Cardiff School of Sport
DISSERTATION ASSESSMENT PROFORMA:
Empirical [1]

Student name: Florence Roberts	*Student ID:* ST20001495
Programme: SES	

Dissertation title:	A comparison of Social Support and Mood between Team and Individual athletes during their transition to university competitive sport.
Supervisor:	David Wasley

Comments	Section
	Title and Abstract (5%) Title to include: A concise indication of the research question/problem. Abstract to include: A concise summary of the empirical study undertaken.
	Introduction and literature review (25%) To include: outline of context (theoretical/conceptual/applied) for the question; analysis of findings of previous related research including gaps in the literature and relevant contributions; logical flow to, and clear presentation of the research problem/ question; an indication of any research expectations, (i.e., hypotheses if applicable).
	Methods and Research Design (15%) To include: details of the research design and justification for the methods applied; participant details; comprehensive replicable protocol.
	Results and Analysis (15%) [2] To include: description and justification of data treatment/ data analysis procedures; appropriate presentation of analysed data within text and in tables or figures; description of critical findings.
	Discussion and Conclusions (30%) [2] To include: collation of information and ideas and evaluation of those ideas relative to the extant literature/concept/theory and research question/problem; adoption of a personal position on the study by linking and combining different elements of the data reported; discussion of the real-life impact of your research findings for coaches and/or practitioners (i.e. practical implications); discussion of the limitations and a critical reflection of the approach/process adopted; and indication of potential improvements and future developments building on the study; and a conclusion which summarises the relationship between the research question and the major findings.
	Presentation (10%)

---

[1] This form should be used for both quantitative and qualitative dissertations. The descriptors associated with both quantitative and qualitative dissertations should be referred to by both students and markers.
[2] There is scope within qualitative dissertations for the RESULTS and DISCUSSION sections to be presented as a combined section followed by an appropriate CONCLUSION. The mark distribution and criteria across these two sections should be aggregated in those circumstances.

	To include: academic writing style; depth, scope and accuracy of referencing in the text and final reference list; clarity in organisation, formatting and visual presentation

CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

Prifysgol Fetropolitan Caerdydd

CARDIFF SCHOOL OF SPORT

DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (HONOURS)

SPORT AND EXERCISE SCIENCE

2013-14

A COMPARISON OF SOCIAL SUPPORT AND MOOD BETWEEN TEAM AND INDIVIDUAL ATHLETES DURING THEIR TRANSITION TO UNIVERSITY COMPETITIVE SPORT.

PSYCHOLOGY

FLORENCE ROBERTS

ST20001495

FLORENCE ROBERTS

ST20001495

CARDIFF SCHOOL OF SPORT

CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

A COMPARISON OF SOCIAL SUPPORT AND MOOD BETWEEN TEAM AND INDIVIDUAL ATHLETES DURING THEIR TRANSITION TO UNIVERSITY COMPETITIVE SPORT.

Cardiff Metropolitan University

Prifysgol Fetropolitan Caerdydd

Certificate of Student:

By submitting this document, I certify that the whole of this work is the result of my

individual effort, that all quotations from books and journals have been

acknowledged, and that the word count given below is a true and accurate record of

the words contained (omitting contents pages, acknowledgements, indices, tables,

figures, plates, reference list and appendices).

Word Count: 11,950

Date: 20/03/2014

Certificate of Dissertation Supervisor Responsible:

I am satisfied that this work is the result of the student's own effort.

I have received a dissertation verification file from this student

Name: _____

Date: _____

<u>Notes:</u>

The University owns the right to reprint all or part of this document.

<u>TABLE OF CONTENTS</u>

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

CHAPTER SEVEN: REFERENCES

CHAPTER EIGHT: APPENDICES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to primarily thank my dissertation supervisor, Dr David Wasley, for his guidance, and knowledge over the previous few months whilst helping me to produce this dissertation.

Secondly, I would like to thanks the participants who took part in this study, giving in depth answers throughout their interviews.

Finally, thank you to my close friends and family who assisted me emotionally and psychologically throughout this period

.

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify whether team or individual sport participation facilitates the transitional experience of moving to university. The second aim was to examine differences between social support patterns of team and individual athletes over the course of a transition to university, identifying changes that occur as a result of this transition. The final aim was to determine which sporting participation (team or individual) elicits more positive mood during transition. To gain firm understanding of social support patterns and mood profiles, a mixed-method approach was employed, including qualitative and quantitative research. Participants (n=10) were first year university students, participating in team (n=5) or individual (n=5) sport. Subjects completed a Profile of Mood States (POMS) questionnaire and Social Support Questionnaire-Short forms (SSQ6) prior to a single, semi-structured interview. POMS results revealed team athletes experienced higher levels of all mood subscales, however only anger and depression proved significantly different ($p < 0.05$). SSQ6 displayed no significant differences in the number of available support sources. However, individuals reported significantly higher levels of support satisfaction in two SSQ6 questions. Interviews revealed changes in independence and commitment as a result of moving to university, finding all participants valued social support in a similar manner. Findings recognise coaches and universities must be better educated within the domain of social support, and made aware of issues student-athletes face when moving to university. Education needs to focus on appropriate types of social support required from student-athletes during transition to university

.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Sports psychologists are commonly faced with issues regarding the coping strategies utilised by student-athletes in the initial stages of moving to university. University student-athletes are likely to experience a variety of unique challenges and conflicts the non-athlete student is likely to be exempt from (Harrison & Lawrence, 2004) such as, struggling to balance academic, social and athletic lifestyles (Patrikksson, 1994). Murphy (1995) proposed that "difficult choices are made in this career area, which is universally encountered by athletes, however dealt with differently by each individual".

The concept of transitions is becoming a well delineated topic of study among sports psychologists (Wylleman et al., 2004a). Expansion of literature has prevented an official definition of "transition" emerging. However, Schlossberg (1981) described a transition as an event or non-event, resulting in changes in assumptions about oneself and the world, requiring a corresponding change in one's behaviour and relationships.

During previous decades, research into career development of talented athletes has evolved into an emergent topic of study within sport psychology (Wylleman et al., 2004b). The academic development of athletes has been brought to the forefront of research, due to the importance placed on optimal development of these athletes (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2000). Several studies have suggested a transition to university results in students experiencing isolation, and loss of identity (Scanlon et al., 2007; Peel, 2000), thus perceiving this transition to be of negative nature. However, positive effects of this transition have also been noted, such as increased independence, freedom, and development of new social networks (Peel, 2000; Cameron, 2005). Increased importance placed on student-athlete transitions led Johnston and Carroll (1998) to propose the received and perceived support from coaches, family, peers, and significant others to be 'beneficial in assisting athletes through transitions'.

Little agreement among exact definitions of social support exists. However, Brownell and Shumaker (1984) describe social support as an 'exchange of resources between two individuals, perceived by the provider or recipient to enhance the well-being of the recipient'. Sarason et al., (1990) further defined social support as 'knowing that one is loved, and others will do all they can when problems arise'. This definition fails to state the

provider of support, and delineates the types of assistance that can be delivered. Both definitions are vague, and limited in providing in-depth understanding of social support. Research has begun to refine social support definitions, creating a deeper understanding of mechanisms surrounding the concept of support. Hunt (2011) defined social support as a transactional, communicative process, including verbal and/or non-verbal communication, to improve individual feelings of coping, competence, and esteem.

Social support is multidimensional, and consists of three main dimensions: structural (i.e., existence of social ties), perceptual (i.e., amount and quality of available support), and functional support (Holt & Hoar, 2006). Functional support refers to types of social support protecting people from negative effects of stressors (Jowett & Lavallee, 2007) and consists of four types: Emotional, Esteem, Informational, and Tangible support. Hunt (2011) recently defined these in the following ways: emotional support is a form of communication that meets individual emotional or affective needs; esteem support involves convincing individuals they have the ability to confront difficult problems; informational support involves providing the recipient with useful, or needed information to overcome stressful situations; and tangible support refers to physical assistance provided by others such as transport or financial support.

Munoz et al., (2011) proposed "phase-appropriate matched support leads to improved physical and psychosocial outcomes". Thus, matching the type of social support to needs of athletes' will effectively improve an athletes' transitional experience of moving to university, and have a positive effect on their mood. In turn, the psychological changes, in relation to mood, that occur as a result of a transition to university are of interest to researchers.

"Physical activity is an important public health tool used for treatment and prevention of physical and psychiatric diseases" (Peluso & Guerra De Andrade, 2005). This phenomenon is frequently noted in literature (Buckworth et al., 2002; Jonas & Phillips, 2009; Leith, 1994). Conversely, it is noted in previous research physical activity can also be associated with impaired mental health and negative affect, due to stressors such as excessive exercise and overtraining (Peluso & Guerra De Andrade, 2005; Steptoe et al., 1989). Nonetheless, engaging in a healthy, active lifestyle contributes to both physical and psychological health (Poudevinge & O'Conner, 2006). This conflict of literature has served

the exploratory function of generating research into relationships between exercise and mood states (Leith, 1994).

Mood is defined as a host of transient, fluctuating, and affective states, further categorised as having positive or negative affect of varied durations (Berger et al., 2002). Positive affect refers to individual levels of congenial engagement with the environment (Leith, 1994), said to release changes such as sense of accomplishment, improved self-worth, and concentration (Weinberg & Gould, 2006). In contrast, negative affect reflects individual levels of distress within an environment, identified through behaviours such as anger, tension, and distrust (McIntyre et al., 1990). With regard to student-athlete's health, the importance of mental health is viewed as secondary to physical health, in terms of importance, with research suggesting suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students (Thompson and Sherman, n.d).

1.2 Aims

The primary motivator of this study results from scarcity of qualitative studies (Drahota & Eitzen, 1998; Parker, 1994), and lack of attention to mixed-method research designs. Attention of literature must be turned to the university student-athlete, as they move away from family, combine academic and athletic lifestyles, change support networks, and uphold a social life.

Future importance lies within those whom the athlete turns to for support during this transition, including types of available received and perceived support, and effects this may have upon the athlete's moods, focusing on the four types of functional support.

The purpose of this study was to examine differences between team and individual student-athlete social support patterns during transitions to university sport. This study also aims to determine which sporting participation (team or individual) elicits greatest positive mood as a result of the transition, with an overall intention of identifying whether participation within a team or an individual sport best facilitates this transition.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Mood

Modern populations are under increasing levels of stress, negative emotions and mental health risks. The Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, London Times (2003) reported mental illness in England costs the government £77 billion. This is more than the cost of crime (£60 billion) and the NHS (£54 billion). In light of this, researchers are constantly looking for the most effective and appropriate treatment for mental health disorders. The World Health Organisation proposed that depression will be the leading cause of death and disability by 2020 (Murray & Lopez, 1997).

Undergraduate university students encompass a large proportion of the UK population. Their health and well-being is critically important, with many lifestyle-related behaviours being formed during this time (Steptoe et al., 2002). Hussain et al., (2013) stated 21.3% of first year undergraduate students often felt unhappy or tearful, and 8% had received a diagnosis of depression or anxiety. Conducted in rural Australia, this study lacks generalizability in occurrence with British undergraduate students, as cultural differences may be present. Hafen et al., (2008) however, found 30% of first year undergraduate veterinary students scored above clinical cut-offs for depression, and Eisenberg et al., (2007) concluded 15.6% of 2785 students tested positive for depression and/or anxiety. Biro et al., (2011) also reported that female students score worse in psychological distress. Hussain et al., (2013) makes use of cross-sectional surveys, with no longitudinal data available to assess variations in self rated health. Therefore, a longitudinal study, conducted across several institutions would be of increased value in gaining in-depth information. Eisenberg et al., (2007) only utilised a sample from one university, thus limiting generalizability of the findings, as issues presented in these studies may differ across other institutions. It is vital to be aware of the types of mental health problems studied throughout these studies. For example, Eisenberg et al., (2007) focused on depression, anxiety and suicidality, and did not examine a full range of mental health problems prevalent in student populations.

It is clear that the mental health of undergraduate student populations give cause for concern. Not only due to the substantial burden of disease, but because adolescence has been linked to onset of a considerable proportion of mental health disorders diagnosed during adulthood, and is linked to lifelong mental illness (Gore et al., 2011; Patel et al., 2007; Thapar et al., 2012).

Physical Activity is renowned for its positive psychological effects on mood, with a broad spectrum of literature acknowledging this relationship (Buckworth et al., 2002; Jonas & Phillips, 2009; Leith, 1994). These positive effects can mediate the determinants of individual participation in physical activity (Buckworth et al., 2002). Mood fluctuations have been studied in a multitude of settings, and substantial experimental and anecdotal evidence supports changes in mood states, as a result of exercise (Biddle, 2000).

Participating in regular physical activity may assist in achieving emotional balance (Gore et al., 2001). More recently, the mental health benefits reaped from team sport involvement have been highlighted. Gore et al (2001) stated team sport involvement provides a protective resource largely separate from other defensive sources, such as parental support. Therefore, students may experience a more positive transitional experience in the early stages of university, when involved in a team sport. Terry and Carron (2000), making use of the Profile of Mood States-C (McNair et al., 1981) explored relationships between perceptions of team cohesion and mood responses in athletes, identifying positive relationships between team cohesion and mood, highlighting lower levels of depression, anger and tension. Profile of Mood States (POMS) is a well-established method for assessing mood in the exercise domain. However, the fact this study required athletes to fill in questionnaires in locker rooms may have influenced their results. Filling in questionnaires so close to competition can be seen as an invasion of privacy; leading athletes to give untruthful answers, and results being open to several confounding variables. Samples of these studies do not represent undergraduate student-athlete populations, therefore generalising results from high school (Gore et al., 2001) to undergraduate university students is likely to produce biased results. The above studies coincide with the hypothesis produced by Terry and Carron (2000), stating individuals who perceive discrepancies in their personal relationship with the team are more likely to experience negative effect such as tension and depression (Terry & Carron, 2000). Further research is required to investigate the effects of individual sporting involvement in relation to protection and prevention of negative mood, thereby enabling a comparison to be made with team involvement. With regards to mental health of undergraduate university students and its relationship with physical activity, little research has been conducted.

Ahmadi et al., (2002) reported engaging in individual sports such as body building and swimming reduced depression in female students. Toskovic (2001) also found that students participating in Taekwondo reported lower levels of depression when compared with a control group. Tyson et al., (2010) further investigated this relationship in a sample

of 100 undergraduate university students at the University of Gloucestershire, using a Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS), and Physical Activity Questionnaire (PAQ). Team or individual sport involvement is unknown in this study, and the utilisation of PAQ holds several limitations. PAQ has a 'ceiling' on its measurement scale, meaning that abnormally high scores may distort the group's mean data (Kowalski et al., 1997). However, prevention of influential outlying scores that may arise is strength of this measure (Kowalski et al., 1997). PAQ also does not provide frequency, intensity or time information about physical activity levels, and its self-report nature may lack accuracy due to the influence of social desirability (Kowalski et al., 1997).

Consistent with the results of the above two studies (Ahmadi et al., 2002; Toskovic, 2001), Tyson et al., (2010) revealed that as physical activity levels increased, self-reported anxiety and depression decreased. This study is one of very few that explored the benefits of physical activity on mental health within a university population. One major limitation of this study is the results do not conclude a cause or effect relationship. It is therefore inaccurate to say the decreased levels of anxiety are directly due to higher levels of physical activity. It could be as the individual becomes more depressed and anxious, they are less likely to participate in physical activity.

