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Autonomy, Paternalism and the Ethics of Boxing: A Qualitative Investigation into the Perceptions and Experiences of Professional and Semi-Professional Boxers, Coaches and Referees

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

There are longstanding debates regarding issues of ethics and morality in boxing. The most common traditional approach to examining such issues amongst academics has involved the ethical theories of paternalism and autonomy. Paternalistic researchers have often opposed boxing due to its inherently 'violent' and 'dangerous' nature. However, those advocating participant autonomy have often sought to defend the free choice of those who take part, as well as supporting the potentially beneficial mental and physical health benefits that boxing can offer. This thesis critically analyses the theories of paternalism and autonomy in order to discuss and analyse their application to boxing, whilst also generating data surrounding key ethical issues within this often-controversial sport. Data were sourced from semi-professional and professional boxers, coaches and referees through the use of semi-structured interviews. The majority of boxers and coaches claimed that boxing was not a violent sport and it provided an outlet for them to release any aggression in a controlled environment. Boxing coaches and a referee were aware of their responsibilities to maintain the boxers' safety during a bout, however there was a slight confusion over who potentially had the ultimate responsibility. It was evident that boxing had made a positive impact on many participants. However, the results also show a clear lack of formal education amongst boxers and some coaches regarding the risks and possible dangers to participation in boxing. A soft-paternalistic approach to issues of ethics and education in boxing is therefore advocated. Providing that all participants are fully educated on elements of risk, they should be allowed to make an informed decision as to whether they want to pursue the sport of boxing. This approach would only restrict participant autonomy until participants had received formal training or education and, once complete, their personal autonomy would remain intact.

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Abbreviations

AIBA – Amateur International Boxing Association

AMA – American Medical Association

BBBC – British Boxing Board of Control

BMA – British Medical Association

CMA – Canadian Medical Association

CTE – Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy

TBI – Traumatic Brain Injury

1. Introduction

On the 22nd June 2002, Pedro Alcazar stepped into the ring to face Fernando Montiel in Las Vegas, Nevada. Alcazar lost via technical knockout in the sixth round and suffered a severe injury to the brain that went undetected during the post-fight medical check. Two days later, before returning to his home country of Panama, he collapsed in his hotel room, passing away in hospital hours later (Lander, 2004). Over seventeen years later, boxing related deaths are still occurring. On 16th October 2019, Patrick Day died as a result of brain trauma that was sustained in a bout with Charles Conwell. Maxim Dadashev and Hugo Santillan also passed away in the same year due to boxing-related injuries. Following such fatalities, the 'violent' nature of boxing has continued to receive much attention and debate within media reports, amongst medical professionals and within academic research. Questions have also been raised regarding the medical procedures that take place before, during and after a boxing bout, particularly given increasing scientific knowledge surrounding issues such as concussion and other boxing related injuries during training and bouts (Sethi, 2016). Similarly, there remain questions surrounding the management of such issues and the extent to which they are understood amongst boxers, boxing coaches and referees (Sethi, 2016).

It has often been argued that people make an autonomous choice when deciding whether they would like to take part in the sport of boxing (Woodward, 2006; Case and Christophe, 2019). Whilst the decision to take part in boxing currently rests with the individual, there are however many opposing arguments from paternalist researchers and others who would see the sport abolished. Many paternalists believe boxing to be violent, immoral and to contain too much risk to be defended (Lane, 2008; Ling, Hardy and Zetterberg, 2015). There are however also many counter-arguments emphasising more positive aspects of boxing, such as involvement in the sport promoting physical and mental health and providing participants with discipline and structure (Wacquant, 1992; Case and Christophe, 2019). Boxing and other forms of combat 'sport' have been part of society in some form for thousands of years.

The modern sport of boxing is watched and followed by millions of people across the globe and has been a dominant sport across working-class culture for centuries (Shilling, 2017). Given such debates, it is important to note that deaths have been common throughout these periods, so it is first important to locate the discussion of modern forms of boxing within an appropriate socio-historical context.

1.1 Examining the Long-Term Socio-Historical Development of Boxing

Gems (2014) has argued that forms of 'boxing' and fighting contests have been part of sporting culture for thousands of years. Gems (2014) suggests that early boxing contests first emerged in Ancient Mesopotamia (present day Iraq and Syria) around 4000BC and by 3580BC boxers were portrayed on Egyptian tombs. Bare-fisted boxing was often used as a form of entertainment to amuse pharaohs in Ancient Egypt, making pugilism one of the world's oldest sporting activities (Gems, 2014). It was, however, the Ancient Greek period (700BC-400BC) that witnessed the emergence and development of ancient forms of boxing and other related activities as forms of entertainment for the populace.

Although early forms of boxing were popular in Ancient Greece, they were also the sibling of a more popular ancient sport known as the pankration. The pankration can be described as an ancient combination of boxing, kick boxing and wrestling, in which opponents would compete until submission or, in some cases, death (Spivey, 2011; Peatfield, 2007). These two 'sports' were extremely popular and reflected the nature of the warrior societies of this time period. The collective warrior cultures of Ancient Greece and surrounding nations reflected a common theology that the Gods would lead their nations into battle in order to overcome their enemies (Rich and Shipley, 1993). Linked to this warrior-based ethos, boxing and the pankration were both added to the Ancient Olympic Games, with the pankration introduced in 648BC (Gems, 2014; Constantoyannis and Partheni, 2004; Peatfield, 2007; Griffiths, 2012). There were often serious injuries and sometimes fatalities in such contests within the Ancient Olympics (Spivey, 2011).

The rules of ancient boxing were significantly different to the rules of the modern sport. In ancient times, combatants would fight without rounds, until one was either knocked out or admitted defeat (Frayer and Martin, 2014). Fighters in the pankration often wrapped their hands in leather thongs, causing direct bloodshed, lacerations and damage when compared to today's heavy gloves (Frayer and Martin, 2014). Boxing was also a popular sport in Ancient Rome. The Romans took the Greek variation of the sport and developed it into something similar to a gladiatorial sport. This was extremely violent, with pugilists often wearing spiked gloves, causing severe damage and bloodshed, and the winner determined by life and death (Poliakoff, 1987). Once again, boxing was a representation of warrior culture within ancient societies. There was little concern for issues of ethics, personal safety or wellbeing in Ancient forms of boxing, as the warrior mentality dominated Ancient Greece and Rome (Poliakoff, 1987). Questions were raised by many Christians (the dominant religion of the Roman Empire at the time), who believed such activities should be banned due their brutal nature. A Christian emperor named Theodosius sought to ban pugilism and the pankration: a decision that some authors (e.g. Watson and Brock, 2015) have argued could be viewed as one of the first acts of paternalism with regards to the morality of boxing. Indeed, this decision was supported at the time by many Christian and Jewish scholars who argued against the brutal nature of these sports (Poliakoff, 1987; Watson and Brock, 2015).

Documentation relating to the existence of boxing is sparse during the intervening period between ancient times and the 17th century. Sugden (1996) argues that the Roman variation of gladiatorial boxing partly disappeared from the records in line with the fall and decline of Imperial Rome. Whilst it is unlikely that fighting activities disappeared altogether during this period, there is little evidence defending their existence. Early forms of pugilism and boxing did however start to re-emerge in records as a popular form of entertainment during the 17th century, when boxing as a sport was revitalised within Britain, as boxing matches and prize fights gained much popularity.

Prize fighting remained relatively violent and un-controlled, again reflecting the social context of the time (McCrory, 2007; Frayer and Martin, 2014). During this period, there was a divide between the often dangerous and illegal prize fights of the lower social classes and the perceived 'honourable' and 'civilised' forms of 18th century sparring (Boddy, 2013). Boddy (2013) notes that pugilism and prize fighting began to thrive during the 18th century as there was a national love for gambling, which may have helped the growth of modern forms of boxing. Spectators would place large wagers on boxing matches during the 18th century, with so much money involved there was an increasing need for rules to help regulate contests (Brailsford, 1982). However, some authors argue that this was not the only issue that contributed to the gradual 'civilising' of such activities.

The civilising process refers to the theoretical argument that, over time, there have been gradual trends towards a lowering in the levels of violence that are considered acceptable within society and increasing trends towards greater self-control amongst the population (Elias and Dunning, 1986). As a result, the level of enjoyment that people gain from watching violent sports has also declined throughout history, as many modern sports have gradually become more civilised (Elias and Dunning, 1986). During ancient times, fatalities were common due to the lack of rules and regulations and the widespread acceptance of more overt forms of physical violence, with little self-control from participants. Elias and Dunning (1986) argue that the modern variation of boxing is more civilised in the sense that fights are held within carefully controlled environments, with a number of rules and regulations that aim to improve the safety of those involved, and greater levels of self-control expected from combatants. The imposition of rules and regulations has attempted to 'civilise' the sport over the years through the introduction of rounds, scoring systems and ringside doctors (Jako, 2002; Loosemoore, Knowles and Whyte, 2007; Nead, 2011). These developments first began to take place when modern forms of boxing re-emerged within 18th century Britain.

In 1747 Jack Broughton, an ex-prize-fighter, introduced the use of gloves and 'mufflers' which were an early form of head guard. Such equipment was introduced in an attempt to

prevent black-eyes, broken jaws and broken noses (Sheard, 2004). According to Sheard (2004), Broughton supposedly created the first set of written rules that 'governed' the sport of boxing. Rules such as specifying the length of rounds and how umpires should conduct themselves were introduced and after 1746 English gamblers began to divide boxers into weight classes (Boddy, 2013). The rules of boxing have continued to develop since this time, with a more recent emphasis on improving the safety of those involved. Gradually throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, boxing began to become more 'civilised' with further rules and regulations introduced, such as the Queensbury Rules. The Queensbury Rules introduced 3-minute rounds, the use of gloves and the 10 second knockout count, resulting in a more structured and organised sport (McCrory, 2002).

Boxing did not become an official sport in the modern Olympic Games until the third Modern Olympiad in 1904 hosted in St Louis, USA. During the last century, the sport has continued to develop (Felice and Marcora, 2013). In particular, since the early 20th century, both amateur and professional boxing authorities have imposed a series of important changes within the rules of boxing in an attempt to improve levels of safety. A rule was introduced in 1906 that all amateur boxers must undergo a medical examination before a fight and by 1950 medical cards were introduced that could impose a mandatory suspension for certain injuries (Loosemore, Knowles and Whyte, 2007). The introduction of such rules in amateur boxing were intended to maintain the safety of boxers. Another noticeable development in Olympic Boxing was a change to the scoring system. At the Barcelona Games in 1992, computer scoring systems were implemented alongside the five judges in an attempt to improve the reliability of the verdicts (Loosemoore, Knowles and Whyte, 2007; Felice and Marcora, 2013). In 2000, the "outclassed" rule was also introduced during the Sydney Games. The introduction of this rule meant that a bout would be stopped instantly if a boxer led his opponent by more than 20 points in every round, except the final round. Such rules were intended to make Olympic boxing a safer sport and to improve the health and safety of those who compete.

The rules of professional boxing during the late 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s were very different. Jako (2002) states that ringside doctors in amateur boxing would often intervene if a boxer needed to be examined, whereas in professional boxing this would rarely happen. Head-guards were first introduced in the 1984 Olympic Games and were mandatory in amateur boxing until the 2012 Olympics, when new evidence emerged that it was safer for boxers not to wear them (Loosemoore, Knowles and Whyte, 2007; Amateur International Boxing Association, 2016). This has caused much debate within academic literature, particularly given that a number of scientific tests have had contradicting results. McIntosh and Patton (2015) found that wearing a head guard can potentially reduce impact and the risk of concussion by up to 50%, although their results contradicted those of the Amateur International Boxing Association (AIBA). Graham et al. (2011) also conducted a study focussing on the effects of head punches across 16 male amateur boxers, all of whom wore head guards throughout the study. Whilst they noted that head-guards may prevent superficial facial injuries, the results of their study suggest that head-guards offer insufficient protection against cerebral brain injuries. It might be argued that amateur boxing is safer than professional boxing, given the different aims and objectives for winning a bout. The main aim within amateur boxing is to outscore your opponent, with the knockout being a secondary objective. However, in professional boxing, knockouts and knockdowns are intentional and used as the primary objective for beating an opponent (Jako, 2002). As such, there might potentially be greater risks attached to the professional sport of boxing, given the deliberate intent for boxers to knock their opponent unconscious.

The historical popularity of boxing is unquestioned. However, developments with regard to safety and violence have caused much debate when discussing the morality of the sport. The violent nature of boxing has come under much scrutiny throughout its history. Although the modern variation of boxing is seen as violent by a number of people, it could be argued that it has undergone its own civilising process when compared to the likes of Ancient Greek and Ancient Roman forms of pugilism (Elias and Dunning, 1986). On one hand, boxing

represents the honour and authenticity of single combat and to this day symbolizes the heroism of a classic warrior (Boddy, 2013). There have also been numerous developments throughout boxing's history attempting to improve the health and safety of those involved. The idea that boxers are gambling their lives when stepping into the ring is however enough to make some paternalists push for the sport to be banned (Dixon, 2007; British Medical Association, 2008). As such, there remain ongoing debates between paternalists and autonomists when discussing the morality of boxing, particularly in relation to medical developments and social attitudes towards issues of 'violence' in sport.

1.2 An Introduction to Ethical Theories: Paternalism and Autonomy

Paternalism can be defined as the interference in a person's freedom (by governments, governing bodies and medical authorities, for example) for what is believed to be their own good (Archard, 1990). The application of the theory of paternalism in practice is a nuanced and complex undertaking. There are various subcategories of paternalism, as demonstrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Paternalism Definitions

Paternalism Subcategory	**Definition**	**vs**	**Paternalism Subcategory**	**Definition**
Soft	Soft paternalism refers to a viewpoint that a paternalistic interference is only justified when it is necessary to determine whether the person in question is acting voluntarily. If their actions are voluntary, a soft paternalist must allow them to proceed.	vs	Hard	Even if a person's actions are voluntary, a hard paternalist would still interfere in the matter if it meant protecting the person in question.

Broad	Broad paternalism concerns itself with any paternalistic action whether it be state, individual or institutional.	vs	Narrow	Narrow paternalism is only concerned with state laws and legalities.
Weak	Weak paternalists may only interfere if an individual is making a mistake surrounding a fact. An example of this is someone attempting to jump out of a window believing that they will float even though this is impossible.	vs	Strong	Strong paternalism refers to the idea that interference is justified if the individual's ends are mistaken or irrational. If an individual chooses to ride a bike without a helmet then interference is justified.
Pure	Pure paternalism refers to an instance where the class being protected is identical to the class that is being interfered with.	vs	Impure	Impure paternalism refers to an instance where the class being interfered with is larger than the group of people that are being protected.
Moral	If a person's actions could potentially be deemed immoral or morally corrupting, then interference may be justified if it promotes the person's well-being.	vs	Welfare	An interference that aims to make someone a better person to improve one's moral character and ultimately better their welfare.
Libertarian Paternalism	Libertarian paternalism is influenced by the idea that human cognitive and affective capacities are possessing limitations and flaws. Libertarian paternalists aim to push people in the way of their goals by manipulating their choices to allow them to better achieve their ambitions. Their interference would be deemed justified as the			

	individual who is being interfered with will maintain individual autonomy with the help of a paternalistic nudge.

Source: Derived from Dworkin (2020)

Many academics have highlighted the various subcategories of paternalism in a variety of fields (see: Hatzis, 2009; Crossley, 1999; Buchanan, 2008; Aycan, 2006). It is important to acknowledge the wider collection of paternalistic subcategories, however only a handful are widely adopted within boxing literature. Both moral and welfare paternalism are becoming an expansive discussion point within boxing literature, with many academics calling for a ban on the sport due to its potentially immoral nature (Dixon, 2007, 2016; Leclerc and Herrara, 1999). Some academics also argue that boxing should reformed to help preserve the boxer's autonomy (Dixon, 2001; Lopez, Frias and McNamee, 2017). Dixon (2001) argues that boxing should be reformed and that blows to the head should be banned, as they could potentially lead to delayed neurological problems years after retirement. Whilst this could prevent such issues and retain boxers' autonomy later in life, their present state of personal autonomy would be infringed, causing concern amongst autonomists.

The above theory of paternalism has been a key part of British society since the Victorian period, as many scholars who share utilitarian characteristics believe that paternalistic actions are the best way to keep societies healthy and prevent harm (Roberts, 2016). Utilitarianism refers to the idea that actions are deemed right if they promote the wellbeing of the majority, such as the implementation of laws and regulations within societies for example (Archard, 1990; Gray 2013; Mill, 2016). Paternalism and utilitarianism became popular theories within 19th century politics when discussing society and notions of liberty. Liberty is often described as being free from oppressive societal restrictions and having the ability to make free choices within society (Skinner, 2012). Liberty can be divided into two concepts: negative liberty and positive liberty:

> Negative liberty… [is where] You are free, in this sense, to the extent that no one is preventing you doing what you might want to do. Positive freedom, on the other

> hand, is a matter of the doors that you can actually pass through, not just of those that lie open: it is what you can actually do (Berlin, 1969, p.172).

There have often been debates regarding issues of liberty and paternalism within society as laws and regulations, which can be seen as paternalistic, can sometimes impact on people's liberty and rights of freedom. Scholars throughout the 19th and 20th centuries who have defended the theoretical developments of paternalism and utilitarianism sometimes argue that people care too much about liberty and autonomy (Conly, 2013). People can sometimes believe that they cannot be happy unless their liberty and freedom is intact, a belief that paternalists would argue against. Acts of paternalism can potentially impact people's behaviours more broadly within society, whilst other relationships – such as a doctor and their patient – may impact on the welfare of an individual.

