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In from the side: exile international rugby union players in Britain, blood ties and national identities

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Abstract

This study analyses the experiences of exiles within international rugby union in Britain. The emphasis is on challenging existing sociological assumptions surrounding national identity and sports labour migration. Eight international rugby exiles were invited to take part in semi-structured interviews and several themes emerged. The major findings from the study demonstrate that exiles are subject to an array of cultural attachments and personal experiences which shape their national identities. As migrants, their repositioning in relation to the nation is increasingly deemed to be the norm in rugby union. However, additional influences were also shown to persist to varying degrees.

Keywords: rugby union, globalization; national identities; exile players; blood ties

Introduction

The inexorable development and expansion of sport are interwoven with wider processes of globalization (Bale and Maguire, 1994). According to Jackson and Scherer (2013: 893), ‘the migration of bodies (which are also commodities) via the new international division of cultural labour is intimately related to globalization and raises of [sic] host of issues pertaining to culture, commerce and identities’. The modern game of rugby union operates within this global, mediated and professional environment. As the world becomes more compressed, the nuances relating to national identity and sports labour migration continue to attract critical sociological attention. Rapid globalization highlights and impacts the speed at which the complexity of national identities in sport has increased and is a useful lens through which to understand identity issues in the contemporary world.

When New Zealand-born Denny Solomona was selected to tour South Africa with the England rugby union team, he announced, ‘I’m Samoan and when I played for them in rugby league, I felt it was necessary to represent my grandparents and my heritage. Now I am focusing on England and I love it. I have bought a house here, I am married to an English

woman and I am setting roots' (Rees, 2018: 15). This study focusses on the identity issues that are addressed by rugby union players who choose to represent nations other than those of their birth. More specifically, the study is concerned with those players who, unlike Solomona who qualified for England on the basis of residency just before a pending rule change that would extend the required period from three to five years, are able to do so because of familial ties to their adopted sporting nations.

Like Smith and Porter (2004), Holmes and Storey (2004: 101) argued that little research has been done on professional sportspeople's attitudes to the issue of national identity and that 'more work is clearly needed involving direct interviews with players in order to unravel the complex feelings of identity and belonging in operation'. This situation has changed in recent years. Nevertheless, ambiguity surrounding exiles, particularly in rugby union, remain. For example, while Jarvie (2013) comments on the ambiguous nature of sporting identity in an ever-changing twenty-first century, he does not elaborate on the position of exiles in relation to this ambiguity which is the main focus of this paper.

Having previously represented England at U16 and U18 level, the involvement of one of the authors as an exile in the Scotland U20 team in 2014 provided an initial insight into the dynamics of international sport in an environment hostile to outsiders. During six months preparation with the team before the Junior World Cup in New Zealand, the author was exposed to misconceptions and assumptions that made acceptance by other players difficult. This prompted a range of emotions about dual nationality and a questioning of allegiance both as a player and as a person, the consequence being a consideration of the ambiguities and difficulties that sporting exiles face. The resultant study has gathered qualitative data from interviews with a group of international exiles to provide an innovative contribution to the current understanding of rugby union's relationship with national identity.

Globalization is seldom regarded today as leading to a single homogenized global culture. Instead, it is increasingly recognised as a complex phenomenon consisting of numerous global cultures which emanate from particular nations and regions (Crane et al, 2002; Pieterse, 2015)). As part of this process, the constant flow of athletic migrants has resulted in the development of flexible, fluid, pluralistic and multi-layered identities (Pearson, 2006), whereby the various ties an individual maintains with either the host or donor country become contested which Maguire (2008) identifies as one of the main causes of problems, which we would call challenges or even opportunities, encountered by athletic migrants. In the United Kingdom, this period has witnessed each of the four 'home' countries selecting rugby union players born outside of the country in question. Furthermore, the 2015 Rugby World Cup saw Argentina as the only nation that did not select a single foreign-born player (Guardian Sport, 2015).

Since then, World Rugby has sought to strengthen the rules governing the right of players to represent countries other than their places of birth. In particular, this meant requiring 60 months of continued residence in the adopted country instead of the previous 36 months with effect from 31 December 2020 (Rugby World Cup, 2017) provided that other requirements are met. However, permission will remain in place for a country to select players not born in that country but with at least one parent or grandparent who had been (World Rugby Handbook, 2016). It is players who qualify to play international rugby on that basis who are the focus of this study.

Existing literature has made reference to 'place-bound identities' which can result in local affinities (Bairner, 2001) and localised identity which supersedes national identity (Kelly, 2007). Hague and Mercer (1998) discuss the notion of geographical memory, in which

places are ascribed particular identities based on experience. The upbringing of exiles must be examined, therefore, in order to discern whether the notion of place-bound identities is relevant to their overall identity construction.

