Facilitating cold-water immersion for metabolic health: Situating habitus, enskilment, and communities of practice in the context of a London Swimming Club

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

Saturday morning at the club, mid-winter. The image on the front cover shows a man in his early 80s, dressed only in swim kit and a pair of pink crocs. Having exited the water, he speaks avidly with other members of the club. Around them, individuals are changing, waiting for their turn to enter the water, or looking out onto the race taking place at the time. This eclectic community gather together, sharing this space with their families, dogs and local wildlife. Throughout the year, social entanglements similar to those depicted in this scene are repeated, especially on Saturday mornings. From an anthropological perspective, a question is how to make sense of this scene, and how the community this scene represents is self-promoted. These questions are of interest to medical anthropology due to the effects on human health of repeated cold exposure, as discussed in section 2.1. Thus, the aim of this thesis is to understand how the club facilitates cold exposure through cold-water immersion. I attempt to understand this club (and therefore scenes such as that depicted) through an engagement with practice theories. Practice theories seek to understand the relationship between action and the social context that of that action (Ortner, 2006). I choose to engage with the practice theories of habitus, enskilment, and communities of practice, discussed in section 2.2, seeking to demonstrate how this triad of theory allows for a deep understanding of the club.

The origins of this thesis lie in the idea of a medical anthropology *for* the Anthropocene, rather than *of* the Anthropocene (e.g. Cartwright, 2019). At a time when the entanglements of human and planetary health are increasingly recognised (see Whitmee et al, 2015), resources are increasingly limited, and a multitude of health benefits from being in nature are recognised (see White et al, 2019), medical anthropology arguably can play a critical role in studying sites of nature-contact. Such a position would be the other side of the coin to medical anthropological work on toxic landscapes (see Lock, 2017), such as Tine Gammeltoft's documentation of the effects of Agent Orange in Vietnam.

Two pieces of theory guide this approach. The first is future anthropology. Seeking to intervene in contested futures, Salazar et al's (2017) future anthropology project is one that is transdisciplinary, that seeks to decentre the human and embrace entanglement, and that engages with embodiment and experiential approaches to consider alternative futures. Thus, this thesis imagines a medical anthropology intent on using this approach to suggest practices of living that are beneficial to human health, as understood from an anthropological standpoint. It is for this reason why observant participation, with its roots in embodiment, was chosen as the methodology for this thesis. The second piece of theory guiding this approach comes from Bruno Latour's (e.g.

2014, 2015, 2017, 2018) recent ecological project. Consistently, Latour has argued for the opposition of those ways of living and forms of politics engaged in by Moderns (i.e. those practices that are collectively responsible for the contemporary crisis of global environmental change – The Anthropocene), to Terrestrial (alternatively, Earthbound) ways of living and forms of politics that aim for sustainability of human and more-than-human life. Relevant for this thesis, this terrestrial approach seeks to question the form and make-up of the human, and thus discover and cultivate the numerous dependencies that humans (or Terrestrials as Latour puts it) 'need in order to subsist' (Latour, 2018: 87). Given that Latour emphasises how this need to understand dependencies is not intended with the idea of creating natural harmony (but of engaging with more-than-human negotiations), there are similarities here to recent work in medical anthropology that attempts to describe the dependencies of human health on other species such as microbes (Helmreich, 2015), chickens (Porter, 2010), and mosquitoes (Kelly and Lezaun, 2014; see also Brown and Nading, 2019). In this thesis I seek to add to this list, and explore the practice of being exposed to, cold.

To investigate how the club facilitates cold exposure, I seek to respond to the following three research questions:

1. How does the club encourage a sociality that facilitates cold-water immersion?
2. What does one learn in the process of becoming a cold-water swimmer at the club?
3. How is facilitation affected by club understandings of who belongs at the club?

As I discuss in Chapter 3, the second and third of these questions developed over the course of the research. Originally, I sought to understand facilitation as involving discussions of lay physiology and the reconfiguring of one's relationship to thermal comfort. However, as I continued to speak and swim with members of the club, I realised that there were particular social dynamics, concerning who has the rights to the club, that could both help and hinder facilitation. Thus, I reoriented the research to more explicitly consider the sociality of facilitation in a broader sense than I had originally intended. Before laying out the structure of this thesis, it is worth noting where this thesis lies in the context of previous work on swimming in the social sciences.