In contrast, autonomy can be defined as self-governing oneself and having the ability to make independent choices and decisions (Dworkin, 1988; Kağıtçıbaşı, 2017). It is the liberty of rights, self-rule, self-determination, freedom of will and the freedom to be one's own individual being (Scott et al., 2003). Jennings (2016, p.12) describes autonomy as:

> The freedom from outside restraint and the freedom to live one's life in one's own way. To be autonomous is to live according to your values and principles, as these are refined in the light of informed, rational deliberation and settled convictions that are your own.

It is believed that principles of autonomy first emerged within Ancient Greece and were used to describe the self-government of Greek city states (Scott et al., 2003). Over time, the theory of autonomy has acquired numerous meanings within academic literature. The 17th and 18th centuries played a considerable role in such developments. One of the key figures who played a large part in the development of autonomy is Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Kant was a German philosopher who spent his career researching anthropology (Louden, 2006; Denis, 2017). Kant designed the concepts of 'autonomy of the will' and the

‘metaphysic of morals’ within human society (Diem and Lane, 1999). He believed that the will of the human mind was conditioned to conceive itself to universal laws, either by following them or limiting themselves to them. Kant believed that laws should not be used as moral commands, but rather as a means to guide the human mind. He believed that conforming to laws should ultimately be down to the will of the individual in question. He called this principle the autonomy of the will (Diem and Lane, 1999; Louden, 2006; Denis, 2017). Many different names can be attributed to acts of will and autonomy such as choices, approval, disapproval, liking, disliking, accepting, rejecting, and so on. The different meanings behind autonomy all coincide and come down to the idea of personal choice (Edwards, 2016). How people choose to use their autonomy will ultimately shape and affect their day-to-day lives.

Paternalism and autonomy are not the only two ethical theories that are adopted in boxing literature, but they are popular and widespread theories when discussing issues linked to the morality of boxing. On one hand, there are numerous paternalists who believe that infringing the autonomy of boxers is justified as the outcome would help promote their wellbeing (Archard, 1990; Leclerc and Herrera, 1999; Dixon, 2016). In contrast, some theorists argue that the personal autonomy and free will of pugilists should be defended, as they should be allowed to make their own decisions on whether to take part in the sport, without the infringement of others (Sokol, 2004).

1.3 Research Questions and Rationale

There are numerous ‘positives’ and ‘negatives’ examined in existing literature when discussing the sport of boxing, with many researchers and scholars either defending the autonomy of boxers or posing the paternalistic abolishment of the sport. Such debates will be examined in greater detail in the following chapter. It will be argued that the rationale underpinning numerous studies within this debate are often based on preconceived values regarding issues of paternalism and autonomy in boxing. It will be argued that many quantitative paternalistic studies over-emphasise numerical data and sometimes fail to

consider opposing arguments surrounding the autonomy of boxers. Similarly, it will be argued that some qualitative autonomist studies focus too heavily on observations and ethnographies and fail to examine the personal experiences of the boxers themselves. From both perspectives, there remains a lack of research that highlights the key roles and responsibilities of boxing coaches and referees, which need attention to bring this area of boxing research up-to-date and to offer a first-hand insight into the arguments surrounding the morality of the sport from participant groups who are directly involved in the sport. Taking such issues into consideration, this study will aim to answer the following research questions:

1. How do semi-professional and professional boxers, coaches and referees approach the concept of violence and its application to boxing?
2. Are semi-professional and professional boxers, coaches and referees aware of the inherent dangers of taking part in a combat sport such as boxing and how are they educated on such issues?
3. What is the extent to which the theories of paternalism and autonomy can provide a framework to better understand issues of risk and personal choice in semi-professional and professional boxing?

Data will therefore be generated from three participant groups, allowing boxers, coaches and referees to give their perspective and experiences of what it is like to be involved in the sport of boxing as well as critique and analyse the extent to which theoretical frameworks of paternalism and autonomy can help researchers to understand underlying ethical issues within the sport.

1.4 Key Terms

Whilst professional boxing can be defined as a boxing variant that is fully regulated and sanctioned by a governing body, consisting of boxers who have a professional license, semi-professional and white-collar variants are more difficult to classify (British Boxing Board of

Control, no date [b]). Semi-professional boxing or sometimes labelled white-collar boxing can be defined as any form of boxing that is not considered amateur or professional and is unlicensed or unregulated (Wright, 2019). This can take the form of prize fighting and charity fighting and any earnings are often not enough to pursue a career in these variants of boxing (British Boxing Board of Control, no date [b]). 'Violence' is a broad, complex term that takes many forms; physical, sexual, verbal threats, psychological and emotional (Saltzman et al. ,2002). Although there are numerous forms of violence, paternalists often highlight physical violence when discussing the sport of boxing. Physical violence can be defined as:

> the intentional use of physical force with the potential for causing death, disability, injury, or harm. Physical violence includes, but is not limited to: scratching, pushing, shoving… punching, hitting. (Saltzman et al., 2002, p. 11).

The terms 'violence' and 'controlled aggression' and their application to boxing will be referred to throughout the thesis. The term 'violence and its application to sport can be best described by Smith (1983). Smith uses four categories to classify sport violence and often refers to them as the categories of sport deviance; Brutal bodily contact refers to legitimate violence which is legal within the rules of a sport and can often be found in full contact and combat sports such as ice hockey and boxing. Borderline violence refers to an act that violates the official rules of a sport, however it is a behaviour that is widely accepted amongst fans and players alike and is often a wanted form of violence by fans of the sport. An example being a fist fight in ice hockey. Smith (1983) refers to his third category of sport violence as quasi-criminal violence which are more serious forms of rule violations such as assault that could be deemed as a criminal act. The final category consists of extreme acts of unwanted violence that warrant serious legal action. The primary example of this would be Eric Cantona kicking a fan during a premier league match in 1995. Each category gradually gets more severe and the term 'violence' might be better placed within the later categories. Elements of brutal bodily contact are legitimised within the rules of certain sports and could be linked more with forms of 'aggression' and 'assertion'

The concept of aggression can sometimes be viewed in the same capacity as that of 'assertion', however there is an argument that the two terms differ from one another. Parry (1998) argues that assertion is a way for an individual to affirm upon their rights without the necessity to be forceful whereas aggression is a forceful action that involves a conscious level of intent (Parry, 1998; Bushman and Anderson, 2001). Aggression can be separated into sub-categories such as hostile aggression and instrumental aggression (also known as controlled aggression). Hostile aggression is an impulsive action that is often motivated by the desire to hurt another human being (Bushman and Anderson, 2001; Allen and Anderson, 2017). However, instrumental aggression or 'controlled aggression' is a predetermined behaviour that is driven by a potential goal or reward such as money, fame, trophy or medal (Kempes et al., 2005). These definitions have a direct to link to boxing along with the term 'violence'. Within a sporting social arena it would appear that forms of physical violence and controlled aggression are more readily accepted when compared to other walks of life.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

The following chapter will offer a detailed review and analysis of existing literature surrounding paternalism and autonomy in boxing. The rationale behind using a qualitative methodological approach to data collection alongside the reasons for using semi-structured interviews across three participant groups will then be explained. Following this, the results and discussion chapters will provide analysis and discussion relating to the data that was collected. This will consist of multiple chapters focussing on the study's key findings and outcomes. Finally, theoretical and empirical conclusions will be drawn based on the responses of all three participant groups that will answer the study's research questions. Any limitations with the project will presented along with any opportunities for potential further research in this field.

2. Literature Review

There are ongoing debates within academic literature surrounding the morality and ethics of boxing. A number of people including some medical professionals and paternalist researchers argue for a permanent ban on boxing, often based on the viewpoint that the sport is violent and unethical (Jones, 2001; Lane, 2008). Such individuals believe that boxing is one of the only sports that involves intentional violence, with one of the main underlying aims of the sport to render an opponent unconscious. This can lead to serious harm such as concussions, facial lacerations and broken bones. Boxing can also cause delayed harm that may not become evident until later in life, including conditions such as Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE), Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease (Ling, Hardy and Zetterberg, 2015). There are however numerous counter-arguments from proponents of the sport that defend boxing and the autonomy of those who take part. Many boxing participants are from a working-class background and take up boxing as they may not have the social, cultural and economic capital to participate in sports such as tennis or golf (Wilson, 2002). Some researchers also argue that boxing teaches discipline and organisation, as participants often adhere to a rigorous training regime in order to keep fit and healthy (Case and Christophe, 2019; Woodward, 2006). There are therefore various arguments for both paternalism and autonomy when examining the sport of boxing. This chapter will critically examine such debates. In doing so, it will be argued that much existing research has often focussed on the experiences of boxers, with little discussion of the responsibilities that coaches and referees have with regard to maintaining the safety of boxers during a bout. In addition to the traditional paternalist and autonomist debate, this chapter will therefore also consider the state of existing knowledge regarding the roles, experiences and responsibilities of boxers, coaches and referees within this sporting arena.

2.1 Arguments to Ban Boxing: A Critical Examination of the Paternalist Viewpoint

The idea that modern boxing should be banned started to receive greater recognition in 1982 when the British Medical Association (BMA) adopted a policy campaigning for the abolition of boxing on the basis that participation in the sport can cause severe brain damage (Jones, 2001). Subsequent calls to ban boxing from governing bodies such as the American Medical Association (AMA) and Canadian Medical Association (CMA) raised further questions regarding the morality of boxing. This gave impetus to the BMA campaign to ban boxing, as paternalists began to argue that boxing was a violent 'blood sport' (Jones, 2001). The idea that boxing should be banned due to violence has become a central argument for paternalists in recent years. Paternalists argue that physical violence is a primary element of boxing, in line with Saltzman et al.'s (2002) definition that hitting and punching are examples of physical violence and central components of boxing. They are also highly 'visible' aspects of the sport. Some forms of physical contact between two strangers on the street may be judged as violent, yet the 'same' behaviours between individuals on a sports field would often go unjudged (Ray, 2011). Boxing is however one of the few sports that does get 'judged' on its 'violent' behaviours. Professional boxers, in particular, aim to win via knockout, as it is often the fastest route to victory and the most hazardous. A knockout can be defined as either a concussion or a more severe brain injury that renders a person unconscious (Richards, 1984). There are a number of sports that could result in serious brain injury and fatality as a result of participants being rendered unconscious such as horse racing, American football, rugby and motor sports. Yet boxing is one of the only sports in which competitors intentionally aim to render their opponent unconscious: a trait that separates the sport from many others (Lane, 2008).

One of the main underlying ethical and moral issues from the viewpoint of paternalists is that all physical contact in boxing is intentional. A boxer intentionally aims to harm their opponent by punching them to a point of unconsciousness. From a paternalist perspective, the underlying intent to violently harm someone is immoral and should not be allowed (Watson

and Brock, 2017; Rudd et al., 2016), not least because the resulting injuries (caused as a result of intentionally harming one another in the boxing ring) can lead to serious injuries and, in some cases, death. More alarmingly, boxers can operate within the rules of the sport, but in doing so may unintentionally take the life of their opponent (Herrera, 2004). The arguments as to whether boxing is morally right or wrong could, in some respects, link to the notion of medical ethics. Medical ethics examines and tackles issues such as euthanasia, abortions and the distribution of limited health care resources. Many of these moral debates pose the question as to whether it could be deemed right to act and intervene on an individual's behalf if it will benefit their long-term health (Dunn and Hope, 2004). The notion of medical ethics can be applied to boxing with regards to whether the sport should be banned (Sokol, 2004; Leclerc and Herrera, 1999). At present, it is down to the boxer to make the autonomous decision to participate in the sport. This decision could put their health at serious risk. It could therefore be deemed ethical on medical grounds for a referee or coach to step in and intervene to try to prevent the possibility of serious injury, harm or death, by considering the medical repercussions of a career in boxing.

There have been many quantitative paternalist studies that have focussed on the death rate and injury rates of both amateur and professional boxing. Zazryn, McCrory and Cameron (2009) examined injury rates in professional boxing in the period between January 1997 and June 2005. The study involved 545 professional boxers aged 18-43 years who participated in 907 bouts throughout the study period. Zazryn, McCrory and Cameron (2009) noted an injury rate of 23.6 per 100 professional fights. They found that older fighters and fighters who had participated in an increased number of fights were more at risk of serious injury. They concluded that in order to reduce injury rates in professional boxing, restrictions should be put in place based on age and boxing bout exposure. This could protect boxers against the possible risks that can accompany long-term or regular participation in the sport (Zazryn, McCrory and Cameron, 2009). Pappas (2007) also conducted a three-year study focussing on injury-related visits to hospital emergency departments due to boxing, wrestling and

martial arts incidents. During the study period, 7290 injuries were recorded, 10.3% of which were boxing related. Out of the three sports, boxing had the highest head/face injury rates at 23.3% in comparison to wrestling at 16.9% and martial arts at 11.1%. Boxing also had the highest injury rate for upper extremities at 63.7% in comparison to 44.3% (wrestling) and 32.0% (martial arts). Out of these injuries in the upper extremities, 87% of boxing injuries were head/face related. Whilst overall injury rates might have appeared higher in other sports (e.g. basketball injury rates were 50% higher than boxing), the risk of serious injury to the brain would be higher in boxing (Pappas, 2007). Similar discussions can be found in numerous academic studies showing that sports such as American football, rugby and football, among others, have higher overall injury rates than boxing (Alevras et al., 2018; Siewe et al., 2015).

Referring back to the notion of medical ethics, a number of paternalists believe that their intervention is justified in boxing as they are protecting the long-term health of participants. Studies such as those outlined above focus predominantly on statistics, without necessarily seeking to understand the experiences or viewpoints of those who participate in the sport, such as boxers and coaches. Many of these paternalist studies do not know whether boxers are aware and willing to accept the risks of boxing, given that they have not interviewed or spoken to participants directly (e.g. Jones, 2001; Dixon, 2007 Lane, 2008). In many instances, emphasis was placed on a predominantly paternalistic argument that boxing should be banned, with potential counter arguments surrounding issues of autonomy in boxing rarely considered. It seems that a number of quantitative studies surrounding the risks and dangers of boxing therefore adopt and apply a more value-driven paternalist viewpoint from the outset, often drawing upon statistical findings in order to justify an argument for the sport to be banned. Whilst there can at times be an underlying paternalist ideology within such research, this does not however change the fact that the majority of boxing related injuries are head/face related, resulting from repeated intentional blows to the head (Rudd et al. 2016). These injuries that can result in severe short-term and long-term

injuries and, in some instances, death: an element of boxing that has gained much attention in recent media history.

Individual instances of violence and harm in boxing are not often published within academic literature, but are printed in various media sources, individual case reports and industry reports (Zazryn, McCrory and Cameron, 2009). One of the most infamous acts of boxing violence occurred in 1997 when Mike Tyson bit-off part of Evander Holyfield's ear (Johnson, 2013). There have however been numerous other cases in recent boxing history that have resulted in even greater injuries, even though fighters have remained within the laws of the sport. On 1st October 2016, Dundee boxer Mike Towell passed away in hospital 24 hours after suffering a severe brain haemorrhage in a bout against Dale Evans. Towell had passed all of his pre-fight medicals (Davies, 2016). After this boxing tragedy, many reports suggested that the British Boxing Board of Control (BBBC) needed to re-evaluate its safety protocols for those involved in the sport. BBBC rules and regulations are available online as well as medical requirements that are needed before an event may go ahead (British Boxing Board of Control, no date [a]). All boxers are required to complete a number of medical procedures before a fight and are also obligated to have an annual MRI scan in order to maintain their license (Davies, 2016). Although these safety measures are in place, there are media reports to suggest that boxing-related brain injuries are still going unnoticed following post-fight procedures (Lander, 2004).

One of the most common medical concerns that occurs as a result of boxing is concussion. Concussion can be defined as "a complex pathophysiological process affecting the brain, induced by traumatic biomechanical forces" (Sethi, 2016, p.62). Concussion usually involves the temporary loss of neurological function and a full recovery normally occurs over a period of time (Neidecker et al., 2017). However, the issue is that concussion does not appear as an abnormality during a head scan, making it extremely difficult to grade its severity. This can be a matter of concern when discussing a sport such as boxing, as concussions can potentially go unnoticed. For that reason, boxing coaches and referees have to be extremely

vigilant during a bout to ensure that boxers do not continue with potentially serious neurological impairments (Sethi, 2016). Sethi believes that coaches and referees may be able to identify a potential concussion early and stop the fight before an injury gets more serious. Sethi (2016) also states that if a boxer is knocked down due to a head punch and gets back up before the count of ten, coaches and referees should still be concerned about a possible concussion. Symptoms of a concussion can include headaches, nausea, vision impairments, memory problems, confusion, loss of consciousness, slurred speech, dizziness and difficulty remaining upright without stumbling (Ling, Hardy and Zetterberg, 2015; Neidecker et al., 2017).

The majority of non-combat sports have a universal agreement that if an athlete is believed to have suffered a concussion, they must be immediately removed from play to be assessed. If they are diagnosed with a concussion, they will not be allowed to return to sport on that same day. The Irish Rugby Football Union (2020) implement a graduated return to play protocol that requires players to be absent from the sport for a minimum of 23 days after an incident of concussion. However, boxing does not apply this rule universally across all nations. Boxing rules surrounding concussion often depend on the state/commission. Some commissions leave the responsibility to the ringside physician and if they believe a boxer may have concussion, they can stop the fight without any intervention. Other commissions, however, leave the decision to the referee who would make an informed decision based on the advice of a qualified medical physician (Neidecker et al., 2017). The issue with this system is potential confusion over who has ultimate responsibility to stop a fight, potentially leading to a higher risk of concussion if a fight continued longer than it should. In this respect, it is also important to consider that the “win-at-all-costs” nature of modern sport can also at times encourage athletes to play through injuries and pain in order to win (Whatman, Walters and Schluter, 2018). Paternalist researchers often believe that there is just cause to intervene in order to protect the safety of boxers, as boxers themselves would not

necessarily stop a fight if they felt that they needed medical attention (Sartore-Baldwin et al., 2017).