Bairner (2001) has highlighted the role of myth making and tradition in the construction of national identities. Tuck (2003) adds that international sports are functions of nations and are able to tap into patriotic sentiment. However, international rugby is also a diasporic arena with exiles increasingly challenging the assumption that a national side aligns with a single country's cultural values and traditions. National anthems for example have often been disregarded by certain exiles and thus the 'relatively straightforward sense of belonging has had new layers added' (Polley, 2004:16). Many British rugby players have had to learn to live with at least two identities - one linking them to their adopted nation and the other to their place of birth (Polley, 2004). To assume that exiles are sporting patriots, embodiments of 'their' nation (Tuck, 2003a) and custodians of the national jersey without some underlying sentiment towards their country of birth would be naïve. While fixed cultural attributes may be common elements in national identity discourse, the mixed ethnic and national composition of those playing within the borders of Britain and Ireland continues to proliferate and blur these fixed assumptions.

Polley (2004: 10) draws attention to the ways in which 'traditional models of sporting Englishness have become more diverse and flexible in line with cultural and demographic change'. In fact, all four international rugby teams in the Britain and Ireland have included exiles of South African and New Zealand descent. These players may or may not conform to Maguire's (1999) criterion that sporting national identity should stress historical legacies and attempt to maintain invented traditions. Indeed, this outmoded view represents an added

incentive to determine the mind-set of the modern day exile. While Heywood (2012: 157) implies that international sides should be seen as 'extended kinship groups, united by blood', many exiles qualify through the 'one grandparent rule', thereby thinning the blood ties considerably.

The 2015 Rugby World Cup saw 'foreigners' selected in favour of 'home bred' players, thereby, for example, challenging Welsh identity which in the past has been easily 'asserted in pounding the Saxon on the rugby field' (Johnes, 2004:55). The selection of players such as Ross Moriarty - an England U20 World Cup winner – to wear the scarlet jersey of Wales troubles the simple equation between the linkage of sporting national identity with national identity more generally. Johnes (2004) advocates that sport glosses over the different meanings that people attach to their nationality. Is international rugby able to transcend divisions and welcome dual-qualified exiles? Undeniably rugby continues to globalize and the plethora of meanings that players attach to their respective international teams is also expanding, hence the need to investigate issues such as the national identification of exiles, their self-awareness, and their attitudes towards their particular experience.

Although rugby union in Britain and Ireland represents a unique arena for studying the construction of identities, Tuck (2003a) explains that there is a paucity of research into certain aspects of the relationship between national identity and rugby union. Harris (2010) has provided us with a detailed survey of issues linked to what he describes as 'passports of convenience' (p. 107). However, much of his attention in relation to blood ties is on players who did not actually have the familial links that would have vouched safe their selection. Thus, Harris (2010: 113), notes that 'while even the most severe critic of the All Blacks would acknowledge that some of the players born outside the country [New Zealand] have

very close ties to the nation, this is not always the case in other nations'. While demonstrating the validity of his claim, however, Harris's analysis did not involve speaking to any of the players implicated in the most grievous transgressions of blood ties eligibility or those who qualified legitimately on that basis.

Literature Review

National identity

National identity has great relevance in the sporting world and has been subjected to extensive scrutiny in social scientific literature (Bairner, 2015). The sheer scale of the subject necessitates drawing upon a number of theories and concepts. In particular, it is necessary to distinguish between national identity, nationality and nationalism if we are to understand fully the ways in which exiles relate to their rugby nations as well as to the places of their birth. Critically examining existing assumptions surrounding British national identity in sport in general and specifically in rugby union can broaden our understanding of how international exiles declare their national allegiance not least because the issue of exiles in international rugby union has tended to be missing from much of the existing literature on labour migration. The common understanding of national identity previously utilised and accepted disregards the complexity of identity construction for exiles.

Grouping together recurring themes in the literature can allow for sociologically grounded interrogation to begin. Bale's (1986) work takes it as axiomatic that sport can serve to promote national identity. With this in mind, Tuck (2003) explores rugby union and national identity in Ireland and outlines that there has been an intensification of this symbiotic relationship. Tuck also provides a lens through which to examine national habitus issues in

rugby and emphasises that players are the primary social actors within the figuration of rugby union and national identity. However, Bairner (2001) has cautioned that academic work on questions relating to national identity often lacks precision in the use of certain concepts which reinforces the rationale for this study which attempts to critique the 'simplistic nature of arguments which lead inevitably to equally naive assumptions' (Bairner, 2001:46).

Maguire and Tuck (1998) predicted that rugby union would become a principal feature of sport and national identity discourse within the British Isles, a claim that is corroborated by Kelly (2007) who stresses that, within national identity studies, rugby union can become a central analytical element and warrants further examination in the context of the growing professionalization and globalization of the game.

