involved in ethnography are often related to participation, thus ethnographic researchers typically use methods of observation, interviewing, and “collecting whatever data are available” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995: 1).

Creswell and Poth (2018) contend that an ethnography focuses on an entire culture-sharing group and attempts to develop a complex, complete description of the culture(s), or subcultures, of the group. Therefore, I used an ethnographic approach to determine practices and procedures within dual career systems, and the cultures within, that contribute to the inclusion and exclusion of athletes. I focused on examining the TASS organisation, as it directly works with dual career athletes in the England talent pathway and is the main dual career support scheme in the country. The two-year ethnographic case-study of TASS was conducted during a time when the organisation was taking its first steps to become more inclusive. A case study involves research on a specific organisation, programme, or process (Yin, 2003). Specifically, ethnographic case studies are case studies “employing ethnographic methods and focused on building arguments about a cultural, group, or community formation or examining other sociocultural phenomena” (Schwandt & Gates, 2018: 344). By undertaking an ethnography of TASS, I critically examined the organisation to identify exclusive mechanisms. I built my ethnographic method by combining critical and institutional ethnography approaches to investigate the culture of TASS. These approaches are outlined below following a reflection on the role of TASS within my ethnography.

TASS was situated as not only the organisation at the centre of my ethnography, but also as the co-funder of this PhD research. As such, my relationship with TASS

was carefully navigated as to try to uphold the integrity of the research process and the presentation of findings. While this PhD programme began from a proposed theme, the eventual focus of the study, including the research design, was formulated and driven by myself without influence from the TASS organisation. There were no specific attempts by TASS to influence the way I collected data or the types of data that I collected. Instead, TASS staff were generally supportive of my personal intentions and approaches to this research and provided assistance when I required access to particular information such as TASS documents, communications, and the athlete portal database. When I requested TASS documents (see Appendix 11) for my document review, TASS staff shared these with me directly via email. During the interview recruitment phase of Study 1: 'The System', TASS staff assisted me by sending out recruitment call emails (see Appendix 2) that I authored to their practitioner and NGB networks. TASS staff also sent messages on my behalf containing information (see Appendix 3) about my study, my intended observation, and an opt-out policy ahead of my planned virtual observation of select TASS calls and meetings. Overall, the TASS organisation and its staff allowed me to direct and conduct my research as I wished and supported me when I required their assistance in obtaining organisational information or with outreach to their network.

Institutional ethnography, originating from the work of feminist sociologist Dorothy Smith (1999, 2002, 2005), is a form of critical inquiry that uses data collection techniques consistent with qualitative approaches such as interview, observation, and textual analysis (Bisaillon & Rankin, 2012). Smith's work, and its development into institutional ethnography, started from projects related to the women's movement in British Columbia (see Smith & Griffith, 2022; Stanley, 2018). Smith centred her research on women's experiences, especially their challenges, and held impact-

focused intentions for her work. Smith (2005) later broadened her epistemological position to include “any subject who ‘disappears’ in objectified knowledges” (Walby, 2007: 1011). Smith and Griffiths (2022: 76, 77) state that institutional ethnography starts off from “what we care about” and “works from the interests and concerns of actual people.” Thus, the institutional ethnography is driven to make things better for the subjects whose experiences are centred within the research. As such, institutional ethnography’s beginnings were “linked closely to the pragmatics of making change from below” (Smith & Griffith, 2022: 105). Here, the method of institutional ethnography is aligned with my paradigmatic position, particularly my pragmatic lens. Furthermore, Smith (2005: 29) stresses that institutional ethnography can “enlarge the scope of what becomes visible from that site, mapping the relations that connect one local site to others”. Thus, this method is not only useful to understand the institutional norms and relations of TASS, but can also help increase understanding of how TASS connects to, or is influenced by, the larger English dual career sport system.

There are different stances or approaches to institutional ethnography in that some researchers use personal experiences, interviews, and participant observation variously alongside the use of texts. Smith (2005) emphasises the great importance of texts, or documents, in institutional ethnographies as texts coordinate and organise different work processes and can deepen inquiry into ruling relations and work knowledges. Grant (2018: 124) also advocates that the open nature of ethnography makes it “ideally suited to the inclusion of documents”. Documents can amplify, or add new, areas of interest that might not be accessible through interviews or observation alone (Atkinson & Coffey, 2010; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). As such, I used documents in combination with other ethnographic methods in Study 1: ‘The System’ to learn more about TASS communications, especially those related to their athlete

nomination process. My document review and document analysis methods are explained below in sections 5.4.2 and 5.4.3.

An institution, in Smith's (1987: 160) view, is not only an organisation but also "a complex of relations forming part of the ruling apparatus, organised around a distinctive function – education, health... nodes or knots... coordinating multiple strands of action into a functional complex." Here, it is within institutions that relations of ruling, and indeed relations of power, are located and thus can be examined to determine their influences on organisational functions, processes, and procedures. I considered TASS as an institution (expanded on in Chapter 8) with its own culture and influence on the greater culture of dual career pathways. As an institution, it has the potential to reproduce and reinforce, as well as to challenge and reform, inequities such as those based on gender, race, and ability (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

As my constructed paradigm includes the critical paradigm, my institutional ethnography is also critical in nature. Critical ethnography was developed from the commitment to radical education in multiple works that were critical of teaching practices. These works recognised that society oppresses marginalised groups and is thus structured by class and status as well as by gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation (hooks, 1994; Keddie, 1971; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Sharp & Green, 1975; Weis & Fine, 2000). A critical ethnography is a coordinated approach to my research programme due to my theoretical approach of cultural studies (Williams, 1958; Hall, 1980) rooted in power relations (i.e., Foucault, 1980, 1983; Lukes, 1974, 2021). Madison (2005: 5) states that "critical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain". A critical ethnography is well suited for this study, as my thesis addressed

exclusionary practices within dual career sport systems and aims to provide inclusion solutions from the data derived in this programme of research.

5.4.2 Data collection methods and sampling

Data collection for Study 1 was driven largely by an attempt to answer my first research question: “Who is included in and excluded from dual career systems?” However, this question was eventually answered with data from across the full ethnography including data collected during Study 2. Beginning Study 1, I sought to understand the types of athletes that TASS supported and who (staff, practitioners, stakeholders) worked in the TASS dual career network. I also sought to understand how athletes might be structurally included into or excluded from TASS, thus examining the athlete nomination criteria and process. I focused on seeking understanding around the culture and structures of the TASS organisation and took appropriate methods to determine their cultural and procedural norms of operation. In the second phase of my research, Study 2, I focused on developing knowledge around the experiences of inclusion and exclusion of the dual career athletes themselves. Below I expand upon the data collections methods, sampling, and recruitment of participants across the ethnography.

<u>Document Review</u>

As I was starting my data collection, I was unsure of how the TASS organisation operated and recognised the importance of understanding the innerworkings of the athlete nomination process, a key component of their main athlete support scheme.

To gain such understanding, I determined it essential to conduct a document review and analysis. A document review was an important data collection method for my case study of TASS as Walby (2013) contends that institutional ethnographers pay attention to and ask about the texts people work with in organisations. Ethnographic data relating to stakeholder involvement with institutional texts and procedures can offer insights into “the everyday work of ruling” (Rankin, 2017: 2). In this case, critically reviewing key documents, communications, and texts can provide insights into the everyday procedures of managing a dual career support scheme (TASS) and therefore showcase instances of potential structural exclusion. The main purpose of the document review was to identify and examine the sequential procedures and communications involved in the TASS athlete nomination process, with a focus on power relations within the process. Chapter 6 centres on the findings from this document review, alongside interview data, and highlights the influence of power relations on the athlete nomination process. In total, 19 documents were selected through purposive sampling (Patton, 2002; Bryman, 2016) and reviewed to develop empirical knowledge of the processes of athlete nomination to TASS. Of those documents, 15 were directly related to the nomination process and support provision while 4 were related to TASS more generally (e.g., TASS promotional materials and the TASS *Equality and Diversity Policy*). A list of the 19 reviewed documents can be found in Appendix 11. Documents were also examined to consider TASS’ commitment to inclusion (see section 7.1).

It has been argued that documents have been underused in ethnography (Atkinson & Coffey, 2010), which may be, in part, due to ethnography’s origins in anthropology where oral history was dominant due to the lack of written records (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Institutional ethnographies tend to fill this gap through

centring and platforming the use of documents, as Smith (2005: 228) argues that "Texts – printed, electronic or otherwise replicable – produce the stability and replicability of organisation or institution" and further advocates for the use of documents as they "enter into and coordinate people's doings". Here, texts, or documents, are involved in the organisation, management, and indeed the *ordering* (Law, 1994; Kendall & Wickham, 2001) of the TASS organisation and the ordering of the athlete nomination process.

Furthermore, because organisations typically keep text-based records that may structure aspects of work, the analysis of documents can illuminate power relations (Smith & Turner, 2014; Smith, 2005; Harper, 1998). As power is a leading theoretical concept in this study (see Chapter 4), documents were essential to include in my data collection and I found them to be helpful in constructing my findings around the TASS athlete nomination process in Chapter 6. Specifically, documents were included as supplementary data to deepen understandings gained from interviews and observation.

Grant (2018: 138) argues that "the order in which researchers are exposed to participants, interview data and documents is also of importance." During my study, I conducted a database review and document review early on (see Table 2 above). These reviews coincided with my first few visits to the TASS office, which involved observation and field notes. It was important for me to conduct this document review early so that I could best understand the core procedures that drove the TASS support scheme for talented athletes. It was essential for me to collect documents and communications related to the athlete nomination process, as this was multi-layered and complex.

When I began my document review, I identified two TASS staff members who were most directly involved in the athlete nomination process and asked for their suggestions of key documents related to the process. These TASS staff members acted as gatekeepers by giving me permission and access to view these documents, including the athlete portal which is an online platform where information (i.e., contact information, demographic information, and use of support services) about TASS athletes is housed. The athlete portal was at the centre of my database review (see 5.3 and Table 2) which was conducted alongside the document review. Although TASS did not keep historical records of athlete demographic data from years past, I was able to collect demographic data from the athlete portal pertaining to the most recent athlete cohort (2018-2019). As discussed in Chapter 7.4, the athlete portal data was incomplete and insufficient, thereby stymieing my intentions to accurately chart and identify demographic trends or gaps within the TASS athlete cohort.

Interviews

A key method of data collection was through interviews. I chose to undertake in-depth qualitative semi-structured interviews. As this study focused on experiences of inclusion and exclusion in dual career systems, qualitative interviews were well suited to create a space for participants to share their understandings, reflections, and opinions of events "in their own words" (Byrne, 2012: 209). As lived experience informs how inclusion and exclusion occur and are felt by participants, qualitative interviews are a useful method to elicit knowledge and beliefs that influence a person's experience (Essed, 1991). Semi-structured interviews encourage rich detailed answers around participants' lived experiences and understandings (Essed, 1991;

Byrne, 2012). Taking a semi-structured approach to my interviews allowed conversation to flow more naturally and gave space for participants to expand on their experiences outside of directly answering interview questions.

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, my interviews had to be conducted online due to regulations and restrictions around travel and face-to-face interactions. Online interviews "involve both parties using the internet simultaneously to engage in a 'real time' conversation" using an online communication platform (Sparkes & Smith, 2014: 84). In my case, I used the online platform Zoom, as my university gave me access to a protected account where I could designate personal security codes and links for the virtual interviews. Interviews were scheduled at times convenient for participants and the average interview time was 125.4 minutes. Some interviews had to be continued across multiple days due to the length of conversation. On these occasions, participants were asked if they were keen to continue the interview and all agreed to do so. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Before each interview, every participant was given the following documents: participant information sheet (Appendix 6), consent form (Appendix 7), privacy notice (Appendix 8), identity characteristics form (Appendix 9), and an interview guide (Appendix 10). Of these documents, participants were required to sign the consent form and fill out the identity characteristics form. The identity characteristics form included questions regarding personal demographic information and participants were asked to self-identify their age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, and whether or not they had a disability. The participants were given the option to refrain from answering questions if they wished, but all participants answered the demographic questions.

Before conducting interviews with each group of participants, I created an interview guide with assistance from my supervisors. This guide (Appendix 10) was created through attempts to best answer the research questions as well as to help gauge perceptions and understandings of key themes that underpin my research (i.e., inclusion, exclusion, dual career). For example, my interview guide for Study 2, in which I spoke with athletes, included the following sections: opening questions, dual career athletes, inclusion and exclusion, key questions, ending questions, and summary questions. Within the "key questions" section, I asked participants about their own experiences of inclusion and/or exclusion or if they witnessed exclusive behaviour within their dual career environments. Sparkes and Smith (2014) argue that interview guides enable researchers to attain important information while also giving participants an opportunity to explore their own views and feelings. The interview guide (Appendix 10) was shared with participants prior to the interview and used during the interview to keep interview questions focused on the main research questions and objectives of the PhD study. Due to being semi-structured in nature, interviews did not always follow the interview guide in that I allowed discussion to naturally flow to topics related but not always listed on the interview guide. Furthermore, the interview guide was not used as a step-by-step process as I jumped back and forth across questions depending on the flow of conversation within the interview.

Study 1 involved interviewing TASS staff and also practitioners working with TASS athletes. TASS practitioners work with TASS athletes at TASS delivery sites and are not employed by TASS. TASS practitioners are predominantly employed by the delivery sites (e.g., universities) and they provide support related to one of the following services: strength and conditioning, nutrition, physiology, psychology, and performance lifestyle. TASS staff are selected individuals among main staff members

at the TASS organisation at the time of data collection. In total, 6 TASS staff and 3 TASS practitioners were formally interviewed (i.e., virtual semi-structured interviews) and an additional 6 practitioners were spoken with during in-person informal interviews during TASS delivery site visits. The profiles for TASS staff and practitioners involved in virtual interviews are included in Table 2 below. The median age of these participants was 36.7 years.

Role	Gender	Race	Ethnicity	Age
TASS staff	Male	White	White British	31
TASS staff	Male	White	British	35
TASS staff	Female	White	British	33
TASS staff	Male	White	White British	48
TASS staff	Male	White	British	32
TASS staff	Male	White	British	51
TASS Practitioner	Female	White	Irish	41
TASS Practitioner	Male	Black	Black British-Caribbean	25
TASS Practitioner	Male	White	British	34

Table 3. TASS staff and TASS practitioner interviewee profiles

Interview participants for Study 1 were approached in phases. The first wave of interviews involved TASS staff. I targeted my recruitment towards TASS staff who were most directly involved in decision-making or communication around the TASS athlete nomination criteria, TASS athlete nomination process, and the delivery of support to TASS athletes. In total, six members of TASS' main staff were interviewed. Of the

TASS staff interviewed, five were male, one was female, and all staff identified as white. Insight into my thoughts around the recruitment of this group are in my reflection notes below:

> It was easy to recruit participants from the TASS team. I wanted to speak with people most involved with the nomination process and those who have relationships with the athletes or practitioners or NGBs. Most staff with that involvement happened to be men. Everyone on TASS staff is white, except for a recently new contract hire (2021). Staff were pretty keen to speak with me and the interviews were overall pleasant.

The second wave of interviews for Study 1 involved speaking with active TASS practitioners. Recruitment for this group was guided in part by an email I created which was then forwarded to the practitioner network by a TASS staff member. Only one person responded to my email recruitment call and followed up with an interview. There was some other interest, but due to busy schedules plans to participate in interviews did not materialise. It was clear that Covid-19 disruptions and “return to play” plans, post national lockdowns and restrictions, kept many practitioners busy during this time. Following this limited response, I took a targeted approach to recruit more participants. Targeted recruitment was driven from suggestions made by TASS staff who work most directly with the practitioners, as well as my own connections (e.g., from attending TASS calls and events) with practitioners in the TASS network. I also attempted to recruit practitioners who reflected demographic diversity. In total, three TASS practitioners were interviewed: two men and one woman. With these participants, I was able to speak with practitioners working at three distinct TASS delivery sites that differed in size, location, and diversity rates of the student population.

A third wave of interview recruitment was attempted for NGBs in the TASS network. However, there were no responses to my general call for interest (via email) with the group. I was, at first, quite frustrated with the lack of engagement from NGBs and considered reasons why they were not interested in my reflection notebook.

> I sent out an email to all NGBs in the TASS network via a TASS staffer. There were zero responses. No one wanted to speak with me. I will look back over the wording of the email… but I think people are just scared of "inclusion" and talking about diversity. From my understanding, NGBs often struggle with meeting diversity targets, and they might not want me directing questions at them around inclusion or exclusion.

Further adding to the recruitment struggles, this phase in data collection coincided with the upcoming Olympics and Paralympics. The Covid-19 pandemic had delayed these events from the originally scheduled summer of 2020 to the summer of 2021. As such, most NGBs in the TASS network (as most were Olympic or Paralympic sports) were busy and burdened with preparation for and travel to Olympic and Paralympic competition in Tokyo. Due to these delays and the lack of interest in my original recruitment call, I decided to forgo the plan to speak with NGBs and instead moved on to recruiting dual career athletes for my second study.

Study 2 focuses on dual career athlete experiences of inclusion and exclusion. I originally intended to speak with three groups of athletes: TASS athletes, non-TASS athletes in education pathways, and non-TASS athletes in work pathways. However, after reflecting on my literature review (Chapter 2) which revealed the lack of research on dual career athletes who are not funded or not in education, I shifted my approach. Instead of recruiting TASS funded athletes, I decided to focus on interviewing "unfunded dual career athletes". Throughout this thesis, "unfunded" dual career

athletes are athletes who fit into one or more of the following categories: receive no organised sport-based funding from any funding scheme, are self-funded, struggle with limited funding (i.e., funding is insufficient in meeting dual career costs), have had organised funding withdrawn, or were denied access to organised funding. Overall, I targeted my recruitment to athletes who struggled with funding, felt marginalised or excluded, and those who balanced sport with work.

I wanted to intentionally include athletes who were from underrepresented backgrounds (i.e., ethnic minority communities, disabled, LGBTQ+, lower socio-economic status). It was imperative that I outlined my criteria in detail, as recruitment was difficult from the outset. I began recruiting athletes through a general recruitment call on social media (Twitter). This recruitment call did not yield many results, especially not from groups historically underrepresented in dual career literature and in dual career support, who I was keen to speak with. I quickly recognised the lack of ethnic diversity in my athlete respondents, as seen in my reflection notes:

> My original Twitter call did not produce many athletes. Interestingly, only white athletes in education responded to my Twitter call. This is important data in itself. It showcases that often-ignored groups of athletes are not easily reachable with traditional recruitment methods. If my Twitter network is mostly academics, sport professionals, and some American athletes, how would British athletes find my call for participants? I had decent traction on my second call out in terms of my contacts retweeting it to their network, but it still did not yield any direct results.
>
> I even reached out to old teammates from when I did sport during my MA programme here in the UK. *None* of them could connect me with a non-white dual career athlete, someone who they knew experienced exclusion, or someone who struggled with funding. Even my friend who competes on an openly LGBTQ+ team could not find anyone on his team who identified with my criteria. I found it surprising that no one on this specific team had experiences of exclusion or marginalisation… or maybe they did but just didn't want to talk

about it. Perhaps they didn't identify as "dual career" or didn't see their sporting life as serious enough. This is data – the white majority and the confusion over what "dual career" even is, especially confusion over the level of performance or commitment to sport.

After reflecting on my failed Twitter recruitment call and drawing from knowledge gained from my literature review and interviews with TASS staff and practitioners in Study 1, I purposely chose to not use the term "dual career" in athlete recruitment (e.g., recruitment flyers, Appendix 4, 5) because the term was often misunderstood. Instead, I used phrasing that described athletes pursuing sport at the same time as education or a job so that potential participants could be found.

Eventually, I settled on recruiting athletes who fit the following criteria, as stated within the participant information sheet (Appendix 6) that each athlete participant received. Athlete participants selected for interview identified with one or multiple criteria below:

You have been invited to take part in this study because you are a current or former dual career athlete in the UK aged 18 years or over. You participate(d) in your sport at the same time as pursuing either education and/or work (a job) and may have found it difficult to balance those commitments. During your athletic career you may have: i) received funding, yet experienced exclusion or marginalisation, ii) did not have funding or were self-funded, iii) declined funding or lost your funding, iv) struggled with limited funding or felt that you missed out on funding opportunities, v) had experiences of marginalisation or exclusion during your career, vi) felt that your voice was not heard or that your needs were not met. You could be competing at elite, sub-elite, or another competitive level.

Ultimately, many of the athletes I interviewed were recruited through snowball sampling (Abrams, 2010). During my first few athlete interviews, I asked my participants if they knew of anyone who might fit my criteria. This led to more

participants from different sports and different dual career pathways. On one occasion, a TASS practitioner suggested an athlete to me. After interviewing that athlete, they told me that they enjoyed the interview so much that they wanted to share the opportunity with other athletes they knew. This athlete actively reached out to their contacts, with my email shared, which resulted in two athletes coming to me to be considered for an interview. It seemed that word travelled much faster within athlete networks than it did within professional or academic networks (e.g., Twitter). Although this particular instance was a breakthrough, I continued to struggle at times to recruit athletes as seen in my reflection notes:

> The athlete recruitment struggles were very hard to work through. Covid-19 made it hard to visit TASS delivery sites… I was able to visit a few at the end of 2021 when infection rates had somewhat improved, but then the new variant arrived in December, and I had to pause those visits. I did put up flyers at every site I visited but have yet to receive any responses from those flyers.

Despite the lack of engagement with my first recruitment calls on Twitter, issues with Covid-19, and the lack of responses to my physical flyers put up at TASS delivery sites, I was able to interview 11 dual career athletes across 9 different sports. The median age of these athlete interview participants was 27 years. The profiles of athletes interviewed in Study 2 are outlined in Table 4 below. In addition to the athlete participants featured below, I spoke with another 9 dual career athletes during an in-person focus group at a TASS delivery site. These athletes were not considered interview participants, and therefore not included in Table 4, but instead were part of the larger ethnography. Athletes within the focus group consented to speak with me and knew the data would influence my research.

Pathways	Gender	Race	Ethnicity	Age	Sport
Education	Female	White	British	28	Individual
Education	Female	White	British	22	Individual
Education	Female	African American/White	American	25	Individual
Work	Female	Black	Caribbean	37	Individual
Multi-career	Female	White	British	27	Team
Multi-career	Male	Black	African	20	Individual
Multi-career	Female	White	Italian	31	Team
Multi-career	Male	Asian	Indian	22	Individual
Multi-career	Female	Black	British	27	Individual
Multi-career	Female	White	Scottish	28	Team
Multi-career	Male	White	British	29	Team

Table 4. Athlete interviewee profiles

The athletes featured above have been placed within one of three dual career "pathways": education, work, and multi-career. These pathways are further discussed in Chapter 6. Furthermore, the sport of each athlete was condensed into two categories: individual and team. This helped to anonymise the athletes by not indicating their specific sport while distinguishing between individual sports and team sports.

Observation and field notes

An essential aspect of ethnography is the researcher's embeddedness in the field of inquiry and the culture being studied (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2017). I was able to embed myself into the ethos of the TASS organisation through visits to their office, involvement in meetings and calls (in-person and virtual), casual conversations with staff, and virtual interviews. However, it was difficult to conduct much observation in-person during my data collection as it overlapped with the global Covid-19 pandemic.

The pandemic especially affected my ability to observe more TASS delivery site environments due to national lockdowns, travel regulations, and face-to-face restrictions. I was fortunate to be able to visit three TASS delivery sites (university institutions where TASS practitioners and TASS athletes are located) during lulls in Covid-19 infection rates and moments of eased travel and face-to-face restrictions.

When I was able to visit TASS delivery sites, I primarily collected data through observation and field notes as well as unstructured interviews (Bernard, 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012) with TASS and university practitioners onsite. Observation was done directly as well as virtually. Direct observation is used by both ethnographers and case study researchers (Gordon, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Salem, 2008). Field notes are assembled and recorded during the observation phase of data collection (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2017). Field notes can take multiple forms including observation notes, methodological notes, theoretical notes, and personal notes (Dennis, 2010; Jackson, 1990; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010). My field notes were primarily observation notes which were written during my time researching TASS, in "the field", to capture what I observed and heard (Dennis, 2010; Jackson, 1990). It is recommended that ethnographic researchers keep detailed field notes, especially when in the process of analysis and when combining several types or sets of data, in order to aid reflexivity (Coffey, 1999). My field notes encompassed many of my observations, impressions, and notes or reflections while in the field. I took field notes during visits to TASS headquarters and TASS delivery sites and these notes helped me to add contextual depth to data from interviews and conversations with practitioners and athletes I spoke with during these site visits. My field notes from my first visit to TASS headquarters were used in my analysis of the influences of higher education on TASS culture and operational norms.

Focus group

During a visit to one TASS delivery site, I conducted a focus group with 9 dual career athletes that lasted approximately 78 minutes. According to Lederman (see Thomas et al., 1995), a focus group is “a technique involving the use of in-depth group interviews in which participants are selected because they are a purposive, although not necessarily representative, sampling of a specific population, this group being ‘focused’ on a given topic”. The main topics of discussion in the focus group included dual career balance, support during dual career, and experiences of inclusion and exclusion. Athletes were chosen through collaboration with the on-site TASS practitioner. After sharing my recruitment criteria, the practitioner invited nine dual career athletes (all pursuing sport with education) to join the focus group discussion. Athletes competed in various individual and team sports at the university. Seven athletes in the focus group were considered “scholar athletes” by the university, one athlete played club-level sport, and one athlete was currently supported by TASS. All athletes in the focus group competed for the university where the site visit was taking place, but some also competed for regional or national teams of their sport. Of the nine athletes in the focus group, 6 were female and 3 were male. The focus group was audio recorded using a digital recording app on my mobile phone with the verbal consent of all individuals involved. A TASS practitioner was also present at the focus group and contributed, at times, to the conversation to clarify structures of the university sport department.

5.4.3 Data analysis methods

To analyse the data that I collected through interviews, a focus group, observation, and field notes, I used reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Data from my document review of the TASS athlete nomination process consisted of content analysis of the documents and communications in addition to reflexive thematic analysis of interview responses about said documents. My use of these analysis approaches is expanded upon below.

Reflexive thematic analysis

There are many examples of thematic analysis being used in sport studies to examine cultural differences, experiences of immigrant and diverse athletes, inclusion efforts in sport programming, and managing diversity in sport spaces (Schinke et al., 2013; Rich & Giles, 2015; Barrick, Bridel, & Miller, 2021; Trussell, 2020). While Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis is one of the most popular methods for qualitative research in sport and exercise science (Trainor & Bundon, 2021), studies often fail to mention details about their chosen thematic analysis approach and the process, with a few exceptions (see Byrne, 2021; Trainor & Bundon, 2021). These limitations may be attributed, in part, to Braun and Clarke's original 2006 paper failing to fully define their thematic analysis approach which led to misconceptions, misinterpretations, and studies often lacking in transparency around the analytical process and reflexivity of the researcher (Braun, Clarke, & Weate, 2016). As such, Braun and Clarke (2019, 2021) have since rebranded their approach as *reflexive* thematic analysis, distinguishing it from other thematic analysis approaches. Braun and Clarke (2013, 2019, 2021) have expounded on the need for researchers to engage fully with their

contemporary approach, which requires a reflexive practitioner. Reflexive thematic analysis is not tied to one paradigm and is often mixed with other qualitative approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Braun, Clarke, & Weate, 2016; Terry et al., 2017), thus it is useful for my research which mixes interpretive, critical, and pragmatic paradigms.

Reflexive thematic analysis falls into one of two thematic analysis camps, that of “big Q”. Kidder and Fine (1987) determined that there are two strands of thematic analysis: “small q” and “big Q”. While small q is tied to a realist ontological framework, big Q is not anchored to a particular theoretical tradition and can be applied flexibly across epistemological and ontological approaches especially within qualitative paradigms (Kidder & Fine, 1987; Braun, Clarke, & Weate, 2016). Additionally, Braun and Clarke (2021) have clustered the many versions of thematic analysis into three approaches: coding reliability, codebook, and reflexive. Reflexive thematic analysis, developed primarily for use within a qualitative paradigm, embraces qualitative research values and subjective skills that I bring to the process as a researcher (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Qualitative research views researcher subjectivity as a resource for research and that meaning and knowledge are partial, situated, and contextual (Braun & Clarke, 2013). As such, reflexive thematic analysis recognises the researcher’s active role in knowledge production (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Clarke & Braun, 2017). Braun and Clarke (2012, 2013, 2021) repeatedly argue that codes and themes do not magically “emerge” from the data but are generated from it. Thus, the researcher makes active interpretive choices to generate codes and construct themes (Clarke & Braun, 2014).

Clarke and Braun (2016) outline six phases when using reflexive thematic analysis: i) familiarisation with the data, ii) generating codes, iii) developing themes, iv) reviewing and refining themes, v) defining and naming themes, and vi) producing the report. The authors stress that analysis is not linear or rigid and that repetition and revisiting of phases is an essential part of the (recursive) analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021). Conducting quality reflexive thematic analysis requires "reflective and thoughtful engagement with the data" and the analytic process, not simply working through consecutive steps (Braun & Clarke, 2019: 594). Below, I expand upon my process of doing reflexive thematic analysis and share to showcase the "bending back upon oneself" practice of reflexivity (Sparkes & Smith, 2014: 20).

Data Familiarisation

The first stage of reflexive thematic analysis involves the researcher familiarising themselves with the data (Clarke & Braun, 2016). I began familiarising myself with my data through reading and re-reading the verbatim interview transcripts. All virtual interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants. To transcribe the interviews, I first relied on auto transcription performed by Zoom and then personally corrected the transcript, using audio recordings, to assure word for word accuracy. From the first reading of each transcript onward, I began to highlight key passages and noted potential codes and themes. This initial analysis is also referred to as "a process of 'immersion' in the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2013: 204). I immersed myself in my data at several points, returning to transcripts for a third or fourth time to develop strong themes. I did not use a coding software programme, but instead coded by hand. This entailed first highlighting and ascribing codes, earmarking key passages, pulling

quotes and their codes from transcripts into a Microsoft Word document, and organising them into initial themes.

It is important to note that data analysis can begin early in the research process, as researchers (especially reflexive researchers) can start reflecting on what their data means during the data collection process. Data analysis is thus an on-going process throughout the research process (Shaw, 2001). As I returned to my data and repeated phases of analysis, my familiarisation with my data increased and my embeddedness deepened.

Code Generation

Reflexive thematic analysis is an interpretive process that involves organic coding which leads to final themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Coding, phase two of reflexive thematic analysis, involves both inductive and deductive approaches, although studies usually lean more heavily towards one approach (Clarke & Braun, 2016). Inductive approaches are “data driven” or “bottom up” where content guides the developing analysis while deductive approaches are “top-down” and thus driven and informed by theoretical concepts beyond the data (Clarke & Braun, 2014). It is a misconception that researchers must choose between these approaches as most thematic analysis include both semantic and latent, and inductive and deductive elements (Robertson et al., 2013). Furthermore, some data can be double-coded in accordance with the semantic meaning communicated by the interviewee and the latent meaning interpreted by the researcher (Patton, 1990).

My predominant coding approach was inductive, as I did not create a coding frame prior to my analysis. Instead, the creation of themes came through my immersion with the data and resultant increased understanding. As stated above, Braun & Clarke (2006) critique researchers who claim that themes "emerge" from the data. The researcher plays an active role in identifying themes, selecting which are of interest, and reporting them to readers (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 7). As a coding example, I asked an interview participant about diversity within the TASS athlete cohort and they responded with, "we can only work with what we've got." During the coding process, I returned to my reflection notes for my thoughts during the interview. In this instance, I wrote that I felt the participant was placing blame on the process and the NGBs and thus relieving TASS of any responsibility related to diversity of athletes in their cohort. These notes were speculation as well as my initial analysis of what was being said. After coding additional interviews and comparing similar statements from other participants, I latently coded this as "TASS points to NGBs for lack of diversity in athlete cohort." While the participant did not directly say NGBs are to blame, they implied this in their answer, and it corresponded with implications that other participants shared. Here, I had an active role in data interpretation as is consistent with reflexive thematic analysis.