Numerous quantitative studies have focussed on injury rates in boxing, in comparison to other sports. A number of researchers highlight injuries to the head, but do not state whether they include instances of concussion. Bennett et al. (2018) sought to investigate whether professional fighters could recognise the symptoms of concussion and if they were willing to report those symptoms. They asked 257 fighters to complete a self-report questionnaire that tested their knowledge of concussion and their reported number of previous head injuries and found that a significant number of fighters were uneducated when it came to knowledge surrounding concussion. Bennett et al. (2018) state that approximately 40.0% of fighters reported that they had returned to training the same day that they had endured a head injury. 21.0% of fighters had also admitted that they had instances of hiding the symptoms of head injury from medical staff and their coaches so that they could get back to training and competing. Although this study is one of the few that have specifically looked at concussion in combat sports, unfortunately they do not separate data to examine specific contact sports such as boxing. It is therefore unclear how these data effect the sport of boxing in itself. There does however need to be further investigation into the relative levels of education, knowledge and understanding of participants surrounding issues of concussion in boxing, before paternalists conclude that the sport be banned.

Concussion in boxing is often referred to as mild traumatic brain injury (TBI). There are however other more catastrophic forms of brain injuries such as skull fractures, subdural and epidural haematoma, and brain haemorrhages that can also occur in combat sports such as boxing (Ling, Hardy and Zetterberg, 2015). Brain haemorrhages occur in boxing as a result of repeated head trauma and can involve arteries within the brain bursting, causing a bleed on the brain (Hart et al., 2017). A subdural haematoma is a form of brain haemorrhage that happens when blood begins to collect outside of the brain and is usually a result of severe head trauma (Oktay et al., 2016). Although these injuries are extremely serious and

potentially life threatening, they can be treated if they are identified early. However, there are some symptoms of serious injury that do not develop until post-retirement. These can include Alzheimer's and dementia pugilistica, more commonly known as 'punch drunk syndrome', which in more recent discussion has often been linked with CTE (Roberts, Alltop and Bruton, 1990; McCrory, Zazryn and Cameron, 2007). CTE is a progressive neurodegenerative syndrome that can be caused by repetitive non-lethal blunt trauma to the head (Omalu, 2014). Symptoms can involve confusion, memory loss, headaches, dizziness, depression, aggressive behaviour, dementia and lack of judgement (Omalu et al., 2005, 2006; McKee et al., 2009). Cases of CTE have been reported in numerous sports including American football, wrestling, horse riding, hockey, rugby and boxing (McKee et al., 2009). Although there are symptoms, evidence of CTE will not however show on any brain scan, therefore cannot currently be medically diagnosed. The only way to prove CTE in an athlete is to conduct a full post-mortem autopsy (Omalu et al., 2005, 2006, 2010). Many studies within this area therefore base their findings on CTE like symptoms rather than direct evidence to 'prove' instances of CTE in boxing (McCrory, Zazryn and Cameron, 2007).

Given the lack of empirical evidence surrounding CTE in boxing, there are risks that paternalists make a moral judgement when voicing that boxing should be banned, rather than basing their conclusion on empirical findings. Manley et al. (2017) systematically reviewed the potential long-term effects of sport-related concussion. They reviewed 3,819 studies and found that multiple concussions could be a risk factor for mental health issues and cognitive impairment in certain individuals. They do, however, state there is no specific evidence for this and that further empirical research is required surrounding CTE and other neurological conditions and diseases in sport. Again, such research focussed on sport as a whole, rather than boxing specifically. Although there have been cases of CTE and delayed neurological harm among retired boxers, there is no explicit evidence to suggest that boxing can cause such health problems later in life. Paternalists argue that although a boxer may pass their medical and be cleared of a concussion, they may have permanent damage that

could forever go unnoticed (Rudd et al., 2016). It is therefore difficult from medical and paternalistic viewpoints to defend the morality of the sport, as boxers may seem fine at the time, but may have serious delayed trauma that could lead to CTE, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's later in life. Paternalists often believe that their interference and campaigns to abolish boxing are important in trying to ensure the safety and welfare of people who might become involved in boxing and believe that they are protecting participants from life threatening illnesses (Timperley, 1982; Rudd et al., 2016).

There are data to suggest that a career in boxing could cause serious harm to those involved, leading some medical associations and paternalists to argue in favour of the sports abolishment (Jones, 2001; Ray,2011). Paternalists base their argument on the idea that boxers intentionally aim to render their opponent unconscious and cause harm, therefore encouraging acts of violence (Lane, 2008; Ray, 2011). This leads paternalists and medical associations to strongly question the sports morality (Herrera, 2004). Although other combat sports can result in serious injury, quantitative evidence suggests that boxing has the highest levels of injury rates in sport for the upper extremities and head/face regions (Pappas, 2007). Given that concussion and CTE are such prevalent discussion topics within boxing and that most injuries occur as a result of repeated intentional blows to the head, paternalists believe that their interference and opposition to the sport is justified (Rudd et al. 2016; Timperley, 1982). They also view their interference as justified as the quality of life for a boxer post-retirement could potentially be life-threatening, as they could be at higher risk of Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease and CTE (Timperley, 1982; Rudd, 2016; Jones, 2001; Ray, 2011). It should however be noted that much paternalist research does not consider nor seek to understand the experiences of boxers, as much research in this area is heavily centred around quantitative statistics. It is seen from the work of Bennett et al. (2018) and Manley et al. (2017) that there is not yet a strong evidence-base to suggest that boxing undeniably causes CTE and long-term cognitive impairment. Due to this gap in empirical research, it seems that much paternalist research is driven by moral values surrounding the

idea that boxing involves intentionally harming another human being with an intent to render them unconscious (Ray, 2011; Watson and Brock, 2017; Saltzman et al., 2002). There are however researchers that put forward counter-arguments to defend the autonomy of boxers to choose whether they wish to participate in the sport.

2.2 Arguments Defending Boxing: A Critical Examination of the Autonomy of Individuals

It has been argued by a number of scholars that boxing can sometimes be seen as an immoral and potentially violent sport (see Jones, 2001; Lane, 2008). Although paternalists often argue for reform or even a ban on boxing, there is a strong argument that would defend the sport and the autonomy of those who participate. Hauser (2000, p.14) has argued that “in a perfect world boxing might not exist. But the world is not perfect, and in the eyes of many, thousands of young men (and women) are better off because of boxing”. Similarly, Sokol (2004) believes that the individual should have the right to choose whether to participate in boxing and that paternalists and medical associations should only offer advice. Sokol (2004) states that medical associations are there to advise boxers on the potential risks and that they should not make a conscious effort to infringe the autonomy of boxers, as ultimately the choice to box is a decision made with freedom and autonomy. Broadly speaking, an autonomous individual is one who is self-governed or self-directed. An autonomous adult would formulate specific goals that are relevant to their lifestyle or career and would aim to complete these goals, with the freedom to do so (Oshana, 2016). These goals are often based on certain values or desires that an individual has and although a person may need assistance in completing such goals, they are the ones who decide which of their goals are most important.

Although an individual may have a certain level of personal autonomy, a number of their autonomous decisions or practices may belong to a wider collective group or culture. Kachanoff et al. (2018) conducted a study in which they restricted the collective autonomy of

three sample groups from various religious, ethnic, racial and national cultures. They found that the psychological well-being and personal autonomy of those involved was seriously affected when collective group autonomy was restricted. They argue that society should respect the collective autonomy of all social and cultural groups and allow them the right to practice their culture, providing that it abides by laws within society (Kachanoff et al., 2018). Researchers who adopt the concept of autonomy argue that paternalistic viewpoints to ban boxing are immoral, as such actions would collectively infringe the autonomy of those who take part in boxing (Rudd et al., 2016).

The argument that researchers often put forward to defend people's right to choose whether to participate in boxing has often been linked to the sports traditional position and standing amongst the working classes (Enoch, 2017). Social class is often cited as an important issue that impacts on the involvement of different people and groups with sport (Stempel, 2018; Woods, 2015; Wilson, 2002). Generally speaking, the upper and upper-middle social classes are less likely to participate in certain sports that have become associated with the proletariat or working-classes (Wilson, 2002; Tammelin et al., 2003; Stuij, 2015). The upper social classes often participate in more 'class appropriate' sports such as golf or tennis that often require higher levels of social and cultural capital (Stempel, 2018). In contrast, the working classes are often more likely to be involved in sports such as rugby league, bodybuilding, football and boxing (Shilling, 2017). Participation in sport requires leisure time and money, and the upper classes often have more of both. They can participate in sports that require more economic capital and can be more attracted to doing so, relegating the often 'cheaper' and 'rougher' sports to the working classes (Wilson, 2002; Shilling, 2017; Long, Fletcher and Watson, 2017).

People from the lower social classes often already experience lower levels of autonomy within society. They often do not enjoy large amounts of economic, social or cultural capital. To permanently ban boxing would further infringe on the already limited autonomy of many who take part in such activities (Rudd et al., 2016; Brock, 2014). To limit one's personal

autonomy in such an enforced manner would be viewed by those who value personal freedom as immoral and unethical. Boxers are not forced to participate in the sport, they make the autonomous decision to do so (Brock, 2014). A large proportion of working-class sports participants can lack the educational opportunities or qualifications that can be required for cultural and economic capital (Shilling, 1991). However, Shilling (1991) argues that physical capital refers to an individual who has the skill and ability to excel in their chosen sport, giving them status within their given social group or sporting culture (Shilling, 1991, 2017). This in turn can afford a sense of social capital. It can be difficult to get a precise definition of social capital, but generally speaking it refers to the role of social networks and can be directly linked to trust, civic engagement and community (Bailey, 2005). In order for the working classes to gain cultural and economic capital through sports participation, it has often been argued that they can use their physical capital as a means to make money (Bourdieu, 1978). In relation to boxing, boxers who have the physical attributes to excel might have potential to gain professional status and convert their physical capital into economic capital (Wacquant, 2018). This would potentially allow more autonomy and greater opportunities for social mobility within society, following the attainment of economic and cultural forms of capital through involvement in activities such as boxing (Woodward, 2004).

When discussing issues of autonomy in relation to boxing, scholars have often approached data collection in a different manner to paternalists. They have primarily used a qualitative approach adopting unstructured and semi-structured interviews and, more particularly, have also often used ethnography in order to collect data (see Woodward, 2004, 2008; Wacquant, 1995, 2004). Researchers adopt this type of approach as it allows them to immerse themselves within the boxing subculture in order to develop ‘real experiences’ of what it is like to train as a boxer and to be part of the boxing community (Woodward, 2008). To many pugilists, boxing is more than just a hobby through which they keep fit and socialise. Boxers often undergo a strict diet and rigorous training programmes in order to keep fit and

disciplined. They are always thinking about boxing; at home, at the gym and at work. As such, many boxers are continuously involved in the sport, both inside the ring and out (Deuchar et al., 2016). Many participants come from deprived or working-class backgrounds, and boxing gives these people the ability to shape their own identity and focus their mind and body on something more (Woodward, 2006; Wacquant, 2018).

Linked to the previous point, there are many instances in which it has been shown that some people make the decision to participate in boxing as it is providing them a ‘safe haven’ away from potential violence and crime that they may encounter on the streets (Tjonndal, 2015). Boxing may be seen as intentionally ‘violent’ by paternalists, but many pugilists would rather be associated with boxing culture than potentially be involved in violence or gang culture on the streets, with autonomists arguing that boxers should have the right to make this decision (Tjonndal, 2015). Deuchar et al. (2016) conducted an ethnographic study involving young Danish Gang members, examining how boxing could potentially steer them away from a life of crime. They found that boxing was a good way for young gang members to channel their aggression whilst transitioning their masculine identity away from crime and violence and towards what some would describe as the ‘manly art’ of boxing (Deuchar et al., 2016). Boxing is often used as a disciplinary sport to lure young adults off the streets, giving them a disciplined routine as well as promoting physical and mental health and fitness (Pearn, 1998; Wacquant, 1992). Some researchers argue that providing young boys and girls the opportunity to participate in boxing can help to teach character, sportsmanship and courage, which are useful tools when living in urban environments (Gennaro, 2017).

One of the main counter-arguments from paternalists to the potential social benefits of boxing is that the sport is immoral and intentionally violent. However, many people who are involved in boxing argue that the risk of death in boxing can be less than American football, football, baseball, mountaineering, horse riding and motorsports (Dixon, 2001). In 2011, global death rates per 100,000 participants showed 128 deaths in horse racing, 51 in mountaineering, 126 in parachuting and 7 in motorcycle racing (Rudd, et al., 2016; Lyle and

Mitcheli, 2011). When comparing these statistics to the 1.39 deaths in amateur boxing and the 7.6 deaths in professional boxing, it could be argued that per 100,000 participants, boxing is considerably safer than a number of other sports (Rudd et al., 2016; Lyle and Micheli, 2011). Another retort that autonomists often pose with regard to the notion that boxing is intentionally violent can be best summed up by a quote from Delaney (2003, p.6) that “sports violence can be viewed as behaviour that causes harm, occurs outside of the rules of the game, and is unrelated to the competitive objectives of the sport”. Autonomists often argue that boxing is not therefore necessarily as ‘violent’ an activity as some researchers would suggest, given that participants are following the rules of the game. The competitive objective of boxing is to try to win by either outscoring the opponent or by either knockout or technical knockout. As soon as a boxer knocks their opponent to the floor, they pause to allow the referee to make a count. If a boxer was trying to violently harm their opponent, they would proceed to try and hit them after they have been knocked to the floor (Ryall, 2016). This would not happen in a competitive boxing bout as there are rules in place to prevent any forms of violence. It could be argued that the only violent conduct that occurs in boxing comes in the form of head-butts, low blows, biting and other such contraventions of the rules, which are generally a rare occurrence.

In the eyes of a boxer, it may seem unfair that paternalists are trying to interfere with their personal autonomy by advocating a ban on boxing. The majority of boxers operate within the rules of the sport, which is regulated with officials and medical staff. Banning the sport of boxing may not only take away a sense of identity and other potential socio-cultural benefits for those who take part, but may also encourage them to carry on their boxing career in a potentially unregulated environment (Evans, 1993). Although there can be potential health risks involved when taking part in boxing, there could also be considerable repercussions if the sport were to be permanently banned. One of the main arguments that autonomists put forward is that a permanent ban on boxing could lead pugilists to take up a career in the underground variant (Cohen, 1984; Evans, 1993; Herrera, 2002). If boxing were to be driven

underground, there are potential risks and consequences that health and safety regulations may become insignificant or potentially non-existent, there may be no immediate access to medical facilities and the role of referees could be diminished in comparison to those in the current amateur or professional sports of boxing (Jones, 2001; Tjonndal, 2015).

A further argument advocated by paternalist scholars and medical professionals is that interfering and limiting the personal autonomy of boxers will be beneficial for them in later life. Respect for autonomy is a principle that is prevalent within medical practices. However, some autonomists believe that when it comes to boxing, the medical professions have a desire to interfere with the autonomy of those who take part (Sokol, 2004). Sokol (2004) argues that the role of medical professionals should be solely informative and advisory. He believes that medical associations and professionals should fully inform potential boxers of potential health risks before they take up the sport. This would allow the individual to make an informed decision as to whether they want to participate in boxing, keeping their personal autonomy intact (Sokol, 2004). An autonomous adult should be allowed to engage in any given behaviour or activity, as long as they are aware of the risks and that their involvement does not endanger any unsuspecting or unwilling individuals (Herrera, 2002). Boxing participants are not unwilling or unsuspecting and they ‘harm’ each other within a field of voluntary agreement. They therefore consent to the potentially violent and rough nature of boxing. Herrera (2002) also believes that medical professionals should only warn boxers of the risks and not attempt to infringe on their personal autonomy. It is unclear within academic literature whether boxers are actually aware of the potential risks and whether they receive any training or education regarding such issues. If autonomists believe that boxers should be educated on the risks before making an informed decision whether to take part, issues of training and education need to be investigated. At present, this is arguably an oversight on the part of autonomist researchers, as such questions have rarely been asked within autonomist studies surrounding boxing. Providing that boxers are fully aware of the risks

before participating, there remains an argument that the autonomous choice of whether to participate in the sport of boxing should be down to the individual.

There are therefore numerous arguments put forward to defend the sport of boxing and the free-will and autonomy of those who take part to choose whether they wish to be involved in this activity. Restricting the collective autonomy of any given cultural or social group could negatively impact individual people's psychological well-being and personal autonomy (Kachanoff et al. 2018). There has long been a tendency for boxing participants to be drawn predominantly from working-class backgrounds. Such individuals may already have restricted personal autonomy within society. They do not possess the cultural and economic capital that would allow them more freedom and autonomy in their day-to-day lives (Bourdieu, 1978; Wilson, 2002). One of the only ways for boxers to gain economic and cultural capital is to use their physical capital. Whilst the small percentage of boxing participants that possess the traits needed to gain professional status may be the only ones who make any real money from boxing (Bourdieu, 1978; Woodward, 2004), to permanently ban boxing would only further infringe on the already limited personal autonomy of those who take part, which could seriously impact their social, cultural and psychological well-being. Although more qualitative interview-based studies need to be conducted surrounding issues of risk and education in boxing, autonomists put forth a strong counter-argument to defend the sport of boxing. They believe that medical professionals should advise and not interfere. If boxers are fully informed of the potential health risks of the sport, they can make an informed decision as to whether they want to participate. Autonomists therefore seem more likely and more willing to engage both sides of the debate. Giving boxers the correct education and information and allowing them to make an informed decision whether they want to take part would potentially keep their personal and collective autonomy intact, without the interference of paternalists and medical professionals (Herrera, 2002; Sokol, 2004).