Smith and Porter (2004) observe that national identities are in a state of flux, with Allison (2000), claiming that national identity is engaged in an evolutionary process of reinvention. The presence in many countries of immigrant communities, as well as ongoing labour migration, is a significant determinant. While many stereotypes are associated with international rugby players from particular countries, the infusion of exiles alters existing perceptions and, furthermore, complicates the enigma surrounding the exiles themselves. As we shall argue, an examination of British international rugby sides provides ample evidence of this.

The 2015 Rugby World Cup provided sociologists with a demonstration of the amalgamation of various national identities, as evidenced by the significant involvement of exile players in the British teams. The players' national identities were developed in these particular social contexts and cannot be interpreted as fixed entities. As Graham (1997) suggests, one's national identity is 'capable of being read in conflicting ways and of being transformed

through time' (1997:7). According to Bourdieu (1998: 153) to 'understand a sport, one must locate it in the space of sports'. Thus, the context of modern day international rugby requires an understanding of exiles and the fluctuating dynamics of national identity.

Bradley (1998) and Tuck (2003) are among a relatively small number of researchers who have examined the complex reality of national identity in rugby. Tuck has emphasised that sportsmen are not shackled by one identity, while Bradley (1998: 145) has highlighted the multi-layered character of identity construction. He states, 'people can have one dimensional affinities, they can inhabit a multi-layered set of identities or they can lie at any point in between'.

The modern international rugby team is made up of representatives of various cultures and Britain and Ireland themselves are far from being homogeneous societies (Maguire and Tuck, 1998). According to Cronin and Mayall (2005:7), 'sport provides a major avenue for the expression of local, regional, ethnic, immigrant and national identities'. However, the ways in which these ideas apply to the outlook of exiles is still largely unknown. The influx of exiles has certainly contributed to the development of a wider spectrum of identities under the banner of an international side. Yet what it means to wear the 'red rose' of England or the 'thistle' of Scotland has very different connotations for exiles, on the one hand, and their 'thoroughbred' teammates on the other.

Sport Labour Migration

According to Besnier (2012), the ebb and flow of athletic labour across national boundaries began in the 19th century. However, Bale and Maguire (1994) have argued that this process gathered pace in the late twentieth century and has affected a growing geographical area. Researchers have described how sport migrants can traverse geographical, political, cultural, ethnic, and economic boundaries (Elliott & Maguire, 2008) in conjunction with the increasing globalization of elite-level sports (Maguire, 1999). Since rugby union turned professional in 1995, the presence of athletic migrants has become the norm. However, the sentiments of athletic migrants in relation to national identity have largely been ignored as has the impact of exiles on squad dynamics and relationships.

Carter (2013) advises that we must remain cognizant that globalization shapes the processes we are attempting to understand. Thus, Romanos (2002) remarks that globalization has allowed rugby to establish itself as a global professional sport. Bale and Maguire (1994) suggest that the ensuing migration of players is embedded in a complex series of economic power struggles which characterize the globalized sports system. How then do economic factors influence exiles' motivation to migrate? Bruce and Wheaton (2011) argue that literature on rugby labour migration is an important vector through which to understand various issues such as national identity and allegiance amongst internationally mobile exiles. Nonetheless, this literature has not as yet provided sufficient insight into the various facets of migrating exiles to and within the 'British Isles'. Serving as an important framework for this study, globalization allows us to investigate sport within a global process interwoven with the global flow of people (Maguire, 1993).

Besnier (2012) highlights that the migration of athletes across national boundaries is well established but the underlying motives can vary considerably and be subject to multifaceted responses. For example, Holmes and Storey (2004) outline the controversies surrounding

eligibility rules for foreign players with specific reference to Jack Charlton's recruitment of exiles to the Republic of Ireland football team. They suggest that exiles can often benefit from a marriage of convenience, using familial factors to enhance their own status and cultural capital.

Carter (2013) emphasises that we must be aware that nearly all professional sports contribute to the production of mobile labour within the parameters of global sport. Elliott and Maguire (2008) noted that football contains an abundance of sociological evidence of this and, indeed, the migration of football players constitutes a large proportion of the available literature (Moorhouse, 1994). Cricket has also benefitted from extensive sociological interest (Hill, 1994).