Due to the conversational nature of the interviews and the semi-structured format allowing for participants to sometimes guide the direction of conversation, not all of the text within interviews were coded. Text and passages that most directly answered my research questions were coded and involved in theme development. My decision-making process of which themes were included in my report was challenging in that I had a lot of data from long interviews, and I was interested in most of it. I again returned to my research questions to aid in the selection of priority themes.

Theme development, refinement, and definition

Phases three to five of Braun & Clarke's (2006, 2016, 2019) thematic analysis involve the development, refinement, and definition of themes within the dataset. Progression of analysis involved generating themes and sub-themes while also moving back and forth between them to refine and rename the themes. While codes are meant to provide evidence for themes, sometimes this process was difficult when codes and themes were not easily distinguishable (Terry et al., 2017). I used post-it notes and written notes to write out developing themes and sub-themes during this process. I also created Word documents in which I outlined themes with connecting codes and quotes from interviews.

One major final theme (examined in Chapter 8) is "the culture of TASS is entwined with the cultures of higher education and high-performance sport". This theme was developed over the course of many rounds of coding and theme development with interviews, observations, and field notes. One of its sub-themes is "dual career is intrinsically linked to higher education" with a further sub-theme below that of "dual career is perceived to mean athletes in education". That sub-theme was built from codes relating to dual career definitions (i.e., education and sport, higher education) and codes relating to "misconceptions" of dual career. Such "misconceptions of dual career" included: dual career athletes must be in education, and dual career athletes are in (or intending to go into) higher education. These misconceptions were also linked to codes related to TASS athlete eligibility criteria, especially the education criteria. All the codes and themes in this paragraph build into

the final theme of “the culture of TASS is entwined with the cultures of higher education and high-performance sport.”

Initial reflexive thematic analysis of interviews from Study 1 informed the subsequent analysis of Study 2 by developing a clearer understanding of how dual career environments are structured so that athlete experiences within them are contextualised. I was able to contextualise some of the data from athlete interviews with data from TASS staff and practitioner interviews. As the process of data analysis is not linear but instead a recursive process (Braun & Clarke, 2006), I repeated and moved back and forth across the stages until I felt secure in my final themes.

This thesis serves as the final report of my reflexive thematic analysis, known as stage six of Braun and Clarke’s (2016) approach. Here within, themes were presented and analysed through critical interpretation. Chapter 9 includes discussion around how my third research question, “How can dual career systems be more inclusive?” might be answered through reflecting on findings from this study. I anticipate creating condensed versions of this report to share with dual career practitioners to improve practice and positively influence dual career environments and the cultures within.

Vignettes

To share the stories of dual career athletes from Study 2, I created vignettes to act as narratives. Portrait and composite vignettes (Ely et al., 1997; Spalding & Phillips, 2007) represent lived experiences based on interviews. In the context of my work, these were one-on-one semi-structured virtual interviews and an in-person focus group. Portrait

vignettes were constructed to showcase experiences of individual athletes and composite vignettes were constructed by combining the stories of two or more athletes within similar pathways and with similar experiences into a combined narrative. Direct quotations from athletes interviewed were used, along with minor adjustments and additions for clarity, to create representative vignettes of dual career athlete experiences pursuing their dual careers. Participants reflected in each vignette were given an opportunity to approve of or edit the vignettes that relate to their experience. As such, all vignettes that appear in this thesis have been approved by the athletes as representative of their lived experiences.

Vignettes have been used in sport studies examining dual career experiences, dual career practitioner emotional labour, and the acculturation of immigrant athletes (Deason, 2019; Hings et al., 2018; Schinke et al., 2016). I argue that vignettes are also appropriate to use when presenting and analysing athlete experiences of inclusion or exclusion. These athlete stories are told in the first-person perspective, which has been advocated so as to amplify participant voices in the research (Ely et al., 2007; Blodgett et al., 2011; Langer, 2016). However, it is important to note that my interpretation and analysis as the researcher is embedded within the creation of the research vignettes as the act of writing them can be an interpretive representation of qualitative inquiry (Langer, 2016; Richardson, 2003). This is consistent with my use of reflexive thematic analysis, as this approach recognizes the researcher’s active role in knowledge production (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Clarke & Braun, 2017).

Document Analysis

A document analysis (Bowen, 2009) was undertaken to analyse the documents, communications, and athlete portal related to the TASS athlete nomination process. This document review and analysis provided essential data which helped to answer two research questions. Through examining the criteria for athletes to be nominated to the scheme (i.e., education criteria), I was able to discern what kinds of athletes were included into the scheme. Through charting and analysing the TASS athlete nomination procedure, I was able to determine how decisions were made which informed answering how the systemic processes included and excluded athletes.

Bowen (2009: 33) conceptualises document analysis as a process of “evaluating documents in such a way that empirical knowledge is produced and understanding is developed”. It is common for sociology researchers to combine documentary analysis with other research methods (Tight, 2019). One such example is Leston-Bandeira’s (2016) study which examined the UK parliament’s commitment to and engagement in public engagement using, similar to myself, in-depth semi-structured interviews in combination with documentary analysis of key documents related to management and strategy development. Leston-Bandeira (2016: 501) claimed that when used together, the documents and interviews produced “the narrative presented by the institution and its officials”. Such a narrative, in my view, speaks to the ordering and culture of the organisation. My document analysis involved a combination of content analysis (Elo, & Kyngäs, 2008) and reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019). This approach is expanded upon below.

During data analysis, Braun & Clarke (2006) distinguish between two types of data, and two corresponding levels of themes: semantic and latent. Semantic content

in documents can refer to “explicit or surface meanings of the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 84). To explore and examine semantic or “witting” content within documents, O’Leary (2014) calls for techniques of interviewing and content analysis. Bowen (2009: 32) argues that content analysis can be used as a “first-pass document review” that can identify meaningful and relevant passages, which then can be strengthened by interviews. However, Bowen (2009) also suggests that thematic analysis can be used to consider pattern recognition within data from documents. As such, I used a combination of content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) and reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019) of interviews with TASS staff directly involved with the athlete nomination process and the creation or dissemination of the documents involved. While there are many similarities with Bowen’s (2009) content analysis and reflexive analysis, Tight (2019: 137) contends that all documentary analysis “is a form of content analysis, in that the content of the document(s) is being analysed”. When evaluating documents, Bowen (2009: 33) asserts the importance of not considering data as “necessarily precise, accurate, or complete”. As such, it is essential to explore content and context not explicitly included in the documents. O’Leary (2014) points to two such issues to consider when conducting a document analysis: the issue of bias both in the creator of the document and the researcher, and the “unwitting” evidence, or latent meaning, of the document. When analysing documents, latent content can refer to the tone, style, facts, opinions, or agenda that exist within the document (O’Leary, 2014). Such latent data, and theme-making from its analysis, can ”start to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations – and ideologies” (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 84). I examined both latent and semantic content within my document review of TASS’ athlete nomination process.

Eastwood (2014) contends that ethnographers should pay attention to the ways that documents are constructed and the particular language used within. As one of my concerns was to determine how committed the TASS organisation was to inclusion (see Chapter 8.1), language was a key element of my document analysis. My process involved combining content and reflexive analysis. First, using content analysis, I critically examined the use, or lack of, EDI terminology within TASS documents. I then combined those findings with data from my reflexive analysis of interviews with TASS staff, particularly the themes from passages related to the TASS organisation's commitment to inclusion and TASS inclusion efforts. Together, these analysis approaches allowed me to assess and characterise TASS' commitment to inclusion.

The document analysis yielded important data from primary sources that provided context around the processes and procedures of athlete nomination to TASS. As Roth (2015: 16, emphasis in original) argues, the adequacy of an ethnographic account derives from "describing *how* members do what they do to be able to do *what* they do." In this ethnography, the inclusion of documents, and the understandings gained from the document analysis, confirmed how and when procedures were undertaken and allowed for critical review of the types of power, and technologies of power, present within the nomination process (see Chapter 6).

5.5 Ethical considerations

I applied for ethical approval from my institution, Durham University, with 3 ethical assessment forms for: Study 1, Study 2, and the overarching ethnography. Ethics forms for studies 1 and 2 included reference to interviews while the form for the ethnography covered secondary data collection methods like observation. Individuals

involved in ethnographic observation received information about my research programme, were notified when observation was taking place, and consented through an opt-out policy (see Appendix 1, 3). As discussed in 5.4.2, all interview participants received a consent form, privacy notice, identity characteristics form, information sheet, and interview guide prior to their involvement in interviews (see Appendices). Participants were required to sign the consent form (Appendix 7) and complete the identity characteristics form (Appendix 9) before engaging in the interview. The identity characteristics form allowed participants to self-identify across 7 categories: age, gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, and religion. The form included a note clarifying that the "gender" category was not asking about "sex", but instead asking about gender identification. All forms were saved to my password protected computer with names of participants anonymised throughout all documents and writing related to the thesis.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions around face-to-face interaction, all interviews were held over a secure virtual platform (Zoom) involving a unique link and unique password only shared with the participant being interviewed. Consent to record (video, audio, transcription) the interview was given in both written (consent form) and verbal form as all interview participants were asked at the start of the interview for verbal consent. The explanation given ensured that participants understood their rights even if they had not read the informed consent form in much detail before signing it. Participants were reminded that their involvement with the interview was voluntary and that they could end the interview at any time or withdraw from the study at any time. At the end of each interview, I asked participants if they would like to expand on something or if they felt I had misinterpreted anything. This gave them an opportunity to clarify

answers to questions. Recordings of interviews were downloaded to my password protected computer and not shared with anyone.

Each participant was made anonymous throughout data collection. Within my research documents (i.e., chapter drafts, transcripts), thesis write up and presentations on the research, I only refer to my participants using their corresponding pseudonym. Efforts have been taken to limit the amount of information shared about my participants. Specifics around educational institutions, workplace, geographical location, and type of sport have been omitted to ensure athletes could not be easily identified. As stated previously, text from the narrative vignettes were shared with the athletes represented within to give athletes an opportunity to approve of, edit, or withdraw the vignettes which tell their stories. Therefore, the vignettes that appear within this thesis have been approved by the athletes reflected within them.

This chapter has detailed my positionality and the methodological approaches that have shaped my research design of a qualitative methodology. The methodology and research methods were chosen to provide rich data to conceptualise and interpret the lived experiences of participants. This methodology aligned with the impact purposes of the study, in that critical, interpretivist, and pragmatic lenses and approaches are used to consider the inclusivity of the English dual career system and the TASS organisation.

The next chapter entitled 'Athlete Voice' presents findings related to athlete experiences in dual career pathways. Athlete approaches to undertaking their dual careers are categorised by three routes, or pathways: education, work, and multi-career. The findings speak to the ways that athletes were excluded (i.e., structurally and interpersonally) and to how athletes managed their dual careers without access

to organised support. The chapter serves as not only a “findings” chapter, but as a platform for the voices of the dual career athletes who are largely missing or overlooked in current dual career literature.

6. Chapter Six: Findings: 'Athlete Voice'

Little is known about the experiences of unfunded dual career athletes, or those without organised support (i.e., funding and/or support provision) from established sport systems and funding schemes like TASS. As stated in Chapters 1 and 2, dual career literature and dual career funding are primarily focused on athletes in education. To expand understanding around athlete experience in British dual career systems, this chapter primarily examines how unfunded dual career athletes manage their dual careers, with particular focus on how athletes experience inclusion and exclusion from or within dual career systems. In this study, three types of dual career pathways were identified: education, work, and multi-career. Additionally, this chapter also includes experiences of funded athletes through the lens of a select few TASS athletes (6.5).

Across dual career literature, as reported by Li & Sum (2017) and discussed in Chapter 2.3.2, three overarching factors contribute to or inhibit dual career development in sport: individual factors (e.g., physical and psychological conditions), interpersonal factors (concerning interactions or relationships with coaches, teammates, and employers), and external factors (e.g., opportunities, barriers, support, conditions, environments, and finances). Dual career athletes are required to manage these three factors to maintain their dual careers (Li & Sum, 2017). Importantly, the second and third factors (interpersonal and external) emphasise the importance and influence of the environment(s) that facilitates the dual career experience of each athlete. Here, I examine the lived experiences of exclusion among unfunded dual career athletes and consider how such exclusion may be connected to such individual, interpersonal, and external factors. Recalling conceptualisations from

the literature (2.1.1) exclusion is considered as both a process and relational (Berghman, 1995; Room, 1994) and is characterised by the lack or denial of resources and the ability to participate in relationships and activities (Levitas et al., 2007). Within this chapter, I identify the ways that unfunded athletes are structurally excluded from organised support and explore how athletes experience exclusion on an interpersonal level (i.e., treatment from teammates and coaches).

This chapter presents narratives of athletes managing their dual careers in the form of portrait and composite vignettes (Ely et al., 1997; Spalding & Phillips, 2007) which represent lived experiences based on interviews (i.e., one-on-one semi-structured virtual interviews and an in-person focus group). As discussed in Chapter 5, vignettes were constructed from direct quotations from athlete interviews, along with minor adjustments for clarity, to create representative narratives. Experiences of individual athletes are presented through portrait vignettes while composite vignettes are used to present the similar experiences of two or more athletes within similar dual career pathways. Importantly, the vignettes below were shared with the athlete participants whose experiences are reflected within them to ensure accuracy.

6.1 Traditional and non-traditional dual career pathways

Dual career support is organised and structured across different types of dual career environments which can vary across nations (Aquilina & Henry, 2010; Morris et. al, 2021; Storm et al., 2021). As dual career environments vary, the approaches athletes take to their dual careers can also vary. For example, there are different routes, or pathways, that an athlete could take in pursuing their dual career. Here, “pathway” is used as it pertains to terminology used within dual career literature, and dual career

pathways are enmeshed within the more formalised England talent pathway (see Chapter 2). As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, the most traditional and most supported dual career pathway is the education pathway, which involves pursuing sport at the same time as education. While other dual career pathways do exist, these pathways are not typically represented in British and European dual career research and, as such, I refer to them as "non-traditional" dual career pathways. One non-traditional pathway involves pursuing sport at the same time as a vocational career (i.e., paid job) which I refer to as the "work" pathway. I have titled the third dual career pathway as the "multi-career" pathway to distinguish athletes who undertake more than two careers, or life pursuits, at the same time. For example, some athletes pursue a competitive sporting career concurrently with an educational degree (or certification) *and* with work. Such multi-career pathways rarely feature in dual career research and this pathway has not been specifically studied. Athletes in the multi-career pathway face additional challenges and different experiences compared to athletes with only two careers. As such, it is important to distinguish them as pursuing a unique dual career pathway.

Within this study, I interviewed 11 athletes (see Table 4 in Chapter 5 for athlete characteristics) through virtual one-on-one semi-structured qualitative interviews (Byrne, 2012) and spoke with an additional 9 athletes through an in-person focus group (Thomas et al., 1995) during my ethnographic observation visiting a university within the TASS network. In recruiting dual career athletes who were unfunded or who "missed out on funding" (see recruitment strategies in Chapter 5), I intentionally included athletes who were not in receipt of TASS awards. I also took a broad approach to performance level criteria and included dual career athletes who were competing at international, national, sub-elite, or British Universities and Colleges

Sport (BUCS) level. Some athlete interview participants (n=4) held small amounts of funding from other sources (e.g., university scholarships), but that support was insufficient to fund their dual careers. As such, all dual career athletes interviewed (except TASS athlete in focus group) discussed the ways that they attempted to self-fund, organise, and direct their own dual careers without the structured support that funded athletes (e.g., TASS athletes, NGB funded athletes) were provided. Drawing from the concept of "ordering" as attempts at managing or controlling social order or culture (Law, 1994; Law & Moser, 1999; Kendall & Wickham, 2001), I use "self-ordering" to refer to athletes' attempts to manage and control their dual careers in the absence of organised support from dual career systems and institutions (e.g., TASS). Self-ordering encompasses the actions athletes take to create structure and support within their dual career so that it is sustainable and to avoid drop out.

This chapter centres and analyses dual career athletes' experiences and feelings related to being excluded. During every semi-structured interview, I asked participants how they defined the terms "inclusion" and "exclusion". Across athlete responses to defining inclusion, four primary themes derived from my reflective thematic analysis: Value, Trust, Community, Belonging. By contrast, exclusion was perceived as "the opposite" of inclusion and thus related to the absence of the key themes which define inclusion; therefore, exclusion involves not feeling valued, a lack of trust and community, and not feeling a sense of belonging. Athletes also defined exclusion as relating to unequal opportunities. The inclusion themes developed from my athlete interviews are consistent with a recent study (Haegele & Maher, 2023) that presents a new conceptual understanding of inclusion, as outlined in Chapter 2.1. Haegele and Maher (2023) conceptualise inclusion as intersubjective experiences associated with feelings of belonging, acceptance, and value. They argue that these

feelings are "dynamic, ephemeral, spatial, and in flux" and therefore inclusion is not static but instead fluid as an individual's feelings of inclusion can change depending on what they are experiencing (Haegele & Maher, 2023: 387). These themes, and athletes' fluctuating feelings of in/exclusion, are explored in the vignettes below across the three types of dual career pathways I have identified in the UK.

6.2 Self-ordering in education pathways

As the traditional dual career pathway, the education pathway receives the most structured support (e.g., TASS). While there is much literature around how funded dual career athletes in the education pathway balance their dual career (Stambulova et al., 2015; Linnér, Stambulova, & Ziegert, 2021) and experience transitions during their dual career (Tshube & Feltz, 2015; Vickers, 2018), unfunded athletes are seldom discussed and thus their stories are largely missing. This section seeks to fill that gap in the research to elevate and develop understanding of the experiences of unfunded dual career athletes in the education pathway.

6.2.1 Early entry

When athletes begin sport at a young age, this is often referred to as early entry. Early entry is essential for athletes hoping to receive organised support, as early-career performance indicators (e.g., physical and psychological attributes, performance results) are used to identify talent and predict future high-performance results (Baker et al., 2020; Dehghansai, Pinder, & Baker, 2021). Furthermore, research indicates that talent selection processes may be biased towards early entry athletes (Bennett,

Vaeyens, & Fransen, 2019). Thus, early entry into sport can increase an athlete's chances of getting noticed by gatekeepers in their sport system who identify talent.

Although early entry may help an athlete get noticed and subsequently funded by their sport NGB, this is not guaranteed. Julia, a former dual career athlete, specialised in her sport at a young age and was competitive at the national level, even competing at international competitions. Although she excelled in her sport, was early entry, and took the traditional route to her dual career (i.e., education pathway), Julia was never given organised support from an NGB and thus had the need to self-order, or self-manage, her dual career. The portrait vignette below showcases Julia's feelings and experiences of exclusion during her dual career at a university outside of her home country where promised support never materialised.

From the age of eleven, I was pursuing a dual career. I used to travel two hours a day to get to practice and relied on my parent to drive me. Things really stepped up in my sporting career when I went to university, it was like – Right. You're an athlete and that's it. I chose my university solely because of their strength in my sport, the facility, the coaches, and the excellence promised at a national training centre. I didn't think about the education aspect at all.

During undergrad I was on a university sport scholarship of about £1,000 annually. Every little bit helps, but in the grand scheme of things it was not going to cover rent and living costs. So, I took out a student loan. There was always that worry of money… I had to ask my parent for financial help because I couldn't take on a job while I was full-time training on top of my studies. It was either that or I just couldn't do sport.

I guess I was considered a sub-elite athlete, even though I was very competitive at the national level. Sub-elite athletes are often excluded from any form of funding. Which is disgraceful because I was training alongside athletes who were going to the Olympics. I was training the same number of hours, doing all the same gym sessions, putting in the same amount of effort — everything. But because I was based at [university] and I was [nationality], I had no support. If I had known before I moved that I wasn't going to get support from the NGB running the performance centre, I would not have gone there. I had been promised all these amazing things but was never

given access to them. I did get some great strength and conditioning support, but no tailored types of support like physiology, nutrition, performance lifestyle, or psychology. I think they probably thought 'well she's not worth investing in because ultimately she is not competing for [redacted].' What's frustrating is that if I went to a different institution, I would have been valued and had that support.

The lack of support really impacted me psychologically and hurt my physical performance because I saw others around me provided with the support that I was not getting. When I asked to see the psychologist they said, 'We're really sorry, you can't see her' even though she was taking appointments with my teammates. Honestly, that was a kick in the face because I was thinking – I'm really struggling here, and I need someone to speak to. I didn't feel supported or understood because they didn't want to help me. Those constant feelings of not being good enough because I wasn't eligible for support hurt my self-esteem and self-confidence. Being handed that support was like the system and the coaches providing their trust in you as an athlete and saying, 'I'm behind you and I believe in you.' Since I didn't have that support, I didn't feel like that belief was there and I didn't feel like that value was there. Thinking back, I didn't have that winning mindset – that undeniable belief that I was going to be successful. I think that lack of access to support had a huge impact on my belief in myself.

Because I was trying to prove myself, I was overtraining and not realising the effect that had on my body. Sometimes I had physical issues like a shoulder injury, but it wasn't a guarantee that I could see a physio. They only cared if an injury stopped me from being able to compete for them. My coaches also made comments about my weight. They would say things like 'you need to lose a bit of that weight' or 'have you been eating donuts over the weekend?' The coaches had a mentality of the lighter you are, the faster you will be. So, I began restricting my eating because I wanted to be the best athlete I could be. I didn't realise it had become an issue until my roommates pulled me aside and said, 'You are severely underweight… we are really worried about you.' It was only by opening up about it to those friends that triggered me to change. I didn't seek any help from my coaches because I didn't trust them, and I didn't want to be seen as a nuisance. No one was telling me I was underweight even though I was getting weighed in every week. No one was saying anything like 'I think you might need some help', or 'we might need to signpost you to a nutritionist.' Nothing.

I ended up quitting my sport because of the lack of support. There was no turning back from that constant feeling of not being good enough and feeling disadvantaged because I didn't have the support I needed. I didn't necessarily give up, because I knew that I had the potential to be better than I was. I just knew that I wasn't going to be successful in that environment. I knew I was never going to get funding from [NGB],

and I would have had to rely on my parent again or get a job to supplement costs. That's what led me to retire – I couldn't financially afford to keep going so I had to pack it in.

I have quite a tainted perspective on my final years in my sport because I was under coaches that I didn't necessarily feel valued by. That made retiring harder to deal with because I didn't want to leave. I didn't want to finish… I felt like I had more potential, but I physically couldn't do it because of the finances.

Julia's story reveals that the performance of an athlete is often not the only prerequisite for funding or support, but that organised support usually carries additional criteria, often not shared with the athlete until it is too late and they have made a huge commitment (e.g., choice of university, moving across the country). In this case, full access to support (i.e., funding and support provision) at this high-performance training centre hinged on athletes being eligible to win medals for the home nation NGB that governed that centre. As explained in Chapters 2 and 3, although athletes across the four UK home nations (England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland) could potentially compete for Team GB at international competitions (e.g., Olympics and Paralympics) each home nation has their own sport development programmes, talent pathways, and national targets. It is important to note that NGBs operate within remits linked to specific targets (e.g., national medals), as their funding is related to performance results (Fletcher & Streeter, 2016), and thus organisational policy likely sets nationality criteria for funding. However, Julia was not told that her nationality (UK home country) would exclude her from access to support through sport practitioners (e.g., performance lifestyle advisors, sport psychologists).

Julia often compared herself to her funded teammates on two levels: performance (training and competition results) and support allocation. While it is

common for athletes at high levels to compare themselves to their peers, this can sometimes lead them to question their capabilities (Mitchell et al., 2021). Julia saw a stark difference in how her funded teammates were supported by the system (NGB running the training centre). This difference in support allocation was felt in two ways. First, Julia's perception of her own value was linked to the value that her environment (coaches and NGB) placed upon her. She specifically felt that when an NGB valued an athlete, that value was shown through the allocation of funding and access to support provision (e.g., performance lifestyle advisor, psychologist, physiologist). Since she was not given access to support, and was actively denied it when asked, Julia felt that her sport system (the coaches and NGB running the high-performance training centre) did not value her. Here, value was central to Julia's sense of inclusion, consistent with Haegele and Maher (2023), and thus in the absence of feeling valued, she felt excluded. Second, Julia felt disadvantaged by the lack of support she was able to access, as she was pursuing the same goals as her funded teammates without the same support or resources. Thus, Julia felt that her funded peers had an advantage over her that could never be overcome.

Since Julia felt that her sport system did not value or believe in her, she did not believe in herself. This prevented her from building the self-confidence, or winning mentality, which some researchers argue is necessary for athletes to achieve the highest performance levels (Jones, Hanton, & Connaughton, 2002; Nesti, 2012; Sheard, 2010). Instead of feeling supported and valued by her coaches and sport system, Julia felt neglected and believed that she could never be "good enough" for support. This feeling of not being "good enough" is commonly experienced by athletes who are without, or who are denied, support. For example, in a study of elite swimmers aiming to qualify for Olympic Trials and to be selected onto the funded world class

programme, the athletes felt that they were denied psychological support due to not being “good enough” (Mitchell et al., 2021). In this study, one athlete expressed her frustration at not being able to access a sport psychologist: “No, I’m not that good am I? So if you’re not good enough you don’t get the support” (Mitchell et al., 2021: 1566). Julia’s experience was similar, in that she felt the system did not care about her or her mental health when they denied her access to the psychologist. Interestingly, literature on dual career balance indicates that key coping strategies amongst athletes who achieve dual career balance include communicating with staff, seeking social support, and asking for help (Brown et al, 2015; De Brandt et al., 2018). Here, although Julia expresses such coping strategies, and her need for the help, she is unable to achieve dual career balance because her sport system (coaches and NGB) denies her the support she requests (i.e., sport psychologist).

When discussing her struggles with disordered eating, her coping behaviour, Julia stated that she did not trust the coaching staff enough to ask for help or share her challenges. Instead, she felt neglected and uncared for due to the staff overlooking her rapid weight loss despite receiving weekly weigh-in data. The feeling of trust, an essential component of how athletes in this study defined inclusion, shifted during this athlete’s journey. At first, Julia trusted that her coaches had the knowledge and expertise required to help her be the best athlete she could be. Heeding their advice that “lighter is faster”, Julia began a pattern of disordered eating that was further fuelled by coaches inappropriately commenting on, and mocking, her weight. This experience is echoed in other dual career studies (e.g., Tekavc et al., 2015) where coaches, and sometimes parents, pressured athletes to lose weight. It can be inferred that the judgmental comments and unhealthy advice from coaches exacerbated Julia’s dwindling trust in the coaching staff to be able to meet her needs with care. Research

has indicated that, within high-performance environments, trust in one's coach is an important factor in successful coach-athlete relationships and the facilitation of high-performance results (Fletcher & Streeter, 2016; Jowett, 2007; Jowett & Cockerill, 2003). As such, lacking trust in her coach created challenges for Julia in her pursuit of transitioning to the next level of her sport.

Julia was a committed athlete who had to quit her sporting career due to financial constraints. Deason (2019) calls this type of decision inactive, as the athlete felt she lacked control or had little choice in the matter due to financial and structural barriers. This is consistent with the findings of Morely et al. (2018) who identify how the financial barriers within talent pathways that often escalate as athletes move up the pathway (Morely et al., 2018). Higher education itself is known for its financial barriers (Lynch & O'riordan, 1998), which when combined with sport costs can put a heavy financial strain on dual career athletes and their families. Cost, reported to influence athlete dropout in dual career (Henry, 2013), was the main challenge and eventual cause of retirement for Julia.

6.2.2 Late entry

Some dual career athletes do not specialise in one sport until a later age and are thus categorised as "late entry" (Storm, Kristoffer, & Krogh, 2012). That is, athletes might enter a sport or reach a development level (e.g., talent level) at an age that is considered "late" for that sport's pathway. It can be difficult for late entry athletes to receive recognition of their talent as sport systems are already allocating support towards athletes they have been familiar with for years.

Self-funded throughout her entire dual career, Victoria felt like she was overlooked for funding and support due to being "unknown" to her sport system (i.e., the NGB). Calling herself a "late entry" athlete, she felt like she was playing catch up compared to her peers who had begun the sport at an earlier age. Similar to Julia, Victoria also pursued a traditional dual career pathway (e.g. education) at a university that served as a high-performance centre for her sport. Victoria was also playing an individual sport, but her sport encompassed multiple disciplines. As shown in the portrait vignette below, Victoria recognised that she was treated differently than her teammates who were funded and "known" to the system.

I'm not from a sporting family, but I tried multiple different sports when I was young. At around age 12, I picked up [sport] and progressed quickly. So, I started my competitive athletic career around 12/13 years old, which is already kind of "old" [quotations used] by the standards of that sport. I then fell in love with sport in general and started building dreams.

After a while I noticed I wasn't progressing as quickly as my peers, because I was kind of delayed – I mean, I had a delayed start into the sport. So, I thought that wasn't the right path for me and began trying other sports. I was 15 or 16 years old when I finally started [current sport] because a parent of a successful athlete in the sport invited me to try it out and said, 'Oh, you're actually quite talented' and told me I might represent my country one day [Victoria smiles at the memory]. So that's what I did. Now sport is all of my life.

When it was time to look at universities, I had my heart set on one in particular. But they weren't structured to support my sport. Instead, I went to a different university where my sport's national training centre was located. When I asked the coach there if I would be able to train with them, he said, 'We'll see. If there's space, we will let you in.' From then it felt like they were doing me a favour. It wasn't like they wanted me there… And from that I already knew I was going to be on the side lines, I wasn't going to be in the mix.

I was allowed to train with the team in my first year. I took part in every session available to me. While I had access to coached training for most of the disciplines, I

did not have access to the extra support that the funded athletes got – strength and conditioning, nutrition, psychology, physiology. At the gym, I was self-directing my training just guessing what I needed to do. Within four months I was already making personal bests and felt like – wow, this is great!

Amongst my teammates, I felt included. In terms of the coaches and the system, I felt neglected from the start because I wasn't on the funded programme. It didn't help that I was completely new to the system. The coaches had never heard of me before, and they held preferences for the funded athletes and the athletes they knew. It felt like they were doing me a favour for letting me train with them… So, I kept quiet because I never knew when they might throw me off. I was always on edge. But I also trusted them – they were national level coaches; they should know what they are doing. One time I asked for a session with the performance lifestyle advisor, but they told me it was not available to me. They didn't offer any solution, it was like – you're not funded, we aren't obligated to help you at all. There was no human connection. Their excuse was always funding.

After training hard and performing well my first year, I received an email from the coaching staff saying, 'Next year you won't be able to train with us because we're only allowing funded athletes on the programme.' This was what I was going to dedicate my life to, just stripped away like that [snaps her fingers]. I felt neglected and pushed to the side. Although they blamed funding, another "unfunded" [parentheses used] teammate never got kicked off the programme. Her parents could afford to pay the coaches and the NGB had been familiar with her for years. I couldn't pay the coaches; I was living on a student loan. After being cut from the team, I took such a knock psychologically… I felt so isolated. When you're not there 100% psychologically, it's hard to manage it all. It damaged my studies too because I developed depression and anxiety.

That next year was the worst year. I took a placement year (away from university) and I tried to do the same level of training, but I was doing it all on my own— no support, no coaches, writing my own sessions. How do you progress if you don't have that knowledge? So, my performance went down… it was rough. I had developed disordered eating habits and my self-belief and self-worth had gone down the drain.