2.3 Examining the Responsibilities of Coaches and Referees within Boxing

When discussing paternalism and autonomy in boxing, much existing research often focuses on the views, perceptions, experiences and dangers that are involved for boxers who are involved in the sport. The involvement of other people and groups and the subject of shared responsibility has rarely been examined within academic literature. There are numerous articles that put forth paternalist and autonomist arguments surrounding boxing, yet many of them fail to examine the views, opinions and shared responsibilities of other key stakeholders in boxing – such as coaches and referees – with regard to maintaining the safety of boxers, both in training and in competitive bouts. It is important to note that in a sport such as boxing, boxers will always have slight restrictions on their autonomy. Boxers rely on the instructions of a coach in order to progress further in the sport and for this to happen they have to relinquish a certain amount of control and autonomy to their coach (Ryall and Olivier, 2011). Individual sports such as climbing and cycling often involve elements of self-teaching and participants primarily remain autonomous. Ryall and Olivier (2011) put forth the argument that if boxers are to give up part of their autonomy to their coach, the coach therefore has a significant responsibility to maintain their boxers safety and ensure that they are educated on elements of risk. Sethi (2016) has argued that boxing coaches and referees have a significant role when it comes to identifying a potential concussion or head injury during a boxing match. If a boxer is knocked down as a result of a head punch and gets back up, they could still have a serious head injury despite the fact that they appear to be healthy. This raises the question as to whether referees or coaches have a responsibility to stop a fight.

Although they may have some help from a ringside physician, either the coach has to ‘throw in the towel’ or the referee has to stop a fight if a boxer’s health appears to be at risk. If boxing coaches and referees are to make such a decision, they need to be fully educated on potential signs, symptoms and health risks in boxing in order for them to make an educated decision when deciding whether to stop a fight. The issue of further educating boxing coaches and referees is something that has rarely been discussed within academic

research. Ryan (1987) argues that in order to make boxing a safer sport without drastically changing the rules, both coaches and referees need to be further educated on the health risks that can be involved in boxing so that they can more closely monitor a boxer's health during a fight. However, Ryan's article was published over thirty years ago and since then there has been little discussion regarding the responsibilities of referees and coaches within boxing (see Xu and Zhao, 2008; Jako, 2002). Jako (2002) is one of the few academics who has published an article that highlights the role and responsibility of coaches and referees with regard to maintaining the safety of a boxer. Jako (2002) states that in amateur boxing the referees monitor boxers more closely than in most other contact sports and that amateur referees stop a fight immediately if a boxer does not look fit enough to continue. This is one of few articles that highlights such safety measures in amateur boxing and there is very little academic literature that focusses on semi-professional and professional counterparts. Given that Jako's (2002) article was also published 18 years ago, there remains significant scope to revisit such issues regarding the roles and responsibilities of coaches and referees as well as the types of training that they receive in order to help their decision making during the a bout. Neither paternalists nor autonomists have examined the role of the referee or the coach with regard to their perceptions and responsibilities to monitor the safety of boxers within the sport. As such, there remains scope to provide new insight into the roles and experiences of a boxing coach or referee, particularly when they are potentially responsible for monitoring the safety and wellbeing of participants.

2.4 Rationale for Examining Issues of Ethics and Morality in Boxing

Paternalist and autonomist researchers offer a number of competing arguments and perspectives when discussing the morality of boxing. Many paternalists argue that boxing is an overtly violent sport that should be banned (Lane, 2008; Ray, 2011; Jones, 2001). They argue that boxing is one of the few sports that encourages intentionally violent blows to the

head with an aim of rendering the opponent unconscious (Lane, 2008; Richards, 1984). Boxers could seriously harm or inadvertently kill their opponent (Herrera, 2004). Even if a boxer appears to be okay after a bout, they could still potentially have severe brain damage or have suffered a brain haemorrhage. A boxer may know if they are seriously injured, but may carry on fighting due to a “win-at-all-costs” mentality. Paternalists believe their interference to be justified as they are potentially saving boxers from serious injury as boxers themselves would not admit that they are seriously hurt (Sartore-Baldwin et al., 2017). This ties in with the notion of medical ethics, as paternalists argue that their interference is justified as they could be protecting the long-term health of the boxer in question. Whilst a boxer may go their entire career without a serious brain injury or concussion, this does not however mean that they are unharmed. Boxers can suffer delayed forms of injury and harm such as CTE, Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s that may only show symptoms years after retirement (Omalu, 2006; McKee, 2009; McCrory, Zazryn and Cameron, 2007). Paternalists argue that they are protecting boxers from life-threatening illnesses and ultimately believe that boxing should be banned (Timperley, 1982; Rudd et al., 2016). However, the main weakness of quantitative-based paternalist studies is that they can often adopt a somewhat value-laden moralistic approach. Many medical-based studies related to boxing collect data on a mass quantitative scale and therefore often overlook the views, perceptions and experiences of the people who actually participate in boxing. There is a tendency for paternalists to overemphasise numerical data and statistics from the standpoint of medical ethics, without necessarily considering both sides of the debate. Many studies within the paternalistic spectrum therefore tend to overlook the day-to-day experiences of thousands of boxing participants, whilst stating that the sport should be banned.

Autonomists have put forth a number of counter-arguments defending boxing. The majority of boxing participants come from working-class backgrounds and have limited autonomy within society. Autonomists argue that paternalistic arguments to ban boxing would be immoral in restricting the free will of participants to make their own personal choices (Rudd

et al., 20116). Many working-class boxing participants may lack cultural and economic capital, but might have potential to exploit physical forms of capital (Shilling, 1991). If a boxer can excel in their sport, they may gain semi-professional or professional status, generating cultural and economic forms of capital which, in turn, increases their personal autonomy (Woodward, 2004). Boxers are not forced to participate, they make the autonomous decision to do so, therefore it could be seen as immoral to completely abolish the sport (Brock, 2014). If boxing were to be banned then many participants may be encouraged to take up the underground variant, fighting in unregulated matches without qualified medical staff or referees and therefore increasing potential health risks (Jones, 2001; Tjonndal, 2015). Boxing is a discipline sport that many young people take up to keep them away from potential violence and crime that could be encountered on the streets. Yet many qualitative studies in this area also contain weaknesses. Ethnographies and observations can be a good way of capturing and experiencing boxing culture, but many qualitative studies in this field lack opportunities to generate more detailed in-depth examinations of the thoughts, experiences, perceptions and real-life stories of the boxers themselves. There is also little research surrounding the training and knowledge that boxers receive about the potential risks that can be involved in the sport.

This study will adopt semi-structured interviews in an attempt to rectify some of the issues that have been identified from a critical review of existing literature in this subject area. Using semi-structured interviews will allow the ‘real-life’ stories of three interrelated participants groups to be examined: boxers, coaches and referees. Knowledge about the experiences and interactions of these three groups is an area that is significantly lacking in existing quantitative and qualitative studies. With a lack of qualitative based studies examining the role of boxing coaches and referees, there also remains scope to provide new insight into the experiences and responsibilities of such stakeholders. There has often been a tendency within much existing research to adopt a particular ethical approach from the outset. As will be outlined in the following chapter, rather than approach this research with a fixed viewpoint

in mind, this study will seek to adopt a more interpretivist qualitative approach, providing a basis for data analysis to emerge in a more inductive manner, based upon data that are generated.

3. Methodology

There are a number of ways to approach the methodology when conducting qualitative research. It was therefore important to consider numerous factors that contribute to an effective methodological design. Several questions needed to be considered with regard to design, participants, sampling, data collection and data analysis. Addressing these issues was imperative in creating an effective methodology. The approach and rationale that was adopted within this study will be outlined and explained within this chapter. Prior to the design of the study, there were a number of ontological and epistemological considerations that needed to be addressed.

3.1 Ontology and Epistemology

Questions of social ontology are concerned with the 'nature' of social beings (Searle, 2006). Ontology has often been described as consisting of two main positions: objectivism or constructivism. Objectivism refers to the question of whether an 'objective reality' and external social factors impact upon social beings within society (Goodwin and Darley, 2008; Graham, 2010). In contrast, constructionism refers to the idea that social entities are built up from the ways in which individual people act within society (Rawnsley, 1998; Burr, 2015). Bryman (2016) demonstrates these differences by the use of two examples: organisation and culture. Objectivism and organisation are often referred to as tangible objects with a specific set of rules and regulations. The people working in an organisation follow the chain of instructions that rises through the hierarchy. From this ontological viewpoint, the organisation itself has an 'external reality' that is separate to the individuals who populate it (Bryman, 2016). Individuals follow the standardised rules and regulations and do the jobs that they are told to do. If they do not follow the rules, they may be fired therefore their social actions are limited to the reality and expectations of the broader organisational structure. In contrast, the notion of constructionism can be explained in relation to ideas of culture. Constructionism and culture can often be seen as developing forms of reality that are

continuously reconstructed and adapted by the interweaving of individual people to create better cultures and sub-cultures. It is these cultures and sub-cultures that shape people's perspectives and influence their actions. From this ontological viewpoint, people enjoy greater freedoms to construct their own interpretations of cultural reality and to adapt them as needed.

The ontological position that a researcher adopts is often also intrinsically linked to their underlying epistemological perspective. Epistemology refers to the theory of knowledge. It considers the methodology, validity and scope of any given research project and studies the distinction between justified belief and opinion (Meretoja, 2014). Epistemological issues examine the question of what is regarded as acceptable knowledge within any given discipline. Traditionally, the social sciences are often studied according to different epistemological principles when compared to the natural sciences. The study of science is often associated with the epistemological position known as positivism, whereas the study of social science is generally associated with the concept of interpretivism (Bryman, 2016). Positivism is an epistemological position that emphasises 'natural laws' and 'facts'. Theories are often based on hypotheses that can be tested in order to allow an explanation of a given law, resulting in a knowledge base that has come from 'factual' quantitative data sources and involving a more deductive approach to theory. A positivist approach to data collection is often adopted within quantitative research studies that focus on numerical data on a mass scale. It is therefore associated more with an "objectivist" ontological approach to reality. In contrast, interpretivism can be defined as:

> A term that usually denotes an alternative to the positivist orthodoxy… It is founded upon the view that a strategy is required that respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action (Bryman, 2016, p. 26).

Interpretivist approaches to research often share a view that the social sciences contain a subject matter that is fundamentally different to that of the natural sciences. Social sciences study people and their institutions, which therefore requires a research procedure that reflects the differences and individualities of people as a collective. Interpretivism is based upon primarily qualitative research questions, with theoretical understandings mainly emerging from the voices of the participants involved. This relates to a more “constructivist” ontological approach.

When planning the research question for this thesis, a constructionist ontological approach and interpretivist epistemological perspective was adopted. Given that the aim within this study was to examine perceptions of violence, harm and the responsibilities of different people and groups within the sport of boxing, it was important to examine the viewpoints and experiences of people who are involved within the sport. This was necessary in order to develop a more in-depth understanding of how boxing culture and sub-cultures emerge from the interactions of different people and groups. As outlined in the preceding literature review, there is limited existing knowledge about the perceptions of referees and coaches within the sport of boxing. Whilst there is existing literature that examines the perceptions of boxers, there remains scope to examine the experiences of professional and semi-professional boxers and whether their viewpoints differ to those of referees and coaches in terms of their perceptions of violence and responsibility to reduce levels of harm within the sport. It is therefore necessary to understand how the interactions of such people have helped to build and shape their perspectives of accepted behaviours within boxing subcultures during their years of participation.

3.2 Research Design and Procedures

Many qualitative studies within boxing adopt an ethnographic based methodology when collecting data (see Wacquant 1995, 2004; Woodward, 2004, 2008). This allows researchers

to immerse themselves within the boxing culture and get a real insight into what is like to be a part of the sport. Taking part in boxing and observing a gym environment or bout can help the researcher understand the boxing community and culture which can aid them when discussing their research topic (Woodward, 2008). The problem with this approach to data collection is that there can, at times, be a lack of communication between the researcher and their participants. Ethnographers can spend so much time observing and participating in boxing culture or sub-culture that they overlook boxing participants and their opinions on the subject matter (Lipson, 1994). Like many quantitative studies, ethnographies can sometimes focus predominantly on the broad topic area from the perspective of the researcher and, as a result, sometimes fail to examine the personal experiences and stories of the participants who are involved in the sport.

Semi-structured interviews were used within this study as a means of data collection. Semi-structured interviews involve the development and use of interview guides consisting of topics and questions that need to be covered within the interview (Bryman, 2016). A semi-structured interview is a verbal exchange between two people. It involves the interviewer attempting to elicit information from another person by asking predetermined questions from an interview guide. The difference between structured interviews and semi-structured interviews is that the structured variant can only follow the list of predetermined questions whereas semi-structured interviews can be more flexible, using what is known as elaboration probes to try to elicit more information from the interviewee (Longhurst, 2003). Semi-structured interviews are designed in a way that allows for an open response from the participant as opposed to a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer. They adopt more of a conversational approach that allows the researcher to adapt their follow up questions after a certain response, whilst still following a predetermined list of topics or questions where appropriate (Ayres, 2008). This approach is therefore more popular within qualitative research, as the researcher is often looking for an opinion or point of view from the participant with regard to the subject of investigation. Semi-structured interviews can therefore help to provide a

greater and more in-depth understanding of social phenomena when compared to the use of quantitative methodologies (Gill et al., 2008). Semi-structured interviews are sometimes best used when the interviewer only has one chance to interview a participant (Bernard, 1988). As participants will only be interviewed once, interviews need to gather rich, detailed data, which is a strength of adopting a semi-structured approach.

This project is based upon a case-study design. Three separate participants groups were used throughout the data collection process: boxers, referees, and boxing coaches. Twelve participants took part in this study: seven boxers, four coaches and one referee. A process of mixed purposeful sampling was used as a means of sampling participants within this thesis. Mixed purposeful sampling refers to a method in which a researcher uses a combination of two or more sampling strategies in order to generate their participant base (Suri, 2011). Within this study, participants were primarily sampled through a combination of snowball sampling and criterion sampling. Snowball sampling is a technique in which the researcher initially samples a small number of relevant participants who in turn put forward further participants who share the same relevant characteristics required for the research topic (Bryman, 2016). Snowball sampling can be used when it is difficult to find people with relevant characteristics, therefore the researcher relies on the knowledge, background and contacts of participants to find other potential participants for their study. Criterion sampling refers to a technique in which participants have to meet certain criteria in order to be eligible to take part in the research project. The researcher devises a list of relevant criteria to ensure that participants have sufficient knowledge or experience relating to the research topic (Palys, 2008; Palinkas et al., 2015). A process of triangulation was also adopted when collecting data. Triangulation refers to using two or more data sources or methods to help develop a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter (Patton, 1999). Within this study, triangulation was used across three separate participant groups of boxers, referees and coaches. The rationale behind this approach was to ensure that a number of sample groups were able to offer their own views on their experiences within boxing

subcultures, particularly in relation to their opinions and views on issues of responsibility, violence and education on health risks within the sport. These particular groups were chosen because they are the ones who are directly involved in training and bouts and are best placed to offer a deeper insight into the training and competition subcultures of boxing.

In order to gain participants from these three groups, a mixture of snowball sampling and criterion sampling was adopted. Prior contacts who are involved in the sport of boxing had agreed to help in snowballing with their connections in order to find other boxers, referees and boxing coaches who would fit the criteria for this study. In order to be eligible to take part, participants needed to be eighteen years of age in order for them to have sufficient experience within the sport and be able to give full informed consent to take part. Boxers needed to have at least one year's boxing experience and to have participated in two or more official bouts. Referees had to have had at least one year's refereeing experience and to have refereed at least two or more bouts. Boxing coaches also needed to have been a coach for at least one year prior to taking part in the study. All participants needed to be involved in professional or semi-professional/white-collar boxing. Finding a referee that met the criteria who was also willing to take part proved a significant challenge. Snowballing from prior boxing contacts, one referee with several decades of experience was willing to take part, but did not know of any other referees that would take part in the study. Whilst boxing gyms advertise their services making it slightly easier to find participants, referees do not appear to have as much social exposure making it rather difficult to identify such individuals. Due to the difficulty in finding such a niche participant group, it proved more beneficial to involve one referee rather than none. A third participant group and a third perspective on the ethical issues surrounding boxing gave data more depth and added to the overall understanding and exploration of this research field.

Data required to examine the experiences of boxers, boxing coaches and referees within this study were generated from an in-depth one-to-one semi-structured interview with each participant. Each interview followed a semi-structured interview guide, with interview

questions devised for each participant group. The use of semi-structured interview guides allowed each interview to be tailored towards the personal experiences, opinions and responses of each participant. This allowed individuals to offer their in-depth thoughts on a number of issues relating to the sport of boxing and to expand upon issues they felt strongly about in order to generate rich in-depth data regarding their thoughts, experiences and perceptions linked to their involvement in boxing.

3.3 Data Analysis

There are a number of ways in which data can be analysed within qualitative research. The search for themes can be recognised in most approaches to qualitative data analysis, with critical discourse analysis, grounded theory and qualitative content analysis being a number of such examples (Bryman, 2016). Another form of qualitative data analysis that is widely used among researchers is thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Bryman, 2016). Since Braun and Clarke (2006) published a paper utilising this approach within the field of psychology, thematic analysis has been increasingly adopted by a number of qualitative researchers (Braun and Clarke, 2014). Thematic analysis can be defined as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.79). This analytic strategy can be flexible with regards to the ways in which it can be conducted. However, the general idea of thematic analysis is to construct an index of primary themes and subthemes that link to recurring patterns and discussion points within the given data set (Bryman, 2016). Upon organising data into central themes (general dimensions) and subthemes (first order themes), the underpinning idea is to provide a basis for key extracts of data to be organised into corresponding themes.