The use of typologies can enhance our sociological understanding of sports migration. Despite literature on the labour migration of rugby exiles being limited, research into athletic labour migration in general and other spheres of sporting experience is relatively broad (Elliott and Maguire, 2008). Maguire (1996) developed a typological approach to distinguish the manner in which athletes migrate. Magee and Sugden (2002) developed Maguire's work while simultaneously offering a critique of his initial typologies. With regards to the movement of athletes, Maguire developed five categories that identify a network of multidirectional processes. The 'migration experience' (Elliott and Maguire, 2008: 485) was categorised in terms of: pioneers, mercenaries, nomadic cosmopolitans, settlers and returnees. With the use of this typology, we can start to identify the motivating factors that lie behind sports labour migration. Magee and Sugden (2002: 485) added the terms 'ambitionist, exile and expelled' to Maguire's typology, thereby further demonstrating the complex nature of migratory movements and the importance of avoiding pigeon holing athletic migrants into a

single exclusive category. Notably, athletic migrants can range across the different categories and reveal characteristics linked to more than one group.

Although the models put forward by Maguire and Stead (1998), Maguire (1996) and Magee and Sugden (2002) are important foundations upon which to develop an understanding of the impetus that drives a migrating rugby player, the present study concentrates on blood ties rather than the other criteria identified by previous commentators. This does not negate the possibility that exiles can appear as mercenaries. However, in the international game, rugby union boasts a large number of players who ply their trade for a nation through blood ties with parents or grandparents. Exiles with blood ties are not, of course, the only migrants who play international rugby for British teams. At the 2015 RWC, the relative success of the 'home' nations undeniably owed a certain amount to the inclusion of players who had not been born in England, Scotland or Wales. However, such players ranged from Sean Maitland, a New Zealand- born player, who qualifies for Scotland through his Glaswegian grandparents and Josh Strauss who met Scottish domicile requirements and was able to play without any familial connections to Scotland. Blood ties that allow exiles to play rugby in the UK conjure up a myriad of potential motivating factors including heritage, family traditions, and a genuine sense of pride but other factors must also be explored, using the typologies provided by Maguire (1996) and Magee and Sugden (2002).

The use of the term 'mercenary' has been coined to define the athlete solely motivated in terms of earning capacity and economic reward (Magee and Sugden, 2002). Often perceived as the main 'mercenaries' of the game, Pacifica rugby players have become a significant feature of sporting migration to the UK and elsewhere (Horton, 2012). Although these players are not the focus of the present study, their experience obliges us to consider whether

material gain may also be a decisive factor in the life choices made by exiles with familial ties to their 'new' rugby nation (Grainger et al, 2011).

When investigating the sentiments of rugby players, a number of studies (Maguire and Stead, 1996; Maguire and Tuck, 1998; Maguire and Stead, 1998) have highlighted that the ambition to play at the highest level is important in determining a decision to migrate. However, Holmes and Storey (2004) argue that the lure of prestige and financial rewards trumps the ambition to play for 'one's' country. Players often move to different countries in order to fulfil their desire for success and money and also to extend their careers. In contrast, Maguire and Bale (1994) speculate that the players may merely wish to relocate and settle in another country. Holmes and Storey (2004) identify that an athlete's decision to migrate can range from strong cultural affinity at one end of the spectrum to largely career-related factors at the other. However, international rugby exiles with blood ties, although by no means immune from the economic incentives of migration, are yet to be precisely situated within any one of these categories.

The earlier confinement of national sport within specified geographical borders continues to be challenged by diasporic identities (Brazier and Mannur, 2003). While analysis of the diasporic movement of players in rugby union has been largely focused on Pacificas who constitute the most prodigious and prevalent ethnic group of rugby migrants (Horton, 2012), the literature has not sufficiently addressed the exiles discussed in this study, in particular the players from New Zealand and South Africa who are willing to travel abroad in order to represent a nation with which they have familial ties and, thus, potentially acquire hybrid identities (Holmes and Storey, 2004). Despite their lineage, certain groups may migrate with specific national traditions that are incongruous in their host countries. Exiles who have been exposed to one culture may or may not be able (or willing) to adapt their attitudes when

selected for teams of predominantly English, Scottish or Welsh-born players. This blending of various national identities can be either straightforward or problematic dependent of the attitudes and behaviour of the exiles and of their new teammates (Polley, 2004) as the subsequent discussion will reveal.

On Methodology and Methods

Following Tuck (2003b) and McGee and Bairner (2011), the present study demonstrates the need to ask those athletes who actually act as representatives of nations about their identities and sense of belonging. The first author's personal experience of international rugby was crucially important for obtaining from former teammates the contact details of potential participants. The players who were selected had to have blood ties to the country which they have represented but were born elsewhere. Personal contacts were Ayoola Erinle, Edward Taylor and Rhys Davies while former teammates were used as gatekeepers in order to make contact with Sean Maitland, Matt Stevens, Blair Cowan, John Hardie and Hallam Amos. The rationale for choosing these players was their status as international rugby players in Britain.