Research provides great understanding into the mental health issues of student populations, and the psychological benefits of physical activity. Research has not explored the mental health issues of student-athletes' occurring as a result of the demands of their athletic-academic lifestyle. Rather than physical activity being beneficial to mental health, it may be that participating in university sport results in added stressors to the student-athlete, especially in the early months of their university experience, where a period of adjustment is undergone.

Based on existing literature, this study hypothesises those who participate in Team sport will have a better state of mental health in the initial period of university, due to their non-isolated sporting involvement and exposure to larger social networks.

A secondary hypothesis is enhanced levels of physical activity may in fact, have a detrimental effect on mood states of first year undergraduate student-athletes.

2.2 Transitional Process

The psychological aspects of a transition can get in the way of an athlete's career progress, and student-athletes may find their university years filled with important challenges (Petitpas et al., 1997).

The model of human adaptation to transition (Figure 1), proposed by Schlossberg (1981), is the most frequently employed theory of transition, highlighting three interacting factors. These factors include characteristics of the individual experiencing the transition, perception of the particular transition, and the characteristics of pre and post-transition environments (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2000).

TRANSITION
- Event or non-event resulting in change or assumption
- Change of social networks resulting in growth or deterioration

PERCEPTION OF THE PARTICULAR TRANSITION
- **Role change:** gain or loss
- **Affect:** Positive or Negative
- **Source:** Internal or external
- **Timing:** on-time or off-time
- **Onset:** Gradual or sudden
- **Duration:** permanent, temporary, or uncertain
- **Degree of Stress**

CHARACTERISTICS OF PRE/ POST-TRANSITION ENVIRONENT
- **Internal support systems:**
  -Intimate relationships
  -Family unit
  -Network of Friends
- **Institutional Support**
- **Physical Setting**

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INDIVIDUAL
- Psychosocial Competence
- Sex
- Age
- State of Health
- Race/Ethnicity
- Socioeconomic Status
- Value Orientation
- Previous Experience with a similar transition

ADAPTATION
- Movement through phases following transition: pervasiveness through reorganisation
- **Dependent on:**
  -Balance of individuals resources and deficits
  -Differences in Pre and Post Transition Environments

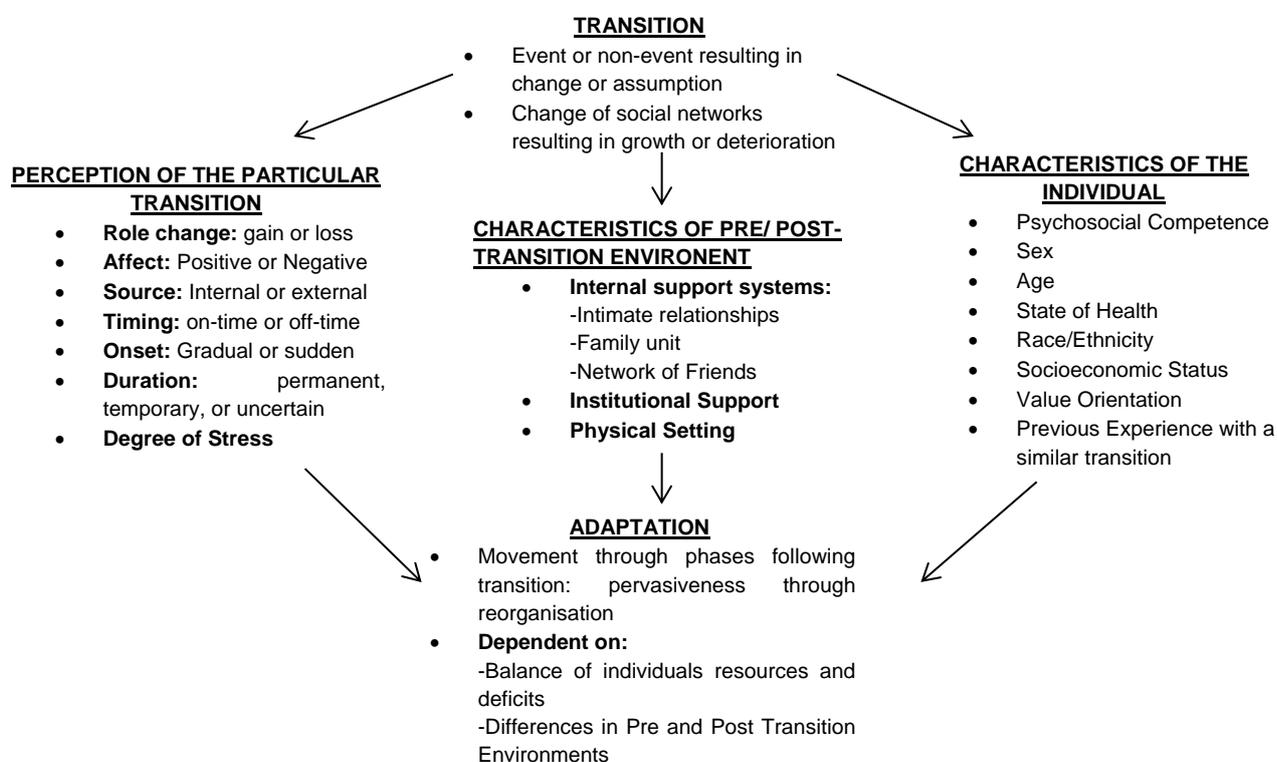Figure 1. Model of Human Adaptation to Transition (Schlossberg, 1981).

Sporting transitions have received considerable research attention over previous decades. The forefront of research has previously been directed at elite athlete's transitions out of competitive sports (Hatamleh, 2013; Stankovich et al., 2001; Ungerleider, 1997). More recently, increased importance is based upon optimal development of talented athletes,

and the transitions within athletes' educational and athletic environments (Wylleman et al., 2004a).

2.21 Transition to University

Transferring from college to university is not a new phenomenon and students must negotiate new roles and relationships to become fully integrated into the new institution (Cameron, 2005). During this period of negotiation, students, due to uncertainty, alter their routines and relationships, and adapt to new environments (Cameron, 2005).

Three major stages of transition are identified, based on difficulties students experience when becoming incorporated into university life (Tinto, 1993). Initially, students distance themselves from their previous lifestyle, then upon arrival at university; a sense of belonging is experienced, accompanied by feelings of stress, loss and bewilderment (Cameron, 2005). Finally, students must find additional normalities and comfort in their new environment (Tinto, 1993).

With regards to Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory, Cameron (2005) explored the experience of nursing students undergoing a transfer from college to university. Results revealed during their first and second semester, grade report averages declined. Students were content with their decision to transfer to university; however, did not have a satisfactory social life, and the transition was not smooth. In addition, Scanlon et al., (2007) found students experience loss of identity during the initial transition to university. Cameron (2005) used questionnaires to determine students' experiences of transferring from college to university. However, students transferred mid-degree to complete their final year at the university; already having good understanding of the work rate required, thus may not have undergone similar stressors to first year student-athletes. The use of questionnaires may have been subject to biases, such as social desirability, where respondents may alter responses in the direction they perceive to be desired by the investigator.

It is believed students develop an opinion of university prior to their move, with isolation being identified as a major issue for new pupils (Peel, 2000), along with a greater degree of independence and freedom. Peel (2000) and Cameron (2005) demonstrate findings from American and Australian institutions. Students, across countries, are likely to undergo various experiences during their transition to university, presenting an issue with cross cultural generalizability. These studies do not use a sample representative of student-

athletes, who spend more hours per week with teammates and coaches, and are said to quickly develop new social networks; facilitating their transition. In contrast, non-athlete students may not have had access to broad social networks during early stages of the transition.

Student-athletes are faced with two roles: academic student combined with that of an athlete, where conflict between these roles may occur (Wylleman & De Knop, 1999). Students may be under pressure from peers and coaches to choose between an academic and a sporting lifestyle. For example, coaches feel an athlete cannot fully apply themselves to high-level sport if involved in academic study (Wylleman & De Knop, 1999). Due to this combined role, student-athletes may experience issues such as impaired development of relationships and de-motivation to perform academically and athletically (Wylleman % De Knop, 1999).

The transitional experience of student-athletes moving to university is evidently providing interest within research, with new themes emerging such as conflicting roles, and broader social networks facilitating transitions. However, research fails to identify differences between team and individual student-athlete experiences, raising query whether team or individual sport participation promotes more positive transitional experiences. Such differences may be due to the psychological process of athletes, for example, the concept of social support.

2.3 Social support

The importance of social support in the maintenance of health and wellbeing has become an increasingly interesting concept for scientists and practitioners within behavioural science and medical disciplines (Cohen et al., 2000).

The multi-dimensional nature of social support, as seen in Figure 2 below, provides a concrete framework for investigating the extent to which different types of social support facilitate coping strategies of student-athletes undergoing a transition to university.