When I returned to university for my last year, I decided to pause competitive sport and just focus on my studies. But, I had continued the disordered eating that was happening before. After university I was diagnosed with RED-S, which is relative energy deficiency in sport. I then realised I needed to take a break from training

completely and increase my food intake. Now I'm prioritising my health over sports and trying to regain that. Well… as if I ever had it [health]. More like attaining it in the first place. Better late than never. Sport is still something I want to pursue, and the passion is still there. They haven't broken me; I'm just taking a pause.

Within the larger interview, Victoria shared that she felt she did not receive funding for her sport because she was "unknown" to the system, in that decision-makers were not familiar with her: "If you are not there early, you're missing out already. They have very little space, if any, for new athletes." This experience is echoed in another study where an unfunded athlete explained, when discussing unfair funding patterns, "... it seems if you aren't already there you aren't allowed to get there" (Mitchell et al., 2021: 1566). Athletes who enter sport at an early age, and mature earlier, are more likely to be selected for talent development programmes (Bennett, Vaeyens, & Fransen, 2019). Such talent development programmes typically involve access to specialist coaches, training sessions, and sometimes competition opportunities. Research also indicates that athletes who develop at slower rates are often deselected or dropout from talent development programmes, likely due to being perceived by coaches and sport practitioners as less talented than their peers who matured early (Cripps, Hopper, & Joyce, 2016; Furley & Memmert, 2016). However, as discussed in Chapter 2, contrasting literature also argues that early entry (early identification) or even early specialisation is not necessarily an indicator of future success (e.g., Ackerman, 2013; Barreiros, Coté & Fonseca, 2014). Indeed, some studies (e.g., Vaeyens et al., 2009) suggest that late entry athletes can perform just as well as early entry athletes. In practice, English sport systems agree with those who promote early talent identification, as this is reflected in frameworks used by UK sporting bodies, despite data suggesting that early specialisation is not a requirement

for high standards of performance (see Bridge & Toms, 2017). Victoria's story illustrates that athletes unknown to the sport at early ages appear to be given fewer, or less secure, opportunities to access high-performance training centres and teams, especially if they have a history of not being invested in by the sport NGB.

In this case, the label of "unfunded" can also hurt an athlete's chances of being considered for organised support. Being an unfunded athlete appears to carry a history of never being acknowledged or recognised by the system as having *value*. The concept of being and feeling valued is dependent, in part, by others recognising you as valuable due to their evaluation of some ability they deem to be important (White & Mackenzie-Davey, 2003; White, 2005). Here, value has two meanings. First, value is ascribed by an entity onto another usually through verbal communication or the allocation of resources. Second, value is a positive feeling that is experienced (or not) by a person within an environment. Despite being called "talented" by the parent of another athlete, the real gatekeepers of Victoria's sport (NGBs and coaches) did not ascribe the talent label, or value, to her. Instead, Victoria felt that the NGB of her sport was unaware of her since she was never contacted by them or given recognition of her talent through the allocation of resources (e.g., funding, support provision). This coupled with the coaches at the high-performance training centre not knowing her, Victoria felt "unknown" and unvaluable to the whole sport system. This lack of value is apparent when Victoria, as with Julia's experience, asked for support at her training centre but was denied access to it, with no alternate solution provided. Being unfunded also made Victoria's place at the training centre less secure than her funded teammates, or teammates with more financial resources, as Victoria's fear of being kicked off the team came true after only one year at university.

Throughout this narrative, Victoria often compares herself to her peers on a performance level, as Julia did. However, Victoria felt that she was behind or “delayed” compared to her peers due to her late entry to the sport. This self-identification and labelling of being “late” and “new” to the sport drove much of Victoria’s self-ordering decisions and coping behaviours. In one discipline, she said that her peers had “about ten years” more experience than her. So, Victoria pushed hard to catch up to her peers (e.g., overtraining) and, similar to Julia, developed problematic coping habits (e.g., disordered eating). Continuous and rigorous training led to delays in menstruation and, when coupled with disordered eating, an eventual diagnosis of relative energy deficiency in sport (RED-S)[2]. Victoria’s story demonstrates the importance for coaches and staff of dual career systems to recognise the physical impact of training and stress on bodies and to monitor the health of athletes more closely. As she said within the interview, “When you don’t allow people to develop fully, you don’t realise the long-term consequences... I trained through it all, but that’s the problem – you don’t see the long-term effects until you’ve reached them, at which point it’s too late.” Here, despite motivations to survive and thrive in her dual career, Victoria’s self-ordering was destructive and, when combined with denied support from her sport system, led to serious long-term health consequences.

Together, these two narratives reveal how exclusion is experienced by unfunded athletes within the traditional dual career pathway (education) and the impacts of such exclusion. Both athletes felt that they were training in an environment that did not value them and did not support them. Similar to experiences of unfunded

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[2] RED-S is defined as “a mismatch between an athlete’s energy intake (diet) and the energy expended in exercise, leaving inadequate energy to support the functions required by the body to maintain optimal health and performance” (Mountjoy et al., 2018: 317).

swimmers attempting to transition to the master level of their sport, it could be said that Julia and Victoria were operating in “an environment that was working against them” (Mitchell et al., 2021: 1565). Denied access to support (i.e., psychology, performance lifestyle) that they viewed as essential to their dual careers, their needs were not met by the sport systems they trained in. The impact of that exclusion was felt at a physical level and a mental level. Both women developed depression and anxiety and turned to disordered eating as a coping mechanism. Both athletes were expending more energy (through training) than they were consuming, which resulted in serious health issues including RED-S. Julia and Victoria are still, to this day, managing this health problem and other related issues long after quitting or pausing their respective sports. Remembering researchers (e.g., Cahill & MacNamara, 2024) who critiqued talent identification and pathway literature for a lack of attention given towards environmental factors, these narratives showcase the critical need to fill that gap in the literature as some dual career sporting environments appear to have cultures that accept destructive and harmful behaviour towards athletes.

6.3 Self-ordering in work pathways

While organised support can be difficult to access in the education pathway, there are fewer support schemes available to athletes taking non-traditional dual career pathways. It is very uncommon for organised support to be available for dual career athletes in the work pathway. The following section explores how one work pathway athlete self-funds and self-orders her dual career without access to such organised support.

I argue that one of the most notable gaps in the existing literature on dual career athletes relates to the scarcity of research on athletes balancing their sport with a job (i.e., the work pathway). These athletes are often missing from the literature (see Chapter 2 and Stambulova & Wylleman, 2019) and infrequently mentioned in dual career support guidelines (EU Commission, 2012; Wylleman, De Brandt, & Defruyt, 2017). There is a lack of dual career environments in the UK targeting development and support of dual career athletes in vocational pathways, as recent research has identified only defence force programmes as an example of such an environment (Morris et al., 2021). For example, as mentioned in Chapter 1, TASS (2022) has a defence force programme that supports talented athletes employed by the Army and does not require these athletes to be in education or a learning programme. There are no other organised support schemes, to my knowledge, that offer support to dual career athletes in the UK pursuing a work pathway.

The portrait vignette below exemplifies the experience of a work pathway dual career athlete. As the oldest athlete in the group at 37 years, Amina has the longest dual career journey.

Sport, to me, is freedom. My journey in sport was not linear… I've stopped sport for periods of time along the way. It's been about twenty years of considering myself an athlete. I was a student-athlete for 6 or 7 years, then had a break of around 5 years – where I hit the gym all the time and participated in exercise classes... I'm very disciplined and motivated enough to train alone. Then I came back to my sport at age 20 while working a publishing job. I don't know what made me go back to competitive sport… there was no distinct a-ha moment. One day I obviously decided it was time. It's just a feeling, an internal thing.

When I returned to sport, things were different. I now needed to balance my sport with work instead of education. School environments had often encouraged and supported my dual career, and many others. I knew that the work environment would be different, and I was very lucky to have an understanding employer that accommodated my need

to sometimes shift work hours to fit in my training time. I think there was an understanding because I was competing at national standards, that I wasn't just a gym goer. I think they just saw it differently, and I was fortunate that they were able to accommodate. I also think it's important to get support from both sides – work and sport—just to take the pressure off. So, I made sure to be open with my coaches about my situation and what I can and can't do. I've become disciplined to make my own structure of things. I know what days I work, I know what days I train, and I know what days might be a bit of a stretch.

My sporting environment had changed too – my old coach was still there but my teammates had all left the sport. Lots of people drop out by age 18. I sometimes ask myself, 'How are you still doing this?' and my friends and family always ask if I'm still doing sport. I've been balancing sport with work for about 15 years now, so it's a big part of my identity, it's my way of life… that's how it feels.

I've never heard the term dual career before, but since speaking with you about it and hearing your side, this is exactly what I've been doing for so long without even realising. Being a dual career athlete has been a natural thing that I've always done. It's second nature to me. I'm not going to be an Olympian, I'll be honest. But I have competed at national standard, and I think that's quite an achievement to reach while studying and working and not ever being a full-time athlete. So, I'm quite proud of that.

I've never had any organised support outside of small donations early in my career. So, I've been self-funded throughout my dual career. I've been fortunate to have many voluntary coaches in the past who supported me because they loved the profession. Now I have to budget my expenses to pay for coaches, club fees, gym fees, equipment, and facility fees. It's an unavoidable expense that many people don't appreciate – the price of it all. The budget is difficult to manage as sometimes there is not a lot leftover once I've paid for training costs, but the journey and lived experiences are worth it.

Maybe when I turn 40 the journey ends… but for now there is no reason for me to stop.

A sub-theme across athlete interviews was that the term "dual career" was often misunderstood by athletes in that it was either conflated with education, a particular

level of performance, or, as seen above in Amina's experience, that some athletes are unfamiliar with the term. As explained in Chapter 5, during athlete recruitment I did not use the term "dual career" on my posters or in my social media recruitment messages and instead used the phrasing "balancing sport with education or work" to appeal to athletes in the work pathway, because they are underrepresented in the existing literature. In every interview, I asked each participant how they defined or perceived the term "dual career". Here, above, Amina mentions that she had never heard of the term before and, by the end of the interview, Amina did self-identify as a dual career athlete. This showcases the limited reach of the term in sport spaces, especially in work pathways.

Self-ordering was essential for Amina to succeed in her dual career as her route, the work pathway, has no available organised support. In a way, Amina had the "freedom" to self-structure her own path due to the lack of existing structures. Her success is dependent on how she navigates and self-orders her own unique pathway and her environments. Recalling how previous school environments "encouraged" and "supported" her dual career, Amina recognised that balancing work would be different and more difficult. This echoes words from a composite vignette of dual career pathway athletes in Cartigny et al.'s (2021: 293) study in which an athlete stated, "the sport side of things was set up for us to do an education" while they were at university. The work pathway does not have such a built-in structure, so athletes in this pathway must seek out their own means to balance and maintain their pursuit of both sport and work.

Athletes balancing sport with work often look for a job which would provide "a lot of flexibility" (Cartigny et al., 2021: 294). To achieve the flexible structure that she

needed to maintain her dual career, Amina required support from both her coach and boss. These interpersonal relationships would be pivotal to her ability to maintain and succeed in her dual career. Amina felt “very lucky” that her coach and boss were understanding and supportive of her dual career. Both the coach and boss appeared to value Amina, in part, due to her high levels of performance (national). This performance level differentiated Amina from other people trying to balance work and sport as she wasn’t “just a gym goer” but a competitive athlete at a recognized performance level. Due to valuing Amina, both parties (employer and sport coach) were supportive and willing to be flexible so that Amina could self-order her dual career in a way that worked best for her. Here, Amina was supported despite not being a funded athlete. She did not experience the interpersonal exclusion from coaches that Julia or Victoria did. As such, Amina’s self-ordering of her dual career did not include harmful coping habits because she was given the adequate support (e.g., flexibility, value, understanding) that she needed from her coach and manager to balance her dual career.

It is challenging to further analyse and compare Amina’s experience to other athletes balancing work with sport, as there is a distinct lack of literature around dual career athletes in employment. A study by Moreno, Chamorro, and López de Subijana (2021) presents a novel exception in that it explores elite Spanish athlete perceptions of combining sport and work. This study confirms the experiences of Amina outlined above in that employee-athletes considered the flexibility of their employers as a resource that helped them to succeed in their dual career. Other mentions of dual career athletes who work can be found in exceptions such as Cartigny et. al (2021), however these athletes are not distinguished from the education pathway. Instead, work pathway athlete stories are embedded within narratives of dual career athletes

categorised by their commitment or prioritisation to one of their careers. These categories are: “sporting pathway” where sport is prioritised, “educational/vocational pathway” where education or vocation is prioritised, and “dual career pathway” where both sport and education or vocation is pursued equally (see Cartigny et al., 2021). It is important to note that Cartigny et al. (2021) took a lifespan approach to athlete journeys and, thus, most of the stories of dual career athletes pursuing work at the same time as sport come after their time as student-athletes and is often related to their “vocational” pursuits. As there is such limited mention in the literature of dual career athletes in the work pathway in existing literature, it is clear that more research is needed to better understand the challenges and experiences of athletes balancing sport with work.

Other athlete participants pursued work at the same time as sport, but they did so in addition to education or a second job. Thus, these athletes balanced three or four careers at once. The following section explores experiences of dual career athletes in this “multi-career” pathway.

6.4 Self-ordering in multi-career pathways

As “dual” career connotes “two” pursuits, dual career research seldomly recognises that athletes could be balancing more than two careers. While these athletes often exist in the same environments and pathways of typical dual career athletes (i.e., athletes pursuing an education pathway), the act of balancing more than two pursuits is rarely examined or considered in dual career literature. A main outlier is Vickers’ (2018) doctoral thesis which referenced the author’s own “triple career”, identified in the study as a type of transition, in which she continued her athletic career alongside

a PhD degree and a teaching job. Outside of this study, there remains a significant lack of in-depth examinations of such a triple career. In the following section, I examine the ways that athletes with three or more careers, which I call a “multi-career” pathway, experience exclusion in dual career environments and how they self-order their careers.

Experiences of three multi-career athletes are shared below. First, I present a portrait vignette of a British multi-career athlete who pursued sport alongside education and work. Second, I present a composite vignette combining the similar experiences of two international athletes pursuing dual careers at English universities while also balancing work. Together, these stories indicate the cost related to pursuing a dual career and the necessity for many athletes to take on paid work to make ends meet (i.e., thus becoming multi-career athletes).

6.4.1 “Spinning plates”: multi-career pathway as a balancing act

Athlete Steph has pursued a dual career across two sports and has always balanced more than two careers, or pursuits, at the same time. Starting in a team sport, Steph competed at BUCS level through her undergraduate and master's degree until she switched sports when she moved universities to pursue her PhD. Steph switched to an individual sport, which she self-describes herself as already “competitive” in, particularly at regional competitions. In the portrait vignette below, Steph describes how she self-ordered her dual career through transitions across sports and environments.

For most of my life, I had been playing [team sport] and I had always been really good at it. I played all through university and did well at BUCS level. I took out student loans

and always tried to find work at local gyms, so I didn't have to pay gym fees. In undergrad, I was on the first team so I could use the strength and conditioning gym too. During my master's, I didn't get that access and I also had to pay for the kit… which was about 300 pounds, and I was only there for one year. It was ridiculous to be honest. Things were tight then and I had to live off about 40 quid a week, after I had paid for petrol to commute. That's why I lived at home, so I didn't have to worry about rent.

When I started my PhD, my supervisor pretty much told me that it would be a bad idea to do BUCS because it would affect my research time. So, I decided not to do BUCS and considered joining the local [team sport] club, but I missed the try outs by one month and they said I would have to wait until next year. I couldn't wait. I noticed that there were a lot of [current sport] events in my local area, so I tried it for the first time. That was the start of the end of my old sport.

There isn't any diversity in my new sport… I'm one of the only dark-skinned female athletes. And it's an obvious stereotype that most athletes in [sport] are white and middle class. That's just my reality. And the cost of this sport is so high! I have worked to be quite savvy on social media so I can get some equipment for free.

During my PhD I worked as a gym instructor, trained for my new sport, and worked on my research. My job at the gym took up 20-24 hours a week and it was quite difficult to balance with everything else. But I created a productive schedule to work with my limited time. I asked for afternoon shifts at the gym so I could work on my research from 6am until 2pm at home before work. I did a lot of training classes at work because I was already there, and they had equipment. It was a lot easier to be flexible then. The gym was right across the street from my department.

Since I finished my degree, I've been balancing my [sport] training with two jobs. One job has a three-hour commute, and the other job is as a self-employed [practitioner]. I'm training much more these days and I've joined lots of clubs so I can have access to training partners and coaches to up my level. The main reason I got a coach is to make sure it's working for me, that I'm getting some benefit. I'm a member of one club closer to home so I can train [sport discipline] on the weekends, another club to access my coach, and a third club to improve my [sport discipline] which is my weakest link. For a while I was just training myself and I kept getting cramps because my technique wasn't right, and I wore my muscles out. Now that I have a coach, it's made a massive impact.

Steph's story, and her self-ordering choices, reveal the financial challenges of maintaining a dual career when an athlete is without organised funding. Referring to her many careers within the interview as "spinning plates", Steph worked to balance all of her "plates" across changing environments, often adding or switching plates during those transitions. Working a paid job was always a key "plate" that Steph needed to spin because it was essential to cover the costs of a dual career journey. This finding is consistent with the limited literature on employee-athletes, in that work is often compulsory due to athletes lacking organised financial support (Moreno, Chamorro, and López de Subijana, 2021). This working "plate" added a third career to Steph's dual career pursuit; thus, she has always balanced three or more careers.

Similar to Amina, Steph reflected on her time as a dual career athlete in education and saw it as much easier to balance. Within the larger interview, she commented that sport and education appeared to be "built to co-exist" and highlighted how easy it was to access facilities on campus. Even when balancing three "plates", Steph said that it was easier to balance her multiple careers while in education due to the way things are structured, and that the balance was harder once her studies ended. This is, again, consistent with athlete experiences from Cartigny et al.'s (2021: 292) study in which a vignette presenting the experience of an athlete balancing work with sport states, "… from a lifestyle perspective, it [sport] wasn't fitting in at all. I found managing the two really hard. There wasn't the flexibility that there was at university". This expands understanding of dual career balance because the existing literature is primarily centred on athletes balancing only education with their sport, with few studies comparing the balance of sport with education to sport with non-educational pursuits.

Steph's sporting environment also lacked representation of athletes who looked like her. Citing the "obvious stereotype" of athletes in her sport being white, Steph recognised her racial difference as a Black woman. This supports findings from a recent study (Fair Play Talks, 2023) that six out of ten Britons from ethnic minority backgrounds do not feel truly represented across the full spectrum of UK sport, with 30% indicating that past experiences of racism prevented them from participating in or supporting that sport. When training in one of her disciplines, Steph shared that people looked at her differently in that environment. She said, "I can't tell whether it is gender or whether it's the fact that I'm Black, but there's definitely a lot of people looking at me like - why are you here?" Despite feeling differentiated from the norm, Steph said that her racial difference was "one of the main reasons I've probably stuck with [sport]". She also spoke to the high financial cost of training and equipment due to the sport's multiple disciplines requiring different equipment. When asked about her feelings around the term "inclusion", Steph perceived it as "anyone that wants to participate" in sport can participate. She further explained, that "inclusiveness doesn't come from being nice when you get there, the barrier is actually being able to get there in the first place." Indicating that the financial cost of her sport is the main barrier for people who want to participate, Steph concluded "I don't think [sport] will ever be an inclusive sport… it's so expensive, not everyone can afford to do it."

While the above narrative centres on a British athlete's experience, international athletes also experience similar challenges related to the cost of pursuing a dual career in the UK. The following section examines the experiences of two international athletes who were also undertaking a multi-career pathway.

6.4.2 Multi-career pathways of international athletes

The UK is a popular destination for international athletes to study abroad and to continue their sporting career (Play Overseas, 2023). As such, there are international athletes pursuing dual careers in the UK. In this section, the experiences of two international dual career athletes (Gabriella and Jayden) are explored through the creation of a composite vignette. Interview quotes from each athlete were combined based on similar experiences and dual career environments (See Chapter 5 for methods).

I've been playing [sport] for about 12 years now. I'm originally from [country] and I just started my degree at [English university]. I came here because I was told I would be given a sport scholarship of up to 6,000 pounds a year. However, when I arrived here the school told me that I was only getting 500 pounds a year in support, and I had to wait six months to receive my first instalment. I know that communication was difficult internationally, but I was so disappointed and mad that the financial support was so different to what had been discussed in my earlier chats with the coach. I was misled.

The kit and equipment are expensive, but it seems like most of my teammates can afford all the fancy kit pieces. In training I look different from the others because I can only afford one shirt – the mandatory one – while they have all the other gear. I had to take on two jobs to make ends meet. My family doesn't help me, I'm doing this on my own. One job is working the night shift, and the hours are horrible. I get maybe four hours of sleep a day and try to find time to sleep between classes or jobs. I only need to drink two energy drinks and I'm ok. Things are so busy and it's hard to balance it all... I take my [sport] bag everywhere with me in case I have extra time to train. I cannot stop; I have to keep going.

The team culture here isn't very welcoming. In the beginning I tried to talk with teammates, but there was no point… no one would talk to me because I was new. Most people on the team are from the UK so they know each other. Back home, my teammates and I called each other family, we were so close. It's the opposite here and we don't get along well. I'm treated differently because I'm from [country]. There are times when my teammates are whispering and laughing at me when my accent is strong. During one game my teammate blamed me for a missed ball. It was just a moment of miscommunication, but they blamed me for it and yelled at me in front of

everyone. English is not my first language and I've never played my sport in another country before. I still automatically think in my native language, so translating isn't immediate and sometimes I have delays in communication. It makes things hard, and I don't feel included… The environment is negative.

The coaches aren't inclusive either and sometimes the trainings are useless. Some drills are difficult for me because the coach yells words so quickly but doesn't explain them. One time we did a drill that was about reaction time, so I appeared to be slow because it takes me time to translate. The coach seems oblivious to how his actions put me at a disadvantage. It's frustrating because I am faster than that, but I cannot show it. One coach mocked my accent a lot. He made jokes about my language and nationality. So, after multiple occasions of this I reported him to the student welfare officer. They spoke to him, and he kind of apologised to me… only said that he never intended to be offensive. It was like I was being told I misinterpreted things when – c'mon – I was literally made fun of for my accent because I was not British.

I used to take pride in representing my school back home, but I don't feel that way here.

This composite vignette combines the experiences of two athletes from two different countries, playing different sports at different universities in England. However, their experiences of exclusive treatment had striking similarities. Both athletes felt that their teammates and coaches did not actively include them into the team environment. Here, the athletes view inclusion as an action that never occurred. This inaction coupled with mistreatment from their coaches and teammates based on cultural differences made them feel excluded from their teams. These experiences are consistent with literature indicating the prevalence of racial discrimination and racism in British sport (e.g., Burdsey, 2011; Ward et al., 2024) and at British universities (e.g., Sian, 2017, 2019; Reay, 2018). When Jayden and Gabriella experienced exclusion due to their cultural differences, the individuals who displayed exclusive behaviour often denied it and/or had no repercussions. For example, the coach who mocked one

athlete's accent and nationality did not receive any consequences from the university other than a short discussion (the athlete said the conversation was just two minutes). It also appears that no adaptations were made to attempt to help either athlete adapt to their new sporting environment/culture. Both athletes recognised how they were differentiated from their teammates due to their cultural backgrounds and felt this difference during interactions with their teams. Jayden and Gabriella said their teammates treated them as outsiders because English was not their first language. Both athletes discussed missing the community and feelings of belonging they felt on their sport teams back home. As Haegele and Maher (2023) argue, inclusion involves feelings of community and belonging. With this definition, Gabriella and Jayden were not included because they did not feel these things. Here, experiences of exclusion led both athletes to isolate themselves from their teammates in both avoiding social team gatherings and sometimes avoiding team training. Such isolation did not help either athlete's pursuit of a dual career, as is echoed in another study (Geraniosova & Ronkainen, 2015) identifying loneliness as a reason for an athlete's failure because their dual careers had been managed mostly by themselves.

Gabriella and Jayden were further differentiated from their teammates by financial factors. Financial differences were experienced in two ways. Firstly, there were differences related to athletes having organised support or funding (e.g., TASS, university scholarships). It is important to note that both athletes had a mixture of funded and unfunded peers on their respective teams. In Jayden's case, he received a small amount of funding from the university that was much less than he anticipated – "I was misled" – before he moved to England. This difference of funding led Jayden to take on two part-time jobs in order to cover costs related to his dual career and university education. Again, indicating that dual career athletes without organised

support often are compelled to seek out paid work to make ends meet (Moreno et al, 2021). Jayden often compared himself to other athletes on his team who had more funding from the university. Namely, he observed that other funded athletes were given much more essential equipment than him (which he felt was deeply unfair) and that no funded athletes had to work a job on top of their sport and studies. Jayden noted that just one other athlete on his team took on a part-time job: another international athlete who did not have organised funding. For Gabriella, her academic scholarship did not cover all her dual career costs, so she also took on a job to make ends meet. Despite her scholarship and her job, Gabriella still felt that she had fewer financial resources than her teammates. This difference was primarily felt during team trainings. In this instance, the university had additional branded clothing, for each sport, available for purchase. Gabriella was required to purchase the team shirt for practice, but all other clothes were optional. As her teammates opted to purchase the full university branded kit, Gabriella did not just *feel* different from her peers while training, she *looked* different too without the full uniform.

The cost of dual career has been evidenced by the preceding athlete narratives in education, work, and multi-career pathways. The following section highlights a few select experiences of athletes with organised support from TASS.

6.5 TASS athlete experiences

Within athlete interviews and my focus group discussion, some stories of TASS funded athletes were shared and provided insight into ways that exclusion could occur within the system. A brief composite vignette is used here to describe, through a combined narrative, the experiences of TASS athletes. This narrative was created from the

experiences of one TASS-funded athlete (from the in-person focus group) and second-hand accounts of teammates and friends of the athletes interviewed who were supported by TASS and experienced exclusion.

I'm the only TASS-funded athlete on my [sport] team. It's a lot of pressure because my teammates keep telling me that they are pinning all their BUCS hopes on me this season. I'm seen as the 'talented' one and the one with all the support, so it's hard to meet these high expectations. My teammates say that TASS sounds awesome and ask how they can get it. When I try to explain they ask me to clarify what level they have to be at to be considered. The level is mysterious, and I can't answer them. And then sometimes my teammates seem afraid of me… they don't interact with me much and they give me lots of space in training. I feel ostracised a lot and it is a bit isolating. My coaches are completely inflexible and put unnecessary pressure on me… To be honest the whole sport has problems with authoritarian coaching. [Sport] is going to be the next sport with public issues… the NGB is a disaster, and they have no incentive to stop what they are doing.

Although my teammates seem to put me on a pedestal, my classmates and professors do not. Since I'm always training, I often miss out on group work and my classmates say things like, 'Well it's only sport, isn't it?' These two worlds couldn't be farther apart… I'm burning the candle at both ends to keep up my dual career balance.

My friend plays [different sport] at another university and she just got injured. I've known her for years and she's devastated to not be able to compete for the next four months or longer, depending on how long it takes to heal her knee injury. I can't believe what she just told me – she lost her TASS funding and all the support that goes with it. The NGB pulled her off TASS because she couldn't compete this season. They said if she's better next year maybe she will get put back on it again, but for now someone else will get the spot and the support. I don't know how they expect her to recover when they are taking that away... How is she going to rehab her knee if she can't access a physio? If she doesn't have access to that, she might not ever recover from her injury.

This friend told me that her coaches and NGB kind of rank the funded athletes by their level: podium, podium potential, and TASS. The TASS athletes were seen as the lowest level of the funded athletes. So, I'm not surprised that she's the one who got her funding cut.

The above composite vignette showcases TASS athlete experiences while at universities within the TASS delivery network (i.e., TASS delivery sites). One athlete

spoke of being differentiated from her peers due to being the only one with TASS support and resources. Here, being awarded organised support like TASS comes with expectations of results, as talent funding is limited with high expectations thus placed on the few in receipt of funding and support. The pressure from these expectations puts further stress on the athlete as the hopes and dreams of the team were placed on her shoulders. In these examples, financial and support factors created a rift between the funded athlete and her unfunded teammates. Relationships with coaches and teammates were challenging because of this difference and therefore the athlete had to navigate both interpersonal and external factors. This internalised and team-projected pressure led the athlete to prioritise sport over studies, which in turn created tension with her classmates when she missed classes or group project meetings, further isolating her. In sum, while the athlete was included into the TASS support scheme (through nomination from her NGB, see Chapter 7 for athlete nomination process), she experienced isolating and demanding treatment from her peers and coaches.

As seen in the narrative above, the TASS nomination process is largely unknown or unclear to athletes, even athletes who receive TASS awards. As one TASS athlete noted above, the performance level required to be considered for TASS was "mysterious" and impossible to explain. In my interviews with TASS staff, there was no clear definition of the talent level within nomination criteria, only that "athletes will be at the top of their pathway". The distinction of who is considered at the "top of the pathway" is left to the NGBs who nominate athletes to TASS. The following chapter (7) provides further explanation and analysis of the TASS athlete nomination process, including the identification of decision-makers and types of power present within organisational procedures and governance.

The additional story of an injured athlete being taken off TASS funding references how a TASS award can be taken away from an athlete if they cannot meet the expectations of the NGB who nominated them for the award. It is important to note that TASS itself did not defund this athlete, the NGB decided to do so and replaced them with a different athlete likely due to the pressure to meet performance targets to maintain funding (Green, 2009; Bostock, 2013; Fletcher & Streeter, 2016). This reveals a power dynamic within the TASS athlete nomination process – NGBs appear to have the power to remove athletes from the scheme for reasons such as injury and TASS has allowed this move to happen. This situation seems odd given that TASS support includes access to a medical scheme where healthcare services can be supported and requests for care (such as surgery for injury) advanced. Perhaps this swapping of athletes took place during the allocated transfer window where NGBs can shift their athlete nominations if they move up or down the pathway before a certain date. Although a striking story, it must be noted that the TASS athlete who lost funding was not directly spoken with in this study. The story came from a teammate of the athlete who witnessed this occurrence. Still, the story indicates that NGBs have the power to remove athletes from TASS. The power of NGBs in the TASS athlete nomination process is further examined in Chapter 7.

6.6 Conclusion

Together, these athlete narratives reveal how British dual career systems structurally and culturally exclude certain types of athletes from organised support and also shed light on ways that unfunded athletes experience exclusive treatment by coaches and teammates. The addition of TASS athlete narratives indicate that funded athletes can

also experience exclusion in dual career environments. In sum, primary themes from my reflexive thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2016; Braun & Clarke, 2019) of athlete interviews indicate that some dual career athletes are overlooked or excluded from organised support due to: i) taking non-traditional dual career pathways, ii) being unknown to their sport systems (NGBs), or iii) being differentiated by financial or cultural factors. These themes sometimes interlink as athletes who were “unknown” to their sport systems often took non-traditional dual career pathways.

The lack of, or limits within, organised dual career support structures can cause financial problems for dual career athletes (Geraniosova & Ronkainen, 2015). Athletes who are unsupported or not getting their support needs met turn to self-ordering, or self-managing, their training and career. Importantly, the ways of self-ordering observed in athletes’ stories may further prevent athletes from receiving support in the future, as they often take less-recognised paths to manage their dual careers and therefore are not “known” to the system organising support.

Due to external factors like lack of organised support and financial resources, many dual career athletes self-order their dual careers to survive. This places the onus on individual athletes to self-structure, and often self-direct, their own support in order to maintain their dual careers. Self-ordering was a helpful conceptual lens to interpret and analyse athlete experiences, especially related to inclusion and exclusion, within their dual career pathways. This chapter has identified that unfunded dual career athletes self-order their dual careers in two distinctive ways: i) in collaboration with institutions or stakeholders, and/or ii) in isolation.