By adopting a friend-of-a-friend strategy which is situated within Dandelion's (1995) typology in the category of 'insider research', the participants were generally at ease and were aware of the first author's playing pedigree which aided the free flow of information (Magee and Sugden, 2002). There was an additional snowball effect whereby the participants seemed very willing to be interviewed after being informed that some of their team mates and other international players were also taking part in the study. An ideographic sample of eight International rugby players was identified with purposive sampling that ensured the participants possessed the necessary playing pedigree and characteristics to provide

information rich accounts of their experiences as exiled players. Semi-structured interviews, which were used to capture subjective feelings, thoughts and experiences, were conducted at beginning of 2016.

Informed consent was required from the participants before interviews took place (Patton, 2005). With regards to confidentiality, the participants were made aware of who might potentially gain access to the research data and accepted this accordingly. All of the participants also agreed to have their names used in the transcripts, analysis and any subsequent publications rather than being given pseudonyms. As Parker (2005: 17) argues, ‘anonymity can protect the participants, but it can also deny them “the very voice in the research that must originally have been claimed as its aim’.

As the sole instrument of data collection in this research, the first author’s positioning and potential bias should be recognised. There was always the possibility that pre-conceived judgements could create bias during and after the interviews. On the other hand, Fontana and Frey (2000) suggest that a qualitative researcher is never a neutral tool, but always an active participant with prior knowledge being at least as important as detachment.

Thematic analysis is used for various forms of qualitative analysis (Smith and Sparkes, 2013). For the purposes of the present study, themes were identified inductively by generating codes (Patton, 2005). There were several phases through which the thematic analysis was carried out, the first being familiarisation with the interviews themselves. Generating initial codes within the margins of the transcribed interviews was the next step. Third, searching for themes required looking closely for recurring patterns of response (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). The final stage was to define the themes as the basis for the analysis

of findings. The sub-headings used in the next section of the paper correspond to the most common themes to emerge from the interviews.

Findings and Discussion

Influence of Upbringing

For six of the eight respondents, their country of birth proved to have had a significant influence on their sense of national identity. cursory analysis of remarks made by the players suggests ‘geographically bounded identity’ (Hague and Mercer, 1998). For example, Sean Maitland expressed his attachment to his place of birth, recalling, ‘I grew up knowing only that place in the Waikato; it is my home town’. Edward Taylor also demonstrated the importance of his country of birth: ‘where I was born and where all my mates lived was definitely my biggest identity marker growing up’. Taylor stated that it is obvious he would lean more towards his English identity as one tends to ‘follow the crowd’ growing up. Six of the respondents were uniform in expressing a cultural and emotional attachment to the geographical location of their upbringing. Conversely, Hallam Amos and Ayoola Erinle demonstrated a lack of geographical identification, both recognising that they had migrated at a very young age. Amos added, ‘living in Manchester was never something I was familiar with’; instead, his upbringing in Wales was his ‘biggest identity foothold’. Erinle also revealed that his ‘tangible memories of Nigeria growing up were not very prominent’ and he relied on ‘home based Nigerian traditions’ to maintain that aspect of his identity. Thus, it is important to recognise that only when geographical memories and concomitant attachments are strongly linked to a player’s location of upbringing does a corresponding place-bound identity become apparent (Hague and Mercer, 1998).

All eight respondents discussed the impact that schooling had on their national allegiances and their corresponding ambition to play for the country in which they were educated. As cited in Graham (1997), Maguire stresses that national identities are created in particular social contexts and the frequent mention of the school environment by the players was significant. Maitland described how his high school 'made the dream of playing for the All Blacks even greater', and how this was 'the norm in a school like Hamilton Boys'. He also emphasised the 'New Zealand All Blacks culture at Hamilton Boys', capturing Porter's (2004: 46) claim that the 'consciousness of national identity is shaped by shared culture and experience'. Maitland expanded on his earlier remark, claiming that it is 'stupid to think you'd want to do anything else when you're in a school like that'. Articulating similar feelings, Erinle claims that his affiliation to English rugby began because the school's culture ensured it was 'embedded in every lad there'. He alluded to a culture which encouraged him to 'get behind England'. In similar vein, English-born Amos described the 'proud identity within Welsh rugby' that existed at his school in South Wales. This in turn 'bred Welsh pride for all the rugby lads' and brought him closer to his Welsh identity (Harris, 2007). Indeed, Amos emphasised that the memories of his school, schoolmates and rugby coach were substantial influences on his acceptance of an alternative Welsh identity. This also helped to insure, no doubt, that unlike many migrants but like some, he was not regarded as 'the other' by his Welsh teammates (Wise, 2011).

John Hardie related a rather different experience, recognising that his school had fostered his love of rugby union but claiming that his passion for rugby would have existed regardless of him 'being in New Zealand' and was not bound up with an ambition to play for the All Blacks. Rationalising this position, Hardie declared that his 'heart was always with the Highlanders in Otago' and he was particularly interested in the stories his 'proud Scottish

grandmother from Fife' would tell. Here local attachment appears to have taken precedence over the nation.