There are many ways to approach data when creating codes and themes, a number of which are highlighted by Terry et al. (2017). A researcher can approach the data inductively meaning that first order themes and general dimensions emerge in relation to data that have

been generated. Alternatively, a deductive approach works from the ‘top down’ utilising existing theories that provide a foundation surrounding the potential areas that may be coded (Terry et al. 2017). A deductive approach is more commonly associated with quantitative research. This study adopted an inductive approach involving broader general dimensions that consisted of several relevant first order themes. Whatever approach is adopted, there are however six phases to consider when conducting a thematic analysis: (a) familiarisation of the data; (b) generating codes; (c) constructing themes; (d) reviewing possible themes; (e) naming and defining themes; and (f) reporting the findings in a form of discussion (Terry et al. 2017). A key principle to consider when conducting thematic analysis is the aspect of flexibility. There is no ‘correct’ way as such to approach this strategy, providing that the researcher follows the overall guidelines and phases of analysis in their interpretation of their data.

To ensure a thorough and detailed thematic analysis, the six phases of analysis were implemented in this study. Upon completing all interview transcripts, it was essential to repeatedly read each transcript to become familiarised with the data whilst making note of any recurring themes. Working inductively, potential first order themes were generated and relevant extracts of data were coded within corresponding first order themes. All first order themes were specific to a certain discussion topic. Through ongoing analysis, relevant first-order themes were gradually linked within a framework of broader general dimensions that emerged from the data. Overall there were five general dimensions that contained a total of forty three first order themes. This process of thematic analysis was conducted in a table-based format. As previously mentioned, thematic analysis is a flexible approach when analysing data. It is not linked to a specific theoretical framework and is lacking methodological specifications surrounding elements such as data collection and sampling methods (Braun, Clarke and Weate, 2016). This allows each researcher to approach thematic analysis in a way that is effective for their study. The approach adopted within this

study ensured that repeated reading of each interview transcript would allow for a deeper understanding and familiarity to emerge from ongoing analysis and coding of these data.

3.4. Ethical Considerations in the Research Process

Ethical issues are presented in all research studies and a number of ethical factors had to be considered before beginning the data collection process. There are four main ethical principles that have to be considered when conducting a qualitative research study: “whether there is harm to participants; whether there is a lack of informed consent; whether there is an invasion of privacy; whether deception is involved” (Bryman, 2016, p.125). When conducting interviews in qualitative research, the protection of participants is imperative. By applying the correct ethical procedures, the researcher can prevent or minimalize any potential harm to the participants involved (Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden, 2001). Prior to conducting this project, ethical approval was sought and obtained from the relevant research ethics committee within York St. John University. Prior to conducting any interviews, all participants were given a Participant Information Sheet and Informed Consent form, which had to be agreed to and signed before an interview could take place. The information sheet and consent form contained a summary of the research project, information surrounding participant anonymity and confidentiality, information relating to data generation, storage and processing, and relevant statements highlighting that participation was optional and detailing issues such as their right to withdraw from the project. Participants were made aware that all audio would be recorded from each interview and that pseudonyms would be used throughout this project to ensure participant anonymity and confidentiality.

When conducting research, it is critical that all data be managed in the correct manner, as issues surrounding data storage, record keeping, data sharing and confidentiality need to be addressed by the researcher (Lin, 2009). All audio recordings for this study were converted into anonymous written transcripts to ensure participant confidentiality. Audio recordings and

transcripts were then stored securely in line with University policy and the requirements of data protection legislation. An additional area of ethical concern refers to the notion of privacy. When collecting qualitative data, the researcher has to be aware that participants can refuse to answer any given question, as participants retain the right not to answer questions or to later withdraw from the study, should they wish to do so (Bryman, 2016). Finally, with the participant information sheet and informed consent form clearly stating the nature and aims of the study, this negated the risk of any potential form of deception.

3.5 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness consists of four criteria that need to be considered when conducting qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Bryman, 2016). In order to establish credible findings, the researcher has to ensure that they have carried out their study with principles of good practice and that they have investigated participants within that field (Kyngäs, Kääriäinen, and Elo, 2020). This study was designed so that only experienced participants could be involved to ensure that they had sufficient knowledge surrounding the subject matter of boxing. Transferability refers to how the research findings can be transferred to other groups or settings (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004). To facilitate transferability, in depth descriptions of participant criteria and characteristics, data collection and data analysis are present in this chapter as well as in-depth thick-description providing a voice for participant responses in the following results chapter (Bryman, 2016). Dependability refers to how stable findings are over time and requires the researcher to keep an audit trail recording all phases of the research process (Anney, 2014). This study has ensured that all interview transcripts, participant criteria sheets, thematic analysis tables and various other forms of planning have been stored securely as an audit. Confirmability concerns itself with ensuring that the researcher is acting in good faith and not allowing themselves to be swayed by personal values which would affect the data gathered (Amankwaa, 2016). Triangulating across three participant groups helped achieve greater confirmability within the study. Considering the notion of reflexivity

(Bryman, 2016), this study has been conducted with a neutral approach to both paternalism and autonomy in relation to boxing. All discussions are based on the data provided by participants and are not driven by personal values or theoretical standings.

3.6 Summary

The methodology for this thesis was based on a number of qualitative methodological concepts. Before designing the methodology, key ontological and epistemological issues had to be considered. With the research looking at issues of violence and harm in the sport of boxing, an interpretivist constructivist approach was considered the most suitable framework to conduct this investigation. Following an appropriate sampling framework, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three main participant groups: boxers, coaches and referees. Being mindful of numerous ethical considerations, data were collected and audio recordings were transcribed for analysis. A process of thematic analysis was adopted, in line with the framework advocated by Braun and Clarke (2006), in which interview transcripts were read repeatedly and emerging first-order themes were labelled and organised into broader general dimensions in line with an underpinning interpretivist approach to the research process. Elements of trustworthiness were considered and applied throughout the course of the study. The following chapters will now outline the results of the study alongside an in-depth discussion surrounding the key findings that emerged within these data. The rationale behind the conflation of the following results and discussion as one chapter rather than two separate chapters is based on a common methodological approach in this field of research (see Wacquant 1995, 2004; Woodward, 2004, 2008). It is also common practice within qualitative research to formulate a discussion alongside the results rather than separating them into two different chapters (James and Slater, 2013).

4. Ethics in Boxing: Examining the Perceptions and Experiences of Boxers, Coaches and Referees

Questions and debates surrounding the morality of boxing have been at the centre of paternalistic viewpoints that boxing should be abolished. According to many paternalists boxing should be banned due to its violent nature and potentially immoral values (Jones, 2001; Rudd et al., 2016). However, as outlined in previous chapters, many paternalistic studies focus too heavily on numerical data on a mass scale and often lack knowledge and understanding of what it is like to be part of boxing culture. It is rare in this area of academia for studies to examine the first-hand experiences and viewpoints of boxing participants on what they believe regarding issues of 'violence' in boxing. Similarly, the commonly used observational methods adopted by many autonomists can lack depth of knowledge surrounding the perceptions and knowledge of boxers themselves on issues relating to health risks, potential health benefits and issues of 'violence' in boxing. This chapter will begin to address such issues by discussing perceptions of violence with all three participant groups. It may seem naïve to discuss the notion of violence with boxing participants, as one may assume that they would wholeheartedly defend their sport and neglect any negative connotations the sport may possess. The findings of this study, however, demonstrate that there were a number of mixed perceptions when it came to discussing such issues in boxing during the interview process. Important results also emerged surrounding perceptions of the health risks as well as possible health benefits that come from participation in boxing. Finally, it was important to examine 'new' information on these issues from the perspectives of coaches and referees, given that their viewpoints are currently lacking in this field of study.

4.1 Violence in Boxing: Perceptions of Boxers, Coaches and Referees

It is perhaps not surprising that a number of participants defended boxing when discussing their perceptions and experiences of violence in the sport. A number of participants believed

that boxing can help to channel violent and aggressive behaviours in a controlled environment. Many of the boxers defended this idea during interviews. For example, Boxer 6 stated that:

> “Like, you know, you know when you feel yourself getting wound up you know, and you think to yourself, 'Save it for the gym, save it for the gym’.”

Boxer 6 had an interesting story. He was a recovering drug addict and found boxing during the recovery process. He is now a professional boxer and from the above quote it would appear that any violent or aggressive behaviours he experiences can be channelled in a professional sporting environment. Interestingly, Boxer 6 shared a number of perceptions and ideas that correspond with the work of Deuchar et al. (2016), who argued that boxing can provide an appropriate environment for young people and potential gang members to channel any violent tendencies. Boxer 6 offered a short quote defending the potentially violent nature of boxing: “Pick up the gloves, not the knife, you know what I mean?”. Here, Boxer 6 was suggesting that although some people may view boxing as violent, it is a better alternative for young people than being out on the streets potentially committing crime. Boxer 6 was not the only participant who rejected the notion that boxing is, in itself, inherently violent. Boxer 2 and Boxer 3 also had similar thoughts on the subject. Boxer 2 believed that an act of violence is something that it is non-consensual, whereas boxing actually consists of two participants trying to best each other in the form of a combat sport: “obviously it’s not violent if you’re shaking hands”. Similarly, Boxer 3 believed that:

> “People do think it’s aggressive and violent and all that but I don’t intend to be any of those things when I get into the ring. I don’t want to hurt anyone I just want to show you how much smarter I am than you.”

Violence can take the form of hitting and punching as Saltzman et al. (2002) state. However, Boxer 3 is stating that he does not have violent intentions when stepping into the ring with an opponent. His aim is to prove that he is smarter than his opposition, indicating that he takes

a strategic and controlled approach in attempting to defeat an opponent during a bout. It is clear from the above quotes that a number of boxers believe that the consensual nature of boxing negates any notions that boxing is an inherently violent sport. This idea was reinforced with the thoughts of Referee 1 who compared boxing with surgery:

> “It’s the same with surgery you know surgery on somebody else that's a form of assault but because it's consensual it's not deemed as assault which is the same as boxing.”

Referee 1 is adopting the same thought process that violent behaviours lack the consent of a specific party. The comparison between boxing and surgery is interesting as the two share a common element in that someone’s physical body is being invaded by another individual. Clearly boxing and surgery are different, yet the notion of consent is an important distinction, negating potential criticisms of overt physical violence that are often attached to boxing. Coach 2 also neglected notions of violence in boxing:

> “The word violence in boxing does not exist it is not violent, boxing is an art it’s a sport, it is a game and people enjoy it. Violence is… you get violence in the street but that’s street fighting, it is not boxing and that’s violent.”

Coach 2 believed that because boxing is a sport it is not violent as the two participants are taking part in a governed activity, unlike street fighting which he perceived as violent because it is not a governed sport with a precise ruleset. The forms of contact or physical ‘violence’ that are witnessed within boxing may be tolerated due to it being held within a social sporting arena. The idea that boxing is a sport with specific rules consisting of two individuals consenting to the activity makes for a strong argument defending the sport and the autonomy of those who take part.

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, it might seem obvious that participants would defend boxing as it is their passion. Some participants, however, did indicate that boxing was a relatively violent sport, regardless of consent and rules. Although Boxer 3 stated that he

does not have any violent intentions when he steps into the ring, he did acknowledge that boxing can sometimes be seen as violent:

> "It is a violent sport, it is, it is a violent sport, it is. There are some punches you'll see ringside and you'll go oow and ahh not because it's a really beautiful shot but because you know it's going to hurt… So yeah you know it's a violent sport but both people who jump in are willing to accept that."

Boxers do seem aware that their sport may include elements of violence, however the quote above again emphasises that all boxing participants are willing to accept that. The many paternalists who believe boxing to be immoral and unethical have based their arguments around the notion of "intent". They believe it is wrong to intentionally harm another human being and base a paternalistic argument to abolish boxing around this concept (Watson and Brock, 2017; Herrara, 2004; Lane, 2008). There is however an important counter argument that although there can be violent elements within boxing, both participants are willing to accept this and are adopting their own freedom of will when making the autonomous decision to take part (Rudd et al., 2016).

Some concerns were expressed by Boxer 3 and Boxer 5 who indicated that, although boxing can help young people to steer themselves away from crime and violence, it can also occasionally have an adverse effect. For example, Boxer 3 stated that:

> "Not always no you get some people that are bullies and that become bigger bullies. Some people have a massive ego and they don't respect the sport and they don't take their role serious and it can influence some people the wrong way."

Boxer 5 similarly indicated that:

> "If you take say a bruiser off the street and they then start to learn to fight box properly then it's going to make it worse on the street."

There are pros and cons to every sport, but the idea that boxing can potentially make violent people more violent is potentially a matter of concern. When asked about such issues, Coach 4 answered:

> "You get bully boys coming to a boxing club wanting to learn how to box you can see through it straight away and I wouldn't touch them with a barge pole, why should I do you know what I mean."

It appears from what Coach 4 has said that experienced boxing coaches believe that they can identify potential "bullies" and if their training does not help the boxer to control their aggression, then they will be asked to leave the boxing club. In some respects, the coach has a paternalistic role. If they do not believe that someone has the correct attitude to be a part of boxing, they can make the paternalistic choice to remove them from training or from the club. This act of paternalism can potentially benefit the boxers themselves, other club members and the wider population of society as these 'bullies' are not being taught the correct boxing techniques. The boxer therefore has to forego part of their personal autonomy and allow the coach to teach them the correct attitudes, values and techniques to give them the best chance to succeed (Ryall and Oliver, 2011).

With the previous points in mind, it would seem as though more overt physical forms of violence, loss of control and aggression are a rare occurrence in boxing. From all of the interviews conducted with all participant groups, only Referee 1 had ever experienced a more overt act of violence during his 38 years as a boxing referee:

> "A boxer actually whilst I was administering him a caution or warning for infringing the rules he actually, actually banged me out and put me down to the canvas. I mean that that, that's an act of violence. It was outside the rules. It was assault on a referee."

To reiterate earlier discussions, the experience of Referee 1 could be considered an act of violence as he claims that it was outside the rules of the sport and a non-consensual assault.

He went on to state that this boxer received an 18-year ban and was not allowed to box or train during this time, as a result of his violent actions. The emphasis here is on the idea that the strict rules and regulations within boxing limit the levels of violence that may occur – requiring strict levels of self-control on the part of participants – with any violent conduct met with a potentially long-term ban.

Referee 1 stated that the boxer that assaulted him appeared to get carried away with the event and the potential "win at all costs" nature of boxing. There are important questions to consider, regarding whether boxers just want to win or whether they would prefer victory by knockout. Their responses offered mixed results. Boxer 2 thought that the win was more important: "The win, aww the wins more important to me than the knockout." This thought process was similar amongst the majority of boxers who would rather win the bout and were less concerned with achieving a knockout. However, Boxer 4 offered a somewhat different response:

> "If you're looking for the knockout then you're looking to win aren't you but… I really look to hurt my opponent and just that warrior, gladiator instinct."

The intention to hurt his opponent could be seen as a violent thought. The reference here to a "gladiator instinct" draws an interesting implied comparison to ancient forms of boxing and the pankration (Spivey, 2001; Peatfield, 2007). Boxer 4 appeared to view the boxing ring as a hypothetical arena where he could take on the role of gladiator within a controlled sporting environment. Whether it is violent for Boxer 4 to state that he aims to hurt his opponent or not is left to individual interpretation. However, it is important to remember that his opponent also aims to win the bout and will most likely try to hurt him in the process. Such issues again come back to the notion of consent and the idea that both boxers are willing to take part in any given bout. For example, Boxer 3 stated that:

> “You both know the risks when you go into it and if I let them then I will be that person, so rather you than me. If you trained a bit harder and did a bit more research and a bit more homework then he wouldn’t have got hit.”

Regardless of how they win, a number of boxers gave the impression that they just wanted a trophy or success when boxing. Boxer 3 claimed that both parties know the risks before they step into the ring and that somebody has to win and, in order to do that, one competitor may get seriously injured or knocked out. He suggests that a careful studied approach to boxing and training harder to hone various skills will improve the chances of winning and potentially reduce the risk of injury.

It is clear when analysing participants perceptions of violence that there are some mixed views surrounding whether boxing is a violent sport. Boxer 3 admitted that boxing was violent and Boxer 4 claimed that he aims to hurt his opponent when competing. Referee 1 had also experienced an act of overt physical violence against himself, albeit the stringent response to this occurrence did lead to that boxer being banned for 18 years. It appears that the best way to understand elements of violence in boxing is to consider the inherent tension-balance between issues of paternalism and autonomy. The autonomy currently remains for boxers to have the free-will to engage with boxing within a socially-sanctioned sporting arena. Boxers may need to relinquish parts of their autonomy to their coach in order for them to develop a sense of self-control and strategy through their training (Ryall and Oliver, 2011). Coaches also need to take paternalistic actions if they believe that a participant potentially has a violent personality to protect other club members. There needs to be a balance between boxers taking their coaches training and advice in order to develop more autonomous elements of self-control whilst also respecting the paternalistic actions of the coach if a boxer acts violently or breaks the rules and values of a boxing club or other regulatory bodies.

4.2 Perceptions and Experiences of the Health Risks of Boxing

It is often considered self-evident that boxing is a sport that poses a number of risks to the health of those who take part. There are a wide range of injuries and health issues that occur as a result of boxing, ranging from relatively manageable cuts and bruises to serious long-term health problems such as Alzheimer's disease and CTE (Ling, Hardy and Zetterberg, 2015; Omalu, 2014). With many paternalists arguing for the abolishment of boxing due to potentially life-threatening health risks (see Jones, 2001; Dunn and Hope, 2004), it was important to explore such issues with boxers, boxing coaches and boxing referees. All three participant groups were able to offer their experiences of both serious injuries and training injuries during their time within the sport. The opposing argument to both injury rates and health risks is that boxing can potentially offer numerous health benefits, especially for the working classes who may not have the cultural and economic capital to take part in various other activities (Wilson, 2002; Stempel, 2018). It is therefore important to further investigate the participants' own first-hand experiences of injuries, health risks and health benefits that have been experienced during their time in boxing.