1.1. Swimming in the Social Sciences

Swimming occupies a peculiar space in the social sciences. It is at once both highly inclusive and exclusive. There is no barrier to entry, and access to a body of water is the only

requirement. However, it is an activity that requires training. Such training is entangled with histories of racial and social segregation (Wiltse, 2010). It is an activity that can both produce human specimens of physical health – such as the many-Olympic-gold-medal winner Michael Phelps – and carry with it the potential for death by drowning; a potential that is actualised each year in Britain. It is at once both an ancient activity, with evidence of swimming in Britain since the 4th Century AD, and one that is continually reinvented (Parr, 2011; Deakin, 2000). For example, swimming has been used as a military tactic by the Romans, as a means of bathing by multiple cultures and at multiple times through history, and as a sport with a range of distances over, and temperatures in, which competitions take place (Parr, 2011). Studies of swimming in the social sciences can be divided into those of indoor and outdoor spaces.

Studies of swimming in indoor spaces have tended to focus on swimming pools. Examples of such work include Susie Scott's (2007) Goffmanian analysis of the behaviours of individual swimmers. In particular, her work has focused on how pool swimmers take up particular roles in the context of the pool. Miranda ward (2017), in comparison, has focused on the visceral experience of swimming in swimming pools. Pushing back against the notion that indoor swimming pools are sterile space, ward seeks to show that 'the specifics of the contained indoor pool can make for a distinct exercise experience, and to encourage further participation in an activity with clear health benefits this experience should be taken into account' (320). A separate strand of studies of swimming has aimed to show how swim training is a disciplinary action. Here, authors such as Lang (2010), McMahon and Penney (2013), and McNarry et al (2019, 2020) have sought to paint the swimmer's body as that which is made to conform to a specific way of swimming. For example, McNarry et al (2020), studying competitive swimmers in the UK, demonstrate how this learning to swim for the purposes of competition involves experimentation and the ability to adapt to both changes to oneself and one's environment. Finally, DeLuca (2013, 2014) and DeLuca and Andrews (2016) point to how swim club membership can be understood as a means of exercising class privilege. For example, DeLuca (2013), studying membership of a swim and tennis club in the United States, sees the pool as an exclusive learning opportunity that is entangled with a broader class habitus. Thus, the pool, DeLuca argues, is part of a broader context of social segregation.

Considering swimming in outdoor spaces, Foley (2015, 2017) and Foley and Kistemann (2015) build on work in public health that promotes the benefits of being in or near 'blue spaces' such as rivers, oceans, and lakes. Such work notes that personal wellbeing can be improved with access to blue spaces (see Britton et al, 2020). Situating this research in coastal swimming communities in Ireland, Foley (2015, 2017) draws on geographical theories of affect (e.g.

Anderson, 2009) to understand how these 'blue spaces' enable health. Thus, Foley considers these spaces from a therapeutic perspective. Throsby (2013, 2016), while also focusing on outdoor swimming practices, turns her attention to the process of learning to become a marathon swimmer. She notes the discourses of fat that pervade marathon swimming, the discourses of masculinity and femininity such swimming enables, and the embodied skills that one learns in the process of becoming a marathon swimmer.

This thesis is thus situated on the side of studies of outdoor swimming. However, unlike those studies cited above, the focus of this thesis is not on the activity of swimming. Rather, it is on the exposure to the cold that accompanies outdoor swimming, and the community that facilitates this exposure.

1.2. Structure of the Thesis

This thesis proceeds as follows. First, I delve into literature on thermal comfort, the physiology of cold exposure, and metabolic health. I do this to demonstrate both how cold exposure is integral to metabolic health, and how building design, by incorporating thermal comfort standards, is detrimental to metabolic health. Thus, I argue that understanding those social environments conducive to cold exposure is key for policy makers seeking to improve metabolic health. One such site is the club studied in this thesis. Then, I elicit three different theories of practice that will each be used throughout this thesis. These theories are not used interchangeably, but specifically, so as to demonstrate how different theories highlight different aspects of the club that are critical to its function as a site of outdoor swimming. In the empirical chapters and the discussion, I aim to demonstrate the connections between these theories. These three different theories of practice are habitus, enskilment, and communities of practice. Following this, I present the club itself, a brief sketch of its members, and the methods used in this thesis. Here, I clarify how the thesis shifted through the observant participation and formal interviews. My original aim to study facilitation through the communication of lay knowledges and the reconfiguring of relationships with thermal comfort developed into a study of facilitation in a broader sense than originally intended. This development occurred as I recognised the role of community belonging and community-specific meaning in this facilitation.