The influence of family and blood ties was mentioned by all the players when discussing their affinity with their adopted nation. South African born Matt Stevens identified the importance of his grandparents, noting, 'having English grandparents is a blessing and means I am eligible just as much as the next guy'. Taylor explained that the symbolic importance his mother attached to Welsh rugby was a 'massive influence and kept a Welsh spirit in the family'. Rhys Davies concurred, adding: 'my Welsh dad influenced and taught me about Welsh culture as I grew up in Edinburgh'. Both players openly associated the identities of their Welsh parents with their national identification, with Taylor confessing: 'my mother's perception of her Welsh national identity is very important to me'.

Two of the New Zealand-born participants identified the influence of family on their explicit association with Scottishness. They are amongst the latest members a growing line of what Richards (2007: 254) refers to as 'that increasingly accessible resource, the New Zealander of Scottish descent'. John Hardie, whose grandmother was born in Low Valleyfield in Fife, described his desire to explore his 'Scottish ancestry' largely due to the influence of his grandmother to whom he referred as a 'Fifer'. Blair Cowan acknowledged the part played by his Scottish mother who forced him to 'learn the words to Flower of Scotland', adding: 'that Scottish aspect was strong bro, my mum is proud of who she is and I felt the same growing up in NZ'. Both players revealed that Scottish national holidays were something they celebrated, with Cowan alluding to 'Burns suppers' with his Scottish mother, further underlining an appreciation of his Scottish ancestry.

Conversely, Maitland offered a very different perspective on his Scottish blood ties. He explained: 'my grandparents were Glaswegians but the Samoan influence of my mother and

growing up in the Waikato were what I connected to the most'. He makes it clear that the 'culture of the Waikato' actually made it difficult for him to appreciate his Scottish links: 'I only identified with New Zealand and the town I lived in mate'. In response to being asked about any degree of affiliation he might have had with Scotland, Maitland admitted that his parents made it clear he had 'Scottish blood', but it 'was never spoken of that much'. For seven of the participants, at least, the acknowledgement of their dual-nationality manifests itself in a positive association with both their adopted nation and their country of birth. Indeed, Maitland emerged as the only exile who confessed to a lack of identification with the country he has chosen to represent. This confirms the arguments of Bradley (1998) and Tuck (2003) concerning the identity spectrum and the potential for sports players to possess anything from a one dimensional affinity through to a series of multiple identities.

Exile Status

When discussing their exile status, the players expressed a collective belief that it is 'the norm' to have exiles in international rugby. Maitland made this explicit, noting that 'the IRB have these rules for a reason'. He then added, in a half joking manner, 'bro if I am qualified, I am qualified! There's no reason for me to feel like some sort of pariah'. According to Maitland, 'coming over to Scotland has given me the opportunity and income to support my family'. His comments appear to align closely with the 'mercenary' category discussed in the typologies by Elliott and Maguire (2008) as he was the only participant to make reference to 'earning a better living' by migrating.

Discussing the general subject of 'exiles in rugby', Cowan observed that 'every team does it'. Indeed, a crucial element in the attitude of all the exiles was summarised by Maitland who stated: 'it is how it works in modern footy mate to have guys like me playing over here in

Scotland'. Amos' comments also seemed fairly representative of the views outlined by all the players: 'I guess it's a sensitive issue for some people but it is part of the modern game now. If you are eligible, then you should have as much claim as anybody else'. This view is captured by Price (2007) when he comments on the normality of the inclusion of athletic migrants in rugby union.

Each player was asked to expand on their experience of the transition to exile status. Polley (2004) reminds us that the blending of various national identities can be straightforward or problematic. South African born Matt Stevens' comment was broadly representative of the players' views: 'I think in an international team, the blend of various nationalities and exile players is indicative of an all-inclusive sport'. Helping to clarify the Polley's analysis (2004), Erinle asserted that rugby is 'fully inclusive of exiles' and there is 'next to zero racism even toward a Nigerian exile like myself'. The players stressed that being exiles had not disadvantaged them in any way, with Erinle commenting that he has never felt 'marginalised, put to the side or compartmentalised'. Elaborating on their experiences as exile players with reference to what Hardie calls 'stick and banter', Stevens outlined that it is 'part and parcel of rugby nowadays', and everyone is focused on a 'common purpose in the end'. Maitland explained that it is 'accepted there is going to be South African or New Zealand accents in and about the Scottish fellas'. Amos highlighted the 'cultural diversity of the Welsh team' by alluding to Toby Faletau and Gareth Anscombe who have successfully integrated into the Welsh system. Such comments point to a wide spectrum of identities and lend support to Polley (2004) whose work highlights the continued cultural diversification within British sport. The intricacies of squad dynamics within a heterogeneous national squad became even clearer when Taylor, Davies and Hardie all emphasised that it is one's rugby ability which 'does the talking' rather than the country of one's birth.