The wide range of potential health risks and injuries that can occur as a result of a career in boxing can pose a serious concern. The idea that repeated head trauma from boxing may not cause a serious health issue until years after retirement needs to be addressed (Ling, Hardy and Zetterberg, 2015). The many statistical based studies surrounding health risks and paternalism in boxing also lack the perceptions and experiences of those involved in the sport (e.g. Zazryn, McCrory and Cameron, 2009). There is an element of risk when participating in a combat sport such as boxing. It was therefore important to examine the relative knowledge and perceptions regarding such risks amongst all participant groups. Boxer 7 summed up his thoughts on the potential health risks by saying:

> "Obviously you can play the biggest risk can't you with dying".

Similar thoughts were indicated by Boxer 2:

> "You could get a brain injury, serious brain injury or worse than that you could lose your life but if you know what you're signing up to it's the risk you take really."

When asked about how to make sense of the possible long-term health risks relating to boxing, Boxer 3 stated that:

> "Brain damage is probably the one that's most consistent once it's there. I suppose once you've got brain damage it never really goes but other things like you can get a broken hand or bruised face, bruised ribs, broken ribs but they all heal."

Whilst some boxers emphasised that many injuries that occur in boxing can heal, the majority of boxers also seemed to be aware of the potential for serious harm and long-term injury. They were however willing to take that risk. Boxer 5 had a completely different outlook and perception surrounding the risks of boxing. Boxer 5 had taken up boxing as a self-defence mechanism after he was assaulted by a group whilst walking home one night. His stories and experiences through general life and through boxing offered an interesting insight that was different to the majority of other participants. Boxer 5 had suffered inflammation of the brain when aged just 2 years old, which led to epilepsy. He claimed that boxing really helped to control his aggression, but also stated that it had led to a seizure whilst competing. Although he discussed numerous benefits that boxing can offer, he said that he would never recommend it to any new starters:

> "There's too much risk in it. I mean I can't fight now for at least I'd say another 2 years until I've been 2 years seizure free… It just shows you how dangerous it can be at top level."

The thoughts of Boxer 5 stood out, as he was the only participant that had suffered a brain injury. Some other boxers appeared to push the risks out of their minds and had a mindset that they would never get hurt. After having an issue with his brain as a young child and then re-aggravating it as a result of boxing, Boxer 5 dismissed the recommendation for people to take part in boxing. Whilst the injury rates may be lower in boxing when compared to other

sports (Alevras et al., 2018; Siewe et al., 2015), the perceptions of someone who suffers from a brain injury provide important insight into the issue of health risks in boxing. Although Boxer 5 also discussed the many benefits boxing had offered him – some of which will be discussed in a later section – he still believed that the health risks were too great to recommend the sport to anyone.

Despite the previous comments, there are procedures in place that attempt to minimise the severity of injuries and harm during boxing events. When discussing the potential health risks of boxing with Coach 2, he discussed some of the medical procedures that were in place on the night of an event to help minimise and control any serious injuries that may occur. The perceptions of coaches were different to the majority of boxers, as they seemed to have greater knowledge of risk prevention. When asked about the health risks of boxing, Coach 2 stated:

> "Well there's health risks in any sport isn't there whichever you do. On the night of every show you go to there's a doctor there there's a medic there, you inform the hospital at the time, the local hospital that the show will be on that night so they'll know well in advance in case anything happens."

It is important to note that procedures are in place to help minimise and control any injuries that may occur during a boxing event. Additionally, the idea that other sports pose a greater risk to their participants was a topic that emerged many times within interviews amongst all three participant groups. A number of academic studies have found that sports such as rugby and American football have a greater risk of injury in comparison to boxing (Siewe et al., 2015; Alevras et al., 2018). Such ideas were also highlighted by several participants who compared the risks of boxing to other sports. For example, Boxer 1 stated:

> "I mean it's unfortunate that people have or do get hurt but like I said it's no more than any other sport. It's even less if you think about it, I mean rugby players and

> footballers you know. There's less injuries in boxing that are serious injuries than there is in other sports."

Coach 2 voiced a similar idea:

> "Medically we have one of the lowest risks for injuries, rugby has more than us, head injuries. Tennis has more, cricket has more head injuries than boxing and the reason why people always have a pop at boxing is because it's two men going at each other."

Similarly, Referee 1 argued:

> "I think and studies have indicated that the risk is fairly remote and low in comparison to other sports such as American football for one, horse riding, Mountaineering, motorcycling and there's certainly a greater risk of death."

The rationale for involving quotes from all three participant groups is to emphasise the common perception that other sports pose a greater risk of harm to their participants. The statement from Coach 2 that negative attention surrounding the risks of boxing can be linked to the idea that boxing involves two people hitting each other and trying to render one another unconscious appears to be consistent with the stated concerns of some paternalists that boxing is immoral due to intentional harm that participants may cause to each other (Jones, 2001; Lane, 2008). It is however interesting to note that all three participant groups seemed to reject such claims. Participants indicated that boxing can sometimes 'look' worse than it is and were keen to argue that the risk of injury in boxing is lower than in many other sports.

Whilst participants were keen to emphasise that the risk of serious injury is relatively low in boxing when compared to other sports, the ongoing autonomy/paternalism debate surrounding the risks in boxing is focussed predominantly on injuries sustained during competition and often overlooks any potential injuries that may occur in training (Zazryn, McCrory and Cameron, 2009). This is another area of debate that currently lacks the depth

and perceptions of those who are involved in the training and preparation that occurs before a competitive bout. A number of participants shared their thoughts and experiences of training injuries during their interviews. Boxer 5 stated:

> "Yeah I've witnessed broken ribs, I've had my nose popped several times… loads of black eyes."

Injuries such as black eyes and "popped noses" were common points when discussing training injuries with boxers. Boxer 3 said that "all my injuries have been in training" and Boxer 6 had experienced a "ruptured eye socket from sparring". It seems that although participants have argued that other sports pose a greater risk to health during competition, there needs to be awareness that the potential bulk of their injuries can occur whilst training and sparring. Many coaches also witnessed a number of training injuries during their time in boxing. Coach 3 had witnessed "all of them, cuts, bruises, black eyes, bleeding noses, bust noses." And Coach 4 had seen "a few people getting cut and stuff like that. I've seen somebody get a cut above the eye". It is therefore apparent that a range of injuries can occur during training and sparring, which could potentially add further risks to those of competing. With a number of medical studies highlighting delayed harm such as CTE and Alzheimer's disease as a result of repeated head trauma (see Roberts, Alltop and Bruton, 1990; Omalu, 2014; Ling, Hardy and Zetterberg, 2015), it could be argued that long-term involvement in boxing training has the potential to be just as harmful as competing. This is an area of boxing research that needs further attention, not least given that some data offered by the participants of this study indicate that training injuries can be common.

It would be difficult to govern boxing training in the same manner as a bout. It is therefore surprising that paternalists and medical professionals who seek to ban boxing have not further investigated the potential risks of training. Many boxers claim to be aware that their health could be at risk when taking part in the sport. It is clear from statistical data that there is a risk from competition (see: Zazryn, McCrory and Cameron, 2009; Pappas, 2007) but on the other hand, boxing can provide participants with numerous physical and mental health

benefits (Woodward, 2006; Case and Christophe, 2019). Participants also enjoy their involvement in the sport. There are potential arguments for both a paternalistic approach or for participant autonomy when it comes to the health of boxers. However, there is again a tension-balance between these two opposing ethical approaches. If medical professionals could potentially work with governing bodies to create strategies that aim to minimise the risk of injury whilst training as well as competitive bouts, boxers would be better protected, which could help to minimise the risk of injury whilst still allowing the autonomy to take part in the sport and better maintain their physical health and mental well-being.

4.3 Examining the Potential Health-Related Benefits of Boxing

There are a number of potential dangers and risks when taking part in boxing, some from competition and some from training, yet there are also a number of benefits to boxing for many young people and adults. It has been argued in existing research that boxing can benefit the health, fitness and endurance of participants and can offer a number of people from the working classes an affordable way to train and exercise (Wilson, 2002; Woodward, 2006). It is a sport that offers discipline and structure for participants and can help a number of young people keep off the streets and channel their aggression into something positive (Wacquant, 1992; Case and Christophe, 2019). With the lack of interview-based studies examining issues of ethics in boxing, participants can often lack voice, as issues relating to their autonomy are often only considered through observational research. It is even more difficult for referees and boxing coaches to voice their opinions, given that they have often been overlooked within boxing literature. Many of the boxers, boxing coaches and boxing referees who were interviewed within this study did however highlight their experiences of the potential benefits of boxing from their time in the sport.

The idea that boxing can provide many benefits to the health of those who take part was evident amongst the participants within this study. A number of boxers and boxing coaches

provided first-hand examples of the ways in which boxing has benefitted their lives as well as others in their gym. Before discussing the physical benefits that boxing can offer, there is a need to emphasise the positive effect that boxing can have on the mental health and well-being of people who are involved in the sport. For example, Boxer 3 stated:

> "When I'm doing boxing everything else just seems so easy because I'm being so positive and I'm full of energy and thinking in the right way… I think actually it's all down to me because of everything that boxing gives me mentally."

Boxer 6 offered a similar outlook: "There's nothing better for my mental health and my, my depression than boxing, than the training". Boxer 6 also compared boxing to "going to therapy" and said that training helps to diminish any negative thoughts or experiences that may occur in his life outside boxing. Whilst some research would suggest that boxing can potentially lead to delayed mental-health issues due to repeated head trauma (see: Ling, Hardy and Zetterberg, 2015; Dixon, 2001), the often-narrow-minded approach of paternalistic research in this field rarely acknowledges the mental-health benefits of boxing. This was most evident amongst Boxer 3 and Boxer 6 who both claimed that boxing helped them maintain a positive mindset throughout their day to day lives. To reiterate, boxer 6 was a recovering drug addict who had channelled aspects of his recovery into boxing. Whilst it can be difficult for paternalists to defend the morality of boxing due to the uncertainty surrounding the symptoms of CTE and delayed harm amongst boxers (Rudd et al., 2016), the potential mental-health benefits of involvement and participation in boxing also need to be acknowledged and considered as an integral aspect of such debates.

Boxing and, more specifically, boxing training can also offer numerous physical health benefits to those who take part. For example, Boxer 4 stated:

> "I was quite a chubby lad as well so I was quite fat when I was a kid so I did it to lose weight and then got a load of health benefits from it as well so I just fell in love with it."

A similar experience was shared by Boxer 5:

> "I mean I used to weigh 18 stone I was fat and over-weight, but I've put me arse into it and I got fit. I used to be lazy I never went to the gym at all but now I've found something that I love doing."

A common theme amongst these participants was that boxing had not only helped them to lose weight and become healthier, but also that it had given them a passion and somewhere they could go to keep fit and healthy. Such findings correspond with existing research that boxing can help with weight-loss and can improve fitness and endurance, leading participants to have a healthier and more disciplined lifestyle (Woodward, 2006). The potential health benefits of boxing, both physical and mental, were however best summarised by Coach 3:

> "Yeah like I said it's the health benefits of boxing. It's a confidence thing for people, a fitness thing for people, a place where people can go. A lot of people come in and just have a chat with us. It gets people off the streets it gets them focus and respect so there's all your positives."

Coach 3 mentioned focus and respect, which were two concepts that many participants discussed alongside notions of discipline and structure. The rigorous training regime that boxers go through when preparing for a bout means that they have to remain disciplined in their day-to-day lives. With boxing predominantly being a working-class sport, the structure and discipline of training can help participants to stay focussed in day-to-day aspects of their lives such as work as well as helping them gain elements of self-control. For example, Boxer 2 stated that boxing was:

> "Brilliant I think it really gives people more discipline, it's given me loads of discipline through life. Erm I find myself that if I'm not in the gym I'm generally out up to no good really."

Boxer 2 believed that if it was not for boxing, he may well have gone down a completely different path in life. A similar mindset was expressed by Boxer 3:

> "Massively, massively I would have been a loose cannon and my life would have fallen to shit definitely."

It is clear from such responses that these two participants feel that boxing has given them a chance to better themselves and to learn and develop elements of discipline and self-control. For a number of boxing participants, this would not be possible if the sport were to be banned, as many of them would not have the economic means to take up other sports requiring greater financial commitment (Wilson, 2002; Shilling, 2017). The majority of boxers that took part in this study were from "rougher" working-class backgrounds, therefore boxing was potentially one of their only options when it came to taking part in sport. With limited options and autonomy it is important to respect the autonomy they have when participating in boxing. The discipline and structure that Boxer 2 had developed from involvement in the sport allowed him to reach professional status and convert his physical capital into cultural and economic forms of capital (Wacquant, 2018; Woodward, 2004). As well as working a standard job, boxing gave him financial benefits that allowed him to provide a better life for his family. Due to a lack of economic and cultural capital amongst the working-classes, many participants within this study used boxing as a way to excel through forms of physical capital, which has resulted in them enjoying greater autonomy in their everyday lives. Aspects of their autonomy were evident, at times, in participant responses. For example, Boxer 7 made an interesting point:

> "Nobody is going to get you up in the morning and take you for a run, you've got to do it yourself… you kind of learn a bit of responsibility as well."

For many boxers, this could be the first time that they have been given the autonomy to take charge of certain aspects of their lives, with boxing allowing them to do so by giving them a sense of purpose and responsibility. Their involvement in boxing also provides structure,

which may have been lacking prior to them taking part: a factor that was shown in previous responses from boxers above that they also believed to have had a positive impact on their lives outside of boxing.

Alongside the points mentioned above, there were two other main arguments that were evident amongst the majority of participants, which provide a further basis to question paternalistic arguments that boxing should be banned: (a) the negative effect it could have on the unregulated bare-knuckle form of boxing; and (b) the idea that there is a greater risk to health when participating in other sports and recreational activities. Referee 1 took a different approach in comparing boxing to other types of recreational activities:

> "I think if you compare the amount of deaths that you see and hear about in alcohol and drug abuse erm… certainly the deaths and the risk of death in boxing is low and very remote."

It is interesting to note that this type of comparison suggesting that issues such as drug use and alcohol abuse might cause a greater risk to health than participating in boxing is rarely considered within academic literature. Referee 1 could have made this comparison due to the idea that numerous boxers take up the sport to try and stay away from drugs and alcohol. It is seen in this study that some participants were recovering drug addicts and the positive effects that boxing could have to help combat drug abuse and alcohol abuse is something that needs greater attention within academic literature. The other argument that might potentially oppose a ban on boxing in relation to health-related issues was the potential for any subsequent ban on the sport to cause more boxers to take part in unregulated variants.

Many participants of this study suggested that a ban on boxing could lead to more boxers participating in unlicensed and unregulated forms of the sport. Some participants also said that they would consider it themselves. For example, Boxer 4 stated he would still take part in the sport if regular boxing were to be banned:

> “Yeah they would it would just be unlicensed. I’d do it just without a license… I’d just spar in my back garden… I’d just have to train at home.”

Given the positive benefits that boxing has afforded to the health of Boxer 4, he stated that he would still participate if the sport were to be banned. There are also financial benefits that can potentially be gained from involvement (especially in professional boxing) that a number of participants would miss. Coach 2 touched upon the subject of finance:

> “The good boxers who have just got a bit of savvy about them would not do it [unregulated fighting] because it is brutal, it is brutal. The ones who need the money and want to fight they will come and do it.”

It is suggested in the responses of Boxer 4 and Coach 2 that boxers would still be encouraged to take part in unregulated forms of the sport if normal forms of boxing were banned. Referee 1 also drew a comparison to the BMA regarding this subject:

> “There's been lots of calls over the years for it to be banned and abolished by the British Medical Association. If it was it would go underground as some of it is now. It would be unchecked, unsupervised, unregulated and that would just increase the risk in lives and health of participants.”

There is no academic evidence to show that a ban on boxing would cause unregulated variants to become more popular but there is a suggestion here from current boxing participants as well as some academics that it could happen (Cohen, 1984; Evans, 1993; Herrera, 2002). Again, the predominantly numerical based data collected in many quantitative paternalistic studies lacks the depth and experiences of those who are currently part of boxing. Paternalists tend to focus on the negatives of boxing and base their opposition on the potential health risks, but have not considered any of the repercussions if they were to completely abolish boxing (Dixon, 2007, 2016; Lane, 2008). Whilst there are potential health risks, there are also a number of key issues presented above that require

consideration relating to the importance of participant autonomy. Once again there is a tension-balance between these more traditional applications of paternalism and autonomy.

4.4 Summary

Rather than debating the notions of either banning boxing or defending the continued existence of boxing, as many paternalists and autonomists have often appeared to do so, it is important to reflect critically upon ethical arguments from both sides of such debates in an attempt to address key underpinning issues that occur in the modern sport of boxing. There have been a number of 'positives' and 'negatives' to the sport of boxing, which can make it difficult to align solely with a paternalist or autonomist viewpoint. Involvement in boxing possesses serious potential risks when it comes to head injuries and the possible delayed health issues such as Alzheimer's disease and CTE (Omalu, 2014; Ling, hardy and Zetterberg, 2015). Such issues are evident from involvement in both training and competition. However, boxing can also help a number of people from working-class backgrounds gain a sense of structure and discipline (Case and Christophe, 2019). A number of participants may lack cultural and economic capital and boxing could allow them to use their physical ability as a form of capital to gain social and professional status (Shilling, 1991). Based on the type of inherent tension-balances that have been identified between more traditional notions of autonomy and paternalism, there is scope to consider a soft-paternalistic approach to ethics in boxing. It would be difficult to pose an argument for the abolishment of boxing when clearly there are numerous health and social benefits to participating in the sport. The potential for serious injury and neurological impairment also means that it is challenging to pose an argument in which boxers remain fully autonomous. If medical professionals and boxing governing bodies could work on strategies to better protect boxers in competitive bouts and in training, aspects of participant free-will could potentially remain intact, providing opportunity to maintain their mental and physical health. This approach also ensures that all participants are formally educated on the key health-risks

before making an informed decision as to whether they take part in boxing. With the idea of soft-paternalism in mind, the following chapter will examine the responsibilities of boxers, coaches and referees within this environment as well as analyse the need for education.