In my first empirical chapter, focusing on habitus, I lay out the site of the club and illustrate how the sociality of the club emerges. This is done by, first, drawing attention to the physical space of the club itself. Second, the practices of the club are explored to illustrate how these encourage

certain behaviours over others. I argue that thinking with habitus allows a detailed sense of how individuals were able to improve their standing within the field of the club. Finally, the role of cold-water exposure in the sociality of the club is considered. This is achieved by drawing on the concepts of existential capital and embodied intoxication. In my second empirical chapter, I illustrate how individuals become skilled in the process of the swim. I discuss the work of Cristina Grasseni (e.g. 2007) – including her recent collaborations with Thorsten Geiser (Grasseni and Geiser, 2019) – on enskilled senses achieved through mediating objects. Furthermore, returning to the phenomenological roots of enskilment, I reflect on what Merleau-Ponty's (1968) Ontology of the Flesh can offer studies of enskilment, demonstrating this through the context of the club. Referring back to the previous chapter's engagement with habitus, I aim in this chapter to point to a variety of ways in which enskilment and habitus inform each other. In the final empirical chapter, I first discuss how the concept of communities of practice addresses the gaps that remain from the combination of habitus and enskilment. I do this by drawing attention to a few of the core aspects of communities of practice. Namely, the duality of participation and reification, the production of meaning, and the possibility of non-participants alongside participants. In the second part of this chapter I focus on what I believe to be the most important thing that the concept of communities of practice brings to the triad of habitus, enskilment, and communities of practice: politics. I aim to demonstrate this by drawing on the negotiations of meaning that occurred within the club concerning developments around the club changing room.

Finally, in the discussion, I seek to address the important findings of this thesis, the links between habitus, enskilment, and communities of practice discussed, and insights into how best to facilitate cold water immersion as a metabolic health intervention, discussed in this thesis. Furthermore, I aim to return to the theme of a future-oriented medical anthropology of the Anthropocene, reflecting on the need for such an approach and how medical anthropology can contribute more than critiques to conversations about what future ways of living might look like.

2. Practicing Comfort and Theories of Practice

In this chapter, I first turn to literature on comfort – particularly thermal comfort – to argue that indoor environments have been set up for humans through the use of thermal standards whose aim is thermal comfort. Below, I clarify what is meant here by thermal standards. Second, I explore the biological effect of these thermal standards on human health, pointing to the loss of the body's thermogenic capacities through a loss of BAT. Third, I note how cold exposure is a means of generating BAT in humans, thus countering the metabolic effects of indoor environments. As the aim of this thesis is to understand how the club facilitates cold exposure through cold-water immersion, I then turn to the three different theories of practice used in this thesis: habitus, enskilment, and communities of practice. I outline each of these approaches, discuss how they have been used in anthropology, and establish the ways in which using these three theories link to and support each other. Where appropriate, I link these theories back to the discussion about thermal comfort and cold exposure.

2.1. Practicing Comfort

Delving into sociology is necessary to account for the development of thermal comfort. Particularly important is the work of Elizabeth Shove (2003). To recount Shove's argument briefly, she first defines comfort by drawing on *The Invention of Comfort*. Here, Crowley (2001) defines comfort as 'self-conscious satisfaction with the relationship between one's body and its immediate physical environment' (142). Building from this definition, Shove traces the rise of this definition through the 18th Century, into a right that people expect. The result of this has been, for thermal comfort, the emergence of 'a protected bubble of artificial climate' (2003: 27). The effects of this 'bubble' on human health are discussed below. Regarding thermal comfort, the American Society of Heating and Ventilating Engineers (ASHVE) developed initial, quantitative temperature values for a human 'comfort zone' in 1923. Taken as a natural condition in which the human body *should* remain[1], quantitative values of the 'comfort zone' were difficult to dispute. This 'comfort zone' was later refined through the work of Ole Fanger (1970). Fanger sought to quantitatively define 'optimal thermal comfort', using subjective perceptions of when individuals were comfortable, and taking into account metabolic rate, clothing, air temperature, radiant temperature, air velocity, and