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│        Social Support Dimensions        │
│                                         │
│  Structural    Functional    Perceptual │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                    ⇓
┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐
│  Moderator   │   │ Social Support        │   │  Moderator   │
│  Culture     │⇒  │     Mechanisms        │ ⇐ │ Personality  │
│  Social      │   │                       │   │ Development  │
│  Context     │   │ Main Effect  Buffering│   │              │
│              │   │              Effect   │   │              │
└──────────────┘   └──────────────────────┘   └──────────────┘
                    ⇑
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│    Instrumental & Relational Outcomes   │
│                                         │
│          Injury Rehabilitation          │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
```
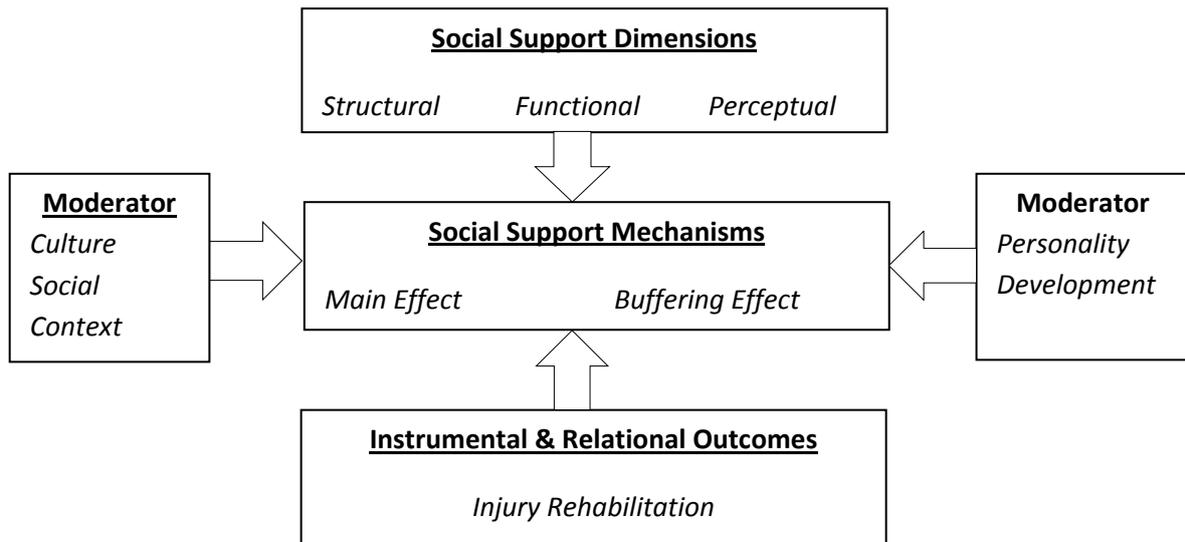
Figure 2. Conceptual Model of Social Support Processes (Holt and Hoar, 2006).

Numerous studies have demonstrated positive correlations between social support and well-being, identified through two principal models. Firstly, the Stress Buffering Model (Cohen & Wills, 1985), distinguishing between structural and functional support (Roeckelein, 2006), proposing individuals are protected from harmful and stressful situations by high levels of social support. However, is considered irrelevant for those not experiencing any form of stress (Jowett & Lavallee, 2007). In quest of the reliability of the Stress Buffering hypothesis, Cohen and Wills (1985) reviewed over 40 correlational studies on the protective nature of social support against life stressors. They found consistent evidence for this hypothesis, where perceived social support was matched to individual needs caused by the stressful event (Cohen et al., 2000). Emotional and esteem support also provided protection against stressful events (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Received support was less important than the perception of the availability of support for the facilitation of health and adjustment to situations (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Recent research supports the findings of Cohen and Wills (1985), where functional measures provide a buffering effect against stressful events related to psychological distress (Vaux, 1988; Wills, 1991).

The second model, the Main Effect Model (Cohen & Wills, 1985), proposes high levels of social support from large social networks provide beneficial effects for the recipient, associated with overall well-being, including improved self-worth, and personal control

(Cohen & Wills, 1985; Jowett & Lavallee, 2007). The Main Effect Model states integration in a social network, network size and frequency of social contact, are all beneficial in helping to avoid negative life experiences (Jowett & Lavallee, 2007), predicting social support has a direct effect on sporting performance.

Social Support is linked to increased feelings of team cohesion and team motivational climate (Weinberg & Gould, 2006). In light of this, literature has focused mainly on social support around team environments (Agata, 2012; Stuntz et al., 2011). Literature proposes that individuals who participate in activities involving others and larger societies possess a better state of mental health than those regarded as 'isolated' (Bell et al., 1982; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Miller & Ingram, 1979). Research has identified differences between male and female perceived social support from their coaches and peers, with males experiencing higher levels of perceived social support (Agata, 2012; Stuntz et al., 2011). However, samples lack generalizability, with female students in the above study having only recently attended the school, thus receiving little social support. These sex differences suggest it is not valid to generalise findings of one sex to another, giving motive for the current study focusing on female student-athletes alone.

Previous literature warns examining social support in an isolated manner limits its influence (Eys & Burke, 2008). This research has been harvested by quantitative studies, focusing on one dimension, or one provider of support, generally targeting non-student-athletes or non-athletes (Hassell et al., 2010). Different sources of social support serve numerous functions, and thus unrealistic to consider one aspect of support alone. Perceptions of social support, in conjunction with levels of satisfaction with this support must be considered, providing insight into nature and quality of perceived available support (Eys & Burke, 2008). Research must progress forward looking upon social support as a multi-dimensional construct. This was done by Hassell et al., (2010) exploring multiple dimensions of social support on nine elite, female adolescent swimmers. Coaches were the main providers of all forms of support, with peers providing affiliation, and parents providing self-worth as a result of emotional support. However, participants were self-selected, perhaps eliciting biased data, and unrepresentative of the target population.

Social support has been the most frequently studied psychological resource and described by Cohen et al., (2000), alongside stress and coping, as one of the three most significant constructs in mental health research. However, scholars fail to explore multi-dimensional

constructs of social support, with regard to its outcome in female adolescent, elite sport (Hassell et al., 2010), with minimal research conducted during early stages of university.

The primary aim of this project, as a result of previous literature, was to gain understanding into the nature of academic transitions of female student-athletes, assessing how athletes are supported throughout this period. Another aim is to highlight differences in social support and mood profiles between team and individual sports during this transition.

.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Methodology

This study utilises a mixed-methods approach, involving qualitative and quantitative research, to obtain deeper analysis of the social support networks and mood profiles of collegiate athletes. Blending qualitative and quantitative research methods, the final product produced can benefit from the contributions of both approaches (Nau, 1995). The study is based upon an already existing hypothesis, allowing new themes to emerge through the collection of data (Gratton & Jones, 2010).

3.1 Participants

To obtain participants for this study, 10 female athletes were purposefully selected from Cardiff Metropolitan University. Patton (1990) states different strategies can be used to purposefully select participants, enabling the research question to be fully addressed. This study employs criterion sampling, involving selecting participants based on a pre-determined criterion of importance (Patton, 2002).

All participants were aged between nineteen and twenty-one (mean= 20.1, SD= 0.74), and involved in a variety of competitive team [Hockey, Netball, Football, and Cricket, n=5], and individual sports [Hammer, swimming, Gymnastics, and Long Distance running n=5]. Ilyasi and Salehian (2011) identified considerable differences in personality traits between team and individual sports. Only students in their first year of university were selected, due to their recent transition of moving to university. Subjects were required to classify themselves as injury free, to prevent any influence on their mood profiles.

3.2 Measures

Two quantitative measures were used to inform the interview guide. The Profile of Mood States (POMS) developed by McNair et al., (1981), was used to assess participant's moods and feelings during their first term of university (Appendix F). The POMS questionnaire comprises of five negative mood scales (tension, depression, anger, fatigue, and confusion) and one positive mood scale (vigour), (Mc Nair et al., 1981). POMS contains 65 self-report items based on a 5-point Likert scale. Participants are required to identify how they are feeling in relation to each item. POMS has suffered previous criticism from several researchers, for only including one positive mood scale (Biddle, 2000). However, it has been widely used for measuring mood adjustment in social, (Davison & Parrott, 1997) and exercise settings (Steptoe & Cox, 1988), being the most appropriate test of mood in relation to exercise, due to high construct validity (Terry et al., 2003).

Equivalent measures of mood profiles and psychological responses are irrelevant to the current study, for example the Psychological Responses to Sport Injury Inventory, which is specific to sports injury only.

The second quantitative measure was the Social Support Questionnaire 6 (Appendix G) (SSQ6; Sarason et al., 1987). This is a 6-item questionnaire, which is a shortened version of the original SSQ (Sarason et al., 1983). The SSQ6 contains two parts; the number of perceived support persons (SSN) listed, and the level of perceived satisfaction with this support (SSS) (Sarason et al., 1983). Possible responses to the satisfaction of the support fall within a 6-point Likert scale ranging from (1) "Very Dissatisfied", to (2) "Very Satisfied". The SSQ6 is simple and straightforward in use, previously used by researchers in educational and exercise environments (Steptoe et al., 1996; Yang et al., 2010). SSQ6 demonstrates good internal consistency, test-retest reliability and concurrent validity (Sarason et al., 1987).

3.3 Interview Guide

An interview is defined as a meeting of two people to exchange information and ideas through a series of questions and responses, resulting in communication and joint construction of meaning about a particular topic (Janesick, 1998). Interviews are the most frequently used method of collecting qualitative data, due to being perceived as 'talking', which is a natural process (Griffee, 2005).

To achieve optimal results, retrospective and prospective semi-structured interviews were conducted during the participants' first term of their university experience. The aim of the retrospective interview was to allow participants to reflect back on their social support patterns and experiences prior to university. In contrast, the prospective part of the interview required participants to discuss their current social support networks.

Semi structured interviews are the most common form of interview in qualitative research (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010), openly exploring a topic, allowing interviewees to express their own opinions (Esterberg, 2002). Semi-structured interviews involve pre-prepared questions allowing flexibility for further enquiry. The utilisation of these interviews throughout this study represents high validity levels. Validity is an important factor within research methodology (Gratton & Jones, 2004), allowing enquiry to measure exactly what it is supposed to. Reliability, referring the consistency and repeatability of results (Gratton

& Jones, 2004) was also maintained throughout this study, through ensuring identical questions used for each participant.

The interview guide (Appendix D) was developed from previous literature and checked several times by the dissertation supervisor prior to the interviews being conducted, breaking it down into three sections, and ensuring all questions credible and suitable. The first section involved participant's general background information. Questions regarding level of participation, commitment, and training environment were included to gain a firm understanding of the athlete's general sporting lifestyle. The second section was centred upon the nature of the transition they experienced as a student-athlete moving to university, including critical questions regarding the transition in general, and in relation to their sport. The final section focused on the participant's past and present social support networks and experiences focused around their sport. Interviewee's were required to discuss their answers in a prospective and retrospective manner, and informed there was no right or wrong way to answer the questions. Probes and follow up questions were used throughout, to clarify responses and obtain additional relevant information.

3.4 Interview Procedure

Prior to the study, a pilot study was conducted to determine the study's feasibility, aiming to develop, refine and test the procedures used for measurement (Kumar, 2005). This assisted the researcher in becoming familiar with, and finalising the interview guide through changes and alterations.

Participants were recruited through word of mouth and email circulation, requesting willingness to participate. Upon willingness to participate, informed consent forms (Appendix B) were provided at the onset of the interviews to make subjects fully aware of the information that was wanted from them, the purpose of this information, and how they were expected to participate (Kumar, 2010). Informed consent forms were also used to identify possible risks and benefits that participants may have been exposed to (Gratton & Jones, 2010; Kvale, 2007). Subjects were made aware they maintained the right to withdraw at any point (Flick, 2011). Alongside informed consent forms, participant information sheets were provided (Appendix C), emphasising the role of the interviewer and interviewee, and outlining the nature of the study.

Interviews took place in a safe and confidential environment within the premises of Cardiff Metropolitan University and lasted between 25 and 40 minutes, ensuring consistency, and

no exposure to any physical or psychosocial risks (Knowles, 2014). All participant information remained confidential with the researcher alone, including participant names, which were altered so identification was not possible to readers (Flick, 2011).

Participants were interviewed face to face and tape recorded using a Dictaphone. Using a Dictaphone enables the interviewer to listen carefully to responses, allowing them to re-listen and paying attention to small details that may otherwise have been missed (Esterberg, 2002). Participants were provided with an introductory sheet, explaining the nature and involvement of the interview, together with a definition of terms sheet (See Appendix D). Definitions of types of social support were not provided to the interviewee, preventing indication of what responses were expected from the interviewee.

3.5 Questionnaire Procedure

To analyse the results of the POMS questionnaires, a table was formed containing scores for each mood state from 1-5 within each of the six sub-scales (Tension, Depression, Anger, Vigour, Fatigue, and Confusion). This was obtained by summing the totals of each sub-scale for both groups, and working out means. Total Mood Disturbance (TMD) was assessed by adding all negative mood state scores and subtracting the single positive mood state. TMD for each group was then established by calculating averages of all participants in each group. Values were compared and contrasted, to identify any differences in mood states between team and individual athletes, in their first term of university.

Analysis of the SSQ6 involved identifying mean and standard deviations of both groups, for each of the six questions, with regard to SSN and SSS. Following this, each participant's total number of people across all six questions was counted, and further divided by six (the number of questions), providing a total SSQ number score (SSQN) for each participant. To obtain satisfaction scores for each participant, scores for all six items were totalled and divided by six, to provide a SSQ satisfaction score (SSQS). Means and standard deviations (SD) for all participants were calculated, gaining overall means and SD for each group.

3.6 Data analysis

POMS and SSQ data were analysed using SPSS version 20. Significance was defined at $p < 0.05$. Descriptive and inferential statistics were performed on all raw data. Independent t-tests were implemented on both quantitative measures, to identify any significant

differences in mood states and social support patterns between team and individual student-athletes.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim (Appendix E), and labelled in an organised manner (Esterberg, 2002). Member checking took place (Miles & Huberman, 1994), seeking to improve credibility and validity of interview content (Barbour, 2001; Byrne, 2001; Doyle, 2007) through participants re-listening to their interview, ensuring accuracy. Interviews were repeatedly listened to and read, ensuring familiarity with the content and hard copies were printed out, which underwent a process of coding (Esterberg, 2002).

Interview data were analysed according to deductive content analysis (Patton, 2002), identifying key emergent themes from participant responses (Kumar, 2005). (Flick (2011) states that content analysis "aims at classifying the content of texts by allocating statements, sentences or words to a system of categories which are derived from previous theoretical models". (pp. 133). Emergent themes were placed into categories, which were compared and contrasted between groups. All themes are explained in the results and discussion chapters of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

4.0 Results

Results are the outcome of both quantitative measures utilised throughout this study; POMS and SSQ6. The POMS questionnaire aimed to find out whether any differences exist between team and individual athletes' mood following a recent transition to university. The SSQ6 aimed to identify any variances in the number of sources of social support used, and the satisfaction with such support between team and individual sports.

4.1 Profile of Mood States

Table 1 below displays the mean ± SD values for each of the six POMS subscales, also identifying differences between team and individual groups. Results indicate team athletes scored higher in all POMS subscales, however only two significant differences were present ($p<0.05$). Team athletes scored significantly higher in Anger and Depression scores when compared to individual athletes, suggesting team athletes underwent additional stressors during initial stages of university.

Table 1. Average ± SD values for team and individual athlete Profile of Mood States subscales.

POMS	Team	Individual	t	p
	n=5	n=5		
Anger	13.80 ± 10.30	4.40 ± 3.21	1.95	0.034*
Confusion	12.80 ± 4.49	7.40 ± 3.58	2.10	0.723
Depression	12.80 ± 13.33	1.80 ± 1.48	1.83	0.003*
Fatigue	13.40 ± 3.91	7.00 ± 6.78	1.83	0.269
Tension	15.40 ± 9.07	7.80 ± 3.83	1.73	0.217
Vigour	19.40 ± 4.67	19.2 ± 3.11	0.08	0.365
TMD	48.80 ± 35.67	9.40 ± 17.17	2.23	0.077

Notes: values are mean ± SD, *$p<0.05$ indicates statistically significant differences between groups.

4.2 Social Support Questionnaire 6

SSQ6 data are split into two sections; number of social support sources and satisfaction with these sources of support. Table 2 presents the mean ± SD values for each question asked within the SSQ6. Results demonstrate individual athletes reported a higher number of social support sources available to them, also proving to be more satisfied with this available support. No significant differences ($p<0.05$) were observed between team and individual number scores in any of the questions. However, significant differences ($p<0.05$) were found in question 3 and 4 for satisfaction scores, suggesting individual athletes felt more accepted and valued by their sources of support.

Table 2. Average ± SD values for team and individual SSQ scores.

	Team n=5	Individual n=5	t	p
SSQ Number Score				
QN1	6.00 ± 1.87	7.60 ± 1.34	-1.55	0.901
QN2	5.40 ± 2.30	5.80 ± 2.68	-0.25	0.468