5. Responsibilities in Boxing: Examining Issues of Safety and 'Education' in Boxing

Academic literature surrounding the culture and sub-cultures of boxing has rarely examined the notion of 'responsibility' when it comes to referees and coaches. Whilst Sethi (2016) and Jako (2002) have indicated that referees and coaches have responsibilities when it comes to identifying possible head injuries, few other academics have discussed this subject. As such, there remain ethical issues that need to be considered regarding the roles and responsibilities that are involved in overseeing and potentially stopping a bout to help maintain boxer safety. It will also be argued that boxing coaches, more so than referees, have other responsibilities that require attention on a daily basis, not least given that they can be seen as a mentor or role model to their boxers. Additionally, questions will be posed surrounding the extent to which coaches and referees have responsibilities to ensure up-to-date knowledge and education on safety matters within the sport. The concept of 'education' has been advocated by Jako (2002), who believes that all coaches and referees should receive full education on matters of safety so that they can sufficiently identify possible injuries during a bout. This chapter will explore the notion of responsibility when it comes to ethical issues of safety and education in boxing and, drawing from experiences of participants, will aim to shed new light on an area of boxing research that academics have rarely examined in previous literature.

5.1 Examining the Responsibilities of Coaches and Referees in Boxing

There are many roles and responsibilities when coaching boxing. Coaches need to maintain the safety of their boxer both in training and competition alongside being a role model and mentor to the boxers in their gym. Coach 3 gave a good example of his responsibilities outside of teaching people how to box:

> “You’re teaching people life skills it’s not just boxing skills it’s life skills and yeah… You’re their shoulder to cry on, you know you’re someone to listen to their problems. You get all sorts of walks of life coming into the gym.”

With many boxers coming from more difficult lifestyles, many of them want to gain a sense of structure to their everyday lives. Boxing provides this opportunity, however something that is not often examined is the idea of boxing coaches acting as a role model, mentor and point of contact for boxers if they have a general life problem. Some younger boxing participants may lack a stable home life and boxing can therefore provide structure and discipline, but also a mentor and role model in their coach (Woodward, 2006; Case and Christophe, 2019). It is important to highlight that boxing coaches are not just there to coach boxing, but have a number of responsibilities to the boxers in their gym. As well as mentoring their boxers, coaches also have to make sure that their boxer is safe during training and during a bout.

The roles and responsibilities with regard to maintaining boxer safety during a bout were discussed with all boxing coaches that took part in the study. When asked about his role and responsibility during a bout, Coach 4 responded:

> “All I’m going to do is look after the boxer that I’ve come with do you know what I mean. So my sort of number one responsibility is not to see him get hurt.”

Similarly, Coach 1 responded:

> “Well the thing is if you think your boxer just isn’t up to it then you throw the towel in because you don’t want them getting hurt, that’s it.”

The ways in which coaches seek to look after the welfare of their boxer to ensure they do not get hurt were best summed up by Coach 3:

> “Well you don’t take your eyes off your boxer. You’re always assessing, you’ve got to look to see if there’s a cut or a swelling or bruising because when they get back to that corner all you’ve got is some adrenaline on a swab stick or an iron to reduce the

> swelling, water, ice… You've got a minute so you've got to have a lot of common sense and knowledge of boxing."

It is clear in the response from Coach 3 that the coach can feel an underlying responsibility to maintain their boxer's safety during a bout. It requires a deep knowledge of both boxing and the potential dangers that can be involved. They have the ability to end the fight prematurely and they need to know and understand their boxer's fighting style and personality so that they can better identify if they are acting out of character due to a potential injury. Understandably, the coach may be reluctant when deciding to throw the towel in, as they would want to give their boxer the best chance of winning. However, Referee 1 commended any coaches for doing so:

> "I'll fully commend a coach for throwing the towel in if he's, if he thinks he's protecting his boxer from unnecessary punishment then yes it is going to be a good call. Well they are aware they've got that responsibility but a lot of them are reluctant to do that."

Whilst boxing coaches might be reluctant to take on the responsibility of throwing in the towel, the perception that any coach that does so is putting the health and well-being of their boxer first draws a similarity here with earlier discussions on paternalism in boxing. Paternalists would argue that the boxing should be banned to allow better health for those who take part (Dixon, 2001; Lopez, Frias and McNamee, 2017). Yet whilst boxing remains a sport that continues to be played in line with current rules and regulations, there are instances in which the coach and referee have to act in a more paternalistic manner when stopping bouts early, as they are trying to protect the long-term health of the boxers who are competing. There are therefore elements of paternalism in boxing and it is important to note that the boxer does not always have full autonomy over the decision on whether to continue a bout.

This tension-balance between notions of autonomy and paternalism applies to the referee also, who has a number of roles and responsibilities when refereeing a bout. The referee is the closest person to the boxers during a bout and, at times, can see potential injuries before the coach and the ringside doctor. When asked about his role, Referee 1 responded that:

> “The primary role of the referee is the safety and welfare of both boxers. That's paramount and its priority.”

The role of the referee is similar to that of the coach with regard to maintaining the safety of boxers. When asked about his experiences of refereeing in boxing, Referee 1 gave an example of when he may stop a bout in order to protect the safety of a boxer:

> “If I see a boxer take a heavy blow or a series of heavy blows if they go down I'm going to pick up the count. That in itself is protecting that Boxer by us observing and looking for the quality and the quantity of the blows and the severity of them and if they are bad then… I'm going to stop the bout in order to protect that boxer from receiving any unnecessary and further punishment.”

The above quote provides an example of how the referee assesses a boxer during a bout. He is looking to see how often and how severe a boxer may get hit and if one participant is failing to protect themselves then he will end the bout. The rationale behind discussing the roles and responsibilities of referees and coaches is to highlight their more paternalistic role within boxing as well as the coach’s role of mentoring their boxers. The mass scale quantitative statistics within many paternalistic studies advocating the abolishment of boxing fail to explore elements of paternalism that are present within boxing already (Rudd et al., 2016). With the lack of research into the roles and responsibilities of referees and boxing coaches, there are a number of questions that contribute to the paternalism and autonomy debate within boxing. A soft-paternalistic approach ensuring that all boxing participants are fully educated on the symptoms and health risks of boxing and which individuals have a responsibility to stop a bout, could potentially help to reduce the number of serious boxing

related injuries. Boxers would also then have greater control over their autonomy as they can make an educated decision as to whether they want to take part in the sport. Referees and coaches would also be better educated as to what their responsibilities are when maintaining boxers' safety as well as how to identify potential injuries.

In an attempt to answer the above questions, it was important to discuss with interview participants their thoughts on stopping a bout early due to safety reasons. The three participant groups had similar ideas and believed that the referee and the coach should be working together to best protect the two boxers in the ring. The majority of boxers believed that it should be a combination of the referee and coach. Boxer 1 summarised such points in saying:

> "I think a combination of all, I mean the referee is the man in there with them so he can see their eyes closer than anybody but I, I do think that the coach should play a role because if he knows his man's getting hurt, you know if he's had two or three punches to the head that he knows he wouldn't normally get caught with I think the coach should take a… throw the towel in."

Boxer 1, along with most boxers, thought that the referee and coach should work cooperatively when protecting the two boxers who are competing. A small number of boxers did however make an interesting observation surrounding the potential biases and ethical quandaries that could be involved if the coach is unsure whether or not to throw the towel in. Boxer 2 believed that the referee should have the primary responsibility during a bout:

> "Probably the referee maybe. He can probably see it closer, he's less biased you know what I mean. A coach will want their boxer to win."

There are potential issues to consider in the fact that a coach might want to give their boxer the best chance of winning the contest and could be reluctant to throw the towel in if they think that their boxer could make a comeback. All coaches would want to give their boxer the

best chance of winning, but would also argue that their boxer's safety is their main concern. For example, Coach 3 indicated that:

> "I think as a coach you've got to keep your boxer safe but also you as a coach know that boxer better than he knows himself. You know how conditioned he is, how durable he is."

Coach 3 was saying that the benefit that a coach has over the referee when deciding whether to throw the towel in is that they know the personality of their boxer and they can act accordingly if their boxer is acting out of character during a bout. Referee 1 had a similar thought when it came to this subject and claimed:

> "The coaches got that same responsibility. He or she knows, knows their boxer probably better than a referee."

The above quotes indicate that the referee and coach must work together in order to best protect the two boxers who are competing in a bout. They share similar responsibilities, with the referee having a closer view on what is happening in the ring, but the coach having greater knowledge and understanding of their boxer's personality. Whilst the above quotes suggest this idea of combined responsibility, there is possible confusion over who has the final say and responsibility as fights can sometimes go on longer than they should, which could result in a higher risk of injury to those taking part.

The notion of responsibility and the combined roles that referees and coaches share when protecting the health of boxers during a bout is an area that is rarely discussed in relation to ethical issues of paternalism and autonomy in boxing. The lack of depth in many existing quantitative paternalist studies (e.g. Dixon, 2001; Rudd et al., 2016; Lopez, Frias and McNamee, 2017) fails to adequately address issues of responsibility and the potential reasons as to why boxers may get injured during a bout. It is clear from the above discussion that boxing coaches and referees seek to maintain the safety of boxers during a bout. The potential confusion surrounding who has the final responsibility when maintaining boxer

safety would make it difficult to defend the outright autonomy of boxers. It would be unrealistic to believe that a boxer would stop their own bout if they felt they had concussion like symptoms or an injury. The following section will therefore aim to address some of the issues that are currently lacking in this area of boxing-related studies.

Boxers are a part of a complex network of entertainment that includes themselves, coaches, referees, promoters, medical staff and fans who all have an influence on the sport. The many tension-balances between these different groups can make it more challenging for coaches and referees to make the decision to end a bout early. This can ultimately result in bouts occasionally going on longer than they should. There could be numerous reasons as to why a bout may go on longer than it should, such as lack of experience and the lack of training for boxers, coaches and referees surrounding the possible risks of the sport. When exploring this subject, all boxers were asked whether they had ever been involved in bouts that went on longer than they should. In responding to such questions, Boxer 4 indicated that:

> “You’re so blood hungry and you want to see someone get hurt and knocked out your thinking in your head you want it to carry on.”

Boxer 4 gave the idea that the crowd could affect the length of a bout. If the crowd are enjoying the event, it could potentially influence the referee when deciding whether or not to end a bout early. He expanded on his idea by claiming that some referees may get too involved with the bout itself and almost become a spectator in some regards:

> “Well some referees don’t like to admit it but they’re a lot more old school and you know they probably want to see that action, they’re probably getting brought into that action in their own head and being like woah what’s going on here lets see a knockout myself.”

Whilst it would be highly unlikely that a referee would ever admit to such points, it is possible that a large chanting crowd and fight night atmosphere could potentially influence a referee’s decision when it comes to prematurely ending a bout. The referee has an ethical

responsibility to maintain the safety of the two boxers who are competing. They have to balance their paternalistic role in protecting the boxer with feeling like they might not have entire free-will to simply end a bout due to external stakeholders. Boxer 3 also linked the idea of bouts going on too long to the potential win at all costs nature that can be present within boxing:

> “In a world title fight those people are willing to die for that little dream of theirs so you have to let it go until it goes.”

It has to be noted that Boxer 3 was referring to boxing at its highest level. The rationale behind letting a possible championship bout run its course no matter what links to the potential ‘win at all costs’ approach amongst some boxers. A referee could be reluctant to end such a high calibre bout due to the fact that both competitors have trained their entire boxing life for that one chance to be crowned champion. A number of coaches had a more grounded approach when discussing this topic. For example, Coach 3 suggested that:

> “I think some referees are better than others, there’s different levels of refereeing and you’ve got to give them chance to get through the levels. Some are more competent than others so I think it’s all down to experience.”

Whilst a referee with less experience may lack the knowledge of when to stop a bout and an experienced competent referee might know what to look for if a boxer is acting out of character, the only way for referees to gain experience is to be given the chance to referee boxing contests. With the thoughts of coaches and boxers in mind, it was therefore interesting to also gain the first-hand thoughts of Referee 1 on this subject:

> “It's so easy to criticize and you know I’ve criticized other referees when I’ve been sat ringside but really unless you're in the ring, close to the action and actually looking into the boxers eyes and in that position it's down to the referee.”

The point being made here is that a referee has to make split second decisions when refereeing a bout, meaning they can be easily criticised if they make a wrong decision. This

links back to experience, as more experienced referees will potentially have a better idea of when to intervene. Referee 1 also had thoughts relating to the semi-professional/white-collar variants of boxing: a variant of boxing that primarily involves charity events and boxers who are not associated with the amateur or professional variants of boxing. When asked about this he responded:

> “I got invited down to it to observe it or watch it with a view to me you know working at these shows. Erm.. but I didn't stay very long. I wasn't happy with what I saw, there was no medical cover, there was no weigh ins done… To me it wasn't safe.”

Referee 1 had years of experience as a white-collar referee and he made a number of points relating to this variant of boxing that need to be addressed. He claimed that a lot of white-collar events lack sufficient medical staff and cover to be safe for the boxers and that matchups are often uneven due to a lack of weigh-ins. He also made the following point regarding white-collar promoters and event organisers:

> “I have gone to events where I've had a promoter say to me “this bout, that bout, will you make sure Red Corner wins?” I said no we can’t.”

It is important to note that Referee 1 believed there to be promoters who were deciding the outcome of white-collar bouts before they had started. This is an area of boxing that needs further attention within academic literature. White-collar/semi-professional variants of the sport appear to be growing in popularity based on discussions with participants of this study. These variations of the sport are already unregulated and lack a governing body. The potential lack of sufficient health and safety measures within white-collar/semi-professional boxing is another factor that is rarely considered by paternalists and autonomists. To reiterate an earlier discussion, if boxing were to be banned it would be naïve to think that all participants would stop taking part in some form of boxing. Again, mass scale paternalistic statistical data fails to fully address possible repercussions if boxing were to be banned. Similarly, the autonomy of boxers cannot be defended outright if there are variants of boxing

that could pose a serious health risk to those taking part. White-collar/semi-professional boxing is lacking attention within academic research and is an area of boxing literature that needs further attention and discussion in line with ethical principles of autonomy and paternalism.

The BBBC have provided guidance on when a bout should be prematurely stopped due to a safety issue reflecting elements of their paternalistic role as a regulatory body. However, regardless of the variant of boxing, there appears to be confusion over when this should occur. Boxing coaches and Referee 1 believe there to be a combined responsibility when it comes to maintaining the safety of a boxer during a bout, but there is confusion surrounding why bouts may sometimes go on longer than perhaps they should. There are varying opinions regarding when a bout should be stopped prematurely and it would appear that it can depend on what is at stake. Regardless of whether it is a world title bout or a white-collar event, referees and coaches have a responsibility to maintain the safety of the boxers within the ring. The confusion over whether one group should have greater responsibility than the other or whether they should be working in tandem is something that requires further investigation. Such points again appear to align more to a soft-paternalistic viewpoint. It seems that boxing coaches and referees may need further training and guidance on when to stop a bout due to a health issue and in doing so it would give the less experienced referees the opportunity to be more efficient at their role even as a beginner. These arguments also link to the following sections discussions surrounding education in boxing. It would be hard to defend the full autonomy of boxers, coaches and referees if they are participating in a sport without first being educated on the possible risks of doing so. With this in mind, the following section will explore the concept of education to see if boxing participants are fully educated on the potential risks.

5.2 Examining Issues of "Education" for Participants on the Potential Risks of Boxing

The idea of educating boxers, boxing coaches and referees on the potential risks of participation in the sport is something that is rarely covered within academic research. The use of ethnography amongst qualitative researchers has proven to be an effective methodological approach when investigating boxing culture and subcultures. The researcher can gain first-hand experience of what it is like to be a boxer through observations and participation (Woodward, 2004, 2008; Wacquant, 1995, 2004). Whilst this has been a popular method of approaching boxing-related research, it does not necessarily address concerns surrounding issues of education for boxers, boxing coaches and referees on the inherent risks of the sport. The lack of clarity surrounding issues of education in boxing needs to be addressed. It is important to explore whether all three participant groups are educated on the potential health risks that are associated with boxing and the potential ways in which they receive this education. It would be difficult to defend aspects of participant autonomy – even as part of a soft-paternalistic approach to such issues – if such groups are not sufficiently educated on these issues.

When discussing the notion of education with participants in this study, it was important to discuss at first how knowledgeable they were with regard to the potential health risks associated with boxing. Discussion in the previous chapter suggested that some boxers, coaches and referees were aware that boxing had lower injury rates than various other sports. Although existing research also shows boxing to have relatively low injury rates when compared to other sports (Alevras et al., 2018; Siewe et al., 2015; Pappas, 2007), it is important to emphasise that the sport can pose serious health risks. Many participants were somewhat aware of the health risks that are associated with boxing. However, it was important to investigate the ways in which they received this education. With potential long-term health issues such as Alzheimer's disease and CTE, it is important to consider whether boxing participants receive a formal education on the possible dangers of the sport.