The first type of self-ordering, in collaboration with stakeholders, is evidenced in Amina’s experience in the work pathway (see 6.3) where she received active

support from her coach and her work manager to organise and manage the balance between her sport training and competition with her work schedule. This collaboration and prolonged support allowed Amina to successfully pursue and balance her dual career pursuit into her late thirties. Other examples of ordering in collaboration with institutions are found in dual carer athletes who, at least temporarily, were in education settings and had varying levels of support from their institution (e.g., access to the university sport facilities) and stakeholders within them (i.e., coaches). Here, athletes found it easier to self-order their dual careers in collaboration with institutions or stakeholders as those entities hold knowledge and resources essential to maintaining their dual careers. The second type, self-ordering in isolation, involves an athlete relying solely on themselves to sustain, manage, and progress in their dual career without the assistance or support of institutions or stakeholders. It was apparent that self-ordering in isolation was less likely to be a successful technique to balance or maintain dual careers, as most athletes taking this approach experienced negative outcomes from it like overtraining, disordered eating, and sometimes drop out. These challenges were further exacerbated by experiences of exclusion. Importantly, athletes may switch between these two types of self-ordering depending on the ability and success of gaining support from institutions and stakeholders. For example, Victoria (see 6.2.2) was self-ordering in both ways until she was cut from her team at the high-performance training centre, which then pushed her to have to solely self-order in isolation due to being cut off from any coaching, team training, or facilities.

As seen in the above vignettes of athlete experiences, sometimes self-ordering leads to unhealthy behaviours (overtraining, disordered eating, lack of sleep) and eventual physical (injury, RED-S) or psychological (stress, depression, anxiety) effects. These unhealthy coping habits and negative consequences are often caused

or exacerbated by athlete experiences of exclusion, creating a cycle of interlinked challenges for athletes. A common theme across athlete stories was the feeling of never being good enough. These unfunded athletes, with a few exceptions, perceived their lack of support from the system as an indication of the system not valuing them as athletes. This was further aggravated by experiences with coaches who prioritised the athletes who were funded through organised schemes (i.e., TASS, NGBs). The result of feeling unvalued was often depression and defeat (i.e., drop out from sport). I argue that there is insufficient work on how exclusion affects the mental health of dual career athletes.

The non-traditional pathway athlete narratives importantly indicate that there are many athletes pursuing dual career that do not meet TASS' education criteria, thus the criteria limit the amount of athletes who could benefit from the support TASS provide. Balancing a dual career requires a high degree of support to manage individual and institutional factors (Aquilina, 2013; De Brandt et al., 2017; Knight et al., 2018), which is why organisations like the TASS were created. Research in sport psychology (Stambulova et al., 2021) indicates that successful progression, or transition, to the next performance level relies upon the athlete's ability to adapt to the demands of the transition, and this adaptability is dependent on personal and social resources.

When athletes lack resources, sometimes a crisis transition can occur (Cartigny et al., 2023). A crisis transition is characterised by ineffective coping mechanisms in addition to lack of personal and social resources (Stambulova et al., 2023). When athletes go through a crisis transition, they often experience ongoing emotional distress, clinical mental health issues, negative impacts to their wellbeing, and

premature retirement from sport (Stambulova, 2017). As seen above, attempts at self-ordering dual careers can sometimes lead to unhealthy coping habits such as overtraining and disordered eating which could be indicating “crisis transitions”. Unhealthy coping habits can cause negative physical outcomes such as injury, depleted energy, or health conditions such as RED-S. Three female athletes within the participant cohort experienced long-term health issues related to the lack of, or disruptions to, their menstruation cycles. These three athletes referenced having the condition of relative energy deficiency in sport, known as RED-S, and all three also had problems with their menstruation during their dual career while under the watch of talent coaches and support staff. Victoria spoke of not menstruating until the age of 18, which was short-lived as she has not menstruated again since being cut from her programme. Julia’s health issues of missing multiple periods and rapid weight loss were unnoticed or ignored by coaches and staff at her high-performance training centre despite their weekly collection of her personal data related to weight and menstruation patterns. A third athlete within the study had similar issues with menstruation and disordered eating due to the strain of training demands (physical drain, time drain). These athlete narratives indicate that experiences of exclusion, especially those related to athlete neglect and lack of, or denial of, support provision, can lead to serious long-term health consequences. In sum, an athlete is more likely to successfully transition to the next level if they have access to support (i.e., coaching, financial, familial).

In the next chapter, I centre and examine the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS) organisation’s policies, processes, and procedures around athlete nomination to their organised support scheme. I consider how TASS is governed and identify types of power and their actors within the athlete nomination process.

7. Chapter Seven: Findings: TASS procedures: From selection of sports and athletes to monitoring service usage

This chapter presents an examination of the TASS athlete nomination process, in particular the procedures involved in the selection of athletes who receive TASS awards. I analyse key communications and processes related to the TASS athlete nomination process and provision of support through a critical document analysis (Bowen, 2009). Applying my documentary analysis (see Chapter 5.4.1 and 5.4.2) in combination with the concept of ordering (Law, 1994; Kendall & Wickham, 2001), or attempts at control or management, I identify the processes of sequential delivery of TASS' nomination process across five stages beginning with pre-selection communications, through athlete nomination and selection, post-selection communications, athlete cohort monitoring and data capture, and finally support provision. To analyse relations of power, I use Lukes' (1974, 2021) theory of three-dimensional power along with Foucault's (1977; 1980) conceptualisations of power/knowledge and normalising power.

Key documents and communication tools (e.g., the athlete portal) were identified during my ethnographic work at TASS with 19 selected documents (see Appendix 11), chosen through purposive sampling (Patton, 2002; Bryman, 2016), and critically reviewed to develop empirical knowledge of the processes related to TASS' main athlete support programme. This document review involved a combination of content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) and reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Of the documents that were analysed, 15 were directly related to the athlete nomination process, eligibility criteria, athlete cohort, and support provision while 4 documents were related to TASS more generally (e.g., TASS promotional

materials and *Equality and Diversity Policy*). This chapter also includes interview data from discussions with TASS staff. Key findings from the document analysis (Bowen, 2009) and interviews with TASS staff concern relations of power and control within the athlete nomination process, the misinterpretation of education criteria, missing and unclear data within the athlete portal, and the lack of direct mention of “inclusion” or “diversity” across all documents.

7.1 Process Stage 1: Initial decisions on sports and TASS athlete awards

TASS engages in pre-selection communications to start the procedure for athlete nomination each annual funding cycle. First, it must be determined which sports will be given access to TASS support each year. NGBs of Olympic and Paralympic sports, and a few exceptions depending on the year, are eligible for TASS if they have talent funding from Sport England (see Doc. 1, Appendix). Of those NGBs, a subset will be selected annually to receive a number of athlete places on TASS. To determine which sports (and thus corresponding NGBs) are included in the TASS network each year and the number of athlete spots allotted to each NGB, TASS meet with Sport England. As discovered through interviews with TASS staff, this meeting involves a discussion of each organisation’s independent rankings of sports and final decisions around the number of TASS awards given to each sport. TASS staff ranked sports based on the engagement and communication between the NGB and TASS. For example, some NGBs respond in a timely and consistent way to TASS communications while others may not be as consistent. Additionally, some NGBs have good athlete engagement in TASS support (e.g., attending support sessions) while others are considered to have poorer engagement. On the other hand, Sport England’s rankings, in the words of one

TASS staff member, are based on how “good” they perceive each sporting pathway to be.

> I mean, it’s very subjective but they objectify that subjectivity if that makes sense. You know, how good [the pathway] was in terms of producing athletes for the performance pathway… so they had a fairly crude measure of the better ones. For some of them [sports], it was obvious that they were losing favour with Sport England.

The ”subjectivity” of Sport England is central to the number of TASS awards given to each sport (NGB) year on year. As seen above, Sport England attempts to objectify their subjectivity through their analysis of how successful a sporting pathway has been. Here, Sport England’s main point of reference to determine such success lies in the number of athletes, and the results of said athletes, who progress to the performance pathway. Reflecting again on the structure of performance pathways in the UK (see Figure 1, below), at the time that the research was undertaken, TASS sits within England’s talent pathway which feeds into the performance pathway.

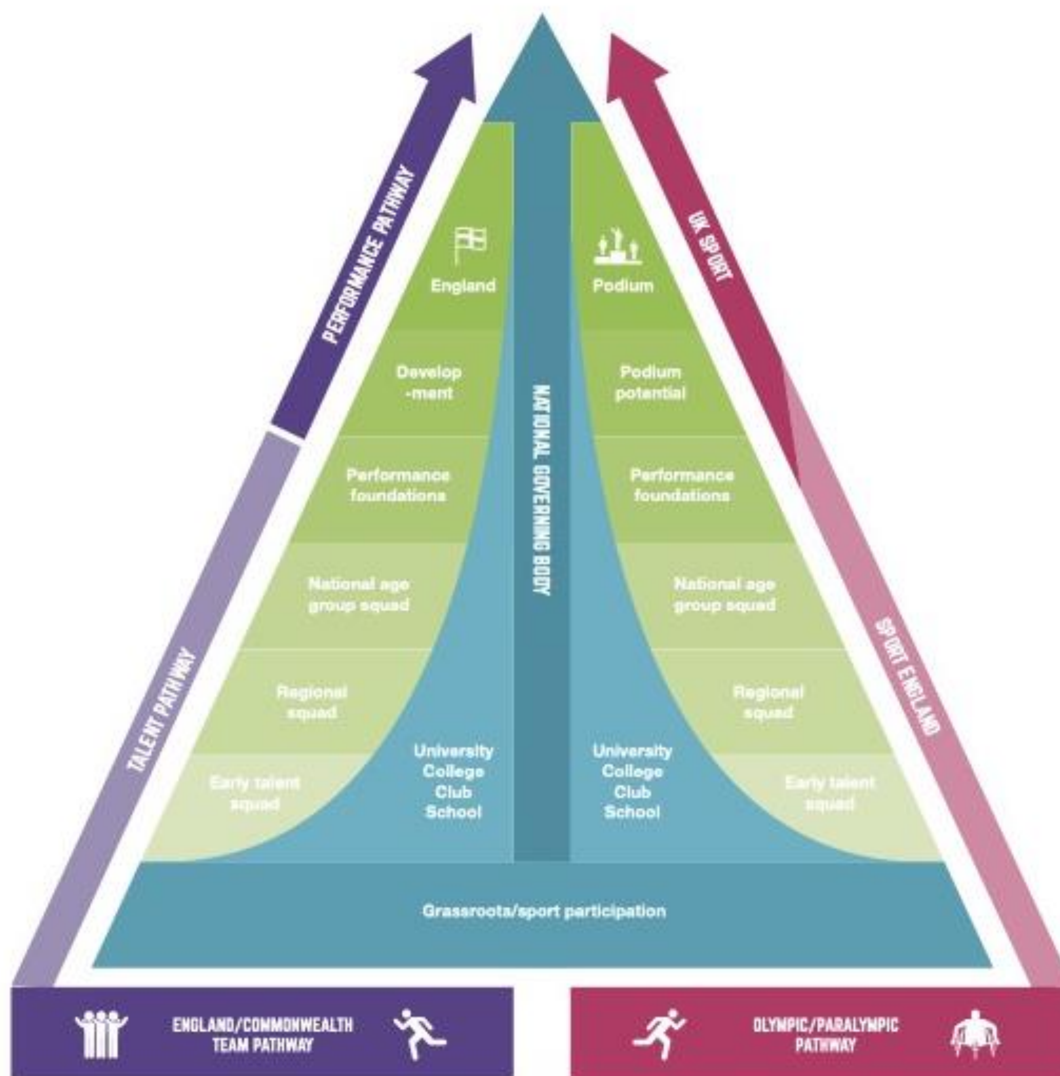

Figure 1. A schematic to demonstrate the typical stages of the talent development pathway. The left-hand side denotes an England/Commonwealth team pathway and the right-hand side represents an Olympic/Paralympic pathway. (Sport England, 2018)

As a reminder, England's talent pathway begins at the grassroots level and overlaps with the performance pathway at the performance foundations level. In Figure 1, the right side shows the key funders of these respective pathways, with Sport England funding going toward athletes in England's talent pathway and UK Sport funding going towards athletes in the performance pathway. Although funded by Sport

England, TASS has supported athletes in the talent and performance pathways, thus straddling the line between the two pathways. Going back to process stage 1 of the TASS athlete nomination process, Sport England's apparent focus on athletes in the performance pathway indicates that NGBs with the largest number of performance pathway athletes are prioritised to improve the likelihood of athletes winning medals for England and Great Britain. Sometimes NGBs drift in and out of "favour" with Sport England, as stated by one TASS staff interviewee, and this is reflected in the number of athlete awards that they are given. Here, athlete awards onto the TASS programme can be seen as a sort of funding allocation due to TASS providing those talented athletes with support services (as well as a small financial award) which the NGB then does not need to fund or provide itself. Additionally, as shared by a TASS staff member, being a "priority" for Sport England can protect sports from losing athlete awards regardless of their poor relationship (and thus lower ranking) with TASS.

Although TASS rankings are discussed within the pre-selection meeting, one TASS staff member involved in the process shared that "fundamentally, Sport England decide what sports we work with year on year" and that the final number of athlete awards per sport are also "mostly driven" by Sport England. That is, each year sports (NGBs) are confirmed to receive TASS athlete awards. Then, it was determined how many TASS athlete awards each sport is given. As a reminder, there are three levels of TASS awards (blue, white, and red) which are distinguished by the type of support services given and the minimum requirements of engagement with those services (see 7.5 below). When asked, "What decision-making power do you have?", the TASS staff member admitted that TASS has limited influence:

> Very little. Sport England make that initial submission engagement hurdle decision. They say to us, 'These are the sports we want you to work with next

> year. How many places did they have last year?' By and large, it doesn't change much really. Where it has changed has been Sport England driven.

Within the larger interview, this process was further discussed, and I learned that the decision around which sports received TASS each year was due to precedent as well as Sport England preference. Applying Lukes' (1974, 2005, 2021) three-dimensional power theory, Sport England embodies the first dimension of power: visible decision-making. Here, through the processes and procedures of this first stage in the athlete nomination process, Sport England's exercise of power is visible and intentional (Lukes, 2005). Furthermore, Sport England prevails during conflict with TASS (e.g., when sport rankings differ) and their interests are consistently achieved. The second dimension of power, that of agenda-setting and hidden decision-making, is also present in this process stage, in that Sport England do not appear to accept sports that they are not interested in funding. That is, Sport England set the agenda of this meeting at the centre of process stage 1, in order to influence decisions to achieve their interests. In this way, although TASS staff are invited to the table with their own rankings and interests, Sport England sets the agenda of the meeting and makes final decisions around which sports receive TASS support and how many athlete spots each sport is allocated.

My data demonstrate that TASS consistently defer to Sport England in decision-making; I conclude that TASS staff see themselves as having limited power within process stage 1. As such, Sport England is portrayed by TASS staff as the dominant actor within this process with their rankings given more weighting than those of TASS. In sum, Sport England's behaviour within the TASS nomination process is indicative of their power and position as the organisation governing England's talent pathway

and, importantly, as the key organisational funder of TASS. Sport England is positioned as an institution with access to, and more importantly control of, monetary resources. Here, the allocation of funding acts as a 'technology of power' (Foucault, 1980), or a technique used to shape conduct with the aim of achieving a desired outcome. While funding is a technology of power, it comes with other things like expectations and targets for results. The TASS organisation is thus constrained, due to the mechanisms of power and governance, in what it can and cannot do within its own processes. This positioning also allows Sport England to 'normalise' (Foucault, 1977, 1983) its power in TASS processes through establishing meaning to what is considered a "good" talent pathway, and in turn who is rewarded with access to TASS support. Here, Sport England acts as a 'meaning-maker' (Rowbotham, 1973) through their judgment of, and structural position to declare such judgement, what is or is not a "good" performing talent pathway.

Also present within process stage 1 is normalising power (Foucault, 1977), which can be used to influence values, ways of thinking, and the ways that things are done (e.g., procedural norms). Normalising power is similar to Lukes' (1974) second and third dimensions of power in that it is often hidden or covert, contrasting with Lukes' overt first dimension of power. Here, as argued in Chapter 4, Lukes' (1974, 2021) characterisations of dimensions of power are extended by Foucault's normalising power and technologies of power in that they add analysis to the ways that people are enacting power. Thus, Sport England use technologies of power (e.g., funding) and the normalisation of their power to influence TASS processes in largely covert ways (e.g., second and third dimensions of power). In this way, Sport England, by their structural position as the funder of TASS and NGBs in the talent pathway, have decision-making power to determine which sports are essentially included in or

excluded from TASS, in turn, including or excluding athletes in those sports from this support system.

Acting more passively, I have observed TASS staff take lead from Sport England in another stage of the athlete nomination process (stage 2). In stage 2, discussed below, TASS is in a similar predicament where TASS staff perceive limits to the control they have within their own organisational processes.

7.2 Process Stage 2: Athlete Nomination

As illustrated below in Figure 3, after the selection of sports and allocation of athlete awards are driven by Sport England as funder (process stage 1), individual athletes are then nominated by the NGBs and shared with TASS for confirmation that they meet TASS athlete eligibility criteria (Docs. 1 and 8, Appendix 11).

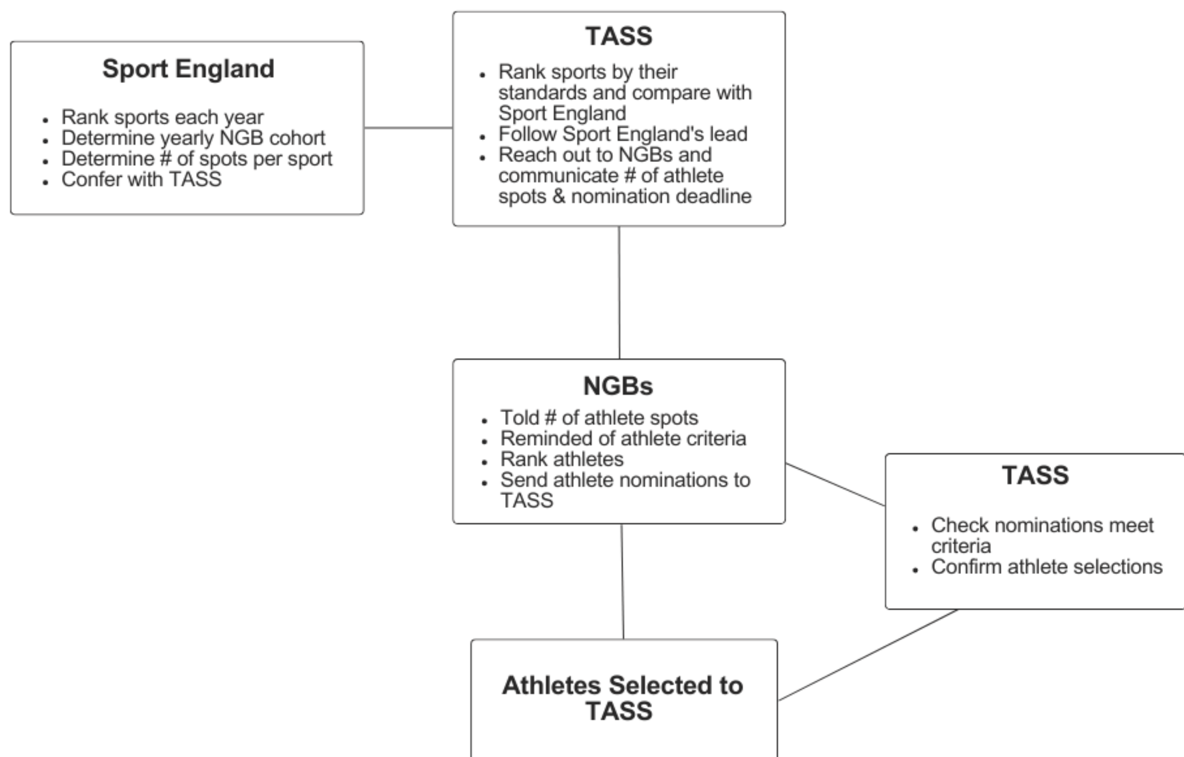

Figure 3: A diagrammatic representation of the TASS athlete nomination process

Eligibility criteria for athletes to be nominated to TASS requires athletes to be: “at the top of the Sport England pathway”, aged 16 years or older, eligible to represent England, and pursuing a recognised programme of learning. Within these criteria, two main aspects drive the identification of who is nominated to the TASS scheme: the performance level of the athlete and whether the athlete meets TASS education criteria. First, an athlete’s performance level relates to whether they would be considered “at the top of the pathway” of their sport, as per TASS language around their criteria (Docs. 1 & 8, Appendix 11). The NGB for each sport is assumed to have

the knowledge, or their own “selection criteria” (Doc. 1), to identify who is talented in their respective sports. Reflecting Foucault’s (1980) power/knowledge theory, NGBs are designated as decision-makers to determine who is talented *enough* for nomination to TASS based on their assumed knowledge of the talented athletes in their sporting pathways. Thus, from the perspective of TASS, NGBs are provided the opportunity to operate in Lukes’ (1974) second dimension of power to set the agenda of the initial list of athlete nominations. However, unlike Sport England in process stage 1, they do not always succeed with their preferred athlete nominations due to eligibility criteria (as discussed below in section 7.2.1).

It is important to note that while each NGB has a talent lead (typically the main contact for TASS), the talent leads sometimes defer to others to compile their athlete nomination list (Doc. 8). Speaking with a TASS staff member about the talent lead of a popular Olympic sport, it was clear that this talent lead was quite disconnected from the individual athletes in his pathway:

> TASS staff member: If I asked him to complete his list, he couldn’t do that without going to local coaches and talent pathway coaches.
>
> Question: So, there’s no universal approach that’s used for everyone? Is it all specific to each sport?
>
> TASS staff member: (nods ‘Yes’). And some of the contacts for TASS are a decent amount removed from the sharp end of knowing who, what, where and when.

This raises an important concern: whether NGBs ensure that the person(s) compiling their nomination list can accurately determine who is “at the top of the pathway”. The talent lead referred to in the previous quotation was described as being able to recognise his limits and thus used staff working more closely with talented

athletes to select athletes for nomination to TASS. However, this may not always be the case and there is no entity or policy which regulates or guides how NGBs select athletes for nomination. Therefore, NGBs can take individual approaches to athlete nomination so long as nominated athletes fit the TASS criteria.

Furthermore, for an athlete to be identifiable by an NGB typically requires particular types of engagement with organised competitions. For example, England Weightlifting (2023) identifies talented athletes through their engagement in official sanctioned or recognised competitions, performances recorded at such events reaching national standards, and minimum training days. Such competition opportunities may be difficult to access due to cost, location (travel), equipment, and other resources. Thus, typical talent identification processes could potentially overlook athletes who experience barriers to accessing competitions, for reasons such as cost, travel, and locality of their clubs, as some interviewees indicated.

It is also unclear whether athletes who fall short of being identified as “talented” are considered or if backgrounds, barriers, or limited resources are also considered. Talent identification is a contentious subject, one that sport researchers across disciplines have critiqued and to which varying approaches have been considered (Till & Baker, 2020; Ward, Belling, Petushek, & Ehrlinger, 2017; Till et al., 2016). As such, one TASS staff member believed that the NGB nomination aspect of the process was exclusive in and of itself:

> It's always hard to promote TASS too because, obviously, we want to promote the idea of dual career and that it's a great pathway for lots of different people but then there's that added caveat of ‘Oh, by the way, if you want to be on this team and want us to help you, you have to be nominated by an NGB.’ So, for me that's always really hard. You want to get that dual career message out there… and make it accessible to everybody, but then the first thing we say is...

> the first barrier is: you must be nominated by an NGB. And it's almost counterproductive really.

The control given to NGBs in the nomination process was perceived by some TASS interviewees as a “barrier” for athletes to be nominated. The positioning of NGBs as nominators of athletes was also seen by this TASS staff member as something that made it difficult to promote TASS as a support service. In this way, the service TASS provides is inaccessible to athletes who are not known to or seen as “talented” by their NGB and its structures of talent identification. By relying on NGBs to determine who is talented enough to be considered for the scheme, TASS may be unable to support athletes who fit their criteria because those athletes may be taking non-traditional routes or have entered their sport too recently to be well recognised by their NGB.

7.2.1 Education Criteria

The second consideration needed to deem an athlete fit for nomination to TASS revolves around whether they meet the education criteria set by TASS (Docs. 1, 7, and 8, Appendix 11). Athletes are required to be undertaking an education programme at a “recognised institution” in England. There is flexibility around the level of education and type of learning programme with the caveat of a minimum time commitment per year (i.e., 300 or more hours of study or 30 credits). Recognised programmes of learning include: academic (e.g., degree, higher education certificate, GCSEs, A levels), vocational certification programmes (e.g., coaching qualification), placement programmes (e.g., traineeships), professional courses (e.g., legal practice), or

apprenticeships (e.g., communication or technology). These programmes of learning and the minimum time requirements are broadly referred to as "education criteria".

As is consistent with dual career literature (see Chapters 1 and 2), TASS organisational policy and operation predominantly view dual career as sport and education, largely omitting work pathways (e.g., part-time or full-time jobs). However, a much-needed inclusive outlier within the criteria allows for learning programmes related to coaching qualifications and apprenticeships (Doc. 9). For example, UK Coaching's level two or three certification is an approved vocational "learning programme". Unfortunately, the learning programmes outside of traditional academic programmes (e.g., GCSEs and university degrees) are often unknown to NGBs due to their misinterpretation of TASS criteria (see 7.2.2).

It is important to note that throughout my ethnographic case study of TASS, it became clear that increasing numbers within the TASS team began to view their education criteria as a barrier, as can be seen below in an interview with a TASS staff member from 2021:

> Barriers in terms of dual career goes back to our education criteria… I think maybe we need to make sure we're including as many athletes as possible and not excluding anybody based on whether they want to go to university, whether they're financially able to go to university, whether they want to work instead of have education as your career.

As staff perceptions of TASS education criteria being a barrier increased, I witnessed the criteria shift and become more flexible from 2019 to 2023. First, the term "education" was replaced with "learning programme" with additional recognised programmes. Next, the phrase "personal development" was increasingly heard in

conversations and more formal discussions around how TASS might move forward in the next funding cycle. An emphasis on personal development made its way into internal discussions amongst TASS staff too, with one staffer contemplating if TASS needs to move away from the term “dual career” itself due to its conflation with athletes at university:

> In a way, we started having discussions inside where actually, is dual career now dead? In terms of the term, and does it do less favours for us now than it used to? … Is it now at the next stage where it goes to being.. the pathway is about personal development, personal enrichment, and one of those key traits inside there could be dual career?

This new concern over the term “dual career” was an interesting development within my ethnography. Just one month into my PhD study (November 2019), I attended TASS’ annual Research Forum to learn about current research projects in the field and to observe TASS’ network of dual career researchers. I recorded in my field notes that during one research presentation, a TASS staff member asked a question around the term “dual career”: “By dual career, you mean athletes in education? Athletes at university?”. The presenter agreed with that definition. While this question did not pose debate or elaboration, it stuck out in my mind as a moment of collective agreement and of, in a way, setting the boundaries of the term dual career. Across my ethnography of TASS, I have witnessed the organisation shift from defining dual career as “athletes in higher education”, to questioning this definition as potentially exclusive, and finally to moving away from the term due to its synonymy with education.

Through the years TASS has seen the dual career term become synonymous with university, in part due to their own conflation of dual career with higher education within their old education criteria language. In the words of one TASS staff member:

“Dual career has started to become fixated around – it's about university... sport and university.” And this link between dual career and university creates a perceived “barrier” due to the barriers of HE. Eventually, TASS staff decided to expand the definition of dual career to include more personal development routes. Later in the interview, the TASS staffer continued his thoughts on getting rid of the term dual career because of the risk of it being seen as exclusive:

> TASS staff member: At the moment, there’s a danger it’s seen as exclusive where we’ve got to make it seem more inclusive. That’s why, is it easier to ditch the term dual career to get away from it because those perceptions are too engrained?
>
> Question: So, you’re saying it’s evolved so much that you’re wondering if it’s dead and that you need to move away from it?
>
> TASS staff member: Yes.

As of 2023, TASS have moved away from the terminology of “dual career” in their core TASS athlete support scheme, while maintaining it within their separate TASS Dual Career Accreditation Scheme (see Chapter 1). The term dual career is now, at the time of writing, absent from the main page about their main support scheme on their website. Instead, as of 2024, TASS describe themselves as “a Sport England funded partnership between talented athletes, delivery sites and national governing bodies of sport… The TASS programme helps athletes – aged 16-plus – to balance sport within the rest of their lives, be they in education, training or another form of personal development”. At the same time, Sport England (2024) still describe TASS as “a partnership funded by us between talented athletes, education institutions and NGBs. The scheme helps athletes in education (aged 16 and above) to get the best from their sporting and academic careers”. Key differences in these descriptions reveal

that TASS has chosen to broaden the description of the types of athletes they support – "in education, training or another form of personal development" – while Sport England still defines TASS as working with athletes in education.

7.2.2 Misinterpretations

Although a central aspect of the nomination process, the education criteria are considered by TASS to be often misinterpreted by NGBs. While perhaps the changes in flexibility of the criteria above might be one reason, it could also be due to conflation of the dual career pathway with higher education. This misinterpretation was viewed by TASS as a problem to be remedied, because it may lead to eligible athletes not being considered as such by NGBs (and therefore excluded from the system).

A TASS staff member shared that once Sport England said, "you can work with this sport this year", the first thing that TASS communicate to NGBs is "here is your education criteria". NGBs receive education criteria details within multiple documents and communications, but still often do not understand it:

> You'd be frightened to know that the education criteria... are pretty basic and pretty relaxed… it became very apparent that some of the NGBs haven't got a clue. Still. And you know they are NGBs who have been on [TASS] for years. There are definitely NGBs who think that to be on TASS you have to be at university.

Here, the misinterpretation of TASS criteria as allowing only athletes enrolled in or pursuing university education is made by NGBs who have been in the TASS network for years. Despite TASS efforts, NGBs appear to ignore or overlook repeated attempts

by TASS to clarify said criteria or resist complying. A TASS staff member gave one possible explanation for such resistance:

> We know some NGBs use it as a little bit of a back door ‘you're not good enough’ by saying ‘oh, you're not in education’ which is an easy cop out rather than ‘You’re no longer talented.’ …They don't like making selections and telling people they are ‘good’ or ‘bad.’ If they can put an aside – ‘TASS says you can't get the support because you're not at university’, then they dodge the bullet. …even though that's incorrect, because you can be doing a B tech or vocational courses. They use it as a barrier.

Here, it is suggested that NGBs might use a narrower interpretation of TASS education criteria to avoid making a value judgment on the talent of an athlete. From additional interviews with TASS staff, it was communicated that athletes (and their parents) often telephoned or emailed TASS inquiring about why they were not nominated to receive a TASS award. From these interactions, it is apparent that TASS awards are sought after and, due to the limited number of awards available, many athletes do not make the cut. As NGBs did not respond to a request for interviews, it is unclear if TASS education criteria are purposely used as a way to let athletes down easily when they have not met the performance level required of the award.

During the course of my documentation review, TASS determined that there was a need to clarify their education criteria and thus created a new document. This new document, titled *Types of Learning* (Doc. 9, Appendix 11), was created in July 2020 for an athlete target audience, instead of an NGB or coach (e.g., Doc. 7, Appendix 11). This was largely due to TASS staff being inundated with calls and emails from athletes and parents inquiring about how to “apply” for TASS. In an interview, one TASS staff member discussed the difficulties of explaining to athletes and parents the complex eligibility criteria and that “the NGB” must nominate them.