QN3	5.60 ± 2.30	7.00 ± 2.12	-1.00	0.921
QN4	5.40 ± 2.30	7.00 ± 2.12	-1.14	0.921
QN5	5.40 ± 2.30	6.20 ± 1.92	-0.60	0.760
QN6	5.40 ± 2.61	6.40 ± 1.67	-0.72	0.428
SSQ Satisfaction score				
QS1	5.40 ± 0.89	5.80 ± 0.45	-0.89	0.095
QS2	5.20 ± 0.84	5.60 ± 0.55	-0.89	0.447
QS3	5.00 ± 1.41	5.60 ± 0.55	-0.89	0.008*
QS4	5.40 ± 0.55	6.00 ± 0.00	-2.45	0.000*
QS5	5.60 ± 0.55	5.80 ± 0.45	-0.63	0.252
QS6	5.20 ± 1.30	5.60 ± 0.55	-0.63	0.189

Notes: Values are mean ± SD, *$p<0.05$ indicates statistically significant differences between groups.

4.21 Total Social Support Scores

Figure 3 compares the mean ± SD for overall team and individual athletes' SSQ number and satisfaction scores, during their first term of university. SSQN reflects the mean number of collective social support sources, derived from all six questions within the SSQ6, whilst SSQS represents the mean satisfaction scores for team and individual athletes across all six questions. Figure 3 displays the results of both total SSQN and SSQS, demonstrating individual student-athletes scored higher in both sections. This

suggests individual athletes, upon commencement to university, experienced broader social networks, and were more content overall with their support available.

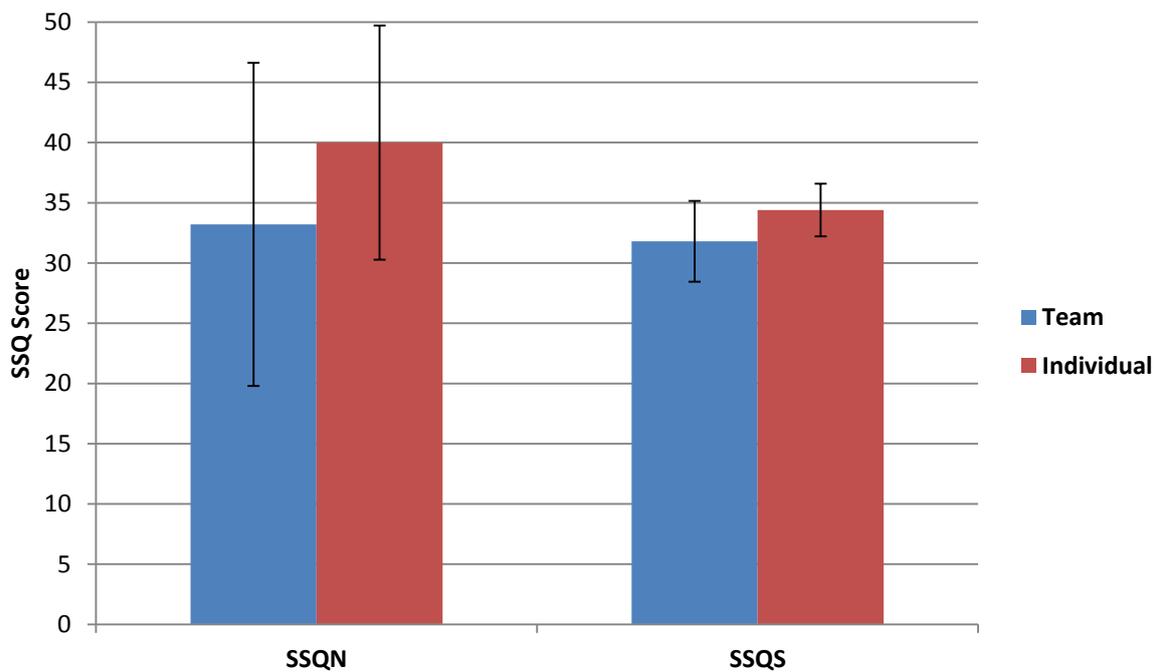## Comparison of Team and Individual Total Social Support Scores- SSQN/SSQS

Figure 3. Average ± SD values of SSQN and SSQS for team and individual athletes.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

<u>5.0 Discussion</u>

<u>5.1 Profile of Mood States</u>

POMS questionnaire aimed to identify mood states of student-athletes following a recent transition of moving to university. Mood states were compared between team (TE) and individual (IND) athletes, to determine which group boasted a more positive mental health state during early stages of university. This provides insight into whether participation within a team or individual sport best facilitates the student-athlete in their initial experiences of university.

Mental health of student-athletes is of crucial concern, with recent research indicating 21.3% of first year university students regularly experiencing feelings of sadness and emotional distress (Hussain et al., 2013). Research also identifies support for enhanced positive mood as a result of both team and individual sport participation (Ahmadi et al., 2002; Gore et al., 2001).

The current study hypothesised team athletes would maintain a better state of mental health due to exposure to larger social networks, and contradictory to common theory of 'endorphin releasing', psychological benefits of exercise, participation in university competitive sport may result in added stressors to student-athletes, resulting in negative mood within early stages of university.

Statistical analysis revealed Team participants scored higher in all six subscales of the POMS questionnaire, including Vigour. Two significant differences ($p < 0.05$) occurred for Anger (0.034) and Depression (0.003), thus demonstrating team athletes experienced significantly higher levels of depression and anger than individual athletes during first term of university, directly opposing the hypothesis of this study. Consequently, these results insinuate a less positive transition was undergone by team athletes upon entrance to university.

Depression in undergraduate students is not a new phenomenon, with Hafen et al., (2008) reporting 30% of 355 first year undergraduate veterinary science students scored above the clinical cut-off for depression. In agreement with this, Eisenberg et al., (2007) discovered 15.6% of 2,785 university students tested positive for depression. However, these studies do not utilise a student-athlete sample, therefore results are not fully applicable to the current study.

POMS questionnaire results from this study directly contrast literature produced by Gore et al., (2001) who suggested participation in team sport protects adolescents from feelings of negative affect, facilitating the experience of a transition. However, one possible explanation for this contradictory finding is several of the team participants reported feeling intimidated and separated from their university teammates. For example, TE 3 stated:

> *"At socials when everyone is really bubbly and gets on well, I sort of feel a bit shy and not myself. But perhaps that's just because I'm only in my first year"* (TE 3).

This gives reason to believe, due to the nature of the transition, where team athletes' compete with older, more dominant players; they may be more susceptible to negative emotions. This is in line with Toskovic (2001), who found Taekwondo student-athletes reported lower depression levels when compared with a control group. However, the control group did not partake in physical activity; therefore unreliable to assume Individual Taekwondo students experience lower levels of depression than team student-athletes.

Results found team athletes experienced higher levels of fatigue when compared with individual athletes (TE=13.40 ± 3.91; IND= 7.00 ± 6.78). These results are in agreement with Hussain et al., (2013), who stated fatigue was the most commonly reported health condition (56%) in 355 undergraduate university students. However, results were derived from non-athlete students, not accounting for differences between team and individual athletes. Mehdipoor Keikha et al., (2013) oppose this, suggesting individual student-athletes experienced higher fatigue levels on the week leading up to competition. Mehdipoor Keikha et al., (2013) however, does not focus on first year university students, therefore leaving results limited in significance for the current study. Explanation for fatigue differences in this study could be due to the increased standard of university sport reported during the interviews from several team participants. Whereas, individual athletes are likely to maintain similar training standards to pre university times.

There may be many underlying mechanisms as to why only two significant differences occurred in this study, the main reason being small sample size (n=10). Small sample sizes in which a non-significant difference is present may simply reflect lack of power rather than a substantive achievement (Bentler & Bonett, 1980). When these situations arise, demonstration of a significant increment in sample size would assure that data are adequate when performing statistical analysis (Bentler & Bonett, 1980). It is difficult to establish from this study whether participation within university sport elicits negative mood,

due to failure to utilise a control group. However, it is clear that subjects did experience a certain level of negative mood during initial stages of university adaptation.

5.2 Social Support Questionnaire 6

Numerous studies have documented a strong correlation between social support and its impact on well-being and emotional health (Caron et al., 2007; Hefner & Eisenberg, 2009; Kawachi & Berkman, 2001).

The SSQ6 solicits a two-part answer; SSQ number scores, and SSQ satisfaction scores. SSQ6 was used to discover which group perceived to have the highest number of social support sources available during university. SSQ6 was also utilised to gain understanding of overall satisfaction levels of support, comparing results between team and individual athletes. Enquiry within this domain is limited, this study being among the few to examine quantity of sources of social support, and degree of satisfaction with such support amongst university student-athletes.

Research making use of the SSQ6 reported social support holds strong associations with positive life changes, and facilitates an individual in persisting at a task under frustrating conditions (Sarason et al., 1983). It could be predicted social support is required to assist an athletes' experience of moving to university. Yang et al., (2010) used SSQ6 in a. university/athletic environment, to explore gender differences in social support patterns of 256 Collegiate Athletes. Male athletes reported higher quantities of social support sources than females, whereas females experienced greater satisfaction with support. No previous authors have compared these social support patterns among team and individual student-athletes.

Results of this study display no statistical differences (p<0.05) in number scores of each question between team and individual athletes. However, these results must be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size used. Although not statistically different, it is clear there are differences between team and individual athletes, with individual athletes reporting higher levels support sources across all six questions. Results may have been more significant if a larger sample size was employed like that of Hefner and Eisenberg (2009), who made use of 1,378 students.

Satisfaction scores presented two significant differences (p<0.05) for QS3 and QS4. Thus signifying individual athletes were significantly more satisfied with their available support than team athletes, suggesting individual athletes felt more valued as a person, and

believed to have a more intimate support network that they are able to rely on in all situations during their first term of university.

The individual group in this study demonstrate a higher overall number of social support sources throughout all six questions when compared with team athletes. Individual athletes also show higher total satisfaction scores when compared with team athletes.

Team athletes demonstrating higher levels of all 6 POMS subscales in the initial phases of university may have been a result of team athletes having lower numbers of social support, and less satisfaction with these sources available, compared with individual athletes. Hefner and Eisenberg (2009) reported university students who perceived a lower quality of social support were more likely to experience mental health problems, including depressive symptoms, relative to students who perceived to have high quality social support.

Findings of SSQ6 are not in agreement with the majority of existing literature, which states those who participate in team sport involving others and a larger society, were in a better state of mental health than those regarded as 'isolated' (Bell et al., 1982; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Miller & Ingram, 1979). Results of this study directly contrast this, proposing Individual student-athletes maintain better mental health states, with a superior level of satisfaction with available support.

From the quantitative measures utilised within this study, it can be predicted team athletes are exposed to a less positive transition when moving to university, susceptible to negative mood states, and higher total mood disturbance when compared with individual athletes. This adverse transitional experience is subject to team athletes having fewer available sources of social support during the initial stages of university that are not considered satisfactory.

5.3 Interviews

Content analysis of the interview transcripts resulted in three key themes emerging (Importance of social support, Utilisation of Functional social support, and Changes in social support patterns as a result of transition to university). During further analysis, several secondary themes also materialized within these themes. Each will be presented in turn, and discussed in depth, providing a comprehensive understanding of the specific findings that evolved. Findings will then be compared and reviewed in relation to previous relevant literature.

5.4 Importance of Social Support

Through analysis of the interviews, it appears both groups consider social support to be important to their sporting performance, confidence, and motivation. No major differences were found between groups regarding perceptions of the importance of social support.

TE 3 expressed their opinion of the significance of social support:

> *"It's really important for me, because as I said before, when it comes to hockey, my confidence is really bad, and so I feel I really need social support and almost rely on it to succeed, especially from my coach for encouragement"* (TE 3).

TE 2 stated *"If I didn't have the social support that I have had, then I probably wouldn't be here today. So it's really important to me"*. Both participants perceived social support to be crucial in their athletic successes. These findings are in line with previous research, suggesting social support facilitates performance. Rees et al., (2007), extended the work of Rees and Hardy (2004), through examining the main effects and stress buffering models of social support in relation to performance. Findings indicated across both models, 100 of 117 golfers experienced poor performance as a result of stress, yet associated social support with improved performance.

IND 1 reported the importance of social support from trusted individuals to enhance motivation levels, as opposed to enhancing performance:

> *"It's really important to me to be honest. But only off people I trust I think. Like my mum and my friends…whether it's just asking me about my training, or giving me motivation and stuff"* (IND 1).

Participants felt, in order for social support to be effective, it must be optimally matched to the stressor, with the perceived correct person to providing such support. As suggested by Munoz et al., (2011), where the transition is the stressor, matching social support to individual needs facilitates the transitional experience. IND 1 states social support from those whom they trust is considered important in enhancing motivation. IND 3 also confirms this theory, revealing *"It's really important for me, I have a really close family, and they are my main people who provide me with support, support of all kinds. I value it a lot, especially my family"*.

It became apparent, through analysis of the interviews, both team and individual athletes considered social support to be of equal importance, however, perceived important for difference uses. Team athletes cited social support necessary to succeed, whereas individual athletes benefited more through enhancement of motivation and confidence.

Social support is deemed important providing protection against harmful effects of stress, and has positive effects on athletes' health and well-being (Clement & Shannon, 2011). This stress buffering effect was considered important by both team and individual athletes in removing unnecessary distractions during competition, enabling athletes to focus primarily on performance. Tangible support as a stress buffer is most effective when the provision of aid is seen by the recipient as appropriate (Cohen & McKay, 1984). For example, TE 1 stated *"social support is very important...It's important for me so I can focus on my actual game instead of worrying about stuff outside of my game, so I guess it acts as a stress buffer".* IND 1 also discussed social support in relation to the stress buffering process: *"Two students from UWIC who I kinda know were there for me and helping with stuff like carrying my hammer, getting water, and anything I needed so I could focus fully on my performance".* According to Cohen and Wills (1985), Received support was less important than perceived availability of support when adjusting to certain situations. However, interview responses contradict this, stating received support, e.g. *"…helping with stuff like hammer…"* best facilitated the stress buffering process. However, participants only reported this importance on the day of competition. Therefore, lacking a full understanding of the stress buffering process during the student-athletes' day to day routines. Literature does exist within the Stress Buffering context, however many studies fail to distinguish between tangible and psychological support, thus confounding results, and not providing clear distinction between types of support best facilitating the stress buffering process.

Findings of this study coincide with the Main Effect model (Cohen & Wills, 1985), mainly with individual athletes only, with majority of individual participants reporting they preferred as much social support as possible. For example, IND 2 stated *"it is always a good thing if you have got as many people there for you as possible".*

IND 5 also suggests this:

> *"Having as many people around me providing me with support when moving to university definitely helped me to settle in quickly and get to grips with my new environment, by making me feel more confident and happy in myself"* (IND 5).

In contrast to the majority of individual athletes stressing the importance of having many people around them, only one Team athlete revealed this. This may be due to the dynamics of a team environment already containing large social networks, which athletes may not knowingly appreciate. Whereas individual athletes may feel more isolated, therefore thriving upon extra social support received, or perceived as available to them.

Both groups reported support from coaches or knowledgeable others as beneficial in increasing motivation and confidence. TE 3 stated:

> *"Generally it has had a good effect on me and my sport, because when I get positive feedback from him, it makes me happy and I think that I've played well, and boosts my confidence. But then if he tells me what I'm doing wrong I know what I've done and I can then improve that, and play better"* (TE 3).

IND 4 also reported *"the support from my friends who are highly experienced runners is very important, as it allows you to share experiences and gain advice. I really value social support from them; it's a great motivator, and also an emotional release".* This is in line with previous research, suggesting coaches were the main providers of all forms of support for nine female adolescent swimmers (Hassell et al., 2010). Weiss (2004) proposed that regular instruction by coaches, to enhance performance, informs athletes they have the ability to improve, thus enhancing motivating. Three out of five team athletes reported the standard of coaching, and support from their coach improved when moving to university suggests these team participants experienced a more positive transition. This is in light of previous research demonstrating the coach as a primary source of social support.

Another similarity found between groups was when athletes received no support; feelings of isolation and negative mood were reported. IND 5 stated *"when I came to university, I found initially I lacked any social support; this definitely knocked my confidence and made me a bit withdrawn at training and stuff".* This is in agreement with Scanlon et al., (2007),

and Peel (2000), both reporting a loss of student identity during the initial transition to university. IND 3 also conveyed:

> *"I think when I've competed on my own in long distance events I have found it difficult and harder to access support because there was no one with me doing the race. So I guess I lacked social support then...I didn't perform as well because I didn't have the support"* (IND 3).

A similar statement was made by TE 2:

> *"My first training session at uni, I didn't really know anyone or the coaches, so there were no comments made on performance, and it was a bad time for me support wise...I felt lonely at the time, having no support I just kept performing badly, I didn't have anyone to tell me what I was doing wrong, I felt quite down and had a negative effect on me"* (TE 2).