Maitland persisted in emphasising his attachment to his 'Kiwi identity', despite again briefly acknowledging his 'Scottish blood'. Unsurprisingly, he explained that the absence of any genuine Scottish identification was because he 'grew up wanting to play for Waikato' and that the 'goal all along was to be an All Black'. Most revealing was Maitland's response to a direct question about his affinities as an international player: 'look bro I am born and bred New Zealand - that is who I am. I love my footy regardless and I give it everything'.

Teammates Cowan and Hardie, however, appeared to link their answers to a recognition of their Scottish identity. Thus, Cowan explained: 'it is an honour to represent Scotland' and the 'Scottish spirit runs in my blood'.

Supporting the multi-faceted nature of identity construction (Jarvie, 2013), Erinle alluded to former teammate and England captain Lawrence Dallaglio, stating that 'he was an outsider, an Italian [although in fact England-born], an exile in every sense of the word, but epitomised the spirit of English rugby together with his Italian identity'. Erinle described how 'it is the norm in the modern game to have that movement of players. It all makes for better rugby'. This point is in line with the findings of Bale and Maguire (1994) who trace the course of athletic labour across national boundaries. Reflecting similar sentiments, Stevens referred to the fluid nature of identity construction in English rugby, suggesting, 'it is a big melting pot of cultures, nationalities and identities'. These comments are supported by Bradley's (1998) suggestion that sport can function as a vehicle for cultural assimilation.

Polley (2004) argues that many players have happily combined dual identities in sport whilst Bradley (1998) makes a similar point regarding the multi-directional processes of identity construction. It appeared that for Stevens, Erinle, Taylor and Davies, it was possible to have

an enduring affiliation to two national identities, thereby supporting Jarvie's (2013) comments on hybridity. Stevens outlined the persistence of his South African identity alongside his illustrious career as a 'proud English front row forward'. The complex nature of his identity was made clearer when he described his 'half and half' split between South Africa and England. The word 'half' was also used by Taylor who, in the past, had found himself 'torn' between his Welsh and English identities. The dichotomy of multiple blood ties and its impact on national identity was further highlighted by Erinle who used the expression, 'outside is English and inside is Nigerian'.

Cultural connections and understanding the other

With reference to cultural influences, Amos, Davies and Taylor explained that Welsh traditions had been significant in the construction of their Welsh identities. One of several exiles in the Wales squad, Amos explained that the wider symbolic attachments associated with Welsh rugby are 'suited' to his character and have moulded him into a 'fully-fledged Welshman'. Maitland, however, asserted that the cultural attachments to his Samoan upbringing 'are impossible to ignore and difficult to let go of' despite his career with Scotland, highlighting the challenge faced by some exiles, betwixt and between two cultures or identities (Holmes and Storey, 2004).

Edinburgh-born Davies outlined the complexity of aligning his Scottish and Welsh identities and said that being 'called British' is a more accurate reflection of who he is. While upholding his affiliation to Welsh rugby, Davies nonetheless expressed his desire to retain his Scottish identity so as not to overlook his family ancestry. Underlying his rationale is the belief that it should 'not be unusual for someone to celebrate two cultures'. Although Tuck (2003) speculates that, due to increasing globalising tendencies within sport, identity crises

can occur, Davies' insightful remarks suggest that it is possible to positively assimilate various national identities.

Fundamental to his enduring Nigerian identity, Erinle cites the cultural influence of his mother who believed it was essential to have some 'sort of rock and anchor you can attach yourself too'. Importantly, the cultural aspects of his Nigerian identity 'remained with his home-life' whereas his playing career meant he was 'English by default'. Erinle's willingness to admit that his Englishness was only ever 'apparent wearing a white shirt' reminds us of the possibility that sport, in this instance rugby, potentially fosters only eighty-minute patriotism (Bairner, 2015). When asked to expand on this, Erinle sought to reinforce that he is 'obviously proud' of his English identity: 'it is probably just my traditional Nigerian way of life that makes me think I am less English than I care to admit'. In response to being asked if he views himself as an exile, Erinle responded that his 'exile status' gives him the 'luxury to explore his dual heritage' meaning that he is a 'true blend with an indisputable connection to both Nigeria and England'.