Types of Learning is a poster-like informational visual that explains the criteria and eligibility within visually segmented sections accompanied by icons and images related to the content. For example, there is an image of a trophy situated next to the text "to be eligible for a TASS award you must be performing at the *top* of the Sport England Pathway, whilst also considering your life beyond sport". Additionally, this document was created with the aim of sharing TASS' criteria across social media, particularly over Instagram. By engaging with a social media platform, this document could be accessed by athletes who are curious about TASS without having to go through their NGB for the information.

While this document may be considered as helpful in clarifying that the education criteria allows for "learning" outside of formal university-level education, it is still problematic. Wording within the document states that the learning programme "needs to be something that makes you more employable, but it definitely isn't just about A levels or a degree." It is interesting that this language is included within a document that aims to provide clear explanations of criteria when the concept of employability is steeped in various definitions across academic disciplines (Forrier & Sels, 2003; Thijssen, Van der Heijden, & Rocco, 2008) and thus is "fuzzy, lacking clarity and specificity of meaning" (Römgens, Scoupe, & Beausaert, 2020: 2589). Therefore, it is not obvious how an athlete can be sure that their learning programme makes them more employable or not.

The *Types of Learning* document sits alongside various attempts by TASS, historically and more recently, to educate and influence NGBs so that they apply the full scope of their eligibility criteria (e.g., not just athletes in higher education). Here, TASS staff are attempting to operate in the second dimension of power (Lukes, 1974),

in setting the agenda around which types of athletes could be nominated to the scheme. TASS staff desire for their criteria to be inclusive of athletes outside of higher education (within the parameters of their remit and the approved types of learning programmes), and thus attempt to influence the athlete nomination process.

In sum, although TASS has a remit designated by funders Sport England to support athletes in education, they have intentionally worked to make their education criteria broader to include more athletes in different types of "education" or "learning". TASS staff make further attempts to educate NGBs so that they clearly understand their criteria as more than "athletes at university". Here, TASS attempts to use influencing power, or the third dimension of power (Lukes, 1974), to educate NGBs around the broader approach to the education criteria and the value of such an approach (i.e., more athletes would be eligible). However, by their own admission, these attempts have ultimately failed to date. This failure to influence NGB behaviour is a consequence of the positioning of TASS within sport governance in the talent pathway, as TASS do not fund or govern NGBs. TASS have few technologies of power to use, and it appears that NGBs are not easily influenced by their attempts at power. Thus, eligible athletes who meet the criteria by means other than being enrolled in higher education end up being excluded from TASS support due to NGB misinterpretations of education criteria.

7.3 Process Stage 3: Post-selection communications

Once athletes are selected by NGBs onto the support scheme and TASS check and confirm that the athletes meet the eligibility criteria, TASS effectively drive and control the flow of communication to the athlete about their support provision. In the past,

NGBs were tasked with the initial communication with newly selected TASS athletes, but in the words of one TASS staffer, “some of them definitely did not send that out. That is 100% sure.” To mitigate this risk, TASS staff now begin athlete communications through sending a welcome email (Doc. 15, Appendix 11) detailing the type of award (Blue, White, Red) they are being offered, the support services available to them (e.g., strength and conditioning, medical scheme), their designated TASS delivery site, the expectations of the award (e.g., required engagement with minimum amounts of service; see Doc. 10, 11, 12, Appendix 11), a privacy notice (Doc. 4, Appendix 11), and the TASS athlete agreement (Doc 5, Appendix 11). These communications might potentially be helpful in confirming official selection to the scheme, standardising award types, clarifying expectations related to accessing support (as per award type), reducing fear of the unknown, and enabling connection to key contacts in the TASS network.

After reviewing the first three process stages related to TASS athlete nomination, I then examined data collection processes post-selection. I endeavoured to understand how data was collected and what that data could say about the athlete cohort. Originally, I planned to use the quantitative data to determine if the TASS athlete cohort was representative of the national population, but the data proved to be of insufficient quality, as is discussed below.

7.4 Process Stage 4: Data collection through athlete portal

When nominated to the TASS scheme, one of the first tasks for athletes is to set up their account in the athlete portal and input their personal information. Examining the athlete portal identified three key findings. First, the data were characterised by low

completion rates and high missing data. Second, that this is likely underpinned by non-mandatory questions around certain data and inconsistency regarding who (athlete or coach) inputs the data. Third, that some data cannot be considered as an accurate representation of the athlete cohort due to exclusive language and lack of demographic options. Each of these will now be considered in turn.

7.4.1 Low completion rates and missing data

To determine the quality and quantity of data collected through the athlete portal, I extracted data pertaining to the 2018-2019 TASS athlete cohort (Doc. 16, Appendix 11). While standard questions around identity data were included, many questions were not mandatory to answer and therefore led to missing data. The themes of gender, disability, and ethnic origin clearly showcase the gaps found during the data capture (Table 5).

Gender		
Response	Frequency	Percent
No Answer	73	12.9
Female	286	50.4
Male	209	36.8
Total	568	100
Disability		
Response	Frequency	Percent
No Answer	166	29.2
No	344	60.6
Yes	58	10.2
Total	568	100
Ethnic Origin		
Response	Frequency	Percent
No Answer	73	12.9
African/Caribbean	28	4.9
Asian	5	0.9
Mixed Race	31	5.5
Other	8	1.4
White	423	74.5
Total	568	100

Table 5. TASS athlete portal data capture: gender, disability, and ethnic origin

While it can be common to have a percentage of “no answers” within data collection, as Enders (2003) found educational and psychological studies to have a missing rate of 15% to 20%, this phenomenon varies across fields and researchers hold different views on what an acceptable percentage can be for valid statistical inferences. Schafer (1999) contends that missing data rates of 5% or less are inconsequential, and Bennet (2001) argues that there would likely be bias in statistical analysis of data sets with more than 10% of missing data. Here, the data extraction of the TASS portal showed multiple survey items receiving upwards of 12.9% to 29.2% “no answer” responses. Thus, data from the portal may not paint a clear picture of the TASS athlete cohort.

When investigating the portal to find patterns within data omissions, I found that several athletes from the FA Women’s Football programme did not answer the “gender” question. Although these athletes are members of a “women’s” programme, one cannot ethically assume that every one of those athletes identifies as female. A member of TASS suggested that these omissions could have been due to coaches inputting data into the portal instead of the athletes themselves, thus skipping non-mandatory questions to quickly complete the portal exercise.

The insight that coaches responded on behalf of athletes combined with certain data points not being mandatory indicates a number of additional issues and problems within the process of data collection through the portal. First, coaches could ascribe demographic labels to athletes based on assumptions which can lead to errors within the data, which could be considered unethical. Second, coaches might skip or omit certain questions if they are unsure of the answer which contributes to the low completion rates and missing data. Third, athletes may not wish to declare

demographic identity markers to coaches or to TASS. These three instances can corrupt the whole demographic picture of the athlete cohort.

By not making key demographic questions mandatory, TASS misses out on collecting essential data that is pivotal to accurate reporting on the demographics of their athlete cohort and, more importantly, may miss key information that could be relevant to their support provision. For example, by not making the disability question mandatory, some athletes may not disclose their disabilities and therefore support might not fully meet their needs. To continue this hypothetical example, if an athlete does not share through the portal that they are a wheelchair user, then the practitioner or coach might miss this important aspect of that athlete's identity and thus may organise their first meeting in a non-accessible space (e.g., a gym with no ramp or accessible door).

7.4.2 Exclusive language and limited options

The language used within portal questions was sometimes exclusive or unclear. For example, the portal questionnaire only allowed three options within the gender category (male, female, other), which excludes representation by athletes who may identify as other genders such as nonbinary, agender, transgender, or gender fluid. Additionally, the term "other" is exclusive itself, indicating that the institution responsible for the question recognises anyone outside of the female/male binary as an "other" and thus consolidates different identities (e.g., nonbinary or gender fluid) under the umbrella term of "other". Here, the lack of representation in the options available to the person filling out the portal questionnaire can contribute to feelings of not belonging or feeling differentiated from the norm due to "othering", defined by

Weiss (1995: 18) to be a “process which serves to mark and name those thought to be different”. I argue that it is best practice to avoid the term “other” and to instead include more inclusive options or to allow for a text-fill option where the respondent can self-identify.

Furthermore, the language used for certain characteristics such as “ethnic origin” is unclear and the options available to athletes exclude many ethnicities while conflating others. The term “ethnicity” is more commonly used within diversity questionnaires in the UK and may be a clearer term for those answering questions in the athlete portal (The Law Society of England and Wales, 2024). The “ethnic origin” category included an option of “African/Caribbean" which combines and inaccurately conflates two separate ethnicities into one option. Conflating or combining multiple ethnicities under one is considered bad practice, as can be seen in the critiques of the term “BAME” (Sporting Equals End BAME campaign, Trehan, 2021) and eventual government guidance (Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, 2021) to stop the use of the acronym, previously used as an umbrella term for anyone considered Black, Asian, or “minority ethnic”.

In addition to collecting demographic details from TASS athletes, the athlete portal serves as a monitoring system for the use of TASS services. Such documents and processes related to support provision and the tracking of athlete usage are outlined below.

7.5 Process Stage 5: Support provision

As discussed in Chapter 1, TASS' main function is to provide access to support for talented athletes nominated to their scheme. This support is delivered by certified sport practitioners in the fields of: strength and conditioning, physiotherapy, lifestyle support, psychology, and nutrition. TASS athletes also receive access to a medical scheme and a small cash award (£500). TASS athletes are provided with one of three types of support called "awards". These awards, categorised by the colours red, blue, and white, carry minimum expectations for engagement in services. These requirements pertain to the number of practitioner sessions an athlete needs to use within the TASS calendar year. Awards typically set minimum expectations around the use of strength and conditioning sessions or performance lifestyle sessions.

Although athletes are given access to the support outlined above, TASS experiences challenges with athlete engagement in the support services they provide. These challenges relate to inconsistencies in the monitoring of service, lack of service usage by athletes, and the prevalence of "double-dipping". Each of these will be examined in turn.

7.5.1 Service monitoring

Each year, TASS practitioners deliver support sessions to TASS athletes and are also expected to input athlete engagement with their sessions onto the TASS portal. This monitoring of service is essential as TASS athletes have requirements to fulfil around the usage of support services, depending on their award type, as can be seen in

Document 12 (Appendix). When asked how TASS monitor athlete engagement in services throughout the year, one TASS staff member said:

> I mean that the portal is not brilliant, right? But fundamentally what the portal will do in our case, you're at the mercy of the practitioners who pop into the portal. But in terms of service engagement, you can see the engagement. You'd be amazed at the number of NGBs that don't even look at it. In the past, the review point has been where we say – right, go on the portal and have a look at the engagement and if there's anyone you're concerned about come back to us. "Eh, I can't quite remember what my login is" [mimicking their response]. Yeah, that says it all.

TASS staff use the portal as a procedure, or *technique of ordering* (Kendall & Wickham, 2001: 33) to manage and monitor athlete engagement. Here, TASS staff are applying an ordering technique to attempt to maintain order or control within how their support provision is monitored so that engagement can be measured, but the technique is not as effective as it was intended. The athlete portal process is ineffective because the portal is clunky and practitioners do not always submit service engagements. In interviews, TASS staff appeared to be frustrated with the NGBs' apparent lack of interest in how their athletes were using TASS services. TASS staff voiced views of support services positively affecting the trajectories of TASS athletes, and staff implied that they want NGBs to care about athlete engagement to see the benefit of TASS. If practitioners cannot be relied on to accurately report athlete engagement and NGBs are disinterested in whether their athletes are using TASS services, it is difficult to determine the effectiveness of TASS as a support service in the performance results of TASS athletes. Lastly, TASS staff voiced desires to improve athlete nominations so that more athletes used the full offerings that come with TASS

awards. This leads into the next section examining the issue of the lack of service usage among some TASS athletes.

7.5.2 Lack of service usage

Although expectations for service engagement is central to the structure and operation of TASS, athlete engagement in support services has been a “problem”, as one TASS staff member shared:

> The problem, the biggest problem... and it was from the moment I joined TASS… the biggest problem was engagement of service. I mean, it tells you a lot that the delivery model is 25 strength and conditioning sessions a year. I was horrified. I was horrified that that was all the athletes were going to engage with was 25 sessions. So, you know even if that’s based on a loose academic year, that's one strength and conditioning session a week, if that.

Despite being given one of the limited TASS athlete awards, athletes do not always use TASS services even though minimum expectations of certain TASS awards (e.g., red award) require only one session a week. One potential reasoning for this lack of service usage lies in the limited consequence for athletes who do not meet minimum requirements, as seen in this interview exchange with the same TASS staff member:

> Question: But there's not a lot of dropouts, right? There are just people who just might not utilise all the services? So, is that like wasted money?
>
> TASS staff member: Yeah, inefficient financially. Definitely. We do review it [athlete engagement] three times a year. Now, we do that partly because the payment is linked to those reviews. If you’re not engaging in the service then you’re not going to get your personal award.
>
> Question: So, there is a minimum level of engagement to access the cash award?
>
> TASS staff member: Correct.

Here, TASS uses the cash award (two instalments of £250) as an ordering technique (Kendall & Wickham, 2001) to incentivise TASS athletes to engage in the services available to them. TASS' ordering techniques show their attempts at having power in the process. Sometimes this technique is unsuccessful, with TASS not achieving their aims of increased athlete engagement in their services. This is typical of ordering in that it has some "failure built into it" (Kendall & Wickham, 2001: 32). TASS staff members pointed to another possible reasoning for lack of service use: athletes having other streams of support and funding.

7.5.3 "Double-dipping"

Within the TASS nomination process, there are no considerations or measurements made relating to the financial need of potential athletes or how much support they might already have, thus the approach is not means tested. TASS athletes can be nominated to the scheme even if they already have support from other schemes such as SportsAid or their sport's NGB. TASS staff members call this predicament "double-dipping", alluding to athletes having two or more avenues of support. When asked about this term, one TASS staff member expanded:

> So, we have historically struggled with engagement of service. Now, probably because there's that awareness piece ... there's that, you know what- hang on a minute, I've got a scholarship at [redacted] university, I'm getting strength and conditioning, I'm getting this and getting that... What's this TASS thing?

Multiple TASS staffers shared that some selected university athletes already have support (monetary and/or services) through university scholarships. Thus, some

TASS athletes are “double-dipping” and have more than one line of support. Whilst this is known to TASS staff and practitioners as a common occurrence, no mention of this issue or of seeking to avoid this issue can be found in any of the nomination documents or communications. Some TASS staff interviewed believed that there were some athletes receiving a TASS award who do not necessarily *need* the access to support services that TASS provides because they already have access to the same (or similar) services through their university or through other support schemes. Other TASS staff members shared their view as to why athletes might not fully engage:

> I get it from an athlete point of view. … if you're in a world where you've probably got lots of different providers of services and support. TASS is just another one of those players. And in that world, I can see how you don't as an athlete necessarily or easily identify with TASS and all they do for you.

While “double-dipping” may be an issue in that it limits the number of athletes TASS can reach as well as hurting engagement numbers with TASS services, an athlete may still benefit from having multiple avenues of support. For example, some athletes may seek other support streams for more financial support. Furthermore, TASS awards may be considered minimal, if we recall the TASS staff member who was “horrified” that TASS athletes were required to attend only 25 strength and conditioning sessions per year.

Here, it is important to consider whether TASS as a system supports those in need or exacerbates inequalities by giving resources to those likely to be getting some wider support rather than those outside the system. TASS criteria, especially its misinterpretations, combined with NGB talent identification and nomination processes appear to systematically exclude athletes in non-traditional or unfunded dual career

pathways (such as the athletes discussed in Chapter 6). The phenomenon of "double dipping" reveals that the scarce resources available within England's talent pathway are largely consolidated across a narrow group of athletes. I argue that it is imperative to rethink current structures and procedures (i.e., nomination processes and criteria) of athlete support so that more athletes can access existing resources and so that resources are not unutilised due to some athletes having too many avenues of support. Such recommendations are further and collectively presented in Chapter 9.

7.6 Conclusion

While TASS staff attempt to manage and keep order within their athlete nomination process, the ordering becomes disrupted when education criteria are misinterpreted by NGBs and thus affects the pool of athletes nominated to the scheme. While TASS staff are in the position to check that nominated athletes meet the criteria, this power is often never exercised due to the narrow interpretation of TASS criteria (i.e., athletes at or going into university), meaning that most nominated athletes automatically meet said criteria. The ordering project of talent identification, built within each NGB, appears to interfere with the procedures set out for TASS' ordering project of getting qualified athletes nominated to their support scheme. This is the nature of ordering, as it is "always a dynamic activity, in which objects are never completely controlled by any one project" (Kendall & Wickham, 2001: 37). NGBs were not controlled by the procedure of TASS athlete nomination and the education criteria central to that selection process, and as such they often resisted or ignored such guidance.

There are mechanisms of exclusion within the TASS athlete nomination process. Firstly, TASS education criteria were identified, by me and by TASS staff, as an exclusionary barrier to accessing TASS. Secondly, the process of athletes having to be nominated by NGBs also indicates a barrier in that some athletes take non-traditional pathways and are therefore overlooked or unknown to their sport systems (see Chapter 6). Thirdly, the types of power exercised by Sport England within the first stage of the nomination process contributes to the exclusion of particular sports and to the allocation of more TASS awards to the sports in the most favour. In these instances, it can be argued that sports that have a history of winning medals at the performance level will continue to benefit from access to support schemes like TASS while sports without such a history may fail to gain access to such support for their athletes, thereby increasing inequalities for unfunded athletes within those sports. In sum, this documentation review begins to show that there are tensions around who controls the athlete nomination process and thus, in the context of inclusion, who is responsible for the demographic makeup of the athlete cohort.

In the next chapter, I consider the commitment TASS has to inclusion in their work. I begin this examination through a document analysis of their *Equality and Diversity Policy*, and then consider further actions taken by TASS to influence NGBs and practitioners in their network towards being more inclusive. Then, I critically examine the culture of TASS and the larger English dual career pathway to showcase how exclusion can occur structurally and systemically. I use theories of power (Foucault, 1977, 1980; Lukes, 1974, 2021) to pinpoint how the larger and intersecting pathways of high-performance sport and higher education influence and contribute to a culture which can be exclusionary within the dual career pathway.

8. Chapter Eight: Findings: ‘The System’

Recalling Williams’ (1961: 57) definition of culture as “a particular way of life which expresses certain meanings and values” in institutions and ordinary behaviour, it is within ordinary everyday processes and behaviours that culture exists. In Chapter 6, I examined lived experiences of unfunded athletes in traditional and non-traditional dual career pathways, finding behavioural and structural mechanisms of exclusion within British dual career environments. In Chapter 7, I used documents and data from TASS staff interviews to examine the procedures of the TASS athlete nomination process and support provision, indicating procedural norms and power relations. Here in Chapter 8, I examine the TASS organisation’s commitment to inclusion and consider the cultures within England’s dual career system. My findings reveal that the culture(s) of the dual career pathway exists at the intersection of two pre-existing cultures: higher education (HE) and high-performance sport. In this chapter I identify and explain how HE and high-performance sport cultures influence the culture of the dual career pathway through application of feminist cultural theories (e.g., Rowbotham, 1973; Ahmed, 2012), power theory (e.g., Foucault, 1980), and the concept of ordering (e.g., Kendall & Wickham, 2001).

This chapter begins with a document analysis of TASS’ *Equality and Diversity Policy* and a review of TASS perspectives and actions related to inclusion aims. Next, I investigate the influence of HE on dual career environments and cultures. I argue that such influences relate to: i) dual career’s synonymity with education, ii) pre-existing support structures and physical environment overlaps, and iii) institutional cultural replications. Finally, I investigate the influence that high-performance sport has on dual career environments and TASS operations. I argue that high-performance

sport influences dual career pathways through: i) nationalistic funding structures, ii) paths of power, and iii) cultural influences.

8.1 TASS commitment to inclusion

Here, I consider the "commitment" TASS has to inclusion in their work. I begin this examination through a document analysis of their *Equality and Diversity Policy* (Document 19, Appendix 11), and then consider additional documents, processes, and actions taken by TASS with regard to inclusion. As discussed in Chapter 7, TASS staff have very little control over which athletes are selected to their scheme, as NGBs have the most significant decision-making role in athlete nomination. While TASS staff do have a role in confirming that NGB-nominated athletes meet their criteria, they rarely get to use such decision-making power due to NGBs narrowly interpreting their education criteria (see Chapter 7.2.2). Despite these limitations, TASS staff actively attempt to influence their athlete nomination processes through clarifying their education criteria (e.g., requirements for types of learning programmes and minimum hours of learning). These attempts at influence increased communication with NGBs and the creation of a new document (Doc. 9, Appendix 11) in July of 2020 to expand their education criteria to athletes outside of HE. In this way, TASS staff aim to include athletes who differ from their historical cohort, as athletes in HE previously made up the vast majority of TASS athletes. As such, I view TASS as actively attempting to influence their athlete nomination procedures to be more inclusive in the dimension of what broader career-based activities that eligible athletes could pursue.

In this section, I consider how committed TASS is to inclusion in their general work outside of the athlete nomination. First, I examine TASS' *Equality and Diversity*

Policy, with a focus on locating mention of, or commitment to, equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). Second, I consider the actions of TASS within their daily operations, particularly their investment into inclusion related workshops for their practitioners.

8.1.1 Equality and Diversity Policy

TASS' *Equality and Diversity Policy* (Document 19, Appendix 11) was established (as stated within the document) to ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010. The policy was uploaded to the website in 2018 and does not appear to have been updated since. This policy proclaims that TASS is "committed to the promotion of equality and diversity, eliminating discrimination, eradicating harassment and ensuring access for all". In doing so, TASS "aims to ensure that all individuals are treated equally at all times" and outline that they protect individuals who have protected characteristics (Doc. 19). Essentially, the document outlines this "commitment" to equality and diversity through complying with key responsibilities outlined in the Equality Act 2010 (e.g., indicating protected characteristics, preventing discrimination and outlining types of discrimination, having a reporting procedure for allegations). TASS also claims that equality and diversity are "encouraged" in the management of TASS, the delivery of the scheme, staff recruitment, staff management, and customer service (Doc. 19).

In analysing this policy, I found that there was not much substance or explanation of a "commitment" to inclusion beyond ensuring legal compliance to the Equality Act 2010 and stating a "zero tolerance" approach to discrimination (based upon the grounds of the protected characteristics). It is important to recognise that there is a substantial gap between non-discrimination and different forms or extents of inclusion. As explained in Chapter 6, athlete participants viewed inclusion as not only

a feeling of belonging but as an action. Here, this policy contains no details around action-based commitments to inclusion and there is no language within this document or on other public-facing platforms that would suggest inclusion is a value or belief embedded within TASS. For example, the "history, values, and governance" page on TASS' (2022) website contains no mention of the words: inclusion, equality, or diversity. There is also no mention of strategy to create or foster an inclusive *culture* at the TASS organisation or in the TASS network.

Ahmed (2012: 118) explains that the language of commitment "is highly valued in the diversity world insofar as commitment seems to move us beyond a tick box approach to diversity, in which institutions go through or along with a process but are not behind it". Here, it is implied that commitment is about doing something based on principles and beliefs. Through the "language of commitment", sport organisations can claim to commit to diversity and inclusion due to an institutionally held belief instead of legal compliance. However, Ahmed (2012: 218) importantly cautions that "a statement of commitment might create an illusion" of commitment. Institutions can use such statements to appear to be inclusive despite taking no action towards such commitment. In this way, commitment to inclusion is often rhetorical rather than rooted in "real action" (Kamperman & Rankin-Wright, 2023). Ahmed (2012: 117, italics in original) argues that such rhetorical commitment is "non-performative" in that the discourse "*does not produce* the effects that it names". In this way, such policy documents often act as "lip service" in terms of actual commitment to diversity or inclusion (Ahmed, 2007: 249).

Although the *Equality and Diversity Policy* explicitly states that it was created to satisfy legal compliance with the Equality Act 2010, the document is also used as a

statement of institutional commitment to equality and diversity. However, I did not find any further mention of EDI across other TASS documents or website pages examined within this study. Importantly, I found this lack of mention of inclusion across the TASS website and internal documents along with the compliance-based policy language to contrast greatly with the spoken beliefs of individual TASS staff members who I interviewed for this study, as will be discussed below in section 8.1.2.

In addition to reviewing the above *Equality and Diversity Policy*, I reviewed additional TASS documents (Docs. 17 and 18, Appendix 11) that pertained to minimum expectations for those involved with providing support provision (i.e., TASS delivery sites and TASS practitioners). Within these two documents I found no mention of *inclusion* or *diversity*, nor any discussion of skills required to support athletes from diverse backgrounds. Outside of the standards expected of practitioners, there were no requirements for practitioners to undertake training related to EDI such as unconscious bias or cross-cultural dexterity. This is problematic in that TASS claim inclusion and diversity are focus points for them, one staffer even calling them "a driving force for us", but inclusion is missing within key documents related to the delivery of TASS support services to TASS athletes.

In an interview with one TASS staffer, it was shared that TASS did not "do much" around inclusion until the creation of my PhD studentship. As stated in Chapter 1, this studentship designated the PhD research topic to be inclusion in dual career systems. This indicates that TASS were only beginning their journey towards being more "inclusive" when I arrived. This is consistent with my experience visiting and observing the TASS office. During visits to the TASS office, especially in 2019 and 2020, I was sometimes approached by staff members for casual conversations around the topic of

inclusion. These conversations usually had to do with inclusive practice as a philosophy and inclusion as a term or value. In these conversations, some TASS staff were very passionate about inclusion as a personal belief or value, while others were more curious and unsure of what the term really meant in relation to their daily work and the TASS support scheme. I also learned, through these interactions, that staff were beginning to have conversations internally amongst themselves around the theme of inclusion, particularly around whether their organisational operations were inclusive or exclusive. Here, discussions of inclusion seemed to happen *because* my PhD study was active and because of staff interest in the subject of inclusion. In my reflection notes, I considered that some TASS staff were not familiar with EDI before my involvement and that my engagement with the organisation seemed to help extend these understandings of EDI for multiple members of staff.

It is important to recognise this contrast between the compliance language within the *Equality and Inclusion Policy* document and the curiosity around inclusion and beliefs held by individuals working for TASS. I believe that TASS staff are more committed to inclusion than TASS organisational policy and website language indicate, as I have been part of numerous discussions around the topic and have seen TASS staff take action to make some of their operations more inclusive. These efforts are considered in the following section.

8.1.2 TASS inclusion efforts

I witnessed TASS work to improve their athlete portal language and terminology to be more inclusive of different identities because I was consulted to help them improve this language (see Chapter 5.1 and Chapter 7.4.2). I also witnessed TASS add

inclusion themed workshops to their practitioner development programme (e.g., sessions with leaders in sport about overcoming gender or race barriers, sessions on supporting neurodiverse athletes). TASS provides a yearly certified practitioner development programme, available to active TASS practitioners. Some of the development sessions involve topics of EDI including unconscious bias and experiences of minority background coaches. One TASS staff member discusses how inclusion focused sessions were intentionally created by TASS to build a more inclusive culture:

> We've had an increase in sessions around inclusion and diversity, either tried to create a culture or environment where it's promoted... diverse thinking is promoted. But also, we're trying to make our practitioners ambassadors as well. Because we're only having them for a finite period of time, we're trying to change their thoughts… and get them to then go back to that delivery side to almost be disciples of what we're trying to preach.

TASS see their practitioners not just as service providers to athletes within their support scheme, but also as potential ambassadors who can influence dual career environments with disciplines and values held by TASS (that is, in this case, inclusion). In this way, TASS is acting in the third dimension of power (Lukes, 1974, 2021) through attempts to influence actors in their network. In this case, TASS attempts to influence their practitioners, through workshops and development trainings, into valuing inclusion and also into conducting inclusive daily practice.

While practitioners have free access to these virtual workshop sessions, the sessions are not mandatory and therefore interested individuals must opt-in to inclusion focused development. In December of 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic and the corresponding regulations and lockdowns, I led one of these practitioner

development sessions – a virtual workshop on inclusive and exclusive language. Participants were well engaged in lively discussion around terminology as well as best practice tips. TASS claimed, as seen in the quote below from one TASS staffer, that the pandemic allowed them to deliver practitioner development sessions on more "softer skills" as opposed to "more technical aspects" due to having an audience with extra time on their hands due to pandemic driven regulations around pauses to sport participation and competition.

> What we've found during this Covid period is we've had greater flexibility in the sort of care or support we can provide our practitioners. And we've started to get them to think about the softer skills and what they have to develop outside just that technical knowledge. And I think that's probably one of the blessings of having a captive audience that we're able to actually start to challenge some of their underlying principles… and now we have an audience that's willing to listen… because they don't have much on. We can start to put philosophies and plans in place that will really benefit us in the long run.

TASS have continued to provide more inclusion focused practitioner development sessions and have featured speakers with EDI expertise across different sports. In 2022, TASS asked me to develop and deliver a bespoke series of inclusion themed workshops to sport practitioners working with TASS athletes. These training sessions included the topics of navigating inclusive language, deconstructing unconscious bias, and championing inclusion. I delivered these training sessions in 2023 and there are future plans to expand and further develop these trainings for more audiences.

TASS staff have shown, on numerous occasions, that they are not only interested in inclusion but appear committed to inclusion in their own practice. One TASS staffer, who also works as a sport practitioner with dual career athletes, shared that all athletes "have the right to be included. And you know that's what [inclusion] is,

for me. It comes back to… everyone has the right to matter. I think at a core level, it's ensuring that people are noticed, you know? I think that's really important." To this TASS staff member, it was imperative to commit to inclusion in sport not only because it is the right thing to do, but because every athlete deserves to feel like they matter. This TASS staff member, in particular, was very passionate about inclusion and consistently centred athlete wellbeing and a whole-person holistic approach in his work supporting athletes.

While the above analysis focused on TASS-specific "commitments" to inclusion, both TASS and their dual career pathway exist within broader contexts and cultures. That is, dual career sits at the intersection of the cultures of HE and high-performance sport and are thus influenced by values and priorities within those contexts. As such, the next section involves an examination of how TASS and the dual career pathway are influenced by their links to HE environments and processes.

8.2 Higher education influences and replications

In the UK and Europe, "dual career" has been inextricably linked to higher education (HE) since the European Parliament commissioned a series of studies in the early 2000s to research the phenomenon of athletes balancing sport with education or work, wherein the term "dual career" arose (Roderick & Kamperman, 2022). As discussed in Chapter 1, dual career is predominantly defined as athletes pursuing sport at the same time as education, and particularly higher education when considering athletes at the talent level and above. As such, most of the research and indeed the availability of existing structured support for dual career athletes centres around athletes in HE,

typically athletes at university. In this section, I examine how HE influences dual career definitions, environments, and culture.

8.2.1 Synonymity with education

There are varying definitions of "dual career" in the literature (e.g., Boboc et al., 2017; Wylleman et al., 2017) but it can generally be understood to describe athletes and systems where sport is combined with education or work. However, interviews with TASS staff and TASS practitioners reveal that the perception of dual career as only relating to athletes in education is perpetuated not only by dual career researchers but also by people currently working within the dual career space. When asked about the TASS organisation, one TASS staff member proclaimed, "Since we existed, TASS is synonymous with education". The same is true more widely with dual career athletes and systems being synonymous with education, as was apparent in TASS staff and TASS practitioner perceptions of the definition of dual career. TASS and its reputation can be seen as a poster child of the dual career pathway with their history of dual career support provision and recent dual career accreditation courses and programmes. One TASS practitioner stated, "Outside the university, nobody even knows what TASS is."