It became apparent when moving to university, both groups found themselves within the second major stage of transition (Tinto, 1993), where feelings of stress and loss are experienced, which were potentially heightened due to lack of social support available within their sporting environment. Mattanah et al., (2010) agreed during the initial period of university, students face a number of challenges, which included isolation and developing new social networks. It may be suggested this lack of social support available in the initial phases of university resulted in a negative transitional experience for both team and individual athletes in relation to their sport. However, it cannot be assumed participants had the same experiences in their social and academic lifestyle.

It was originally hypothesised that a difference in importance of social support would exist between team and individual athletes; however it appears both groups perceived social support to be of equal importance.

5.5 Utilisation of Functional social support

Functional support is categorised into four specific types (informational, tangible, emotional, and esteem support) and refers to perceptions of availability, content, and purposes of support (Tuliao, 2008).

<u>5.51 Informational Support</u>

It was found both team and individual athletes relied on informational support to enhance confidence and improve performance when received from knowledgeable others, such as athletic coaches. TE 3 stated *"Now I'm at uni...I get better support from my coach, as he is at a much higher standard. He's really good for instructional support mainly"*. IND 1 describes coach informational support as fundamental for performance development, reporting *"His main support though I guess, is in the form of instructions, and guidance on my training programme and techniques. As an individual athlete this is crucial, as I don't have other team members to compare myself to"*. This suggests individual athletes rely on coach support more in order to improve, due to the isolated nature of the sport. In contrast, team athletes perceived coach informational support beneficial in reassuring their ability. For example, TE 4 reported *"the coach would just point out good things, as well as bad things, like saying you're doing really well at this"*. In agreement, Rhind (2012) explored perceptions of coach-athlete relationships in team and individual sports, finding individual athletes felt closer and more committed to their coach than team athletes, believed to be result of individual athletes spending more time with their coaches, acting frequently on a one to one basis. However, individual training environments differ, thus generalising findings across different sports has to be done with caution, and careful consideration taken into the dynamics of that particular sport.

Both groups reported reliance on coach informational support during times of poor performance. For example, TE 4 stated *"I'd rely mostly on the coach, obviously cos they'd know what needed to be improved on, and could help explain why the performance wasn't going so well"*. IND 4 demonstrated this view, informing the interviewer *"my friend, as I said previously, she is also a runner, and so she can pick up on parts of my training that I may need to improve upon, and also my techniques"*.

It is apparent both team and individual athletes rely mainly on coaches, or significant others for informational support. However, the way in which they interpret this information differs. Team athletes utilise this support for reassurance, whereas individual athletes benefit in terms of performance enhancement. Athletes also reported coach informational support as important upon arrival to university; suggesting it facilitated their transitional experience, assisting athletes to re-gain any confidence that had been lost during the transition.

5.52 Tangible Support

In certain situations, individuals need material goods or actions to assist them in challenging circumstances (Hunt, 2011).

Team and individual athletes similarly reported, prior to university relying heavily on tangible support for transport and financial assistance. For example, TE 3 reported: *"I'd say I mainly relied on my mum for transport and financial reasons, like getting to and from training, and food and stuff"*. When the athletes had moved to university, a loss of this tangible support was reported, no longer reliant being on others. 'Independence' and 'freedom' were recurring themes throughout the interviews for both team and individual athletes, especially when asked to describe benefits associated with the transition to university. This was reported by TE 1 *"going to uni I could do whatever I wanted and stuff, I could go out and stuff, I just gained way more independence and freedom"*.

These findings are in line with both Peel (2000), and Clark and Hall (2010), reporting students benefited from an increase in independence when they moved to university. Loss of tangible support experienced by both team and individual athletes, although mainly by team athletes, was primarily due to ease of access to facilities. TE 3 stated: *"the facilities are right on the door step so it makes it easy for you and I don't have to rely on anyone else to get there or anything"*. Again, quotations must be interpreted with caution, as not all university students' benefit from such close facilities and may find difficulty in attending training at certain times.

5.53 Emotional Support

Taylor et al., (2003) referred to emotional support suggesting family and friends are the biggest influence on athletes, due to their strong social ties, considered unrelated to the athletes sport participation. Findings from the interviews are in agreement with this hypothesis. It became evident both team and individual athletes perceived to have constant emotional support from their family during university.

IND 1 stated:

> *"My mum is someone I can talk to about literally anything. Whether it's related to sport or not, she is always there for me and we're really close. She is probably the person I am closest to out of everyone. The rest of my family are there for me too when I need them though"* (IND 1).

This tended to be the general theme from all participants, reporting the importance of parental support when needed. Parental involvement and support is a powerful influence on the performance and participation of adolescents, and has been found perceived parental support is positively associated with enjoyment in sports participation, and also self-esteem (Leff & Hoyle, 1995).

A second emergent theme, in relation to emotional support, was since moving to university, participants relied on friends and team mates more for direct emotional support, whilst maintaining comfort that their family were always there. For example, TE 2 stated *"mainly my teammates now are the biggest source of social support for me, now that I'm in uni. My friends are good at supporting me when times are hard now"*, and *"the people I live with are really good and understanding, I tend to talk to them a lot about my emotional issues with hockey"* (TE 3). Individual participants, although did value friends for support at university, they did not report this as much, perhaps due to the isolated nature of individual sport.

5.54 Esteem Support

Esteem support, involving convincing individuals they have ability to confront difficult problems (Hunt, 2011), was reported several times throughout the interviews. It was found team athletes received esteem support from coaches prior to, and during university, far more than individual athletes. TE 2 stated *"coaches give me confidence prior to the competition, and telling me that I have got what it takes and stuff"*. TE 3 also disclosed:

> *"When I get positive feedback from him, it makes me happy and think that I've played well and boosts my confidence, but then if he tells me what I'm doing wrong, then I know what I've done and I can then improve that, and play better"* TE 3).

The main theme of coach esteem support was in the form of reassurance and confidence enhancement. According to Hassell et al., (2010), exploring social support among elite adolescent swimmers, coaches were one of the most prominent providers of esteem support, due to knowledge of the sport. However, this does not give reason to why individuals in this study did not report importance of esteem support from coaches, or knowledgeable others. A possible explanation is two individual athletes were long distance runners, and did not train with a coach, which may have affected findings.

5.6 Changes in social support patterns as a result of the transition to university

The final key emergent theme relates to changes that occurred as a result of the transition. The two main changes that arose were changes in independence, and the athlete's commitment levels upon commencement to university.

5.61 Independence and freedom

Four out of five team athletes reported an increase in independence when moving to university. All ten athletes had moved away from home, and were experiencing separation from their family. IND 5 revealed:

> *"When I started uni, I moved from Shropshire to Cardiff, so it's about a three hour drive. I found this difficult to deal with for the first few weeks and kind of aimed to go home every other week but I stopped myself from doing that and quickly settled into a new life"* (IND 5).

Although all participants underwent a similar transition, it was mainly team athletes reporting benefits of gaining independence and freedom as a result.

TE 5 described their move to university as *"I was worried about it to start with, but I definitely found that I enjoyed it, and preferred being at uni to living at home, and being more independent which I liked".* This theme is in line with the university system, designed to emphasise independent learning and empowerment (Burnett, 2010). Individual athletes did not report independence as significantly as team athletes. A possible explanation for this is they were already used to maintaining an independent training regime, and did not notice such an adaptation to the level team athletes did.

5.62 Commitment

The second change that occurred was change in sporting commitment levels when moving to university. Existing literature suggests sport enjoyment is the greatest predictor of an athlete's sporting commitment (Scanlan et al., 1993). This appeared the main difference present between team and individual athletes upon commencing university. Four out of five team athletes reported increases in sporting commitment since moving to university. TE 1 did not report this due to her semi-professional football status prior to university, thus experienced a drop in standard at university which affected commitment. TE 3 stated:

> *"I am definitely more committed now that I am in uni. With my club back home, we only trained once a week for an hour and a half, and then had a game on a Saturday. But now I train 3 times a week, and we also have 2 games a week"* (TE 3).

TE 2 was in agreement with this, revealing *"I would say I'm more committed since I've been at university. Because of the standard and how they make you train".* The main reason behind this change was down to ease of access to facilities, as opposed to possible links to changes in social support.

In contrast, four out of five individual athletes recorded either a decrease in commitment or no change since moving to university. For instance, IND 3 discusses their time issues; *"I now train less, mainly because it's difficult to balance uni work and training".* IND 2 also discusses loss of commitment, stating *"I probably can't commit to it as much as if I were at home… so I kind of did it more for the pleasure side and to keep fit".* A possible explanation for this is, although results of SSQ6 indicate individual athletes have more available social support, with a higher degree of satisfaction, it was clear from interviews individual athletes were moving away from those whom they trusted, and were close to within their sport, and no longer had access to these sources of support first hand, suggesting that lack of close social support affected commitment levels. For example, IND 1 revealed:

> *"My coach back home, who I am really close to, I think moving away from her isn't great, cos I don't have as much contact with her, even though she is there for me over phone and stuff or whenever I go home, but I won't see as much of her now, and cos she knows me and my throwing she gives me the best advice and stuff...The coaches here are good, but…I don't really have a good relationship with them like before"* (IND 1).

Due to the isolated nature of individual sports, individual athletes grow closer to their coaches, having a more one-to-one relationship. Therefore, moving away from this relationship, it is not surprising they experience loss of commitment. In contrast, team athletes reported an increase in coaching standard: *"the coaching has improved, they have like more experience, especially the coach I have, and she plays for wales as well, so she's got a lot of knowledge"* (TE 4). An improvement in social dynamics of university teams was also reported; *"socially as well I think it's a lot different to any of the clubs I've been at before, as you have weekly socials, and they're quite good, there's a lot of people*

your age too which is good" (TE 5). This is in line with Scanlan et al., (1993), proposing a positive relationship between enjoyment and sporting commitment. The above factors prove reason for team athletes reporting increases in sporting commitment upon commencement to university.

5.7 Practical Implications

The results of this study have led to important practical implications. Athletes should be encouraged to develop quality social support systems, offering potential for emotional and psychological enhancement. No initiative is set up within this institution assisting athletes in strengthening themselves emotionally and psychologically. It is believed "social support is important for elite athletes in reducing debilitating effects of transitions" (Petrie, 1993), proving social support necessary, ensuring positive relationships between stress and transitions to university. This can be done by educating lecturers and university staff on social support, and promoting mental health issues. Smith et al., (1990) suggested social support can be provided by over twenty different sources. This needs to be emphasized, to create more positive mental health among students. Previous literature is in agreement, identifying benefits social support interventions can elicit. Mattanah et al., (2010) explored effects of social support interventions to ease transitions to university, finding cost-effective intervention programs can positively affect students' adjustment to university, increasing levels of perceived social support and reducing loneliness.

Due to athletes reporting decreased coach contact at university, and less personal social support, it is necessary for athletic coaches to develop further understanding of athletes' previous history, nurturing psychological development, and athletic performance. Giacobbi et al., (2004) suggests stressors and individual development can be accomplished with team/athletic meetings, focusing on communication between team members, identifying transition challenges, or anticipated sources of stress. Coaches should also encourage enjoyment during training, creating a positive, healthy environment (Scanlan et al., 1993).

5.8 Strengths and Limitations

Results of this study offer valuable insight into how team and individual athletes respond to the transition to university, and how they utilise social support throughout. This study benefits from a mixed-method approach, an approach to knowledge attempting to consider a multitude of viewpoints (Johnson et al., 2007). Semi-structured interviews also give

strength to this study, enabling athletes to share responses in greater detail, and providing better understanding of the topic.

However, this study also suffered several methodological limitations. The sample size (n=10) may have affected quantitative results of SSQ6 and POMS, providing reason to why only two significant differences were present within each questionnaire, which is likely due to lack of power, rather than substantive achievement (Bentler & Bonett, 1980). Small sample sizes do not allow for generalisation across sporting and academic populations, and consideration is to be taken when applying findings to male subjects. A large section of the interview was retrospective and perhaps, due to memory decay, inaccuracies occurred when recollecting events.

This study relied on honesty, and reliability of participants, therefore certain biases, such as social desirability, and recall bias may have been present, impeding results. It is possible, due to lack of experience the interviewer possessed, despite undertaking pilot studies; they may have failed to draw upon deep understanding of athletes' transitional experience and social support perceptions. Finally, this study failed to use a control group to compare results against non-athlete students. In turn, this would have reduced error, self-deception and bias.

5.9 Future Recommendations

Taking into account the limitations of this study, further development within the student-athlete transitional domain would benefit from increased sample sizes to gain knowledge of a wider variety of team and individual sports. This would strengthen current emerging themes, and assist in identifying new themes that may not have been highlighted in the current study. Future research would benefit from pursuing longitudinal research, rather than retrospective investigation when identifying pre and post-university social support experiences. Thus, allowing researchers to identify more precise representations of social support during specific times of athletes' transitions.

Despite increased attention applied to psychological issues present among athletic trainers in educational settings, it is unclear whether they are fully equipped to deliver psychological support to athletes, and what services should be provided to benefit the student-athlete. Future research should be carried out investigating coach education, and extent to which they are able to educate an athlete in relation to psychological coping skills, to benefit the student-athlete's transition. Forthcoming research must be directed towards gaining deeper

understanding into mental health of university students, not only freshmen, but students in subsequent years of university, who are under an increased amount of stress due to workload and sporting responsibilities.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.0 Conclusion

This section looks to conclude the results from this study, identifying similarities and differences between social support patterns of team and individual student-athletes, throughout their transition to university competitive sport.

This study demonstrates individual athletes perceive to have more sources of social support available to them, and are more satisfied with this support. They are seen to be in a more positive state of mental health, experiencing lower levels of anger and depression when compared to team athletes. This suggests a positive relationship exists between perceived social support and mood profiles in female, undergraduate, student-athletes.

Three key themes were identified from the interviews; the importance of social support, utilisation of functional support, and changes that occurred as a result of the transition. All athletes valued social support throughout their transition, relying on functional support to assist them. All participants made use of informational, tangible, and emotional support at university in similar ways to pre-university times, reaping benefits such as improved performance and confidence. However, it became evident team athletes gained esteem support from coaches, whereas individual athletes relied more upon family and friends whom they held close relationships with. Finally, the main changes that occurred were that of independence and commitment. Team athletes reported increased independence far more than individual athletes, and stated they were more committed to sport at university, due increased training load, and improved coaching, whereas individuals did not report this.