When Boxer 3 was asked about whether he had received a formal education on the health risks of boxing he responded: “Not really no, I didn’t pay much attention to it”. The idea that some boxers are participating in the sport with minimal formal education and training on elements of risk is a potential matter of concern. To reiterate, the majority of boxing coaches did seem to be aware of the risks. However, when all boxers and boxing coaches were asked if they had received any formal education on risks during their time in boxing, there was a clear theme amongst boxers within the data. For example, Boxer 3 responded:

> “I’ve never done any course or anything like that or been educated from someone who’s medically trained or anything like that no.”

The response of Boxer 7 was similar:

> “There’s freak injuries everywhere but yeah like erm nobody really warns you that this can happen really no.”

These results highlighted a recurring theme amongst boxers that they are not necessarily formally educated when it comes to the potential dangers of participating in boxing. With a lack of education evident amongst a number of boxers, it was important to investigate the knowledge levels of boxing coaches surrounding the risks of boxing.

When discussing the risks of boxing with coaches, it became clear as to why so many boxers were unaware of the health risks. The majority of boxing coaches were aware of the risks that can be associated with boxing however, Coach 2 appeared to dismiss the potential dangers of participating in boxing. Coach 2 had over 40 years of coaching experience and had a clear understanding of boxing as a sport, but did offer some interesting responses when asked about the health risks that can be associated with boxing. When asked about his opinions on issues of risk in boxing, he responded by saying:

> “There is no risk, if you get hit then it’s your own fault for not keeping your hands up. If you’ve listened to what you’ve been taught then there will be no damage whatsoever.”

According to this coach, if a boxer explicitly follows everything that their coach teaches them, then they will not be at risk of injury. Whether boxers listen to their coach's advice and training on such matters or not, there can only be one winner and to reiterate on previous discussion, boxers will try to win at all costs. Boxing may have lower injury rates when compared to other sports, however it is important to remember that the repeated head trauma boxers undergo during their career can lead to serious issues such as CTE, Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease (Omalu, 2014; Ling, hardy and Zetterberg, 2015). It is potentially concerning for such an experienced coach to state that the boxer is at no risk as long as they listen to their coach. Similar concerns also became evident when some coaches were asked if their boxers were educated on the risks. For example, a number of coaches indicated that it is "common sense" for boxers to know the risks. When asked if their boxers were aware of the risks, Coach 1 answered:

> "I think a lot of them are aware of the risks I don't know unless they're not the sharpest tool in the box then you're going to say listen you could possibly get hurt, you can only advise can't you."

Coach 4 also had a similar view that boxers were aware of the risks:

> "Yeah if they're at a level, at pro level or a decent amateur level then they're aware of the risks yeah. "

It seems from these responses that several coaches believed that their boxers are (or should be) aware of the potential health risks from participating in boxing, potentially negating any responsibility to formally educate them. The findings of this study have however shown that boxers are clearly lacking detailed underlying knowledge surrounding the dangers of boxing.

When coaching at a higher standard, one may assume that coaches are aware of what may happen to a boxer whilst training or competing. When interviewed, Coach 3 offered a good insight into the ways in which he was educated on the dangers associated with boxing. Coach 3 had accumulated nearly 15 years of coaching experience and was currently a

professional boxing trainer. During the interview when discussing his progression throughout his coaching career he offered a full breakdown of the steps that are taken before becoming a professional boxing coach:

> “When you’re a professional coach or when you want to be a professional coach you have to apply for a license. You then have to go to an interview with a board panel and if they okay you then you must attend a course and the course tells you about injuries and risks and other procedures that you have to know to pass the knowledge onto your boxers.”

From what Coach 3 indicated, all professional boxing coaches are educated on the potential dangers of boxing and are given the responsibility of passing that knowledge onto the boxers they are coaching. Coaches have to undertake a formal application process to gain professional status. Such data suggest that the responsibility to educate boxers is perhaps lacking somewhere along the line between governing bodies to coaches and then to boxers. With this in mind, it was interesting to get the viewpoint of Referee 1. As the referee is more of a neutral party when it comes to issues of education, he offered his own perspective regarding where he thought responsibilities rested to educate boxers about the potential risks of the sport:

> “Personally if a young lad joins a club a boxing club to be a part of boxing, if he's not made aware of the risk by the coaches or the clubs then they put him at risk and you know it’s bad practice. They should certainly be made fully aware of the risks involved in it. “

According to Referee 1, boxing clubs and boxing coaches have the primary responsibility to educate their boxers surrounding the sports inherent dangers. This idea was supported by Coach 3 who stated:

> “It’s definitely the coaches responsibility because you’re taking people into a gym and these people are paying to be a part of the gym and it’s one of the coaches responsibilities.”

It would make sense that the coach should be the one to educate their boxers on risks within the sport, particularly given that they often act as a mentor to the boxers within their gym. The potential concern lies in the fact that a number of boxers responded that they had not received a formal education on the risks of boxing and a number of coaches seemed to think that boxers were already aware of the risks. Such points indicate a potential lack of coherence or lack of responsibility from all parties when it comes to the issue of formal education on the inherent health risks and injuries linked to participation in boxing.

5.3 Summary

It is clear from the above discussion that there could be a lack of formal education and training surrounding issues of risk and the possible dangers of boxing. Although many participants did have some knowledge regarding these issues, they appeared to be lacking a detailed understanding of the danger they may put themselves in whilst training and competing. The lack of coherence and communication between all parties is something that needs addressing before participant autonomy can be defended. It is difficult to pose a hard-paternalistic argument to ban boxing when issues of education are something that can be improved. Again, there are inherent tension-balances in such issues between more traditional notions of autonomy and paternalism that lead more directly towards a soft-paternalistic argument. Similar to elements of training, boxers may be required to give up elements of their autonomy to their coach to allow them to develop a deeper more formal understanding of risk (Ryall and Oliver, 2011). Providing that all participants are formally educated on elements of risk, they should retain free-will to decide whether they want to pursue the sport. This gives participants the opportunity to better identify possible injuries allowing them the opportunity to seek earlier guidance or treatment. Such an approach would also provide coaches with better knowledge and understanding of risk and dangers,

which they can apply to keeping their boxers safer during training and bouts. In turn, formal education for all parties on issues of risk and danger before allowing them to take part in the sport could help to decrease possible injuries whilst giving boxers, coaches and referees the full autonomy to then choose whether or not to take part. At present, such training along with formally educating coaches and referees on their responsibilities does not appear to be in place. Coaches may need to infringe the free-will of their boxer in order to protect their long-term health. Referees also need to be confident in their free-will to make the difficult decision to prematurely end a bout without a concern for external stakeholders such as the crowd and promoters. Further developments surrounding the notion of formal education needs developing and a soft-paternalistic approach to such issues could make education a requirement without further infringing on the free-will of anyone who wants to partake in the sport of boxing.

6. Conclusion

Boxing can and has often been seen as a ‘violent’ sport in the eyes of paternalists, who often argue that the sport should be abolished due its unethical and immoral nature (see Rudd et al., 2016). On the other hand, there are many autonomists who defend the existence of boxing, believing that the sport can promote physical and mental health as well as providing a sense of identity to many working-class participants (Wacquant, 2018; Deucher et al., 2016). The theories of autonomy and paternalism that have been reviewed within this thesis demonstrate an ongoing debate surrounding the morality and ethics of boxing within academic research. However, the singular approach that is often seen within paternalistic and autonomy-based research surrounding the morality of boxing can at times over-simplify arguments within this research area. The mass scale statistical data provided by many paternalistic studies does offer key information relating to injury rates and death rates in boxing (e.g. Pappas, 2007; Zazryn, McCrory and Cameron, 2009). However, such research rarely acknowledges or seeks to examine the experiences of boxing participants. At times, this has often resulted in a somewhat one-sided argument that boxing cannot be defended due to the inherent dangers and violent characteristics of the sport. Indeed, researchers working within this perspective have often failed to acknowledge the possible benefits that boxing can provide its participants, focussing predominantly on the negative aspects of the sport. In contrast, much autonomy-based research in this area addresses the opinions and perceptions of boxing participants primarily through the use of ethnographic observations (e.g. Woodward, 2004, 2008; Wacquant, 1995, 2004). Whilst such an approach can at times present an argument that boxing culture can offer participants a sense of purpose, discipline and structure, it also can lack in-depth analysis of the first-hand experiences of boxing participants when it comes to issues such as violence and risk within the sport. With this in mind, the intention within this study was to examine such issues from a more critical perspective.

6.1 Conclusion of Findings

The findings within this thesis emerge from the semi-structured interviews that were conducted with professional and semi-professional boxers, boxing coaches and boxing referee. The results of this study provided detailed first-hand perceptions from the three participant groups regarding issues of violence in boxing, the potential risks that can be attached to such a combative sport, as well as the methods in which they are educated on such risks. The first research question posed at the start of the thesis surrounded the issue of violence and how semi-professional and professional boxers, coaches and referees perceived this notion. Participants clearly indicated that they willingly choose to take part and, in doing so, consent to the potential risks and levels of 'violence' within the sport. The main counter argument from participants to whether boxing was violent surrounded the notion of consent and that although boxing can be viewed as a violent sport, anyone who chooses to take part does so with free-will. Participants indicated that boxing can give them an opportunity to release their aggression in a controlled environment, also aiding the development of elements of self-control and discipline. They also indicated that such characteristics can be transferred to other aspects of their day-to-day lives. Boxers can, at times, convert their physical capital into economic capital if they can progress through the ranks to gain professional status (Wacquant, 2018). Participants provided clear examples of various ways in which boxing has helped them in their lives and provided them with a sense of structure and discipline, as well as benefitting their physical and mental health. One boxer was previously a drug-addict and another was severely overweight until boxing provided a form of structure and discipline, which, they believed, helped them to overcome such issues. Due to the various positive benefits that boxing has provided for participants, it is difficult to side with a hard-paternalistic approach of abolishing boxing. There is however, a tension-balance between the two traditional approaches of paternalism and autonomy and the lack of coherence surrounding elements of responsibility and the formal education on potential health risks needs addressing before the free-will of boxers can be supported.

One of the key findings relating to research question two is that there appears to be a lack of education surrounding the potential health risks and dangers of boxing. It is evident from the studies conducted by Zazryn, McCrory and Cameron (2009), Dixon (2001) and Omalu (2014) that there can be serious health repercussions from participating in boxing. Many paternalists argue for the sport to be abolished on this basis. Potentially compounding such issues, the participants within this study appeared to indicate that there was a relative lack of formal education for boxers surrounding the possible dangers of participation. In some respects, it is a matter of concern that boxers are not receiving such information. The results of the study suggest that there is an inadequate delivery of educational information surrounding such issues. It would appear that whilst professional boxing coaches receive an education on the inherent dangers and health risks within the sport, there seems to be a relative failure to sufficiently pass this information onto boxers within the gym environment. There is therefore a clear tension between traditional notions of autonomy and paternalism when it comes to the positive and negative impacts that boxing can have on participants health. A similar tension balance can be seen when discussing notions of risk and education with referees and coaches.

It was clear from the results that the referee was up to date with his knowledge on risks and made an effort to ensure that he was educated on such issues. There is a concern however, with coaches' perceptions and knowledge surrounding elements of risk. Some coaches dismissed elements of risk which indicated that they were not receiving enough formal education on the matter. There is still little known about coaches and referees' perceptions of risk as well as their individual and collective responsibilities with regard to maintaining boxers' safety during a bout. There are varying opinions surrounding when a bout should be ended prematurely and there appeared to be a slight confusion over who had the ultimate responsibility when making this decision. Boxing coaches and referees need sufficient education and knowledge before they are qualified so that they are capable of making split second decisions to stop a bout in order to protect the boxer. With the potentially growing

popularity of semi-professional and white-collar variants of boxing, governing bodies need to take responsibility for ensuring that all boxing coaches and referees receive a formal education on how to identify a possible injury during a bout. This could help to rectify the possible confusion over when a bout should be stopped due to a safety issue. It could also improve the safety of boxers and reduce elements of risk as referees and coaches are better trained to identify any possible injuries. This approach could require all coaches and referees to attend advanced formal training before they can either coach or referee boxing. Referees and coaches would maintain their personal autonomy once they had completed said training. Again, there is a balance between the traditional approaches of both paternalism and autonomy.

A theoretical approach of soft-paternalism has underpinned this thesis. It has been argued throughout that the traditional autonomy and paternalism dichotomy is too simplistic when seeking to understand and mitigate possible ethical issues in the complex modern sport of boxing. There is a notable gap between the statistical data surrounding injury rates (and the inherent dangers of boxing), and the paternalistic conclusion that the sport should be banned. Jumping from statistical findings straight to this conclusion entirely overlooks numerous considerations that need to be made with regards to boxing participants as human beings and the benefits that the sport of boxing may bring to them. This dichotomy will always be present until paternalists and autonomists acknowledge the key arguments from both sides of this ongoing debate. A soft-paternalistic interference can be justified, particularly if it is necessary to identify whether a person is acting voluntarily or to ensure that they are sufficiently informed in their actions (Dworkin, 2020). With the lack of formal education surrounding the risks of boxing, it is important to consider that participants should not be able to voluntarily take part in boxing if they have not been fully informed on the dangers of doing so. Providing that all participants are fully educated on the potential health risks of boxing before taking part in contact training or competition, they should maintain the free-will to make an informed choice as to whether they wish to take part in the sport.

However, from a soft-paternalistic perspective it is important to consider the possible limitations to their free-will preventing them from participation until sufficient training on such matters has been undertaken. A soft-paternalistic approach would negate boxing participants from unknowingly putting their health at risk and would allow them sufficient freedom to make an informed decision on whether to take part. If it was mandatory for all boxers, boxing coaches and referees to be formally educated on the potential risks of the sport before any sparring or competition could take place, it could help to further minimise risk. All participant groups would be more aware of any injuries they incur, allowing them to more adequately address any injuries or risks encountered within the sport, justifying a soft-paternalistic approach to these issues. Coaches and referees would also have greater ability to better manage the bout environment. This is an approach that would have to be driven from governing bodies of both amateur and professional boxing organisations and preferably also directed at growing white-collar variants of boxing.

6.2 Limitations

Whilst conducting this study, there were some limitations that would need to be considered and addressed if further research were to be conducted in this field. Firstly, the adoption of a mixed purposeful sampling method based upon a combination of snowball and criterion sampling proved beneficial (Suri, 2011; Bryman, 2016). There were however limitations when building a sample of participants in this manner. Using the approach of snowball sampling, a small initial number of participants were gathered, with the remaining participants generated through subsequent recommendations. Within this approach, the majority of participants were all generated from within a relatively small geographical radius in the north of England. Whilst the adoption of this type of case-study approach is appropriate, a potential limitation could be related to the fact that some perspectives that were shared by a number of participants could have resulted from them being part of the same gym. If a participant group was compiled from across a wide range of geographical

locations, there could potentially be differing perspectives on various topics, as participants would be part of different gyms and gym cultures.

Finding boxers, coaches and referees who met the criteria of the study by having relevant experience and status at times also proved challenging. It was a correct decision on both practical and methodological grounds to devise a list of criteria that participants had to meet in order to take part in the study in order to ensure that they had the necessary experience to share an educated perspective on various discussion topics. The limitation arose when it became evident that relevant participants were difficult to find. There was an abundance of amateur gyms located in the North of England, but finding professional boxing gyms that were willing to take part in the study within this potentially closed-social world proved more challenging. Making use of the network that had been built through previous research provided an initial basis to gain access to relevant participants, but did again limit the geographical location of the project. One of the main limitations when creating the sample of participants was triangulating multiple sources, more specifically referees. Finding referees that had relevant experience was challenging. Whilst most boxing gyms have a website or social media page, referees were not as readily available. Snowballing through a boxing coach did allow access to a referee for the study. However, finding further referees proved to be problematic and is something that would need to be considered if further research were conducted. The use of data source triangulation and mixed purposeful sampling strategies did work for this study and adopting this approach overall proved beneficial (Palys, 2008; Palinkas et al., 2015; Bryman, 2016). This thesis has also contributed to existing knowledge by working with groups such as referees and coaches that have often not been examined within this area of boxing literature. Acknowledgement of the encountered limitations is however something that would need to be considered if the following suggestions for further research were to be conducted.

6.3 Recommendations and Areas for Further Research

There is an abundance of quantitative based research surrounding health risks and injury rates in boxing (see Zazryn, McCrory and Cameron, 2009; Pappas, 2007; Alevras et al., 2018). There are also various qualitative studies that adopt an ethnographic approach to data collection when exploring boxing culture and sub-cultures (see, Woodward, 2008; Wacquant, 2004). However, there remains scope for academics to continue to conduct further research into the views and perceptions of boxers, coaches and referees through the use of interview-based methodologies. It would be beneficial to further interview boxers, coaches and referees on their perceptions of semi-professional and professional boxing. Another area of boxing that needs further consideration is the white-collar variants of the sport. It would appear from the results that have been generated that governing bodies are neglecting white-collar variants of boxing. Given the current lack of academic research examining white-collar boxing, further research needs to be conducted in this area of the sport. Indeed, there are various potential issues relating to the ethics of such activities that require further investigation. The referee participating in this study mentioned that some white-collar events can have little to no medical cover at all. Research should be conducted in this field, as the perceptions of white-collar boxing participants could shed light on whether boxing governing bodies need to address this variant of boxing. Whether it is governed or not, white-collar boxing is growing in popularity and scholars need to investigate the risks, safety precautions and education that is involved in this variant of the sport. Finally, this study has addressed the roles and responsibilities of boxing coaches and referees in relation to ensuring the safety of boxers during a bout. However, there remains scope to conduct further research involving ringside doctors and other relevant stakeholders such as promoters, fans and governing bodies in order to further investigate issues linked to ethical and moral issues in boxing. Whilst there is a plethora of existing paternalism and autonomy based research in this field, there remains scope to continue to investigate such issues from a more critical theoretical perspective.

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