Before TASS existed as an organisation (founded in 2004), the term "dual career" was not commonly used in the UK. Instead, the term "student-athlete" was most commonly applied to athletes pursuing both sport and education, similar to vernacular in the US (NCAA, 2023). However, the term "student-athlete" did not hold much value in British sport spaces, as one TASS staffer explains when asked about the evolution of TASS from its beginnings:

> In the first instance, dual career didn't exist in this country. The term dual career didn't exist. There were student-athletes, and it was sort of like a dirty word. Not real athletes, you know what I mean. It wasn't really the way you went to be a real good athlete. And when we started, dual career was a service. We tried to sell it as a service.

So, dual career can be understood as both linked to education and as a service. Dual career is a service which is provided by organisations like TASS or universities that is based on assisting athletes in balancing their sporting pursuits with their academic pursuits. TASS, as the leading dual career support organisation in England, views their organisation as a dual career support *service*. Dual career as a service is not only common here in the UK, but also in Europe where there are many dual career support provision schemes and programmes (see EAS, 2023). Again, those dual career support schemes are also mostly tailored to support athletes in education and not athletes in work pathways. Important research has been done related to charting and categorising the types of dual career environments and support services structured within (Morris et. al, 2020; Storm et al., 2021). Aquilina and Henry (2010) have categorised European countries based on a national approach to supporting athletes in HE and classified the UK as having national sporting organisations that act on behalf of student-athletes to arrange support.

Presently, dual career is not just a type of athlete or a service in England, "it's our pathway", said one TASS staff interviewee. In England and in the wider UK, dual career has now been considered a part of the larger talent pathway and thus dual career has targeted support provision, research, and even university courses on the subject (Guidotti et al., 2015; University of Bath, 2013). As mentioned in Chapter 1, TASS has its own Dual Career Accreditation Scheme, which formally recognises the

commitment of further education and HE institutions to supporting talented athletes who are in full-time education (TASS, 2022). This scheme is separate from TASS' main scheme (examined in Chapter 7) of supporting athletes with TASS awards which provide access to support provision and a cash award.

The association of dual career as athletes in education influenced how support provision for dual career athletes was organised and structured. Perceiving dual career athletes as essentially student-athletes, TASS organised its support network through partnering with universities and further education colleges across England which had existing performance sport programmes. In the following section, I examine how the TASS network is layered onto university-organised dual career support provision.

8.2.2 Pre-existing student-athlete support structures and physical space overlap

TASS support services are essentially overlaid onto support structures (e.g., athlete scholarships and support provision) that already exist in HE for athletes at university. That is, TASS transposed themselves onto an existing operating network, seemingly by convenience or by design. In one interview, a TASS staff member and I discussed TASS delivery sites being located, predominantly, at universities:

> TASS staff member: *…*the history of TASS and the way that the delivery sites are typically.. well not typically, they *are* [emphasis given] university institutions.
>
> Question: That makes sense, structurally, to align with higher education because those structures already exist. You have institutions, you have facilities, you have people on the ground. Is it much easier to access the university network than it would be to access a network that is not interconnected or organised?

> TASS staff member: Yes. And on a political level, it's almost that's where TASS' niche is in that we are education and sport.

Another contributing factor is that 71% of indoor sports halls in England are owned by educational establishments (Sport England, 2023). In this way, athletes aspiring to progress onto the performance pathway may choose to take an education pathway to their dual career in order to access the best sport facilities, as can be seen in the experiences of athletes Julia and Eva in Chapter 6. Importantly, the best sport facilities sometimes create overlaps between dual career, HE, and high-performance sport environments. In the UK, there is an increasing trend of high-performance training centres being located at universities (see UK Sports Institute, 2023). As such, dual career environments also operate as high-performance environments by design, such as the University of Bath and Loughborough University operating as high-performance centres. For example, TASS delivery sites are sometimes situated as "hubs" for certain sports such as sailing (Southampton and Exeter) and athletics (Birmingham and Leeds Beckett), where some athletes are considered to be high-performance level. In this way, the physical environment is difficult to classify because multiple levels and types (e.g., dual career) of athletes train and compete at the same facility and on the same team.

TASS mirrors the HE environment specifically through physically locating all of their delivery sites at education institutions (36 are universities, 2 are further education colleges). There is one exception to this trend in that two other delivery sites exist outside of education institutions, but these are connected to the British Army programme. As documented in Chapter 1, the Army programme is separate from the

larger TASS scheme in that their athletes do not need to meet education criteria, they only need to be employed by the Army. This programme is outside the scope of this study as TASS-funded athletes were not the primary focus.

Recalling process stage 3 in Chapter 7, once selected, TASS athletes are directed to their designated TASS delivery site to access support services at these locations, utilising the facilities and TASS practitioners based there. It is important to note that most TASS practitioners are employed by athletes' respective universities with TASS providing additional support with those institutions. Naturally, TASS athletes often attend the same university with other dual career athletes who are not supported by TASS with whom they may sometimes train and receive support together (depending on the TASS delivery site).

During a site visit that I made to one TASS delivery site in the Midlands, a lifestyle practitioner noted that TASS "fits in nicely" with their setup and that scholar athletes (i.e., athletes on university scholarships) and TASS athletes "overlap harmoniously". This harmony indicates that many universities are already providing dual career athlete support with similar services to those provided by TASS. Larger universities with larger sport budgets, such as the one visited, are already providing their student-athletes with a network of support services (i.e., university sport departments, coaches, trainers, practitioners, facilities). This location is a prime example, with its professional quality facilities: an Olympic sized pool, several well-kept outdoor turf fields, and multi-level main sport complex. It is important to note, however, that not all universities in the TASS network have such budgets, facilities, or large numbers of performance level athletes.

To further showcase the physical links between TASS and HE institutions, I share below an excerpt from my field notes during my ethnography of TASS which gives a representation of the performance environment of the organisation. Here, I share my reflection notes from my first visit to TASS headquarters, which I believe to be a symbolic image of the enmeshment of TASS with university environments, culture, and norms.

> *My first visit to TASS headquarters began with a train journey from Durham to Newcastle. Upon arrival, I looked at directions to the office building and saw it was located on a university campus. Once I arrived at the red-brick building, I pushed the keypad on the wall to 'call' up to the TASS floor. After the buzzer signalled that the door was unlocked, I climbed the stairs up to the first floor of what I learned to be a university-owned building, shared with other organisations. TASS office windows look down onto a sidewalk below, full of students walking between campus and Newcastle city-centre.*
>
> *The TASS office has a 'sporty' vibe, with protein shake containers at some desks, TASS jackets on the back of chairs, and a mural on one wall with different sports shown within small tiles. The colours of the space are mostly blue, red, and white – TASS colours and TASS award levels (also national Team GB colours). TASS staff have uniformity in their work attire as well. TASS workplace 'gear' is TASS-branded attire, outfitted by Adidas (a Team GB sponsor), again in the colours blue, red, and white. TASS staff usually don a TASS shirt, either polo or dri-fit T-shirt style, with a pair of jeans and trainers or other shoes of choice. Dress is casual and 'sporty' but still uniform.*
>
> *My first experience attending a TASS team meeting showed me how entrenched they were in the university's physical space. A short walk from TASS headquarters, along the pedestrian-only path, sits an old university building that houses many classrooms and some academic offices where the team meeting was to be held. The TASS team and I ascended to the second floor and funnelled into an empty classroom. This room had been "booked" in the university system for TASS use. We sat down at desks facing a whiteboard and podium complete with a computer set up and a projector. During the meeting, people would sometimes stand at the front of the room and use the computer to present to the team. When I presented to the team, my presentation was essentially shown from a university owned computer, through a university*

owned projector, within a university owned classroom in a university owned building. I presented while standing behind a podium with the university name printed upon it. TASS operated out of the university like it was a member, like it belonged there. I too belonged there through my work and association with TASS itself.

Reflecting on my positionality as a researcher of TASS and PhD student, it was interesting to inhabit TASS spaces that overlapped with universities. Over the course of my research programme, I attended many TASS events, like research forums or best practice conferences, and almost all of them were held in university buildings. On these occasions, I always *belonged* in university settings as I was marked as a student and a researcher. In those environments, I felt very comfortable and welcomed either through my status as a student, my history as a former athlete, or my experience working in the sport sector. This experience was similarly felt by Ahmed (2007) when she studied the work of diversity practitioners in HE in Australia. Ahmed (2007: 243) reflected on her experience observing at one particular campus, "I am, of course, a visitor passing through, and not an inhabitant of the university. And yet, the university is also, for me, a familiar space, a space in which I am at home, even if each university provides a different kind of space". In my own fieldwork, I was an active researcher with a student status, but not necessarily a member of the universities that I visited for observation or events. However, I now recognise part of my experience of feeling welcomed and comfortable at every university campus may have been due to how I fit in with the majority demographic of the people around me – I am a white woman, and these spaces were filled by mostly white faces. After visiting and observing at the TASS office, TASS events, and TASS delivery sites, I would then transition back to my "home" university setting to type-up my notes from fieldwork (except for periods of closure due to Covid-19 regulations). When "home" or when at different universities, I

was always faced with the comfort of the university setting and its familiarness of physical space and cultural norms. Here, there was a "common culture" across university environments (Williams, 1958).

"Culture is ordinary" and TASS culture has normalised university spaces and practices as part of its ordinary operations (Williams, 1958). As seen above, the HE system dominates the TASS system and carries over many of its structures and procedures, both physical and operational. As such, many of the problems of HE systems are also carried over into dual career systems.

8.2.3 Institutional influences and cultural replications

The exclusive culture of British HE institutions have been heavily studied and reported through accounts of systemic racism and classism, barriers to accessing such institutions, and has been characterised as a "privileged space" (Bhopal, 2018; Pells, 2016; Weale, 2020). Although there are increases in HE enrolment rates across all social groups, the world's most prestigious HE institutions remain dominated by students from privileged family backgrounds (Marginson, 2016). Although sociologists of education and practitioners working to widen the access to HE, particularly for working-class students, have recognised the narrative of HE as a meritocracy, "time and time again it has been proved to work largely as a mechanism for the intergenerational reproduction of social elites" (Boliver, 2017: 427). Although these realities of inequalities within HE persist, the number of applications for enrolment in HE is rising creating an increasingly competitive environment. Watermeyer and Olssen (2016: 202) argue that the cost and consequence of the predominant competitive culture in HE is "an omnipresence of competitiveness that engenders repulsion,

division, discomfort and fear, far more than it might incentivize, harmonise and instil a sense of belonging."

With dual career sport environments being woven into existing HE environments, HE's competitive and exclusive culture is carried over into dual career spaces. Perhaps the same as with HE, there is an "unspoken system of exclusion" (see Bhopal, 2022) at work in dual career spaces through the same, or similar, practices. Both environments – HE and dual career – are known for their "exclusivity" which is seen as a positive trait because only the best are given the limited spots available. Of course, entry requirements for both spaces are also, in part, created to ensure that students/athletes can attain the rigor of their academic or sport level. As such, this exclusivity based on performance level is often considered to be an admirable quality in HE and inspires even those who are aware of the systemic negatives that come along with it (e.g., systematic racism, classism). Bhopal's (2022) study of academics of colour at elite universities found that many of her interviewees were drawn to such institutions because of the privilege that comes from being associated with such prestigious institutions. One African American professor in the study expressed this below:

> That feeling of always wanting to be part of the elite and if you are part of it you have a legitimate entitlement to it. It's an exclusive group that deep down everyone wants to be a member of. All my friends envy my position because it's a name and that name is exclusive (Bhopal, 2022: 2133).

Dual career environments mirror this exclusivity through its structural links with talent and performance pathways, the competitive nature of the TASS nomination process, and the limited number of TASS awards available. Due to the limited number of athlete spots, due to funding limits, being a "TASS athlete" is an exclusive title. But some

TASS staff members questioned if the nominations should be so exclusive, as one said:

> If we look at TASS, it's a scholarship scheme to which athletes are nominated for. In its entirety athletes are excluded. So, we know that out of the 1,500 athletes [in the talent pathway] who are there, we are excluding 900 of them.

The interviewee spoke to such exclusion as being based not only on talent, which he saw as a "natural barrier", but also based on TASS education criteria. As seen in Chapter 7, the education criteria is often narrowly interpreted by NGBs nominating athletes to the scheme, resulting in most nominated athletes being at or going into university, as opposed to other learning programmes. These criteria, and their misinterpretation "might even put up an unintentional barrier for certain groups that might not have ever thought they'd set foot on university campuses," as one TASS staffer explained. The misinterpretation of TASS education criteria therefore creates an added financial barrier that is associated with HE. Financial barriers to British HE have been exacerbated by rising tuition fees and the current unfolding cost-of-living crisis in the UK, where students from under-represented groups are the hardest hit financially (Adams, 2022). In this way, the TASS athlete education criteria and its misinterpretations mirror the inaccessibility of HE in that access is dependent upon financial resources.

Not only is exclusivity about a limited number of spots but it is also related to the demographic makeup of both the HE and dual career systems. Known for its whiteness, HE in the UK has been routinely critiqued in research (Pilkington, 2014; Arday & Mirza, 2018) and in the public sphere (Beltaji & Lewis, 2021; Okolosie, 2019) for its lack of diversity and exclusive practices. Dual career spaces, as we see through

examining TASS, also replicate similar trends in diversity, or lack thereof. For example, when asked about diversity within the TASS staff cohort, one interviewee said:

> I think you know that our TASS team is not diverse at all in the office… We are all so similar… we've all got such a similar background in terms of we we've all either been an athlete or play a sport to a pretty high-level, bar a few exceptions. We're all, you know, in terms of race the same. We're all pretty similar backgrounds, in terms of socio-economic backgrounds. Like it is not diverse at all, which is a problem. You know, I think that needs to be looked at just in terms of how we operate as a team and brainstorming and input because we're all from the same experiences.

Here, the similar backgrounds of TASS staff are seen as a potential issue in that there may be limited diversity of perspective. This trend is similar when it comes to the practitioners who work with TASS athletes. TASS practitioners, as a reminder, work across the fields of strength and conditioning, performance lifestyle, psychology, physiology, and nutrition. These practitioners are predominantly employed by the universities involved with the scheme (e.g., universities serve as TASS delivery sites) and therefore support other student-athletes alongside TASS athletes located at that university. This group of practitioners is particularly homogenous in that there is a lack of racial diversity within the group. Out of the 37 lead personnel at TASS delivery sites in 2021, only one was Black and there were only a handful of non-white practitioners across the entire TASS network. When asked why this may be the case, two respondents pointed to the "lack of role models" in the practitioner network who are non-white. Across the types of support provision, the field of strength and conditioning was most often brought up for having the most homogeneity. In discussion about the prevalence of "white faces" in strength and conditioning, one TASS staff member claimed that "you could say that about all our practitioners." TASS staff and TASS

practitioners themselves shared in interviews that strength and conditioning “is very dominated by white middle-aged men.” One TASS staff member quoted that out of 900 accredited strength and conditioning members with UKSCA (the professional body for strength and conditioning practitioners in the UK) “only 7% of those are female.” TASS staff and TASS practitioners noted that this lack of diversity related to racial and gender representation was concerning, especially related to dual career athletes lacking diverse role models to look to in sport professions that may be of interest after completing their sporting careers. In sum, the dual career support practitioner cohort has a clear norm when it comes to gender and ethnicity, struggling especially with pervasive whiteness.

Just as dual career environments are influenced by the culture of HE, they are also influenced by the spill over of exclusive culture from the high-performance sport culture that they exist within due to their positioning in the talent pathway. Next, I examine such cultural and structural influences from the high-performance sport sector.

8.3 High-performance sport influences and replications

As expanded above, England’s primary dual career pathway (i.e. TASS) is naturally enmeshed with the culture of HE through its structured networks, culture of excellence, and physical spaces. Here, I present data to argue that the dual career pathway is also linked with, shaped by, and mirrors the culture of high-performance sport. Due to its place within and along England’s talent and performance pathway, the culture of the dual career pathway is heavily influenced by the culture, or “lived practices, belief systems, and institutions” (Hall, 1980: 23), of the high-performance sport space. Using

Kendall and Wickham's (2001) understanding of culture as *ordering*, or attempts at control or management, this section examines how dual career culture reflects the often-exclusive culture of high-performance sport. Through examining multiple orderings of both TASS and the high-performance pathway, the character and behaviour of power in these cultures can be tracked.

8.3.1 Situating high-performance sport culture

MacAloon (1981) reports that Pierre de Coubertin, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) founder, tirelessly wrote and spoke of competitive sport as a meritocracy in which neither inherited privilege nor wealth was to determine people's success in life, but that success instead came from talent and personal effort. Loland (2007) calls this view a "purist" interpretation of justice in sport. This purist approach to sport provides the roots of the meritocracy and fairness ideologies commonly held within sport cultures, seeing sport as a "level playing field" that most other social settings wish they could be (St Louis, 2004). While this view of sport is popular, most TASS staff and practitioners interviewed admitted that in practice this is not the case. In the words one TASS staff member:

> I would say that sport, in theory, should be the ultimate meritocracy and if you're talented and you're good enough, you get to the top. Unfortunately, it doesn't quite work like that.

Later in the interview, the same interviewee discussed barriers that exist within the talent pathway:

> TASS staff member: It's probably a question that we could debate for ages, is 'Can an elite or talented sport ever be truly inclusive?' And what I kind of mean

> by that is: there's going to be some barrier to entry at some point. And I hope that that's because you're either good enough as an athlete or not. As opposed to because you're rich enough or you're from this area or whatever it might be. So, I think from that respect, dual career systems, to some extent, are going to have some natural barrier that is sporting talent. But it's making sure that that's the only barrier, is the challenge. And to create an environment where individuals can succeed and that being the only limiting factor.
>
> Question: If performance and skill were the only barriers then that would be ideal?
>
> TASS staff member: Yeah. But we're a long, long way away from that situation at the moment… as we've already discussed.
>
> Question: It's because it starts with the ground, right? If you don't have access at the ground level, it's not an equal rise to the top?
>
> TASS staff member: Yeah. And if you don't have the resources when you're halfway along that pathway, you have to jump off… or you're pushed off potentially. That's the problem.

The staff member above indicates that "natural" barriers to sport do exist, as one must have sporting talent or ability to climb up the pathway. But he also stipulated that these are not the only barriers, as there are inequalities related to early access to sport and access to resources along the pathway, amongst others. Sport, and indeed dual career pathways in sport, is naturally exclusive due to sporting ability but also unnaturally exclusive due to other factors within the pathway (as this thesis explores).

Far from a meritocracy, sport scholars have opined that sport can be viewed as a "microcosm of society" which thus reflects existing wider inequalities in society (Boxill, 2003; Eitzen, 2015). However, critical sport studies have also revealed that sport is actively, not passively, involved in "producing, reproducing, sustaining and indeed, acting as a site for resistance" of such inequalities (Dashper & Fletcher, 2013: 1227). Therefore, high-performance sport and dual career sport are actively creating or sustaining barriers and inequalities within the sport sector, thus fostering an

exclusive culture. Here, I argue that the dual career sporting pathway's ability to actively produce or reproduce exclusive culture is in part due to the influence of the high-performance sport space. In this section, I outline how dual career sport culture mirrors that of high-performance sport culture through the following orderings: i) national funding structures, ii) paths of power, and iii) cultural influences. I conclude the section with a discussion of how such cultural influences, especially funding structures and paths of power, affect the activation of inclusion initiatives within England's dual career system.

8.3.2 Nationalistic funding structures

Foucault (1977, 1983) views an institution as a function or result of power, and that power flows through, not arises from, institutions. Institutions are then accumulations of various power relations. One technique of power is the allocation of resources, particularly financial, to institutions. In the context of TASS, due to its placement within England's talent pathway (Chapter 2.2.1), it is tied to nationalistic funding structures (Chapter 3.1) and thus receives its funding from those operating in the high-performance space.

The "ordering" – attempts at control or management (Kendall & Wickham, 2001) – of performance sport funding, as it relates to TASS, is as follows: DCMS funds Sport England who funds SportsAid, who then fund TASS. As one TASS staffer described, TASS is "a Sport England-based scheme," revealing that while the money flows through the arm of SportsAid, it is known to originate from Sport England and thus TASS looks to Sport England for direction and leadership. As such, funding is directed top-down and linked to structures of power. Sport England use a technology of power,

funding, to give TASS the remit and responsibility of supporting talented athletes in education to achieve its own interests or main “ordering projects” (Kendall & Wickham, 2001) of winning medals for England and progressing athletes from their talent pathway into the performance pathway.

Top-down economic investments can also push government-driven initiatives like those of diversity and inclusion. In the context of TASS and their shift towards supporting “softer skills” in their practitioner development provision, one TASS staffer said, “Inclusion and diversity are a driving force for us because we want to make change in that space, especially if you look at Sport England strategies”. TASS have taken on inclusion as an initiative because they see Sport England focusing on inclusion in their strategies (e.g., Sport England, 2019b; Sport England & UK Sport, 2019).

Reflecting again on a Foucauldian interpretation regarding processes by which power may be normalised, power may be considered to flow from Sport England through the TASS institution due a perception on Sport England’s part that TASS holds knowledge as to how to leverage dual career support to win medals. In turn, as an “apparatus” (Foucault, 1983) of high-performance sport power, TASS as an institution drives ordering projects related to the strategic aims of Sport England and UK Sport, at the top of the high-performance pathway.

For example, TASS has a primary ordering project to support talented athletes in England who balance sport with education (i.e., dual career athletes in the education pathway). Ordering projects may have strategic aims, as is characteristic of the processes of Foucault’s (1977) “normalising power”, but they also relate and overlap with other ordering projects. By this I mean that strategic projects often connect with

each other and are dependent on the processes of the other. To manage their support of dual career athletes as their main project, TASS decides *how* those talented athletes will be supported, which is then related to how talent is identified and thus *who* is talented. TASS could not operate if there was not already an ordering within the talent pathway which constructs how we identify who is talented. Talent identification (an ordering project of the high-performance sport sector) is based on “talent” being related to questions of who has the potential to win medals, to serve the strategic aim of British sport: winning medals. Additionally, TASS alongside NGBs determine how talented athletes are supported because they are given the funding to do so based on their collective knowledge of how to win medals. Proving such knowledge, TASS athletes have won Olympic and Paralympic medals, as celebrated within promotional documents (Doc. 2), feeding the high-performance sport medal drive and helping to secure TASS’ position in the high-performance institutional structure and culture.

Next, I consider how power, and the paths power takes, affects the culture of the dual career pathway and the operations of the TASS organisation.

8.3.3 Paths of Power

In this section, I seek to understand how power flows in relational ways (Hargreaves, 1986) through high-performance sport institutions towards TASS, how power drives and influences “ordering projects” (Kendall & Wickham, 2001) and how power from the top of the pathway influences the culture (namely the processes and practices) of dual career spaces. Through Foucault’s (1980) theorisations of power and knowledge, underpinned by the view that power dictates the terms of knowledge and that power produces knowledge, it is important to consider who the meaning-makers are in the

construction of what is knowledge and the determination of who holds such knowledge. To do so, I first draw from feminist cultural studies scholar Rowbotham (1973), who posited that all conceptions of female nature are formed in cultures dominated by men. When applying this perspective to the context of dual career sport spaces and high-performance sport in general, conceptions around what constitutes "talent" as well as conceptions or indeed knowledge around how to win medals have been formed and controlled by high-performance sport institutions (such as NGBs, UK Sport) which have historically and predominantly been led by white males (Piggott & Matthews, 2020).

One TASS staff member claimed that this is especially true in sport leadership across the talent pathway (dual career and high-performance level):

> Typically, in this country… when I go into a conference environment or meeting environment or situation… it's very rare that I, being in the white male category, am not part of the majority. [Although] I think, sport is getting better in terms of gender, particularly in sort of the management and the operations of governing bodies and sport. An example, that the last two CEOs for UK Sport have both been women, which is great. And Sport England previously had a female as well. But it's very white if we're being blunt and honest about it. And it really struck me at the Talent launch, or the launch of the Sport England Talent strategy. And they had a big hotel in London, a big conference space that had the stage. But you look around at all of the delegates, and it was relatively… I wouldn't say it's at 50:50, but it's a pretty good gender balance split, but it was very white. And I think sport in the UK is still like that in terms of the people that work within it.

Being a white male himself, the TASS staff member said he has never felt excluded in that space. Regarding the perception of sport leadership, he then said, "I would struggle to say that it's a fully diverse leadership group" and applied this to his observation and experience working on European sport groups.

One of the factors that has reinforced male hierarchies is arguably that dominant cultures are formed from lived experience. Williams (1977) argues that dominant culture must be formed from lived experience in order to effectively hold power in sense-making. Thus, those that hold power do so through the sense-making, or meaning-making, of knowledge that is valued in a culture. Through conversations with TASS staff and TASS practitioners, I repeatedly found evidence that, within the dual career pathway and England's high-performance pathway, the highest value is placed on performance results (i.e., winning medals) to feed national pride. As such, power is maintained by groups and individuals who have (lived) experience of winning medals or have proven knowledge (results) of how to win medals. Such knowledge enables those in power – institutions (e.g., Sport England) and individual professionals (e.g., board members, talent leads) within the sport sector – to continue holding power. Evidence of power hinging on the knowledge of how to win medals can be found in my field notes from a day of observing in the TASS office:

Today while working at an open desk, I overheard a conversation between two TASS staffers – about 'inclusion' and a recent meeting with Sport England. As they became aware of my presence, one TASS staffer began conversing with me to clarify what was being said. I was told that Sport England was in the midst of a 'big debate' around talent identification needing to be more inclusive. Apparently, one board member said it was currently a 'racist system' and suggested that they need to 'start from scratch' and replace the current talent leads with new people in order to truly take action on inclusion. This idea was met with much disagreement and the board member was referred to as 'a zealot'. Apparently many leaders feared that if those talent leads were replaced, there was a risk that new staff might not have the knowledge of winning medals and thus might lead to organisations being at risk of not meeting performance targets tied to funding. The biggest fear was that funding might be lost.

Instead of entertaining the staff replacement approach, Sport England evidently wants to bring current leaders 'on a journey' toward inclusion because their lived experience is valued (re: performance is important). I was then told that the debate was ongoing. To my knowledge, there was no culling of staff, and the talent leads in question maintained their positions.

This example showcases how sport leaders often see inclusion efforts as being in tension with the performance drive. This is not a new phenomenon within British sport, as scholars of sport policy and development have long researched distinct views of sport development for community welfare and, alternatively, the perception of sport development "as a synonym for talent identification and elite development" (Houlihan & White, 2002: 24; Green, 2006). Sport policy studies highlight the "Sport for All" campaign of the 1970s, and its corresponding future iterations such as *A sporting future for all* (DCMS, 2002), as in contention with the no-compromise funding policies (UK Sport, 2006) in place within British high-performance sport today (Kamperman & Rankin-Wright, 2022).

8.3.4 Cultural influences – replicating an exclusive culture

Exclusionary environments are common in British elite sport, as seen with allegations of cultures of intimidation and bullying (Grey-Thompson, 2017; Phelps et. al, 2017), athlete abuse (Scott, 2020), racism (Sky News, 2023), and sexism (The Guardian, 2023). Furthermore, as UK Sport's (2018: 14) *Culture Health Check* stated that there is an urgent "need to address unacceptable behaviour in the high-performance system". Being situated within the talent pathway of English sport, TASS and the dual career pathway are heavily influenced by the nature and culture of the greater high-performance pathway (see Figure 1 above) in a manner that I argue represents normalisation. Foucault (1977) argues that normalisation is a strongly path-dependent process that operates in a top-down way and aims to subsume others into its logic and strategic aims. As such, the cultures of high-performance sport spaces spill over into

and influence dual career spaces. Here, the power structures of the dominant culture at high-performance level influences the rest of the sport sector from the top-down.

Further exploring experiences or observations of exclusive behaviours and cultures, multiple interview participants shared accounts of witnessing such behaviour within high-performance spaces specifically. One TASS staff member with previous experience working as a practitioner in the high-performance pathway of an Olympic sport, at the time supporting a small number of dual career athletes, shared an account of the medal-focused culture of the men's team during that time:

> TASS staff member: Look, your only problem is the chief men's coach... and you know he's immensely successful, unbelievably successful at delivering gold medals... Providing you fit the bill. [stares and pauses] You know? The best way to describe his programme is that it's a wheel that just keeps on turning and if you can keep running, you might get somewhere. The problem with it is that if you can keep running, and everybody wants to keep running, because if you can get on his [team] you're pretty much guaranteed a gold medal. Simple. And it spits out a lot of people along the way…
>
> Question: Is it a machine?
>
> TASS staff member: Yeah. That is *not* [emphasis given] an inclusive experience. But the reward is too high.

When asked if this behaviour was "typical of high-performance coaches" in general, the TASS staff member confirmed it was "unfortunately" typical. Again, poor behaviour has been normalised as the standard within high-performance sport spaces. The TASS staff member stated that he hopes the win at all costs trend in coaching is changing – "I think that is a generational thing". If new generations are to break the mould, it may be some time yet for change to occur as many leaders in sport can maintain their positions for decades. The same interviewee, when discussing a contact

he has in an Olympic sport, “you know, as is typical of most of them, [he’s] been there for 20 odd years.”

Changes in leadership might also be difficult due to the politics within the leadership level of the high-performance sport space. One TASS staff member in the dual career pathway, reflected on his experience of being excluded in talent pathway meetings (with dual career and high-performance stakeholders) due to his point of view:

> TASS staff member: Because sport… if you take away performance and actually get into sports management, politics, stuff like that -- it's a very political thing. And politics is whether you either agree or disagree. And if you disagree and you lose, you’re excluded. You know what I mean? You’re not part of it. It's the very nature of sport, that it’s an environment where it’s run a certain way, and it can be run 72 different ways. You’re either part of it or you’re not part of it.
>
> Question: What happens when you are ‘excluded’? What does that look like?
>
> TASS staff member: Well, you just don't get invited to meetings, your voice isn't... your opinion isn't sought or anything like that. But it's not because of... who I am, it’s because of what I might believe. You know? Not even believe, but what I would think would be the best option. I would say – yeah, I was excluded from that because I don't agree with what they do, and I said I didn't. Do you know what I mean? Therefore, I’m not part of it… And it's the environment you're in. It's kind of like – well it doesn't matter who you are, if you don't agree with them, they’re not gonna include you.

The above interviewee’s experience of exclusion, while also being a member of the majority demographic of sport leadership (white, male, middle-aged), indicates that sameness of identity characteristics is not the only homogeneous characteristic of talent pathway leadership, so too is point of view or shared assumptions of how things should be done. This is consistent with organisational culture studies which showcase that leaders help to shape values, behaviours, and ways of doing things

which in turn produce cultural norms of the organisation (Feddersen et al., 2020; Schein, 2010). Organisational culture studies also indicate that high-performance cultures are characterised by being unified and robust (Henriksen, 2015) often through integration mechanisms which teach members an agreed upon set of appropriate behaviour (Schein, 2010). It is not surprising that this individual had this experience, as Gibson and Groom (2018) argue that contradictory beliefs can create conflict.

The TASS staff member made a point to stress that he was excluded because of his thoughts, not because of his background. When only one dominant perspective is accepted or indeed included, strategic initiatives are directed in one way and can lead to work, specifically diversity and inclusion work, getting “stuck” (Ahmed, 2007, 2012). This issue is explored in the following section including discussions of how issues of remit and responsibility influence the effectiveness of inclusion initiatives in dual career sport systems.

8.4 Remit, responsibility, and blame

As dual career environments overlap physically and culturally with the environment of HE and high-performance sport, there is confusion around who is in control of these environments and who is responsible for inclusion efforts. Recalling findings from Chapter 6, dual career athletes can get caught up in the overlap between different types of environments. Organisations and individuals working in such environments are also caught up in the overlap, but due to their positioning these enmeshments create tensions around the remit of each organisation. Here, I expand on such tensions and challenges of doing inclusion work when multiple parties are involved in the management and oversight of dual career environments.