Although this study did fail to identify substantial differences between team and individual athletes, it did identify types of social support student-athletes require to facilitate their transition to university, and the issues present throughout, providing clear direction for future research, and practical implications for universities.

CHAPTER 7

REFERENCES

<u>References</u>

Miller, P. and Ingram, J.G. (1979). Reflections on the life events to illness link with some preliminary findings. In Sarason, I.G. and Spielberger, C.D (Eds). *Stress and Anxiety.* New York: Hemisphere. 313-336.

Holt, N.L. and Hoar, S. (2006). The multidimensional construct of social support. In Hanton, S. and Mellalieu, S (Eds). *Literature reviews in sport psychology.* New York: Nova. 199-225.

(2003). Mental illness costlier than NHS; Social Care. London Times. Custom Newspapers Library Wales.

Agata, W. (2012). Relationships between competitive anxiety, social support and self-handicapping in youth sport. *Biomedical human kinetics*, 1(1), 72-77.

Ahmadi, J., Samavat, F., Sayyad, M. and Ghanizadeh, A. (2002). Various types of exercise and scores on the Beck Depression Inventory. *Psychological Reports*, 90(3), 821–822.

Barbour, R.S. (2001).Checklists for improving rigor in qualitative research: A case of the tail wagging the dog. *British Medical Journal*, 322(7294), 1115-1117.

Bell, R.A., LeRoy, J.B. and Stephenson, J.J. (1982). Evaluating the mediating effects of social supports upon life events and depressive symptoms. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 10(4), 325-340.

Bentler, P.M. and Bonett, D.G. (1980). Significance Tests and Goodness of Fit in the Analysis of Covariance Structures. *Psychological Bulletin*, 88(3), 588-606.

Berger, B., Pargman, D. and Weinberg, R. (2002).*Foundations of exercise psychology*. Morgantown, WV: Fitness Institute Technology.

Biddle, S. (2000). Exercise, Emotions and Mental Health. In: Hanin, Y.L. *Emotions in Sport*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics. 267-291.

Biro, E., Adany, R. and Kosa, K. (2011). Mental health and behaviour of students of public health and their correlation with social support: a cross-sectional study. *BMC Public Health*, 11(871), 1471-2458.

Brownell, A. and Shumaker, S.A. (1984). Social Support: An introduction to a complex phenomenon. *Journal of Social Issues,* 40(4), 1-9.

Buckworth, J., Dishman, R.K., O'connor, P.J. and Tomporowski, P.D. (2002). Affect, mood and emotion. *Exercise Psychology*, 5(1), 117-146.

Burnett, C. (2010). Student versus athlete: Professional socialisation influx. African Journal for Physical, *Health Education, Recreation and Dance*, 16(4), 193- 203.

Byrne, M.M. (2001). Evaluating the findings of qualitative research. *AORN Journal,* 73(3), 703-706.

Cameron, C. (2005). Experiences of Transfer Students in a Collaborative Baccalaureate Nursing Program*. Community College Review*, 33(2), 22-24.

Caron, J., Latimer, E. and Tousignant, M. (2007). Predictors of psychological distress in low-income populations of Montreal. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 98(1), 35–44.

Clark, J. and Hall, I. (2010). *Exploring Transition: The experiences of students at Newcastle University in their first year*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Centre for Learning and Teaching, Newcastle University.

Clement, D. and Shannon, V.R. (2011). Injured Athletes' Perceptions About Social Support. *Journal of Sport Rehabilitation*, 20(4), 457-470.

Cohen, S. and McKay, G. (1984). Social Support, Stress and the Buffering Hypothesis: A Theoretical Analysis. In: Baum, A., Taylor, S.E. and Singer, J.E. *Handbook of Psychology and Health*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. 253-267.

Cohen, S. and Wills, T.A. (1985). Stress, Social Support and the buffering hypothesis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 98(2), 310-367.

Cohen, S., Underwood, L.G. and Gottlieb, B.H. (2000). Social Relationships and Health. In: Cohen, S., Underwood, L.G., and Gottlieb, B.H. *Social Support Measurement and Intervention: A guide for Health and Social Scientists*. New York: Oxford University Press. 3-25.

Davison, D. and Parrott, A.C. (1997). Ecstacy (MDMA) in Recreational Users: Self-Reported Psychological and Physiological Effects*. Human Psychopharmacology: Clinical and Experimental*, 12(3), 221-226.

Doyle, S. (2007). Member checking with older women: A framework for negotiating meaning. *Healthcare for Women International*, 28(10), 888-908.

Drahota, J.T. and Eitzen, D.S. (1998).The Role Exit of Professional Athletes. *Sociology of Sport Journal,* 15(3), 263-278.

Eisenberg, D., Gollust, S., Golberstein, E, and Hefner, J. (2007). Prevalence and correlates of depression, anxiety, and suicidality among university students. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 77(4), 534–542.

Esterberg, K.G. (2002). *Qualitative Methods in Social Research*. USA: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

Eys, M.A. and Burke, S.M. (2008). Social Contacts and Cohesion in a group exercise context. In: Simmons, M.P. and Foster, L.A. *Sport and Exercise Psychology Research Advances.* Western Ontario, Canada: Nova Science Publishers. 191-205.

Flick, U (2011). *Introducing Research Methodology: A beginner's guide to doing a research project.* London: SAGE.

Giacobbi Jr, P.R., Lynn, T.L., Wetherington, J.M., Jenkins, J., Bodendorf, M. and Langley, B. (2004). Stress and Coping during the Transition to University for First-Year Female Athletes. *Sport Psychologist*, 18(1), 1-20.

Gore, F.M., Bloem, P.J., Patton, G.C., Ferguson, J., Joseph, V., Coffey, C., Sawyer, S.M, and Mathers, C.D. (2011). Global burden of disease in young people aged 10–24 years: a systematic analysis. *Lancet*, 377(9783), 2093–2102.

Gore, S., Farrell, F., and Gordon, J. (2001). Sports Involvement as Protection against Depressed Mood. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 11(1), 119-130.

Gratton, C. and Jones, I. (2010). *Research Methods for Sports Studies*. 2nd ed. USA and Canada: Routledge.

Gratton, C. and Jones, I. (2004). *Research Methods for Sports Studies*. London: Routledge.

Griffee, D.T. (2005). Research tips: interview data collection. *Journal of Developmental Education,* 28(3), 36-37.

Hafen, M.Jr., Reisbig, A.M., White, M.B. and Rush, B.R. (2008). The first-year veterinary student and mental health: the role of common stressors. *Journal of Veterinary Medical Education*, 35(1), 102–109.

Harrison, C.K. and Lawrence, S.M. (2004). Female and Male Student Athletes' Perceptions of Career Transition in Sport and Higher Education: a visual elicitation and qualitative assessment. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training,* 56(4), 485-506.

Hassell, K., Sabiston, C.M. and Bloom, G.A. (2010). Exploring the multiple dimensions of social support among elite female adolescent swimmer. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 41(4), 340-359.

Hatamleh, M.R. (2013). The life transitions of high performance athlete's retirement from sport. *European Scientific Journal*, 9(11), 336-353.

Hefner, J. and Eisenberg, D. (2009). Social Support and Mental Health among College Students. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 79(4), 491-499.

Holloway, I. and Wheeler, S. (2010). *Qualitative Research in Nursing and Healthcare.* 3rd ed. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Hunt, K. (2011). Linking Health Communication with Social Support. *Mattson's Health as Communication Nexus,* 1(6), 181-218.

Hussain, R., Guppy, M., Robertson, S. and Temple, E. (2013). Physical and mental health perspectives of first year undergraduate rural university students. *BMC Public Health*, 13(848), 1-11.

Ilyasi, G. and Salehian, M.H. (2011). Comparison of Personality Traits between Individual and Team Athletes. *Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research*, 9(4), 527-530.

Janesick, V. (1998). *"Stretching" exercises for Qualitative Researchers*. Thousand Oaks*,* CA: Sage.

Johnson, R.B., Onwuegbuzie, A.J. and Turner, L.A. (2007). Toward a definition of mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(1), 112-133.

Johnston, L. and Carroll, D. (1998). The context of emotional responses to athletic injury: A qualitative analysis. *Journal of Sport Rehabilitation,* 7(3), 206-220.

Jonas, S. and Phillips, E.M. (2009). *ACSM's Exercise is Medicine, A Clinician's Guide to Exercise Prescription.* Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

Jowett, S. and Lavallee, D. (2007). *Social Psychology in Sport.* USA: Human Kinetics. 223-231.

Kawachi, I. and Berkman, L.F. (2001). Social ties and mental health. *Journal of Urban Health,* 78(3), 458–467.

Knowles, Z. (2014). Sports Coaching. In: Neil, R., Hanton, S., Fleming, S. and Wilson, K. *The Research Process in Sport, Exercise and Health.* Oxon: Routledge.

Kowalski, K.C., Crocker, P.R.E. and Faulkner, R.A. (1997). Validation of the Physical Activity Questionnaire for Older Children. *Paediatric Exercise Science*, 9(1), 174-186.

Kumar, R. (2005). *Research Methodology: A step by step guide for beginners.* 2nd ed. London: SAGE.

Kvale, S. (2007). *Doing Interviews.* London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Leff, S.S. and Hoyle, R.H. (1995). Young athletes' perceptions of parental support and pressure. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 24(2), 187-203.

Leith, L. (1994). Foundations of Exercise and Mental Health. *Fitness Information Technology*, Inc; Morgantown.

Mattanah, J.F., Ayers, J.F., Brand, B.L. and Brooks, L.J. (2010). A Social Support Intervention to Ease the College Transition: Exploring Main Effects and Moderators. *Journal of College Student Development*, 51(1), 93-108.

McIntyre, C.W., Watson, D. and Cunningham, A.C. (1990). The effects of social interaction, exercise, and test stress on positive and negative affect. *Bulletin of the Psychonomic Society,* 28(2), 141-143.

McNair, D.M., Lorr, M. and Droppelman, L.F. (1981). *Manual for the Profile of Mood States.* San Diego, CA: Educational and Industrial Testing Service.

Mehdipoor Keikha, B., Yusof, S. and Jourkesh, M. (2013). A Comparison between Individual and Team Sport in temporal Patterns of Pre-Competition Profile of Mood States. *European Journal of Sports and Exercise Science*, 2(2), 12-17.

Miles, M.B. and Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*. 2nd Ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Miller, P.M. and Ingram, J.G. (1979). Reflections on the life events to illness link with some preliminary findings. In: Sarason, I.G. and Speilberger, C.D. *Stress and Anxiety.* New York: Hemisphere. 313-336.

Munoz, M., Bayona, J., Sanchez, E., Arevalo, J., Sebastian, J.L., Arteaga, F., Guerra, D., Zeladita, J., Espiritu, B., Wong, M., Caldas, A. and Shin, S. (2011). Matching Social Support to Individual Needs: A Community-Based Intervention to Improve HIV Treatment Adherence in a Resource-Poor Setting. *AIDS Behaviour*, 15(7), 1454 - 1464.

Murphy, S. (1995) 'Transitions in competitive sport'. In: Murphy, S. *Sport psychology interventions.* Champaign IL: Human Kinetics. 331-346.

Murray, C.J. and Lopez, A.D. (1997). Alternative projections of mortality and disability by cause 1990-2020: Global Burden of Disease Study. *The Lancet*, 349(1), 1498-1504.

Nau, D. (1995). Mixing Methodologies: Can bimodal research be a viable post positivist tool? *The Qualitative Report*, 2(3), available: www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR2-3/nau.html.

Patel, V., Flisher, A.J., Hetrick, S. and McGorry, P. (2007). Mental health of young people: a global public-health challenge. *Lancet*, 369(9569), 1302–1313.

Patriksson, G. (1994). *Significance of sport for society. Sport and physical activity as a socialization environment: a scientific review.* Unpublished.

Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. 2nd ed. USA: SAGE Publications.

Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Peel, M. (2000). 'Nobody Cares': The Challenge of Isolation in School to University Transition. *Australasian Association for Institutional Research Journal*, 9(1), 1-10.

Peluso, M.A.M. and Guerra de Andrade, L.H.S. (2005). Physical activity and mental health: the association between exercise and mood. *Clinics*, 60(1), 61-70.

Petitpas, A., Champagne, D., Chartrand, J., Danish, S. and Murphy, S. (1997). *Athletes Guide to Career Planning: Keys to Success from the Playing Field to Professional Life.* USA: Human Kinetics.

Petrie, T. A. (1993). Coping skills, competitive trait anxiety, and playing status: Moderating effects on the life stress-injury relationship. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 15(3), 261-274.

Poudveigne, M. and O'Conner, P. (2006). A Review of Physical Activity Patterns in Pregnant Women and Their Relationship to Psychological Health. *Sports Medicine.* 36(1). 19-38.

Rees, T. and Hardy, L. (2004). Matching social support with stressors: Effects on factors underlying performance in tennis. *Psychology of sport and exercise*, 5(3), 319–337.

Rees, T., Hardy, L. and Freeman, P. (2007). Stressors, social support, and effects upon performance in golf. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 25(1), 33-42.

Rhind, D.J.A. (2012). A Comparison of Athletes' Perceptions of the Coach-Athlete Relationship in Team and Individual Sports. *Journal of Sport Behaviour*, 35(4), 433-450.

Roeckelein, J.E. (2006). *Elsevier's Dictionary of Psychological Theories.* Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Sarason, I.G., Levine, H.M., Basham, R.B. and Sarason, B.R. (1983). Assessing social support: The Social Support Questionnaire. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 44(1), 127-139.

Sarason, I.G., Sarason, B.R. and Pierce, G.R. (1990). *Social Support: An Interactional View*. New York: Wiley.

Sarason, I.G., Sarason, B.R., Shearin, E.N. and Pierce, G.R. (1987). A brief measure of social support: Practical and theoretical implications. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 4(4), 497-510.

Scanlan, T.K., Carpenter, P.J., Schmidt, G.W., Simons, J.P. and Keeler, B. (1993). An introduction to the Sport Commitment Model. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology,* 15(1), 1-15.

Scanlon, L., Rowling, L. and Weber, Z. (2007). 'You don't have like an identity … you are just lost in a crowd': Forming a Student Identity in the First-year Transition to University. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 10(2), 223-241.

Schlossberg, N.K. (1981). A model for analysing human adaptation to transition. *The counselling Psychologist, 9(2),* 1-18.

Smith, R.E., Smoll, F.L. and Ptacek, J.T. (1990). Conjunctive moderator variables in vulnerability and resiliency research: life stress, social support and coping skills, and adolescent sport injuries. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 58(2), 360-370.

Stankovich, C.E., Meeker, D.J. and Henderson, J.L. (2001). The Positive Transitions Model for Sport Retirement. *Journal of College Counselling*, 4(1), 81-84.

Steptoe, A. and Cox, S. (1988). Acute Effects of Exercise on Mood. *Health* Psychology, 7(4), 329-340.

Steptoe, A., Edwards, S., Moses, J. and Matthews, A. (1989). The effects of exercise training on mood and perceived coping ability in anxious adults from the general population. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 33(5), 537-547.

Steptoe, A., Wardle, J., Cui, W., Bellisle, F., Zotti, A.M., Baranyai, R, and Sanderman, R. (2002). Trends in smoking, diet, physical exercise, and attitudes toward health in European university students from 13 countries, 1990–2000. *Preventive Medicine,* 35(2), 97–104.

Steptoe, A., Wardle, J., Pollard, T.M., Canaan, L. and Davies, G.J. (1996). Stress, social support and health-related behaviour: a study of smoking, alcohol consumption and physical exercise. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 41(2), 171-80.

Stuntz, C.P., Sayles, J.K. and McDermott, E.L. (2011). Same-Sex and Mixed-Sex Sport Teams; How the Social Environment Relates to Sources of Social Support and Perceived Competence. *Journal of Sport Behaviour*, 34(1), 98-119.

Taylor, J., Stone, K., Mullin, M., Ellenbecker, T. and Walgenbach, A. (2003). *Comprehensive sports injury management: From examination of injury to return to sport.* 2nd Ed. Publisher: Pro-ed.

Terry, P.C., Carron, A.V. (2000). Perceptions of Group Cohesion and Mood in Sport Teams. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 4(3), 244-253.

Terry, P.C., Lane, A.M. and Fogarty, G.J. (2003). Construct validity of the Profile of Mood States- Adolescents for use with adults. *Psychology of Sports and Exercise*, 4(2), 125-139.

Thapar, A., Collishaw, S., Pine, D.S. and Thapar, A.K. (2012). Depression in adolescence. *Lancet*, 379(9820), 1056–1067.

Thompson, R.A. and Sherman, R.T. (n.d). Managing Student-Athletes' Mental Health Issues.NCAA. Retrieved from: http://www.princeton.edu/uhs/pdfs/NCAA%20Managing%20StudentAthletes%20Mental%20 0Health%20Issues.pdf.

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition.* 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Toskovic, N. (2001). Alterations in selected measures of mood with a single bout of dynamic Taekwondo exercise in college-age students. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 92(3), 1031–1038.

Tuliao, A.P. (2008). Structural and Functional Social Support and Drug Abuse Recovery: A Comparison between Relapse and Non-relapse Groups. *Loyola Schools Review*, 7(1), 83-103.

Tyson, P., Wilson, K., Crone, D., Brailsford, R. and Laws, K. (2010). Physical activity and mental health in a student population. *Journal of Mental Health*, 19(6), 492-499.

Ungerleider, S. (1997). Olympic Athletes Transition from Sport to Workplace. *Perceptual and Motor skills,* 84(1), 1287-1295.

Vaux, A. (1988). *Social Support: Theory, research and Intervention*. New York: Praeger.

Weinburg, R.S. and Gould, D. (2006). *Foundations of Sport and Exercise Psychology.* 4th ed. USA: Human Kinetics.

Weiss, R.R. (2004). Coaching Children to Embrace a "Love of the Game". *Olympic Coach*, 16(1), 15-17.

Wills, T.A. (1991). Social Support and Interpersonal Relationships. *Review of Personality and social psychology*, 12(1), 265-289.

Wylleman, P. and De Knop, P. (1999). The Relevance of non-athletic transitions in the development of the athletic career. In: Hosek, V., Tilinger, P. and Bilek, L. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise: Enhancing the quality of life. Proceedings of the 10th European Congress of Sport Psychology.* Prague, Czech Republic: Charles University. 304-306.

Wylleman, P. and Lavallee, D (2000). *Career transitions in sport: international perspectives.* West Virginia University: Publishers Graphics.

Wylleman, P., Alfermann, D. and Lavallee,D. (2004a). Career transitions in sport: European perspectives. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise,* 5(1), 7-20.

Wylleman, P., Lavallee, D. and Theeboom, M. (2004b). Successful athletic careers. In: Spielberger, C. *Encyclopedia of Applied Psychology.* San Diego: Elsevier Ltd. 511-518.

Yang, J., Peek-Asa, C., Lowe, J.B., Heiden, E. and Foster, D.T. (2010). Social support patterns of collegiate athletes before and after injury. *Journal of Athletic Training*, 45(4), 372-379.