Stevens, Davies and Erinle were all in agreement that the desire to study at a respected university had influenced their decisions to migrate. Stevens recalled that his 'main ambition was to study at a good university' while Erinle referred to himself as a 'studying man' who 'fell into rugby'. Davies' presented a summary of his experiences as an exile player: 'leaving Scotland was largely due to my ambition to study at Loughborough. Welsh students were very supportive ...and that that brought me even closer to my Welsh identity'. The typology of athletic migration developed by Elliott and Maguire (2008) prove useful for interpreting these comments. The three players appear to fall into the category of 'ambitionist' (Njororai, 2012:198) which refers to seeking to achieve a goal in another country. Although not connected to education, Hardie, Amos, Cowan and Taylor also appear to have migrated with

the intention of furthering their rugby careers by representing the country of their blood line. Maitland was the only respondent who admitted to migrating largely for financial reasons.

Johnes (2004) proposes the notion of 'the other' in international sport which often manifests itself in a problematic relationship with England. Throughout the interviews, several references were made by the Welsh exile players that suggested hostility towards England. Most revealing were the comments made by the two English-born participants. Amos claimed that, for Welsh players, team talks were often about the 'Welsh teams of old and the classic matches against England'. This insight into Welsh rugby relates to Maguire's (1999) thoughts on the use of historical legacies and past glories within national identity construction. Additionally, Welsh Students player Taylor also revealed that 'beating the bloody English' was a 'cherished memory' for him and his Welsh mother. The historical rivalry (Johnes, 2004) with England appeared to be particularly respected by the English-born exiles with Taylor's observations being supported by Amos: 'there seems to be something extra there, maybe a little bit more animosity or hostility when you're playing against the English. That makes me proud to be Welsh'. Such comments resonate with Kowalski's (2004) identification of the common resentment that the other 'home' nations have towards English rugby. Amos claimed that 'every Welsh rugby player wants to beat England' thereby confirming Johnes' (2004) observations about Welsh identity and the collective desire to 'pound the Saxon on the rugby field'. Amos made it clear that he refers to himself as British rather than English thus capturing the ongoing 'Welsh rivalry' with England. This 'sense of anti-Englishness' in sport is also highlighted by Smith and Porter (2004).

Conclusion

This study has explored the attitudes and experiences of international exile rugby players based in the United Kingdom; the central focus being on the various values, opinions and attitudes presented by eight participants. The main aim has been to add to our current understanding of national identities within sport with an exploration of sports labour migration and the overarching influence of globalization. The analysis has been informed by existing literature but, more importantly, by the reflections of elite athletes.

Evaluation of the interview data identifies the significance of a player's opportunity to represent more than one country and the fact that identity construction is not fixed and there are often competing versions that can be adopted. We argue that previous analyses of national identity in the context of professional rugby union have provided little more than a perfunctory discussion of the factors determining identification.

When reflecting on their own national identities, the participants often identified deeply intrinsic and emotional attachments to schools, family members and their formative upbringing. However, there were also diverse responses to the importance of blood ties and how these enable differing representative eligibilities. Other factors, such as an antipathy towards the English, were seen as shaping the national identities of the Welsh exile players and it is worth noting that such behaviour has previously been disregarded in relation to elite performers as opposed to sport fans.

Most participants indicated that their location in a specific international team is indicative of their underlying national allegiance. Sean Maitland emerged as the only player to admit that

his decision to migrate was influenced by potential financial rewards; the others expressed a genuine desire to represent 'their' country. Many of the players referred to the fluid nature of the development of their national identities, whilst some recognised their identification with their adopted nation is stronger than for the country of their birth

As an exile himself, the first author sought to ensure that there was an open discussion with the players with pre-existing judgements set aside and every effort being made to avoid unconscious bias. Fortunately, previous involvement with both Scottish and English age grade teams allowed for relatively easy access to players who have represented full international teams within Britain. The absence of any Irish international exile players is recognised as a limitation of this study. Furthermore, an investigation into the attitudes of the Great Britain Sevens team at future Olympic Games would provide a rare opportunity to further understand the enigma of being an exile in international rugby union.

It should be remembered that this study did not focus on the issue of sport labour migration in general or exclusively in relation to the motivations that lay behind the participants choosing to play international sport a nation other than the land of their birth. Their reasons for doing so are touched upon. More important, however, is the fact that these players have chosen to represent nations with which they had a blood connection, thereby differentiating them from those migrants who qualify for an adopted country based solely on the duration of their residence. The primary object of the study therefore, was to consider whether, or not, the character of their qualification to play for their adopted nation interacted with their attitude towards that nation and in what ways. As a result, our study has sought to provide novel insights into the professional worlds of exile players, not least by allowing the voices of some of these players to be heard, and to make a unique contribution to current sociological thinking on the relationship between sport, sport labour migration and national identity. The evidence presented here points to the conclusion that, while rugby union is increasingly a

game without frontiers, the concept of national identity continues to evolve in the socio-cultural environment of international sport. Rugby union is a game in flux (Tuck, 2003a) and the nature of what it truly means to be an exile - an individual who has come *in from the side* – will continue to raise many questions.

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