During data collection, I attended a TASS team call in which Sport England's (2018) updated talent action plan was discussed. One TASS staffer shared that Sport England told the organisations they fund that they need to make inclusion efforts, but no detail was provided. When speaking with a different member of TASS in an interview, I asked him about this call and whether Sport England gave any input around what they meant by "inclusion efforts". I asked if inclusion was still a "nebulous space", to which the member of TASS replied:

> Yes, it's a good description of it, I think, that nebulous space. And we had, four years ago at the start of this previous cycle, we were discussing like KPIs for Sport England, one of the ones they wanted to put in was around sort of demographic breakdowns to ensure that we had X percentage of athletes from different categories. But we sort of went back to them, and challenged them on that because we're like- well, we could do this, but the only real… because we don't pick the athletes that we work with… For us to affect that would mean putting quotas on sports or saying that... we could artificially manipulate that by awarding more awards towards those sports that might satisfy those demographics and fewer in a sport that are more traditionally, I suppose, more white and middle-class or whatever it might be.
>
> So, we challenged them on that and asked them how they wanted us to do it. In the end, they didn't really come back with anything of real merit. What we decided was that we agreed that we would continue to monitor and report on those demographics, but not be held accountable for them. And essentially, I think, what Sport England were trying to do with that was to use TASS as a bit of a barometer of the system. And see... if we're working with the same sports over a period of time, and there's movement in those demographics over that four-year period, that's of interest. Or if there's no movement, that's obviously of interest too, and maybe suggesting that some of the strategies aren't working. So, TASS at the moment, has more of a role, I suppose, as that sort of barometer of the sector more than affecting the change.
>
> In the next cycle, I think we need to readdress that and work better with Sport England to maybe demonstrate ways that we could support lower down the pathway with some of those initiatives and programs. But yeah, currently that's not in our remit.

In addition to rebuffing attempts to be a “barometer” for diversity in England’s talent pathway, TASS staff eschewed responsibility for the demographic makeup of their funded athlete cohort, as they pointed the blame towards NGBs. Reflecting on the athlete nomination process (Chapter 7.2), TASS staff pointed to NGBs as having more control over the types of athletes who are selected onto TASS. One staffer proclaimed, “We can only work with what we’ve got,” indicating that TASS staff feel they cannot do much around inclusion once athletes have been selected by NGBs. Due to this positioning, TASS does not appear to want the direct responsibility, and the corresponding potential blame, if and when it is determined that the talent pool is lacking in certain diversity metrics. Blame is very interlinked with inclusion work, largely due to the conflation of inclusion and exclusion. That is, inclusion work often suggests issues of exclusion which “gets people’s backs up”, as one TASS staffer noted.

Questions of responsibility and blame are influenced by “mission creep”, a term mentioned by a TASS staff member, and defined as relating to organisations stepping out of their remit to try to influence other organisations that sit above or below them in the talent pathway. While other interpretations of the phrase “mission creep” may exist, I centre the way that TASS staff defined it. “Mission creep” was explained to have a negative connotation, as TASS staff indicated that the culture of the high-performance pathway upholds a “stay in your lane” approach to remit. However, I found that TASS staff commit “mission creep” through hidden means, that is the second and third dimension of power (Lukes, 1974), to try to influence other organisations or individuals into taking up inclusion efforts themselves. As seen above in section 6.2.2, TASS staff act in the second dimension of power to try to influence NGBs into adjusting their

athlete nomination patterns, in order to diversify the athlete cohort. However, these attempts fail. And as discussed in 7.1.2, TASS staff act in the third dimension of power through offering inclusion-themed workshops to TASS practitioners thereby attempting to influence practitioners into valuing inclusion, and, eventually have those practitioners influence the culture of dual career environments with inclusive practice.

While TASS staff attempt to influence TASS practitioners in such ways, TASS practitioners themselves shared within interviews that they struggled with situating their own work in relation to the recent top-down inclusion initiatives (e.g., UK Sport, 2021a; Sport England 2018). One TASS practitioner shared his challenges, below:

> Overall, I think it needs some clarity. Inclusion is very fluffy and performance stuff is fluffy… I think it needs to be something a bit more central[ly driven] because otherwise… if we are all tasked with increasing inclusion, that will look very very different. If no one is driving you from the top somewhere, we will be doing different things which is fine. But do you create a movement, so to speak?
>
> It has to be strategic, it has to be a conscious decision to advocate [inclusion]. What is this and what does it look like for this university or institution? It's a bit too subjective at the moment. My biggest challenge is if someone said, 'Okay we need to improve stuff'. I just wouldn't know where to start.

Here, the practitioner is looking for clear direction from a central and consistent source as to how he can do his part in making dual career environments more inclusive. With the current existence of top-down directives (e.g., Sport England, 2018), such directives are ineffective and unclear for individuals working within dual career and talent environments. Although individuals, or indeed organisations (i.e., TASS) have good intentions and aspirations to influence dual career environments to be more inclusive, these efforts brush up against the larger constraints of remit and control within such spaces.

8.5 Conclusion

Findings within this chapter reveal that a main challenge of doing inclusion work in dual career sport systems lies in questions of remit and responsibility, questions which also elicit caution around who is to blame if such responsibility is clarified. The data also point to the lack of effectiveness of vague top-down inclusion directives and the going up against of individual efforts around inclusion. As indicated above, commitments to inclusion are often personal on behalf of individuals, rather than being embedded structurally (e.g., in relation to policy statements). The consequence is that those personal commitments are very hard to enact when coming up against wider cultures and structures that mitigate against inclusion, and power not being available or used (the latter by Sport England) to clarify and push inclusion agendas.

This thesis concludes with the following Chapter 9, which contains a general discussion of findings from this thesis and concluding thoughts. Key findings are summarised and expanded by highlighting the usefulness of my theoretical concepts and approaches. I also outline my contributions to conceptualisations of inclusion and exclusion in sport, dual career literature and knowledge, theoretical contributions, applied recommendations for the TASS organisation, and recommendations for future research and for changes to existing dual career systems to progress towards a more inclusive design and culture.

9. Chapter Nine: Conclusions

This thesis presents a first analysis of the English dual career system which draws upon data from both athletes and from within sporting organisations to present a culturally informed analysis. In this concluding chapter, I revisit my research questions to highlight the main ideas and concerns that underpin this programme of research while sharing how the research focus evolved over time. I then reiterate and expand the key findings from my thesis related to athlete experiences of exclusion in British dual career pathways, power and procedure in the TASS athlete nomination process, and the mechanisms of exclusion in English dual career systems. Next, I discuss the contributions to knowledge relating to the conceptualisations of inclusion and exclusion and the theoretical contributions to dual career literature and knowledge through my use of ordering and self-ordering. Limitations of this research programme are also considered. I then critically reflect on my positionality: how it has evolved over the course of this research and how it has influenced my research. Following these reflections are applied implications for the TASS organisation and recommendations for future research into dual career systems. Finally, I end this doctoral thesis with my concluding thoughts.

9.1 Revisiting the research questions

In Chapter 1, I introduced the context of my research inquiry into inclusion and exclusion in dual career sporting pathways and systems and outlined the common perceptions and my working definitions of the terms “dual career” and “inclusion”. Recognising the lack of clarity around both terms, and particularly the limited perception of dual career as pertaining only to athletes in education, I endeavoured to

expand understanding of and clarity around both terms through designing my research towards these aims. In Chapter 2, I identified gaps in existing dual career literature, namely that: dual career athletes' experiences of inclusion or exclusion are unexplored, that dual career athletes who pursue sport and work (i.e., work pathways) are seldom mentioned, and that unfunded dual career athletes are rarely included in dual career research. I argue that due to the limited perception of what constitutes "dual career", non-traditional dual career routes like work pathways are overlooked in research and thus athlete experiences within those routes are largely unacknowledged. In response to these initial findings from my literature review, I developed the following research questions:

1. Who is included in and excluded from dual career systems?
2. How do dual career systems include and exclude athletes?
3. How can British dual career systems be more inclusive?

While analysing my data across the two studies – Study 1 'The System' and Study 2 'Athlete Voice' – and my overarching ethnography, answering this second research question evolved into identifying and analysing the mechanisms of exclusion that exist within dual career systems and my findings speak to structural and cultural mechanisms of exclusion. My research questions became:

1. How do unfunded dual career athletes experience exclusion in British dual career pathways?

2. What mechanisms of exclusion are at play in the English dual career system that are particularly associated with TASS?

Reflecting on this research journey and its evolution, I recall my personal statement from my application to this PhD studentship, which ended with the following sentence: “I look forward to the opportunity to pursue this vital research so that dual career athletes in the UK can be better understood, supported, and included.” As such, I expand upon my recommendations for what could be changed to make dual career systems more inclusive below in section 9.6.2.

9.2 Key findings

This section extends and summarises key findings across my PhD programme of work. As I collected and analysed my data, I recognised that there were multiple factors that contributed to inclusion and exclusion and that these were usually structural, cultural, or interpersonal factors. These findings are explored below.

9.2.1 Key Finding 1: A diversity of dual or multi-career pathways exist

My research identified that athlete participants took different routes, or pathways, to their dual careers, which I organised into three types of dual career pathways: education, work, and multi-career. The first two categories were constructed from existing dual career literature that defines dual career as the combination of education or work/vocation, while I created the third category of “multi-career” to distinguish athletes who were concurrently pursuing three or more careers. This third pathway is

a new finding in that there is a dearth of existing literature that considers such dual career routes. While there are limited mentions to "triple career" (see Vickers, 2018), this terminology is not widely used within dual career literature and athletes undertaking more than two careers are typically unacknowledged in the research. Furthermore, there is not one singular multi-career pathway, or indeed other types of pathways, as there are different individual approaches to taking such pathways. For example, some athletes combine sport with education *and* work while others may combine sport with two different working jobs (see Chapter 6). Within these three types of pathways, athletes reported experiences of exclusion related to structural barriers to organised support and personal experiences of exclusive treatment from coaches and teammates in their dual career environments. These experiences of exclusion are reiterated below.

9.2.2 Key Finding 2: Structural and interpersonal exclusion are evident and contribute to harmful outcomes

A core finding from the thesis is that some dual career athletes are overlooked or excluded from organised support due to: i) taking non-traditional dual career pathways, ii) being "unknown" to their sport systems (NGBs), or iii) being differentiated by financial or cultural factors. These factors sometimes interlink as athletes who were "unknown" to their sport systems often took non-traditional dual career pathways. I found that athletes experienced exclusion in both structural and interpersonal ways.

Instances of structural exclusion hinged on limited funding and the specificity of funding remits. As there is limited funding and parameters around how such funding is used, unfunded athletes were often unable to access support provision (e.g., access

to sport practitioners) due to those resources being earmarked only for “funded” athletes. I found that some athletes experienced repeated denials to accessing performance lifestyle or psychology support when they asked for such support at crisis moments in their dual careers (i.e., struggles with mental health and dual career balance). In these instances, “the excuse was always funding” as to why they could not access such support. Athletes experiencing such denial of support claimed that coaches and staff in their environments lacked “human connection” as they did not offer any solutions or provide any assistance in supporting their expressed needs. Furthermore, athletes expressed the challenges of being “unknown” to their sport NGB and to coaches in their talent pathways. Late entry athletes or athletes taking dual career pathways outside of HE felt that key stakeholders in their sports were unaware of them and thus this contributed to their lack of funding opportunities and experiences of being denied support.

My findings also indicate the prevalence of interpersonal exclusion within British dual career pathways. The term interpersonal relates to relationships or communication between people, in this case between dual career athletes and their coaches and teammates. Recently, there has been a surge in sport psychology research around interpersonal processes related to athletes’ emotions and emotion regulation (Tamminen, Wolf, Dunn, & Bissett, 2022). Notably, some studies consider the interpersonal relationships of LGBTQ+ athletes and experiences of discrimination (e.g., Herrick, Moisan, & Duncan, 2023). My findings add to this literature in that I extend athlete experiences of interpersonal relationships involving differences of financial and cultural background.

Findings also indicated that unfunded athletes experienced poor behaviour and mistreatment from coaches and teammates in their dual career environments. Unfunded athletes reported clear differences in their treatment from coaches compared to their funded peers, namely that they experienced degrading conversations, neglect, and the denial of access to essential support services when they requested help. Here it was evident that unfunded athletes carried a connotation or perception that their “unfunded” status correlated to lesser value compared to their funded teammates.

Additionally, when athletes had different cultural backgrounds from the majority of their teammates, they were made to feel unwelcome. For instance, international athletes reported being mocked by coaches and teammates for their difference of language and accent. These language differences also linked to further exclusion in that coaches did not make efforts to clearly explain training exercises thus affecting the athletic performance of international athletes which sometimes contributed to consequences relating to selection for competition teams. These experiences of interpersonal exclusion lead to negative outcomes related to athlete wellbeing (e.g., mental health and motivation) and declining athletic performance. Here, it is apparent that there exists an exclusive culture within dual career pathways where athletes who have financial or cultural differences are treated poorly compared to athletes who are funded or who are of the dominant cultural background (i.e., nationality). This is consistent with recent reports of exclusive cultures across numerous British sports including gymnastics (Whyte, 2022), cricket (Sky Sports, 2023), rugby (The Guardian, 2023), and across multiple UK Sport-funded organisations (Scott, 2020).

In sum, my findings indicate an important and striking pattern amongst unfunded and non-traditional pathway dual and multi-career athletes: that athlete experiences of exclusion from organised support and of exclusive treatment within dual career environments lead to harmful outcomes. Athletes overwhelmingly experienced mental health challenges due to these experiences of structural and interpersonal exclusion, especially drops in their self-confidence and self-worth. Athletes also developed unhealthy and inefficient coping habits when trying to self-order their dual careers without organised support. Such coping habits included overtraining, often through additional self-directed exercise, and undereating, as some athletes believed that lighter athletes were faster due to comments from coaches. These attempts at self-ordering, especially self-ordering by the individual in isolation from any organisational support, had negative affects on athletes' physical health, some of which developed into long-term health issues.

9.2.3 Key Finding 3: Power relations and limited power constrain TASS' attempts to enact inclusion

As the leading dual career support institution in England, TASS operate within a strict remit: supporting talented athletes in education. This remit is reflected within the athlete eligibility criteria, particularly in the education criteria, for selection onto the TASS programme. During my research programme, the education criteria were identified by myself and TASS staff as an exclusionary barrier to accessing TASS support. The TASS organisation then made attempts to extend their remit of athletes in education by including different "types of learning" programmes that meet education criteria requirements. These efforts were made through attempts at operating in the

second dimension of power (Lukes, 1974) to influence the actions of NGBs who are in control of athlete nominations. However, these attempts failed as most NGBs (mis)interpret the education criteria to only apply to athletes at university, largely due to the dominant perceptions of dual career as pertaining to athletes in HE and due to the structural design of TASS support provision being delivered at FE and HE institutions. Furthermore, the TASS organisation lacks influential power due to its situated position within the larger English talent and high-performance pathways and governance structures. In sum, while TASS have good intentions and make attempts to influence their own internal processes to include a broader cohort of athletes, they are constrained by existing power relations and hierarchal governance structures that prevent them from achieving these intentions.

9.2.4 Key Finding 4: Existing at the intersection of higher education and high-performance sport, the English dual career system reflects similar barriers, inequalities, and exclusionary cultures.

I found that the TASS organisation and its support provision was inextricably linked to HE, particularly universities. TASS headquarters and the delivery of most support provision to TASS athletes, aside from two FE colleges, are both located on English university campuses. I argue that HE systems dominate the TASS system through physical and operational norms that carry with them structural inequalities and barriers. Key barriers include the financial cost of accessing HE and the exclusivity of the space, that is the limited number of spots and the competitive nature of the space, which make HE and dual career systems inaccessible to many. English dual career systems also mirror HE exclusivity in demographic trends around the prevalence of

whiteness. TASS staff and TASS practitioners reflect trends across HE in that they are dominated by white men.

The English dual career system is also inherently linked to English high-performance sport systems due to its structural position overlapping across England's talent and performance pathway. National funding structures heavily affect the TASS organisation in that they are beholden to their funders, Sport England, who have structural and influential power across the English talent pathway. Thus, TASS prioritise Sport England's strategic aim of winning medals over efforts to be inclusive. Furthermore, there is physical overlap between dual career sport environments and high-performance sport environments due to most English sport facilities being located at education institutions (Sport England, 2023). In this way, dual career athletes are often training alongside, or indeed are themselves, high-performance athletes. The 'win-at-all-costs' mentality and culture of high-performance sport systems is thus carried over into these dual career environments. In sum, England's dual career system cannot help but be influenced by the cultures it exists within, thus it replicates similar exclusionary structures and behaviours that have been normalised in HE and high-performance sport.

9.3 Contributions to conceptualisations of inclusion and exclusion in sport

This thesis contributes to current understandings and conceptualisations of inclusion and exclusion. Findings confirm Haegele and Maher's (2023) conceptualisation of inclusion as feelings of value, belonging, and acceptance, as I similarly found inclusion to be experienced and perceived by my participants as feelings of value, trust, and belonging. Across athlete participant interviews, weight was consistently placed on

community, or the lack of it, which indicates that community is also a significant factor related to feelings of inclusion. Here, community is a key aspect of inclusion while isolation is a key aspect of exclusion. The consideration of feelings of community brings to mind concerns in existing literature (e.g., Jakubowska, 2018; Geraniosova & Ronkainen, 2015) that point to loneliness as contributing to athletes' failed sporting careers or challenges to progressing along the pathway. Recalling Williams' (1958, 1977) conceptualisations of culture involving "structures of feeling" and "deep community", centring community is apt for researchers and practitioners to better understand how cultures within dual career environments can foster feelings of inclusion or exclusion among athletes.

Findings also add to understandings of exclusion as relational (Room, 1995), as athlete narratives indicate many examples of interpersonal exclusion within relationships with coaches and teammates. As indicated in extant literature (e.g., Spaaij & Jeanes, 2012; Morgan & Parker, 2017; Nols et al., 2019), relationships between athletes and programme facilitators or coaches can facilitate social inclusion when the relationships are based on trust, respect, value, and role models who understand the challenges participants might encounter (see Morgan et al., 2019). This thesis adds to this knowledge by deepening understandings of how such relationships contribute to exclusion in dual career sporting contexts. The exclusive behaviours (e.g., bullying, neglect) apparent within relationships between coaches and teammates appear to be symptoms of larger institutional mechanisms of exclusion (Jeanes & Lucas, 2021). Findings indicate that dual career environments (and the overlapping high-performance sport institutions) had ingrained belief systems that valued or held preferences for certain athletes over others which often dictated who could gain full access to resources or support (Pavlidis, 2018). For instance,

institutionally held beliefs included valuing funded athletes over unfunded athletes which led to preferential treatment of funded athletes over unfunded athletes, the denial of full access to support, and poor treatment and neglect (e.g., Julia). Additionally, athletes who differed from demographic norms in their sport teams (e.g., Gabriella and Jayden) were mocked for their language and cultural difference, indicating discriminatory attitudes that have been institutionally normalised in those environments (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2012). These understandings of dual career athlete experiences of exclusion add to, and also reflect, issues of destructive cultures and existing reports of emotional abuse and neglect in British sport (Feddersen et al., 2020; Scott, 2020).

9.4 Theoretical contributions to dual career literature and knowledge

As outlined in the findings above (9.2) this thesis addresses multiple gaps in existing literature on dual career athletes in talent pathways. This research provides representation, and extends knowledge, of typically overlooked and understudied groups of dual career athletes: unfunded, adult aged, and those pursuing non-traditional pathways (i.e., work pathway and multi-career pathway). This thesis also adds to the limited understanding of how talented athletes of adult age experience inclusion and exclusion in sport, addressing previous critiques on the lack of representation of such athlete samples in talent, elite, and high-performance sport literature (see Spaaij, Magee, & Jeanes, 2014). Using the conceptual lens of self-ordering to analyse and present athlete experiences of exclusion, this thesis further fills a gap in understanding the outcomes or consequences of such exclusion in sport spaces beyond existing literature on athlete drop out (e.g., Rothwell, Rumbold, &

Stone, 2020). My novel use of ordering and self-ordering in the dual career sporting context is expanded upon below.

9.4.1 Ordering and self-ordering

I argue that my thesis has applied theory in distinctive ways that support the novel interrogation of aspects and experiences of the English dual career system. Specifically, these are the concepts of ordering, as applied to examinations of dual career systems and institutions, and self-ordering, as applied to dual career athletes' navigation of their careers. Importantly, this diversifies the ways in which dual careers in sport have previously been scrutinised, which has tended towards somewhat descriptive models of pathways and drivers of movement (e.g., transitions) through them.

Using the concept of ordering (Law, 1994; Kendall & Wickham, 2001) to consider both procedural norms within dual career systems and dual career athletes' experiences was novel and advances understanding of structural and organisational mechanisms of exclusion. Ordering helped to identify how organisational initiatives, or "ordering projects" (Kendall & Wickham, 2001), drive the norms of organisational procedures. In particular, ordering was useful in identifying techniques of management that reveal the values and interests which are the highest priority. For most NGBs funded by Sport England and/or UK Sport, the "ordering project" of achieving performance results is typically the priority due to targets set by these funders (Green, 2006; Bostock, 2013). Nevertheless, charting "ordering projects" within sport organisations can also be compared across contexts. For instance, "ordering projects" are not consistent across university dual career environments. While most university

sport teams prioritise winning BUCS medals, the universities that host high-performance training centres operate under a different mission: winning national (i.e., home country) or international (i.e., Great Britain) medals for the nation tied to the NGB that funds and runs the training centre. When there is an overlap of such dual career environments, the priorities of the highest level (e.g., high-performance level) override those of the lower level. As my findings from Chapter 6 show, sometimes dual career athletes get enmeshed in these spaces where they are promised exceptional facilities and support, but then are not given access to that support due to not serving the priority of the dominant entity driving the ordering project of the dual career environment. This contributes new knowledge to the structural exclusion of athletes from support, organised or otherwise, as findings reveal that some dual career athletes, especially unfunded and non-traditional pathway athletes, are structurally excluded from support due to the overlap of dual career and high-performance sport environments and the corresponding ordering projects of the NGBs or universities that govern those environments. Additionally, ordering was useful in examining and characterising the influences of HE institutions and England's talent and performance pathways on the TASS organisation for the first time. This new knowledge is important as the exclusive structures and accepted behaviours of HE and high-performance sport can (as findings reveal) be replicated in dual career environments and contribute to negative effects and consequences for athletes existing within dual career pathways and environments.

The concept of self-ordering (Kendall & Wickham, 2001), not previously used in sport literature, supported my analysis of findings related how athletes experience and navigate their dual careers. Self-ordering was used not just to examine how athletes managed or "balanced" their dual career, as previous dual career research

speaks to (e.g., Linnér, Stambulova, & Ziegert, 2021; Howland et al., 2020; Stambulova et al., 2015), but also to analyse how unfunded and non-traditional pathway athletes coped with, handled, and organised themselves while outside of the traditional or funded talent pathways for dual career athletes. Dual career balance is predominantly researched by sport psychologists, with focus placed on athlete identity, motivation, mental health, and the prioritization of one career over another (e.g., Stambulova et al., 2015; Linnér, Stambulova, & Ziegert, 2021). Here, using self-ordering allowed me to expand beyond this approach, as I was looking more sociologically at dual career environments and how athletes felt exclusion affected their dual career journeys. This approach allowed me to consider structural and interpersonal factors (outlined above in 9.2.2) within dual career environments that contributed to unfunded athlete experiences of exclusion.

I have provided new knowledge to understandings of dual career balance in identifying (in Chapter 6) that athletes self-ordered their dual careers in two ways: i) in collaboration with institutions or stakeholders, and/or ii) in isolation. The first conceptualisation of self-ordering is consistent with the original concept of ordering (e.g., Law, 1994; Kendall & Wickham, 2001) that is linked to 'modes of ordering', or patterns of management and operation, within organisations or institutions. In this sporting context, unfunded dual career athletes find it easier to self-order their dual careers in the absence of organised support (i.e., specialised sport practitioners and/or funding) when they have help from stakeholders or institutions, as those entities hold knowledge and resources the athlete requires to maintain or develop their dual careers. Although athletes self-ordering in this way are indeed self-directing their own dual career due to the lack of organised support, they have successfully acquired some assistance from others (coaches, managers) who are connected with or part of

larger organisations and institutions that involve their own types of ordering. Findings indicated that athletes who self-ordered in collaboration with stakeholders or institutions (e.g., Amina) were more likely to have more inclusive and successful experiences in their dual careers than those who self-ordered in isolation (e.g. Victoria). The second conceptualisation is novel and adds a new dimension to the concept of self-ordering, that fully centres isolated individuals (athletes), instead of organisations, and their unique coping mechanisms, habits, and varying degrees of success or failure in balancing, maintaining, and progressing their dual careers. Self-ordering in isolation was found to occur due to both the lack of organised support as well as experiences of exclusion. Amongst the sample in this study, self-ordering in isolation was, predominantly, harmful to an athlete's dual career and contributed to negative outcomes like depression, anxiety, disordered eating, overtraining, and drop out. As seen in the original theorisation of ordering, self-ordering "has some 'failure' built into it" (Kendall & Wickham, 2001: 32) and self-ordering in isolation is more likely to involve failure.

9.5 Limitations

An important limitation of this programme of research was the absence of the perspectives from NGBs on their specific practices around talent identification and athlete nomination to TASS and other support schemes. This was a consequence of not being able to recruit staff from these NGBs to be interviewees as participants in Study 1. As discussed in Chapter 5, I made attempts to recruit NGBs for interviews, via email with the help of TASS as a gatekeeper, but I received zero responses to this request. As this recruitment took place in 2021, the lack of response from NGBs can

be attributed to a number of contributing factors. The Covid 19 pandemic had dramatically affected sport operations across the United Kingdom due to lockdowns and subsequent restrictions on indoor and outdoor gatherings. As a result, NGBs were preoccupied with adapting to government restrictions and regulations around sport activity, with “Return to Play” plans and timelines consistently in limbo based on Covid-19 infection rates and mutations. Sport organisations adapted government advice into their own guidelines such as return to activity plans and updates throughout (e.g., England Athletics, May 2020, October 2020). Furthermore, one of the largest disruptions to sport globally was the postponement of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics to instead be competed in the summer of 2021, with the Olympics held from July to August and the Paralympics held from August to early September. This shift meant that during my data collection, British and English NGBs of Olympic and Paralympic sports were busy preparing for the Olympic and Paralympic games. When I did not receive responses to my requests for interviews with NGBs in the TASS network, I decided to limit my data collection to TASS staff and TASS practitioners. This decision was made due to time restrictions and Covid-19 challenges. An additional consequence of that decision was that Sport England was not approached for involvement in interviews. Had NGB staff been successfully recruited to participate in the study, I would have reached out to Sport England to add to perspectives from a governing body standpoint.

Another limitation lies in the lack of engagement with funded TASS athletes. As I prioritised filling the gaps in current dual career literature by focusing on recruiting unfunded and non-traditional pathway dual career athletes, there was limited engagement with TASS supported athletes. Although there are brief mentions of athlete experiences *in* the TASS system (see Chapter 6.5), these findings can say little

about whether and how the TASS system may exclude athletes *within* the scheme from an athletes' perspective. The snippets of funded athlete experiences appear to showcase that being funded does not necessarily protect athletes from getting excluded. If an athlete is differentiated in other ways (e.g., late entry), they could get their funding removed when athletes who are more familiar to the system (e.g., early entry) have more security in their funding. However, since I did not interview multiple TASS-funded, or NGB-funded athletes, this finding needs further examination with a greater number of funded athlete participants.

9.6 Reflections on positionality and the research process

From the onset of this programme of work, I recognised my position as both a researcher in this space and as a practitioner with professional experience and practical knowledge of inclusion work in American and British sport sectors. I was wearing two hats, so to speak. This was joined by my lived experience as a dual career athlete, with over a decade of competing in US sport environments alongside one year competing in an English sport environment (i.e., BUCS level). My positionality evolved during this research, as I acquired more and more experience delivering inclusion-themed trainings to sport organisations in the UK. As I was interacting with NGBs in a professional capacity, I gained supplementary understanding of their situatedness of this work at a practical level. I learned how these organisations struggled with the recent inclusion initiatives (see UK Sport, 2021a; Sport England, 2018). This current push for inclusion in British sport is difficult for organisations to navigate largely because, as mentioned in Chapter 3, public opinion and public consideration of inclusion in sport has surged and become more common. This places further pressure

on organisations to indicate their commitment to inclusion. I also learned that many organisations struggle to move past the creation of a document (e.g., EDI action plan) and into more structural inclusion work within their organisations. These learnings helped me to direct the focus of my discussions within interviews, thereby deepening the level of discussion around inclusion themes. For example, Chapter 8.4 focused on responsibility, remit, and blame as these themes came from rich conversations with TASS staff and TASS practitioners, buoyed by my raised awareness the challenges of inclusion work in British sport. Findings such as these greatly contribute to understandings around how dual career systems enact, resist, or struggle with inclusion work, as inclusion work has not been researched in the dual career sport system context before.

Building from this experience as a practitioner and the knowledge gained from this doctoral research, I have developed recommendations for how British dual career systems could change to work towards making their cultures and structures more inclusive. The following section includes recommendations as well as my contributions to TASS during this programme of work.

9.7 Recommendations for future practice and research

As has been indicated above and also indicated in Chapters 7 and 8, I shared some of my recommendations with TASS as my research programme progressed. Section 9.7.1 outlines such feedback and discusses how my recommendations were applied by TASS along with my reflections on the consequences and outcomes of these recommendations. Following this, I share my recommendations for how English dual career systems could change to be more inclusive and to challenge existing exclusive

cultures in section 9.7.2. Lastly, in section 9.7.3, I share my suggestions for future research.

9.7.1 Applied implications: Recommendations for TASS

TASS and English dual career systems are omitting a large group of athletes because they do not fit the narrow definitions of who a dual career athlete is perceived to be (e.g., in HE), and thus also do not fit the narrow criteria for such support. It is imperative that access to support is expanded so that the talent pool can be widened. That is, if support is available to a broader range of athletes, then more athletes can potentially reach the highest levels of sport. This would feed the performance drive and make dual career systems more inclusive of athletes who take non-traditional pathways.

I also argue that my data around and the presence of athletes "double dipping", that is athletes having two or more avenues of organised support, indicates that the funds and services that are available are not being distributed most efficiently. Current support schemes for talented athletes are likely being duplicated across a limited number of athletes instead of being allocated to athletes who would utilise the full services, or who do not already have access to such services. As TASS support is built on top of pre-existing support structures in HE, many TASS athletes are also in receipt of similar support from their universities. Adopting some form of "means testing", such as adding selection criteria that stipulates prioritising the nomination of athletes who are not already in receipt of organised support, may address this problem to allow resources to be allocated to an expanding range of athletes. This means testing would require the active participation of NGBs to change their selection process for nominating athletes to TASS. However, it is acknowledged that such a shift might have

a trade-off in that support may be spread too thinly across a wider group, which may not sufficiently address the need for each athlete. Due to these complexities, I recommend that stakeholders in dual career systems co-produce a new approach alongside currently unfunded dual career athletes so that a depth of experience and a diversity of perspectives can shape new structures of organised support.

From September 2023, TASS has dropped its education criteria for nomination to their scheme. However, it remains to be seen if nomination patterns change, especially since my data showcased that it was difficult for TASS to communicate their criteria to the NGBs who nominated athletes. I hypothesise that this trend in nominating athletes at/going into university will continue unless significant measures are taken to educate and guide NGBs in their nominations. Furthermore, TASS delivery sites remain the same and are therefore located at universities. These physical locations will not help disrupt current patterns of athletes at university being considered and nominated for TASS awards. I therefore recommend that TASS expand their delivery sites to locations that are not tied to HE or FE institutions. This would entail a targeted effort to survey existing facilities across the country and perhaps locating delivery sites at community-based recreation centres and other publicly available facilities.