CHAPTER 8

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

ETHICS STATUS

Date: 17/03/14

To: Florence Roberts

Project reference number: (13/05/321U)

Your project was recommended for approval by myself as supervisor and formally approved at the Cardiff School of Sport Research Ethics Committee meeting of [include the one that applies 29th May 2013, 26th June 2013, 24th July 2013, 16th October 2013, 27th November 2013].

Yours sincerely

David Wasley

Supervisor

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT
FORM

CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

UREC Reference No:
Title of Project: A comparison of Social Support and Mood between Team and Individual athletes prior to, and during their transition to university competitive sport.
Name of Researcher: Miss Florence Roberts

Participant to complete this section: Please initial each box.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.   ☐

2. I understand that my participation in this project is voluntary and that it is possible to stop taking part at any time, without giving a reason.   ☐

3. I also understand that if this happens, our relationships with the Researcher, with UWIC, or our legal rights, will not be affected.   ☐

4. I understand that information from the study may be used for reporting purposes, but that my identity will remain anonymous.   ☐

5. I agree to the interview being audio recorded.   ☐

6. I agree to take part in this study.   ☐

"I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.2"

_____

Name of Participant

_____

Signature of Participant   Date
_____ _____

Name of person taking consent   Date

_____ _____

Signature of person taking consent

_____

Copies of this information sheet can be made available in a variety of formats such as large print, Braille, audio, and in languages other than English.

APPENDIX C
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION
SHEET

<u>**Participant Information Sheet**</u>

<u>**Title of Project:**</u> A Comparison of Social Support and Mood between Team and Individual athletes prior to and during their transition to university competitive sport.

Background

This comparative study aims to identify and differences in social support over the transition of moving to university. Social support from before university will be compared to current social support networks now that you are in university, and how they differ between individual athletes and team athletes.

The study is also concerned with mood states of university student athletes, and how they may differ between team and individual athletes, to discover if any patterns emerge within the two groups.

The study will be undertaken at Cardiff School of Sport at Cardiff Metropolitan University.

What will happen if I agree to take part in the study?

If you agree to take part in the study the following procedures will take place:

1. You will be invited to attend a single semi structured informal interview. Firstly you will be required to fill in a Profile of Mood States questionnaire (POMS), followed by a 6 Item Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ6). This should take approximately 10 minutes.
2. Following the questionnaire, the interview will take place. You will be asked questions regarding your involvement in sport, the nature of your transition, and your social support networks from pre university times, compared with your current social support.
3. Overall, the combination of questionnaires and interviews should take approximately 50 minutes.

Exclusion Criteria

You will not be eligible for this study if:

1. You are not female.
2. You do not attend Cardiff Metropolitan University.
3. You do not compete and train regularly for Cardiff Metropolitan University.
4. You have been diagnosed with any previous mental health issues.

Are there any risks involved with participation in this study?

There is no likelihood that you will be at risk of any physical harm as a result of participation in this study. However, you will be asked to provide information about your self-reported physical and mental well-being. These questions may have a small likelihood of low psychological risk. Nevertheless, due to the requirements of no previous mental health issues to participate in the project, there should be no major underlying issues surrounding this topic to cause any psychological harm. Your results will remain fully confidential within this study, and therefore no social risks are involved.

Benefits you may experience from participating:

After participation in this study, your individual results are available to be fully discussed with you, allowing you to discover your main sources of social support, and how reliant you are upon this source, along with any changes or fluctuations that may occur. Any changes in your mood that occur will also be discussed.

As a result, you may be able to apply this information to your sporting environment, and may lead to improvements in your psychological well-being.

What happens next?

Attached with this information sheet you will find an informed consent form. After reading this information sheet, you can decide whether you are interest/applicable to take part in this study. If you are willing to take part in this study you will be notified on when to attend your first interview.

How we protect your privacy:

During you interviews you will be audio recorded. All recording and results from both questionnaires will remain anonymous and confidential, so that you cannot be identified from any of the information that we have about you.

Further Information:

If you have any questions about the research or how we intend to conduct the study, please contact:

Miss Florence Roberts. Bsc (hons) Sport and Exercise Science.

St20001495@outlook.cardiffmet.ac.uk

Consent to participate is also implied by completion of the Profile of Mood States and Social Support Scale Questionnaires.

Copies of this information sheet can be made available in a variety of formats such as large print, Braille, audio, and in languages other than English.

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction

Hello, my name is Florence Roberts and I am a Level 3 Undergraduate student studying BSc (hons) Sport and Exercise Science at Cardiff Metropolitan University. I would like to thank you for voluntarily agreeing to participate in this interview. I will be talking to a number of student athletes similar to yourself who are in their first year of university.

The aim of this interview is to discover the varying types of social support that athletes received prior to their recent move to university and compare those to the types of social support that they receive now that they have moved to university. The second aim of this interview is to compare these sources of social support between team and individual athletes. Research has previously looked at social support in university students and competitive athletes. However there is a lack of research comparing social support networks between team and individual athletes and also surrounding the transition of a move to university and the effects that this transition may have upon social support. The results gained from this study will be used to further underpin relevant research found in academic journals and books.

Your purpose in this study is limited to a single interview. The first part of the interview will involve you completing two questionnaires; Profile of Mood States (short form) Questionnaire and also a 6-Item Social Support Questionnaire. Completion of these should take on average 15 minutes. The second part of the interview will involve you answering a series of questions surrounding your primary sport, the characteristics of your move to university and your current perceptions of social support and how they may differ to those experienced prior to your move to university. The information gained from this study will be used within my dissertation and will contribute to future research.

Being a participant in this study enabled you to several rights. As the nature of this interview is voluntary, you are free to decline any question that is asked of you and are also free to withdraw from the interview at any point. Your name will not be used throughout the research and confidentiality will be upheld throughout the whole duration of the study. Your interview will be audio recorded to ensure the accuracy of the information gained and will then be transcribed. During the interview or once finished, please feel free to ask any questions that you may have

.

Definition of Terms

Before the interview I would like you to read through the following definitions of the key terms surrounding the interview:

Transitional Process:

"An event which results in a change of assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change on ones behaviour and relationships" (Schlossberg, 1981)

Social Support:

"The existence or availability of people on whom we can rely on" (Sarason et al, 1983)

Social Support Network:

"*The set of people with whom one interacts, to whom one feels attached, and from whom one might receive support*" (Hays, 2007)

KEY: Individual Sports only

Team Sports only

General Background Information:

To begin the interview, I would like to ask you a few questions regarding your involvement and the nature of your sport.

1. What is your main sport that you train and compete regularly in?

2. Regarding your involvement in your sport, how committed would you say you are?
   a) Very committed (for example it is my primary importance)
   b) Fairly committed (I balance it evenly between my social life and education)
   c) Not very committed (my social life and other priorities come before my sport)

3. How many hours do you dedicate to training per week?

4. What is the highest level you have competed to within your sport? For example, County, Regional, National.

5. Now I would like you to reflect back, how does this current level of commitment differ to that of pre university times?
   Probe: Why do you think this is?

6. How many years have you participated in this sport?

7. If you participate in an individual sport, do you mainly train alone or in a group?

8.

D3

9.
Probe: How often in a group and how often alone?

10. How does this training environment make you feel?

11. How does being part of a team make you feel?

Move to University Transitional Process

This sections' main aim is to discover the nature of the transition that you underwent as a student athlete moving to university. Think about what effect this had upon your current life as opposed to your pre university lifestyle.

12. I would like to describe the transition that you experienced when you moved to university.
    Probes: distance from home, financial transition, distance from friends/family.

13. Think of this lifestyle transition in relation to your sport. I would like you describe any benefits you believe to be associated with the transition.
    Probe: commitment? Social environment? Training environment/methods? Coaching?
    Probe: Can you tell me more about these?

14. Can you describe any negative factors that have occurred due to this transition? In relation to your sport and the environment surrounding it.
    Probe: Can you tell me more about these? And why you think they have occurred?

Social Support

This section is designed find out about your past and present social support networks and experiences. I will be asking you questions related to the people in your environment that you feel provide you with social support and what affect these have on you.

15. Describe to me in your own words what social support means to you and how important you think it is.

I would now like you to reflect back again to your pre university lifestyle. Think back to a recent time when you were training and competing regularly. I would also like you to think of your current sporting lifestyle in relation to the following questions.

16. a) Describe to me your social support network before you moved to university.

 b) Now describe your current social support networks and discuss any differences.

17. a) During periods of training, who did you rely on most for help and support prior to your move to university?

 b) Do these sources differ to those that you now currently rely on for help and support?
    Probe: think about the different types of social support discussed at the beginning of this interview.

18. a) Now think back to the time of an important competition. What were your sources of social support during this competition?

    b) Now think of a competition you have recently had, do these sources of support differ at all?

19. a) Now think back to a time when you performed poorly as an individual before you moved to university. What types of social support did you receive/rely on during this time?
    Probe: How did they help you overcome this poor performance?
    Probe: Talk through each source

    b) Now compare this to a recent poor performance that you have experienced whilst being at university.
    Probe: Who did you receive support from? How valuable or effective was this support?

20. a) Now, consider your team that you played for prior to university. Think of a time when you collectively performed poorly. What types of social support did you receive/rely on during this time?
    Probe: what effect did these sources have on you?
    Probe: describe what happened and how you felt.
    Probe: Did social support help you in any way?

    b) Now think of a time when your university team performed poorly. How did your sources of social support differ to those prior to university?

21. Can you describe to me a time where you experienced negative social support or perhaps no social support?

22. What effect did this have on you?
    Probe: did it affect performance? Why do you think this happened?

23. Have you ever felt like you were receiving too much social support? Please describe this situation.
    Probe: What effect did this have on you? How did it make you feel?

24. Finally, can you please describe to me how you think your perceptions of social support have changed since moving to university?
    Probe: for the positive or negative? What effect have these changes had on you as a person?
    Probe: what effect have these changes had on your sport?

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT

Individual participant 1

Interviewer:

To begin the interview, I would like to ask you a few questions regarding your involvement and nature of your sport.

Question one, what is your main sport that you train and compete regularly in?

Individual 1:

Erm,Hammer, Athletics.

Interviewer:

Thank you.

Individual 1:

And kind of a bit of Discuss as well.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Regarding your involvement in your sport, how committed are you? Would you say you are a) Very committed, for example it's your primary importance, b) fairly committed, meaning you balance it evenly between your social life and education, or c) not very committed, for example your social life and other priorities come before your sport?

Individual 1:

Ermm, I'd probably say very committed.

Interviewer:

How many hours do you dedicate to training per week?

Individual 1:

Erm, maybe like one to two hours a day.

Interviewer:

So like 14 hours?

Individual 1:

Yeah around that, about 12-14 really

.

Interviewer:

Okay.

What is the highest level you have competed to within your sport? For example county, regional, national or club.

Individual 1:

Erm, National.

Interviewer:

Now, I would like you to reflect back, how does this current level of commitment differ to that of pre university times?

Individual 1:

Erm, hasn't really changed really. Like, I don't know

Interviewer:

Would you say it hasn't changed at all?

Individual 1:

Not really, I would probably say more committed now though.

Interviewer:

Yeah?

Individual 1:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

So do you train more now than you did before uni?

Individual 1:

Yeah yeah

Interviewer:

Okay.

Individual 1:

Like before I probably trained like four times a week but now I'm more like every day.

Interviewer:

Why do you think that is?

Individual 1:

Umm, probably because the facilities and being so close to everything, like all your coaches and stuff are like right on your doorstep, so you can just go and train with them like all the time, they're always there, so might as well make the most of it.

Interviewer:

How many years have you participated in this sport?

Individual 1:

Umm, three or four, no, four years. I started off with shot first though, I was like 11 when I started shot, and went to discuss when I was like 15.

Interviewer:

Ermm, okay, questions seven, if you participated in an individual sport, which you do, do you mainly train alone, or in a group?

Individual 1:

Um, is this for at uni or before?

Interviewer:

Errr, at uni.

Individual 1:

At uni, okay, it depends really, my gym, when I'm at the gym; I'm normally on my own, but when we do all like technical stuff, like in a group of like 5 I think.

Interviewer:

Ok so a bit of a mixture then.

How does like each training environment make you feel?

Individual 1:

Erm, well, I'm kind of used to training on my own anyway, cos I go to the gym on my own anyway when I'm at home. Nothings really changed in that sense. Cos obviously I've got my training group at home as well. So, it hasn't changed.

Interviewer:

Do you have an environment that you prefer?

Individual 1:

Um I probably prefer training in a group.

Interviewer:

Okay, why is that?

Individual 1:

It's just more social, we chat about what's going on and stuff, like things to do with technique and that. You get more feedback as well like, from the coaches.

Interviewer:

Okay, umm, so the next section has the aim to discover the nature of the transition that you underwent as a student athlete moving to university. Think about what effect this had on your current life as opposed to your pre university life.

I would like you to describe the transition that you experienced when you moved to university. Consider things like the distance from home, finances, umm friends and family.

Individual 1:

Umm, it was a bit hard at first to get my head around, like with the distance from home cos I live in Essex, and obviously go to uni in Cardiff, so being so far away from my family and friends is a bit umm, different, and difficult maybe but, it's fine now, I'm not really sure, like how it's gonna affect me as I haven't had any financial problems before, obviously being a student with not much money so that may start to affect me being able to afford kit and stuff. With my friends and family, it's hard being away from my mum as were real close, but its ok cos she is only a phone call away and I know she is there when I need her. Ive made loads of new good friends too since moving to uni, everyone's really cool and we all have similar interests cos we all do sport and stuff which helps a lot.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Think of this lifestyle transition in relation to your sport. Can you describe any benefits you believe to be associated with the transition?

Individual 1:

Ummm, benefits, mainly the facilities in NIAC I'd say were the benefits, having really good athletics facilities is really good for my motivation, and just having it on the door step means I don't have to travel or rely on anyone to get there. Also the facilities are really good here, much better than at home, so I can use different machines and stuff that I didn't get to use before. Ive also made really good friends who are sport minded like me and so we can motivate each other loads which is good. I've also gained some more coaches, who provide me with different training methods and techniques; it's always good for my performance to have people look at it from different angles