9.7.2 Recommendations for making dual career systems more inclusive

Findings indicate a need for more funding and support opportunities to be available and accessible to athletes taking non-traditional dual career pathways. This need is evidenced by the experiences of unfunded and non-traditional pathway dual career athletes (see Chapter 6) in that exclusion, or barriers, from such organised support led

to inefficient and unhealthy coping habits, the need to undertake additional careers to offset costs, outcomes of physical and mental health challenges, and, sometimes, drop out. Currently, most organised support for dual career athletes, like TASS, is earmarked for athletes in education only. This limits the reach of such support as, stated in Chapters 7 and 8, athletes in HE and FE already have existing support structures at universities. There is an urgent need to build new structures of support for the purpose of supporting dual career athletes in work or multi-career pathways. I recommend that leading organisations Sport England and UK Sport invest in building or renovating sporting facilities that are not located at education institutions to increase access to sport for all levels of athletes – thereby not limiting increased access to just talent and performance level athletes.

If further funding can be granted, then funders can set additional expectations for funded organisations to ensure that their practices and cultures are inclusive of the diversity of athletes who may enter the system. Too often, dual career athletes in non-traditional pathways are overlooked by gatekeepers to support systems and miss out on funding and support. I argue that NGBs could alter their talent identification processes to better recognise late entry and non-traditional pathway athletes, thereby expanding the talent pool. If Sport England (2018) and UK Sport (2021) are true to their word and wish to diversify the current talent pool, talent identification needs to be updated to consider athletes taking non-traditional routes and indicators of potential.

Findings also showcase a need for an individualised holistic approach to athlete support in which athletes are viewed as whole persons, an approach advocated by Sport England (2018). My findings indicated that many dual career athletes felt that they were treated impersonally and that their relationships with coaches lacked

“human connection”. These experiences of impersonal and poor treatment appeared to be normalised within their training environments and not just related to specific individuals. I suggest that a holistic ecological perspective to athlete talent development may be beneficial. Here, ecological pertains to the relationships between athletes and their environments. Such an approach challenges practitioners to “look beyond the quantity and quality of training, and to think instead about the larger environment” when supporting talented athletes (Henriksen et al., 2010: 221). I argue that such an approach would allow practitioners to consider and become more aware of the impact of the environmental culture on the wellbeing, experience, and development of talented dual career athletes.

The talent pathway is diversifying, in theory. Everyone working in dual career systems, and the talent pathway, needs to be ready to support a potential new wave of talent. By everyone I mean individuals at board and leadership level all the way to individuals working directly with athletes, like coaches and practitioners. I recommend that organisations invest in education and training so that staff can develop skills related to inclusive practice in their roles through trainings and workshops around unconscious bias, inclusive language, and other inclusion-themes that address the needs of the organisation. From my own experience delivering such trainings, I recommend inclusion trainings include prompts and exercises that help individuals to apply these new learnings to their everyday practice thereby extending learnings past a raised awareness and towards a more inclusive practice.

9.7.3 Future Research

I argue that the experiences of athletes in work and in multi-career pathways need to be included more within dual career literature so that the group can be better understood. I suggest applying the concept of self-ordering to dual career balance literature to help analyse the experiences of athletes, especially unfunded athletes, as they navigate their dual or multiple careers. Evidence from such additional research could contribute to improving, or building, new support structures so that the experiences and outcomes of structural exclusion could be prevented.

As a main finding from this thesis is the mistreatment and exclusion of athletes in dual career pathways, this indicates a need for further research into these experiences and the structural and cultural contexts that enable such behaviour. While research on maltreatment in sport has been receiving increased attention in recent years (e.g., Kerr & Stirling, 2019; Kerr, Battaglia, & Stirling, 2019; McMahon, Knight, & McGannon, 2018), these studies typically centre child athletes and professional athletes, as such, maltreatment of athletes existing in-between these two groups (i.e., within dual career and talent pathways) remains underexplored. Furthermore, emotional abuse or indeed interpersonal exclusion is also relatively underexplored in existing sport literature (Kavanaugh, Brown, & Jones, 2017). I argue that there is a clear need for more research and investigation into adult athlete experiences of exclusion in dual career, talent, non-professional, and high-performance sport pathways, especially given the increase in concerning reports involving athlete welfare across British high-performance and elite sport.

Since I did not get the opportunity to interview staff from Sport England and NGBs, the thesis does not substantially explore perspectives of these organisations

regarding how they may manipulate their power and position in regard to the TASS athlete nomination process in particular. This presents a need to undertake further research that includes these voices, especially perspectives on challenges of inclusion work in dual career pathways. It is imperative to understand how other support schemes for talented athletes are run and how athletes are nominated to such schemes. As such, I also recommend further research with NGBs to understand their individual nomination procedures to support schemes such as TASS, and their talent identification procedures. This future research and collaboration with NGBs could also help to lower the instances of athletes "double dipping" across multiple streams of organised support. This can then be applied to other funding schemes for talented athletes, as it appears that "double dipping" is not only an issue within dual career spaces, but also present across the larger talent and performance sport pathways.

9.8 Concluding thoughts

I hope that the findings from this study raise awareness and encourage dual career support institutions, high-performance sport systems, sport coaches, and sport practitioners to think about and critically review the culture that is being created within their own sport organisations and sport environments as this is harming many athletes through, often, long-term impacts. Cultural change is possible, but this work must be thoughtful and intentional. I am hopeful for future research in this space that has a practical orientation to supporting change in the sector.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

TASS staff recruitment call and ethnographic observation email

Hi Everyone,

I hope you are well. Not sure if you all remember me, but I'm a second year PhD researcher working on a TASS-funded project. I just wanted to give you a heads up that I'm now beginning my data collection which includes an ethnographic case study of TASS. Since Covid-19 is preventing me from obtaining data in the usual ways, I will be sitting in on some calls and meetings this year to observe virtually. This will be quite casual and I'll mostly be a "fly on the wall," but in a virtual way. Each time that I sit in on these calls, you will be made aware of my presence and reminded of my ongoing data collection. This ethnography process has an opt-out policy, so if anyone does not wish to be observed please email me directly and let me know (FYI: all data will be anonymised). Additionally, I will be reaching out to some of you for individual interviews in the coming weeks.

For those not familiar with my PhD project, I am looking at experiences of inclusion and exclusion in dual career systems. I'm specifically looking at how individual characteristics (gender, disability, race, ethnicity, sexuality, etc.) may contribute to these experiences. My research questions are: 1. Who is included in and excluded from dual career systems? 2. How do dual career systems include and exclude athletes? 3. How can dual career systems be more inclusive? I'd be happy to chat more about my study if anyone has questions or would like to know more. Please feel free to reach out.

For the few of you that I haven't had the chance to meet yet, I hope to meet you (virtually) soon!

Thanks!

Appendix 2

TASS practitioner recruitment call email, sent by TASS staff member

This email is going to all TASS practitioners

Good afternoon,

Below is a request from Lauren Kamperman and who is a researcher at Durham University and currently conducting a TASS-funded PhD project.

I hope you are well. Some of you may have seen me on the Navigating Inclusive Language CPD session back in December. I'm currently conducting a TASS-funded PhD project which explores experiences of inclusion and exclusion in dual career sport systems. I'm particularly interested in how individual characteristics (gender, disability, race, ethnicity, sexuality, etc.) may contribute to these experiences.

This PhD project includes an ethnographic case study of the TASS organisation. Part of my data collection will involve interviews with practitioners within the TASS network. These interviews will be focused on practitioner experiences working with dual career athletes, as well as any experiences (personal or witnessed) of inclusion and/or exclusion within the dual career space. I'm looking for interview participants and I hope some of you will be interested!

If you would like to learn more about this study or would like to participate in an interview, please email me at [email address]*. These interviews will be held virtually over Zoom. Please rest assured that all names of participants will be anonymised.*

Best Wishes

Appendix 3

PhD blurb sent ahead of TASS calls and virtual meetings involved in ethnographic observation

Please be aware that this call will be observed as part of data collection related to a TASS-funded PhD project. The lead researcher, Lauren Kamperman, will be sitting in on the call to casually observe. The PhD project explores experiences of inclusion and exclusion in dual career sport systems, focusing on how identity characteristics may contribute to these experiences. This project includes an ethnographic case study of the TASS organisation. In order to gather insight into the many facets of TASS's work, Lauren will be sitting in on some calls and meetings to observe virtually. Lauren will be like a fly on the wall and her presence will not change the structure or nature of the call. Rest assured that all data collected will be anonymised. This ethnography has an opt-out policy, so if you do not wish to be observed, please email Lauren directly at [email address]

Appendix 4

Athlete recruitment flyer 1

Appendix 5

Athlete recruitment flyer 2

I AM LOOKING FOR CURRENT OR FORMER ATHLETES TO INTERVIEW

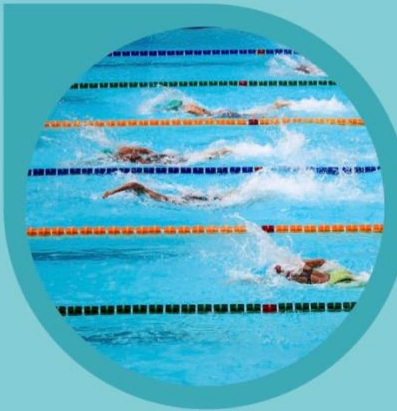
I'm especially keen to talk to athletes who may have felt marginalised on the basis of their gender, race, disabilities, or sexualities.

Have you

or someone you know

had difficulties balancing your sport alongside commitments to education or a job?

struggled with funding your athletic career, or felt you missed out on funding?



For more information or to take part, please contact PhD researcher Lauren Kamperman at:

Lauren.M.Kamperman@durham.ac.uk

Must be 18years+

Appendix 6

Participant Information Sheet – Study 2

You are invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide if you would like to take part, please read this information sheet carefully. You can also ask the lead researcher Lauren Kamperman if you have any questions (please see contact details at the end of this sheet).

Title of Project: *Exploring Experiences of Inclusion and Exclusion in Dual Career Sport Systems*

What is the purpose of the research?

The purpose of this research is to understand how inclusion and exclusion are experienced in dual career sport systems. To achieve this aim, two progressive studies will be conducted to explore the following research questions: (i) who is included in and excluded from dual career systems, (ii) how do dual career athletes experience inclusion and exclusion, (iii) and how can dual career systems be more inclusive? The project will use mixed methods, including data and policy analysis alongside semi-structured qualitative interviews with current and former dual career (DC) athletes as well as DC sport system stakeholders (organisations, national governing bodies, and practitioners). It is anticipated that the research will contribute to the development of action plans for increased inclusion within athlete participation, facilitation, and support within DC systems.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part in this study because you are a current or former dual career athlete in the UK aged 18 years or over. You participate(d) in your sport at the same time as pursuing either education and/or work (a job) and may have found it difficult to balance those commitments. During your athletic career you may have: i) received funding, yet experienced exclusion or marginalisation, ii) did not have funding or were self-funded, iii) declined funding or lost your funding, iv) struggled with limited funding or felt that you missed out on funding opportunities, v) had experiences of marginalisation or exclusion during your career, vi) felt that your voice was not heard or that your needs were not met. You could be competing at elite, sub-elite, or another competitive level.

Do I have to take part?

Participation is voluntary and the decision to take part in this study is completely up to you, as this is not a requirement. Should you decide to take part, please remember that you are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. To withdraw from the study, please contact Lauren Kamperman directly at the email below. If you decide to

withdraw from this study, all information collected (if any) will be deleted and not used in the study.

What will be involved if I decide to take part in the research?

If you agree to take part in this study, you will participate in a qualitative semi-structured interview with the lead researcher, Lauren Kamperman. Due to guidelines around the current Covid-19 pandemic, all interviews will be held virtually online over Zoom and will be password protected. All accessibility needs will be discussed and met. Interviews will vary in length (usually around 60-90 min) but will be stopped after 2 hours (if necessary, an additional session may be scheduled). Interviews will be audio recorded and stored on the researcher's password protected computer, recording never shared with other parties. Your name and identifying details will be kept anonymous.

What are the benefits and risks of taking part?

There are no known risks related to participation in this study. There are, however, many benefits as your participation will contribute to knowledge in the field and may help to create inclusion solutions to improve the quality of dual career sport systems.

How will confidentiality be assured?

Participants will be asked to engage in a semi-structured qualitative interview, which will be audio recorded with their written and verbal consent. This gives you a chance to clearly understand your rights as a participant. Your participation is voluntary, and you can stop the interview (or recording of the interview) at any time. The interviews will take place virtually over a secure platform (Zoom). I will ensure that all interviews are accessible and convenient for each participant, particularly addressing any accessibility needs for those participants with disabilities.

The privacy of participants and the organisations they are a part of will be protected in multiple ways: 1) All interviews will be digitally recorded and uploaded as a sound file to my password protected laptop. I am the only one who knows the password. 2) Each participant will be made anonymous throughout data collection 3) In my final write up and presentation, I will only refer to my participants using their corresponding pseudonym and sport.

Please refer to the Privacy Notice for further information.

What will happen to the results of the research?

The results of this research will be used for the researcher's PhD thesis and thus also will be used in journal publications and conference presentations. Additionally,

research findings will be used to construct inclusion solutions to improve dual career sport systems.

If you have any questions related to the project, please contact the lead researcher:

Lauren Kamperman

Supervisor: Dr. Emily Oliver

If you would like to take part and are happy with the answers to your questions, please complete and sign the enclosed Informed Consent Form.

Appendix 7

Consent form

Project title: *Exploring Experiences of Inclusion and Exclusion in Dual Career Systems*

Researcher: Lauren Kamperman
Department: Sport and Exercise Sciences
Contact details:

Supervisor name: Dr. Emily Oliver
Supervisor contact details:

This form is to confirm that you understand what the purposes of the project, what is involved and that you are happy to take part. Please initial each box to indicate your agreement:

I confirm that I have read and understand the Participant Information Sheet and the Privacy Notice for the above project.	
I have had sufficient time to consider the information and ask any questions I might have, and I am satisfied with the answers I have been given.	
I understand who will have access to personal data provided, how the data will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the project.	
I agree to take part in the above project.	
I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.	
I consent to being audio recorded and understand how recordings will be used in research outputs.	
I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, and other research outputs. *Please choose one of the following two options* ○ EITHER I agree to my real name being used in the above ○ OR I do **not** agree to my real name being used in the above	

Participant's Signature_______________________________ Date______________

(NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS)____

Researcher's Signature______________________________ Date______________

(NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS)____

Appendix 8

Privacy notice

This notice provides you with the privacy information that you need to know before you provide personal data for the particular purpose(s) stated below. Additional information about the University's responsibilities for data protection and your rights in relation to personal data can be found in the University's generic privacy notice, available at
https://www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/privacynotice/generic/.

Title of Project: *Exploring Experiences of Inclusion and Exclusion in Dual Career Sport Systems*

Type(s) of personal data collected and held by the Researcher and method of collection:

Personal data will be collected through interviews held virtually across a secure platform (Zoom). This interview will be audio recorded, with your consent. Personal data collected will include: your occupation/role, sport, race/ethnicity, sex, gender, disability, sexuality, and your experience of inclusion and/or exclusion in dual career systems.

Lawful Basis:

- Your data will be processed in accordance with the consent you give for the use of your data, should you agree to participate in the project. Identifiable data will not be included in any distribution of the findings.

How personal data is stored:

All data will be kept strictly confidential to the lead researcher and supervisory team (Drs Oliver and Rankin-Wright).

The privacy of participants and the organisations they are a part of will be protected in multiple ways: 1) All interviews will be digitally recorded and uploaded as a sound file to my password protected laptop. I am the only one who knows the password. 2) In my final write up and presentation, I will only refer to my participants using their corresponding pseudonym.

- All personal data in electronic form will be stored on a password protected computer, and any hardcopies will be kept in locked storage.
- *The conversation will be recorded and stored on a password protected computer until it has been transcribed by the researcher. No-one else will have access to the recording, and it will be erased once the transcript has been completed.*

How personal data is processed:

- Personal demographic data is collected in order to analyse responses according to certain criteria. As this study examines inclusion and exclusion, particular focus will be placed on whether those experiences were affected or shaped by diversity demographics.
- *The recorded conversation will be transcribed by the researcher, and personal information will be coded and anonymised. The original recording will then be erased.*

Withdrawal of data

- You can request withdrawal of your data until it has been fully anonymised. Once this has happened it will not be possible to identify you from any of the data we hold.
    - If there are circumstances in which I am not able to withdraw data on request, I will consider requests to delete data on a case-by-case basis. This may only occur if the request for withdrawal is very delayed and may affect the needed number of participants in this study.

Who the Researcher shares personal data with:

Anonymised personal data will be shared within the research team and included in publications and other project outputs.

How long personal data is held for:

We will hold identifiable personal data (i.e., consent forms) for six months, after which they will be anonymised and/or destroyed.

How to object to the processing of your personal data:

If you have any concerns regarding the processing of your personal data, or you wish to withdraw your data from the project, contact the researchers below:

If you require further information please contact:

Researcher: Lauren Kamperman

Supervisor: Dr. Emily Oliver

Appendix 9

Identity characteristics form

Project title: *Exploring Experiences of Inclusion and Exclusion in Dual Career Systems*

Researcher: Lauren Kamperman
Department: Sport and Exercise Sciences
Contact details:

Personal demographic data is collected in order to analyse responses according to certain criteria. As this study examines inclusion and exclusion, particular focus will be placed on whether those experiences were affected or shaped by diversity demographics.

*Please note that the question on Gender is asking what you personally identify as – this question is not regarding your Sex.

If you do not wish to answer any of the questions, you may leave it blank.

Age	
Gender	
Race	
Ethnicity	
Do you have a disability? If so, please name your disability.	
Sexuality	
Religion	

As a reminder, all data will be kept strictly confidential to the lead researcher and supervisory team. All names will be anonymised in any dissemination of the findings.

Appendix 10

Interview guide – Study 2

Pre-Session: Each participant will complete an informed consent form and demographic questions form assessing age and identity characteristics (race, ethnicity, gender, disability, etc.) prior to beginning the session. A privacy notice and participant information sheet will also be provided.

Welcome and Overview:

Thank you for taking part in this study today. My name is Lauren Kamperman and I am the lead researcher of this project. I am a PhD candidate at Durham University in the Department of Sport and Exercise Sciences.

The purpose of this interview is to gain understanding of how dual career systems operate, especially related to the treatment of athletes within the system.

There are no right or wrong answers. Please feel free to share your insights and experience freely. This session will be recorded, with your consent, and your name will be anonymised. The interview recording will be uploaded to my personal, password-protected computer. No one else knows the password.

1. Opening Questions:

- Please tell me what sport means to you.
- How long have you been an athlete?
- How long have you been balancing sport with education or work?
- Have you heard of the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS)? If so, how would you describe TASS as an organisation? Have you ever been supported by TASS?

2. Dual Career Athletes:

- Do you identify yourself as a ‘dual career athlete’? Why or Why not?
- How do you balance education or work with your sport?
    - What was difficult?
    - What were your strategies to support yourself?
- Do you have any means of organised support? (i.e. funding, support services, etc. from a sport organisation, university, or other means)

- Have you struggled to fund your athletic career?
- Do you feel that you've missed out on funding opportunities?

3. Inclusion and Exclusion:

- When you hear the term 'inclusion', what comes to mind?
- When you hear the term 'exclusion', what comes to mind?
- How would you describe your team's culture?
- What do your teammates have in common?
- What are some differences among your teammates?

4. Key Questions:

- Do you have any experiences or observations related to **inclusion** in dual career sport spaces?
    - Can you recall a time where you felt included or have you witnessed others being included?
    - Do you feel a sense of 'belonging' on your team?

- Do you have any experiences or observations related to **exclusion** in dual career sport spaces?
    - Have you experienced exclusion or marginalisation yourself or have you witnessed someone else being excluded?
    - Can you recall a specific instance where you or another athlete was treated differently because of your/their identity (race/ethnicity/gender/disability/sexuality/religion)?

- Do you think experiences of inclusion or exclusion can affect athletic performance?

- Do you think there are biases or stereotypes in your sport?

5. Ending Questions:

- Do you feel that dual career sport systems have a problem related to diversity? Inclusion?

- In your opinion, how could current dual career systems be improved?

6. Summary Questions:

- Have I misinterpreted / misrepresented anything?
- As part of my work, I'm likely to run further discussions or workshops around these issues. Would you be interested in being kept informed about this?

Closing: Thank you for participating today! Do you have any questions?

Appendix 11

TASS documents included in document review and analysis (Chapter 7)

1. TASS Dual Career System Presentation/PDF, Autumn 2019
    a. Presentation title: Building a World Class Dual Career System and Who Benefits
    b. Contents: TASS history, what is dual career, dual career athlete types, TASS management and operations, TASS KPIs for 2018-2021, how are athletes identified/nominated, TASS education criteria, TASS 5 'Principles of Learning', learning commitment, athlete support services, TASS sports and expectations of sports, TASS delivery site network, TDS calendar of events, TASS Practitioner standards, TASS Dual Career Accreditation Scheme, Lifestyle/Dual Career support, TASS Qualifications, TASS CPD Programme, TASS Research and Insight.
2. TASS Tri-Fold Leaflet, July 2019
    a. Contents: TASS facts and figures, support services, TDS locations, Dual Career Accreditation Scheme
3. TASS and the FA One-Pager, Autumn 2019
    a. Contents: Facts and figures about FA women's program project
4. Privacy Notice for TASS Supported Athletes, 2019
5. TASS Athlete Agreement, 2018
6. NGB Submission Form, 2018-19
7. Guide to being a TASS NGB, 2018-2019
    a. Contents: TASS Delivery Network 2018-19, Calendar of the year, Review periods, Finances, Delivery Model 2018-19, Athlete induction, Athlete award, Portal guidelines, Medical Scheme guidelines, Mental health protocol, TASS Athlete Advisory Group, TASS Lifestyle Advisory Group, Network partner expectations, CPD opportunities, Education requirements, Dual Career Accreditation Scheme, Dual Career Accreditation Scheme process, TDS Lead contact information
8. Blank Nomination Form, 2020-2021, Excel Sheet
9. Types of Learning, TASS Instagram Graphic, July 2020
    a. Contents: TASS eligibility criteria, explanation of education criteria
10. TASS Nomination Expectations BLUE Award, 2020
11. TASS Nomination Expectations WHITE Award, 2020
12. TASS Nomination Expectations RED Award, 2020
13. TASS Nomination Deadline Email, sent to NGBs July 2020
14. TASS Medical Scheme 2020-21, Health Partners, August 2020
15. TASS Email to Athlete about Award, January 2021
16. TASS Athlete Portal Demographic Data Pull of TASS Athlete Cohort: 2018-2019
17. Core Support Provision, 2020-2021
    a. Contents: Minimum TASS delivery site requirements and expectations for delivery of specific areas of 'core support' to TASS athletes, speedy and timely exchange of information relating to the operation of support for TASS athletes, monitoring and review of provision of support and TASS athlete engagement with such support, reporting of any concerns to TASS, core support shall be initiated, arranged and delivered only by designated staff (practitioners) who meet appropriate requirements of

TASS [see Doc. 18], face-to-face induction for every allocated athlete, provision-specific expectations, etc.

18. Core Support Provider Person Specifications, 2020-2021
    a. Contents: Minimum requirements for individuals (i.e., practitioners) seeking to deliver core support provision to TASS athletes. Requirements relate to standards from recognised certificates and statuses across the different support services, fulfilling individual TASS delivery site safeguarding requirements as well a discrimination and health and safety measures, working knowledge of 'clean sport' anti-doping procedures and regulations, etc.
19. Equality and Diversity Policy, TASS website, created 2018

Appendix 12

Systematic mapping review of inclusion themes in dual career literature, June 2020

Systematic mapping inclusion keyword search			Google Scholar	Google Scholar	EBSCOhost	EBSCOhost	EBSCOhost
Theme	Primary Keywords	Connecting Keywords	In Title	Anywhere	In Title	In Abstract	Anywhere
Main Search Terms	dual career	athlete(s)	117	28,800	52	140	194
	dual career	sport(s)	68	94,800	10	152	234
	dual career	student athlete(s)	53	23,800	20	68	100
	dual career	sport system(s)	0	137,000	0	17	24
	dual role	athlete(s)	15	48,800	10	36	43
	dual role	student athlete(s)	3	28,800	3	143	205
	student	athlete(s)	6,790	255,000	4,462	13,257	22,569
Diversity & Inclusion	dual career sport	diversity	0	55,000	0	2	3
	dual career sport	diverse	0	67,200	0	4	4
	dual career sport	inclusion	0	49,600	0	0	0
	dual career sport	inclusive	0	33,300	0	0	0
	dual career sport	exclusion	0	44,900	0	0	0
	dual career sport	exclusive	0	48,000	0	2	2
	dual career sport	culture	0	107,000	0	10	28
	dual career athlete	diversity	0	28,000	0	1	1
	dual career athlete	diverse	0	31,200	0	4	4
	dual career athlete	inclusion	0	27,900	0	0	0

	dual career athlete	inclusive	0	19,200	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	exclusion	0	23,600	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	exclusive	0	18,400	0	2	2
	dual career athlete	culture	0	25,300	0	15	23
Disability	dual career sport	disability	0	29,400	0	1	1
	dual career sport	disabled	0	12,900	0	1	1
	dual career sport	para sport(s)	0	15,500	0	5	6
	dual career sport	Paralympic(s)	0	2,200	0	1	1
	dual career sport	para	0	23,200	0	5	6
	dual career sport	paralysed	0	11,800	0	0	0
	dual career sport	para athlete(s)	0	5,970	0	3	5
	dual career sport	para-athlete(s)	0	234	0	0	0
	dual career sport	disabled athlete(s)	0	17,800	0	0	1
	dual career sport	handicap(ped)	0	19,700	0	0	0
	dual career sport	adaptive	0	24,300	0	0	0
	dual career sport	blind, blindness	0	38,300	0	0	0
	dual career sport	deaf	0	17,100	0	0	0
	dual career sport	wheelchair	0	83,100	0	0	0
	dual career sport	prosthetic(s), prosthesis	0	4,530	0	0	0
	dual career sport	dwarfism	0	374	0	0	0
	dual career sport	cerebral palsy	0	4,789	0	0	0
	dual career sport	physical disability	0	28,700	0	0	0
	dual career sport	intellectual disability	0	22,000	0	0	0

	dual career sport	mental disability	0	26,800	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	disability	0	20,300	0	1	2
	dual career athlete	disabled	0	7,910	0	0	1
	dual career athlete	para sport(s)	0	11,600	0	3	5
	dual career athlete	Paralympic(s)	0	1,380	0	0	1
	dual career athlete	para	0	13,700	0	3	6
	dual career athlete	paralysed	0	5,340	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	handicap(ped)	0	14,800	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	adaptive sport(s)	0	11,900	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	blind, blindness	0	21,800	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	deaf	0	9,300	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	wheelchair	0	4,890	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	prosthetic(s), prosthesis	0	2,690	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	dwarfism	0	198	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	cerebral palsy	0	2,560	0	0	0

	dual career athlete	physical disability	0	21,200	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	intellectual disability	0	16,600	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	mental disability	0	21,200	0	0	1
Race & Ethnicity	dual career sport	race	0	69,300	0	1	3
	dual career sport	ethnicity	0	34,700	0	0	1
	dual career sport	heritage	0	43,200	0	0	1
	dual career sport	nationality	0	25,100	0	2	3
	dual career sport	minority	0	47,500	0	1	2
	dual career sport	Black	0	79,200	0	0	4
	dual career sport	Asian	0	24,200	0	0	2
	dual career sport	BAME	0	375	0	0	0
	dual career sport	Black, Asian, minority ethnic	0	24,300	0	0	0
	dual career sport	white	0	94,600	0	0	1
	dual career athlete	race	0	35,600	0	1	1
	dual career athlete	ethnicity	0	22,900	0	0	1
	dual career athlete	heritage	0	21,400	0	0	1
	dual career athlete	nationality	0	16,700	0	2	3
	dual career athlete	minority	0	25,000	0	1	1
	dual career athlete	Black	0	30,200	0	0	1

	dual career athlete	Asian	0	12,400	0	1	2
	dual career athlete	BAME	0	127	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	Black, Asian, minority ethnic	0	19,800	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	white	0	33,000	0	0	0
Sex & Gender	dual career sport	sex	0	58,500	0	0	0
	dual career sport	gender	0	66,400	0	19	31
	dual career sport	female	0	76,300	0	26	42
	dual career sport	woman	0	78,300	0	13	29
	dual career sport	women	0	107,000	0	13	29
	dual career sport	ladies	0	26,500	0	0	0
	dual career sport	girl(s)	0	52,000	0	0	0
	dual career sport	male	0	52,900	0	34	54
	dual career sport	man	0	109,000	0	6	15
	dual career sport	men	0	113,000	0	6	15
	dual career sport	boy(s)	0	53,700	0	4	6
	dual career sport	nonbinary	0	1,090	0	0	0
	dual career sport	non-binary	0	3,790	0	0	0
	dual career sport	intersex	0	1,550	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	sex	0	28,500	0	1	7
	dual career athlete	gender	1	30,200	0	15	25
	dual career athlete	female	2	30,600	2	28	37

	dual career athlete	woman	0	34,000	0	7	17
	dual career athlete	women	0	37,800	0	7	17
	dual career athlete	ladies	0	20,300	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	girl(s)	0	29,400	0	3	5
	dual career athlete	male	1	34,000	1	35	48
	dual career athlete	man	0	34,800	0	5	10
	dual career athlete	men	0	41,000	0	5	10
	dual career athlete	boy(s)	0	28,000	0	3	5
	dual career athlete	nonbinary	0	567	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	non-binary	0	1,720	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	intersex	0	878	0	0	0
LGBTQ+	dual career sport	sexuality	0	34,000	0	1	1
	dual career sport	LGBT	0	4,570	0	0	0
	dual career sport	LGBTQ	0	2,840	0	0	0
	dual career sport	lesbian	0	15,700	0	0	0
	dual career sport	gay	0	18,900	0	0	0
	dual career sport	bisexual	0	8870	0	0	0

	dual career sport	transgender	0	6,230	0	0	0
	dual career sport	queer	0	14,500	0	0	0
	dual career sport	homosexual	0	18,800	0	0	0
	dual career sport	asexual	0	3,390	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	sexuality	0	21,700	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	LGBT	0	2,490	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	LGBTQ	0	1,760	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	lesbian	0	10,600	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	gay	0	18,300	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	bisexual	0	5,430	0	1	1
	dual career athlete	transgender	0	4,260	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	queer	0	7,280	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	homosexual	0	12,700	0	1	1
	dual career athlete	asexual	0	1,850	0	0	0
Socio-Economic Status & Class	dual career sport	classism	0	4,130	0	0	0
	dual career sport	class	0	106,000	0	9	12
	dual career sport	poverty	0	42,900	0	0	0
	dual career sport	wealth	0	51000	0	0	0

	dual career sport	economic status	0	85,300	0	0	0
	dual career sport	socioeconomic status	0	27,000	0	0	2
	dual career sport	upper class	0	52,200	0	0	0
	dual career sport	middle class	0	81,400	0	0	0
	dual career sport	lower class	0	72,100	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	classism	0	2,350	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	class	0	34,900	0	8	9
	dual career athlete	poverty	0	22,600	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	poor	0	30,500	0	3	4
	dual career athlete	wealth	0	25,000	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	wealthy	0	21,700	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	economic status	0	30,300	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	socioeconomic status	0	17,800	0	0	1
	dual career athlete	upper class	0	26,800	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	middle class	0	35,300	0	0	0
	dual career athlete	lower class	0	34,000	0	0	0