Interviewer:

Okay, how about any negative factors? As a result of the transition.

Individual 1:

In relation to my sport or?

Interviewer:

Your sport and your life surrounding it too.

Individual 1:

Okay, umm, the main negative factor for me is moving away from my mum who provides me with the most support, in my sport and just like generally. My coach back home, who I am really close to, I think moving away from her isnt great, cos I don't have as much contact with her, even though she is there for me over phone and stuff or whenever I go home, but I won't see as much of her now, and cos she knows me and my throwing she gives me the best advice and stuff. The coaches here are good, but they obviously don't know me as well, and I don't really have a good relationship with them like before, so it's not as good. But time may tell! Also, the coaches here coach quite a lot of athletes so the coaching I get isn't as personal as before.

Interviewer:

Okay cool. So the next section is designed to find out about your past and present social support networks and experiences. I'll ask you questions about the people in your life who you feel provide you with support and I would like you to describe these and what affect they have on you.

Can you describe to me in your own words what social support means to you and how important it is to you?

Individual 1:

Social support, umm, it's really important to me to be honest. But only off people I trust I think. Like my mum and my friends. I guess even though I haven't know the people I live with long, I still consider their support important, whether it's just asking me about my training, or giving me motivation and stuff. Getting support and feedback off my new coach is important to me I guess, for me cos I like don't know him well, I guess I want to prove myself, and so when he gives me good feedback this motivates me loads. His main support though I guess is in the form of instructions, and guidance on my training programme and techniques. As an individual athlete this is crucial, as I don't have other team members to compare myself to.

Interviewer:

Okay yeah

So now I'm going to ask you a question requiring you to reflect back to your pre uni life. Think back to a recent time you were training and competing regularly. Then I will ask you the same question, but in relation to your current lifestyle.

Okay, question 14, describe to me your social support network before you moved to uni.

Individual 1:

Umm, I guess sort of what I've said before, my mum and my coach mainly. My mum is someone I can talk to about literally anything. Whether it's related to sport or not, she is always there for me and we're really close. She is probably the person I am closest to out of everyone. The rest of my family are there for me too when I need them though.

Interviewer:

Okay, anyone else you can describe?

Individual 1:

Yeah, my coach, she's great. She's really like knowledgeable and knows so much so she's really good in helping my improvement. She is there for me in all ways I guess, not just telling me what to do or what I'm doing right or wrong. I'm close to her so I can chat to her about my emotions and stuff too. She's also there to help me out with stuff like transport or anything else if my mum isn't available.

Interviewer:

Okay, now describe your current social support networks and can you identify any differences?

Individual 1:

Okay so my mum is still there for me, but obviously not so much on a day to day basis as before, so that is the major change. And there was no one really to take over her role in uni, so I guess I miss her loads for that. Just having her watching me training and stuff and supporting me. I've gained more friends and stuff who are good for providing me with support, and I guess my new training group I have more in common with and we train way more than before, this really helps my motivation knowing that they are all training a lot too. It makes it hard to skip training. My new coaches are good, but I don't know them that well yet so, it's hard for me to be close to them like I was with my coach from home. But they are really good and they know a lot about my sport. I guess mainly I've just met lots of new people, and I now have more people around me than I did before.

Interviewer:

That's a good thing with uni, always loads of people around.

Okay so during periods of training, who did you rely on most for help and support prior to uni?

Individual 1:

Umm well cos I'm an individual athlete, it's not like I had team mates to train with and stuff and have support from. But I did have a training group, but they were generally a lot older than me, or two were much younger, so I found it hard to have a good relationship with them, the older ones were pretty good though and helping me at times. My coach was good, and guided me loads, I guess I owe my success so far to her, she's believed in me from day one y'know. My mum and family too are really good, and I mainly relied on my mum for financial help, as well as being able to talk to her about my thoughts and feelings. She doesn't know a great deal about hammer but she tries bless her, and can tell when I'm struggling psychologically.

Interviewer:

Has this changed at all since you came to uni?

Individual 1:

yeah definitely, like I said my support networks have broadened a lot, but I guess they're not as strong as they were before. Like, I'd say I know more people now, and I have more people constantly around me to talk to and stuff, but I'm not as close to these people. For me, I prefer having just 2 or 3 people who I'm really close to to provide me with support, rather than like strangers.

Interviewer:

Okay yeah that makes sense.

Ok now think back to when you were at an important competition. What were your sources of social support during this competition?

Individual 1:

Umm, ok I guess at English schools a few years back. That was my first big competition. My mum and coach again I guess. Everyone went on a bus, but I got my mum to drive me, I didn't want the distraction of others. My mum knows this and offered to drive me. It was a couple of hours away and I just met everyone there, so was fine. My coach understood why I travelled separately, and met me there. It was nice to have quiet time you know in the car on the way there to reflect about the day ahead. My team mates and stuff were really good, but I tend to keep myself to myself a little, rather than get mixed up in the hype of things like. I think my teammates and my coach know this so its fine. My coach was really good on the day, and helped me warm up and stuff and giving me tips. One of the other guys who is sort of an assistant coach/helper did all our entries and got numbers and stuff for us so we didn't have to worry about that either which was nice. But when it came down to my actual throws, my coach was in the crowd watching with my mum and I knew I had their support there, which I thrived off.

Interviewer:

Okay, same question but applying it to your current situation in uni.

Individual 1:

Umm, well so far I haven't had a huge competition but I have had one. The whole structure of the competition was the same and stuff, but because im away from home obviously, we all travelled on a coach together, all the different athletes from UWIC. It was good as you have so many people around you, but I didn't get to have that quiet time to think about stuff which I like, I sat on the coach with my earphones in but there are still distractions of other people around. So when we got to the competition we were staying at a hotel overnight but I was competing on the first day. Those who weren't competing that day were so good at supporting those who were, and were there to help out with anything we needed. Two students from UWIC who I kinda know were there for me and helping with stuff like carrying my hammer, getting water, and anything I needed so I could focus fully on my performance, they were so good bless them! I didn't expect that but it was actually nice as I'm usually on my own. My coaches weren't as attentive as my old coach though, he was busy with other athletes and didn't get to watch my performance and give me feedback which was a bit annoying , but that's what you tend to get when you have a coach who coaches quite a few people. My friend did record me throw though, so I was able to watch it back after with my coach which was good. Obviously my mum wasn't there either but she called me when I was on the bus, and I called her before I threw and straight after too.

Interviewer:

Ok so there was quite a big change there.

Individual 1:

Yeah I guess so.

Interviewer:

Okay so now think back to a time when you performed poorly as an individual before you moved to uni. What types of social support did you receive/rely on during this time?

Individual 1:

Umm, what, at a competition or?

Interviewer:

Yeah, a competition.

Individual 1:

Okay, umm there was a competition once which was really important, and I threw 3 no throws. I was literally ridiculous that day! I got there, I had a bad feeling that day and my mum wasn't there to watch me. Maybe that was why! But anyway, I warmed up as normal with my coach, and my coach acted as normal, I have no idea what went wrong, but as soon as I threw my first no throw my nerves just got the better of me and I couldn't handle it at all. I was trying to impress my coach, as I hadn't been with her that long, and I was

only `16, so not that experienced in competitions either, especially in hammer. I think it was only my second competition. I was scared that my coach wouldn't put me forward for better competitions, but she was so nice about it, and told me that she knew I had it in me easily, and that it was just a bad day, and she told me about some awful competitions she had had in the past. So that made me feel better that I wasn't going to be dropped or anything. All the other team members were really good too, but they crowded me a bit too much when I just wanted my personal space y'know.

Interviewer:

Okay yeah, how about a poor performance you've had since being in uni?

Individual 1:

Well cos I've only had one competition, I actually threw really well. But I've had a particularly bad training session a few weeks back actually. I just wasn't in the right frame of mind and all my technique was out, I'm not sure why. I was a bit mentally tired perhaps and was training in a group, and was distracted. Whether that had anything to do with it I'm not sure. But yeah anyway, the guys I train with kinda just ignored it and said not to worry too much about it, which was fine cos I don't like people fussing. My coach just told me technically what I was doing wrong and gave me some things to work on which I did. The people I live with were really good too and took my mind off things and I was able to chat to them about stuff too.

Interviewer:

Okay thanks, how about a time when you experience negative social support or perhaps no support at all?

Individual 1:

Ummm, oh god, I dunno?

Interviewer:

If there wasn't a time then not to worry, but just have a think…

Individual 1:

Okay, ermm….I don't think there's been a time where I haven't had any social support, well, actually, maybe looking back to my first uni competition that I spoke about earlier, when I said that my coach wasn't watching.

Interviewer:

Okay, how did that make you feel? Did you feel like you missed out on support when you needed it?

Individual 1:

Umm yeah actually, he wasn't watching, so I guess that made me feel like he wasn't actually interested in my performance. Whereas before I came to uni my coach was always there without fail and I knew she cared.

Interviewer:

Okay, what effect did this have on your actual performance?

Individual 1:

Umm, well I knew he wasn't watching me, I didn't mind that so much because I knew had a lot of stuff to do that day and people to watch. But for me I do like someone there to give me immediate feedback, otherwise I go away and beat myself up. Which I did that day. So I guess I felt a bit isolated. But in our next training session we sat down and watched back my performance and analysed it.

Interviewer:

Okay, nearly finished now!

Have you ever felt like you were receiving too much support from people? If so can you describe this please?

Individual 1:

Umm (laugh) I dunno, to be honest, I like a lot of support around me so I'm struggling to think! But I guess when I perform badly, people tend to flock you and tell you its fine and not to worry and stuff, even if I barely know them. But for me I prefer to be left alone, and only like to really talk to my coach or my mum, and family, those who I'm like closest to y'know. So when people crowd me it makes me feel a bit claustrophobic, and I guess a bit frustrated, but at the same time I know they're just trying to be nice!

Interviewer:

Okay, final question!

Can you please describe to me how you think your perceptions of social support have changed since moving to uni?

Individual 1:

Umm okay, well I think I probably value social support a lot more now.

Interviewer:

Okay, in what way?

Individual 1:

Well, because I'm away from home, you are more independent as an individual, and don't have anyone to rely on. So the relationships that you make at uni, become your network groups I suppose. And you learn to appreciate the support you get from people. It's also made me take for granted the amount of support I got from my mum and family, and I really miss that now to be honest.

Interviewer:

Are your altered perceptions positive or negative do you reckon?

Individual 1:

Umm, both I guess. Obviously I don't have my mum there all the time, so that's a negative of coming to uni, and also not being as close to my coach as I was before. But at the same time, I now have way more friends, and they are probably one of my main providers of social support, and I probably value them the most. We're all similar minded and they understand everything that I go through, and likewise me for them you know. So I'm really close to them.

Interviewer:

Okay, anything else you would like to add or comment on?

Individual 1:

Ummm, I guess just that the transition of moving to uni was tough at first, and it was hard to get to know people in my sport as there aren't many of us, and most had already been at uni for one or two years so they already knew each other well. It was hard to adapt. But it gets easier the more I train with people.

Interviewer:

Okay, thank you!

Individual 1:

No problem.

APPENDIX F

PROFILE OF MOOD STATES

QUESTINNAIRE

Profile of Mood States (POMS) Questionnaire

<u>INSTRUCTIONS</u>

- The questionnaire contains 65 words/statements that describe feelings people have.
- The test requires you to indicate for each word or statement how you have been feeling in the past week including today.
- There is no time limit

Feeling	How have I felt?				
	Not at all	A Little	Moderately	Quite A Bit	Extremely
Friendly	1	2	3	4	5
Tense	1	2	3	4	5
Angry	1	2	3	4	5
Worn Out	1	2	3	4	5
Unhappy	1	2	3	4	5
Clear Headed	1	2	3	4	5
Lively	1	2	3	4	5
Confused	1	2	3	4	5
Sorry For Things Done	1	2	3	4	5
Shaky	1	2	3	4	5
Listless	1	2	3	4	5
Peeved	1	2	3	4	5
Considerate	1	2	3	4	5
Sad	1	2	3	4	5
Active	1	2	3	4	5
On Edge	1	2	3	4	5
Grouchy	1	2	3	4	5
Blue	1	2	3	4	5
Energetic	1	2	3	4	5
Panicky	1	2	3	4	5
Hopeless	1	2	3	4	5
Relaxed	1	2	3	4	5
Unworthy	1	2	3	4	5
Spiteful	1	2	3	4	5
Sympathetic	1	2	3	4	5
Uneasy	1	2	3	4	5
Restless	1	2	3	4	5
Unable to Concentrate	1	2	3	4	5
Fatigued	1	2	3	4	5
Helpful	1	2	3	4	5
Annoyed	1	2	3	4	5
Discouraged	1	2	3	4	5
Resentful	1	2	3	4	5

Nervous	1	2	3	4	5
Lonely	1	2	3	4	5
Miserable	1	2	3	4	5
Muddled	1	2	3	4	5
Cheerful	1	2	3	4	5
Bitter	1	2	3	4	5
Exhausted	1	2	3	4	5
Anxious	1	2	3	4	5
Ready to Fight	1	2	3	4	5
Good Natured	1	2	3	4	5
Gloomy	1	2	3	4	5
Desperate	1	2	3	4	5
Sluggish	1	2	3	4	5
Rebellious	1	2	3	4	5
Helpless	1	2	3	4	5
Weary	1	2	3	4	5
Bewildered	1	2	3	4	5
Alert	1	2	3	4	5
Deceived	1	2	3	4	5
Furious	1	2	3	4	5
Efficient	1	2	3	4	5
Trusting	1	2	3	4	5
Full of Pep	1	2	3	4	5
Bad Tempered	1	2	3	4	5
Worthless	1	2	3	4	5
Forgetful	1	2	3	4	5
Carefree	1	2	3	4	5
Terrified	1	2	3	4	5
Guilty	1	2	3	4	5
Vigorous	1	2	3	4	5
Uncertain about things	1	2	3	4	5
Bushed	1	2	3	4	5

<u>Definition of Terms</u>

<u>Listless:</u>

"Lacking energy or disinclined to exert effort; lethargic"

<u>Peeved:</u>

"Irritated or Annoyed"

<u>Muddled:</u>

"An untidy or confused state"

<u>Bitter:</u>

"A feeling of deep and bitter anger and ill-will"

<u>Ready to Fight:</u>

"Aggressive, Warlike"

<u>Full of Pep:</u>

"Full of energy and high spirits"

<u>Vigorous:</u>

"Strong, energetic, and active in mind or body"

<u>Bushed:</u>

"Extremely tired; exhausted"

APPENDIX G

SOCIAL SUPPORT

QUESTIONNAIRE 6

Social Support Questionnaire 6 (SSQ6)

INSTRUCTIONS:

- The following questions ask about people in your life who provide you with help or support. Each question has two parts.
- For the first part, list all the people you know, excluding yourself, whom you can count on for help or support in the manner described. Give the person's initials and their relationship to you (see example).
- Do not list more than one person next to each of the numbers beneath the question.
- For the second part, circle how satisfied you are with the overall support you have.

If you have no support for a question, check the words "No One", but still rate your level of satisfaction. Do not list more than nine persons per question.

Please answer all questions as best you can. All your answers will be kept confidential.

Example:

Who do you know whom you can trust with information that could get you in trouble?

No one

1) T.N. (Brother)	4) T.N. (Father)	7)
2) L.M. (Friend)	5) L.M. (Employer)	8)
3) R.S. (Friend)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6- Very	5- Fairly	4- A Little	3- A Little	2- Fairly	1- Very
Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied

---

1. Whom can you really count on to be dependable when you need help?

No one

1)   4)   7)
2)   5)   8)
3)   6)   9)

How satisfied?

| 6- Very Satisfied | 5- Fairly Satisfied | 4- A Little Satisfied | 3- A Little Satisfied | 2- Fairly Satisfied | 1- Very Satisfied |

2. Whom can you really count on to help you feel more relaxed when you are under pressure or tense?

No one

1)   4)   7)

2)   5)   8)

3)   6)   9)

How satisfied?

| 6- Very Satisfied | 5- Fairly Satisfied | 4- A Little Satisfied | 3- A Little Satisfied | 2- Fairly Satisfied | 1- Very Satisfied |

3. Who accepts you totally, including both your worst and your best points?
No one

1)   4)   7)

2)   5)   8)

3)   6)   9)

How satisfied?

| 6- Very Satisfied | 5- Fairly Satisfied | 4- A Little Satisfied | 3- A Little Satisfied | 2- Fairly Satisfied | 1- Very Satisfied |

4. Whom can you really count on to care about you, regardless of what is happening to you?

No one
1)   4)   7)
2)   5)   8)
3)   6)   9)
How satisfied?
| 6- Very Satisfied | 5- Fairly Satisfied | 4- A Little Satisfied | 3- A Little Satisfied | 2- Fairly Satisfied | 1- Very Satisfied |

5. Whom can you really count on to help you feel better when you are feeling generally down-in-the dumps?

No one

1)	4)	7)
2)	5)	8)
3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

| 6- Very Satisfied | 5- Fairly Satisfied | 4- A Little Satisfied | 3- A Little Satisfied | 2- Fairly Satisfied | 1- Very Satisfied |

6. Whom can you count on to console you when you are very upset?

No one

1)	4)	7)
2)	5)	8)
3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

| 6- Very Satisfied | 5- Fairly Satisfied | 4- A Little Satisfied | 3- A Little Satisfied | 2- Fairly Satisfied | 1- Very Satisfied |