[1] This assumption relies on a conception of human biology in which thermal comfort is a sign of well-being, and therefore indicative of health (Shove, 2003).

humidity. The results of this research have since been reified into the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers' (ASHREA) Standard 55 – first released in 1992 – and the ISO 7730 standard (Shove, 2003). Such standards continue to be designed into the architecture of buildings (Grigoriou, 2019). Although Shove identifies that a variety of thermal comfort temperature ranges exist between Western cultures (see Stoops, 2001), and that one's need for thermal comfort might change over time, the lasting effect of these early standards of thermal comfort is emphasised. For Shove, these thermal comfort standards create(d) a 'normality' of being in a zone of thermoneutrality, with these technologies of thermal comfort 'configuring' (Woolgar, 1991) the user, altering their personal preferences.

For Medical Anthropologists, the biological effect of these changes must be considered. Metabolic researchers have recently become concerned by western humanity's shift to '[i]ncreased time spent indoors, widespread access to central heating and air conditioning, … and increased expectations of thermal comfort' (Johnson et al, 2011: 543). These features 'all contribute to restricting the range of temperatures experienced in daily life, and reducing time spent under mild thermal stress' (ibid.). Furthermore, it is not only that people are spending more time indoors: average indoor temperatures have steadily increased since the introduction of indoor heating standards (Johnson et al, 2011). Concerningly, this increased time spent in thermal comfort temperatures reduces the body's need to activate its systems of thermogenesis (heat production). These systems of thermogenesis both increase energy expenditure and activate otherwise inactive parts of the metabolic system (Fenzel and Kiefer, 2014). Thus, researchers in this field have found an inverse correlation between time spent indoors and obesity (van Marken Lichtenbelt et al, 2009; Virtanen et al, 2009; van Marken Lichtenbelt et al, 2017; see also Yang et al, 2015)[2]. Though thermogenesis can occur in both shivering and non-shivering forms, non-shivering forms of thermogenesis become more important with increased time spent in sub-thermal comfort temperatures (Blondin et al, 2019).

The tissue responsible for this non-shivering thermogenesis is brown adipose tissue (BAT) (Farmer, 2009)[3]. This type of tissue is something that human babies have long been recognised to have but was not thought to be present in adults until it was positively identified in the 2000s (Cannon and Nedergaard, 2004). In adults, BAT can be found in between the shoulder blades, in the supraclavicular area, surrounding the kidneys, and along the line of the neck and the spinal cord (Farmer, 2009). This tissue stores very little fat and the thermogenic capacity of BAT is the result of this tissue being a highly inefficient processor of energy, losing much of its converted

[2] Similar effects have been demonstrated in murine models (see Cui et al, 2016).
[3] In individuals with a particularly high level of body fat (white adipose tissue), the thermally insulative capacities of this fat prevent the activation of BAT (see Farmer, 2009).

energy to heat. This inefficiency is due to the action of a type of protein, UCP1 (uncoupling protein 1) (ibid.)[4]. As BAT is involved in non-shivering forms of thermogenesis, it is only activated in temperatures where a body would otherwise lose heat. Thus, cold exposure is an established means of generating this tissue by both stimulating its action and making more of it. Further, the more one's BAT is activated, the greater one's volume of BAT (Blondin et al, 2019).

Research into BAT has shown that increased levels of BAT convey metabolic health, through improved insulin sensitivity (Hanssen et al, 2015), even in obese individuals (up to a threshold of body fatness), as well as the potential for improved immunity (Carrobio et al, 2019). This wasting of energy in the form of heat, therefore, is arguably useful in a modern society where the desire for reducing such inefficiency in energy use has arguably come at a detriment to human health[5]. When thinking about the loss of BAT, there is a need, therefore, to identify practices that will allow humans as organisms that need to regulate their own temperature (as homeotherms (Hansen et al, 2010)) to do that temperature regulation. The practice that this thesis focuses on is cold water immersion[6].

2.2. Theories of Practice

Anthropological studies of practice draw on a range of theories (see Ortner, 2009). In the context of learning, two theories are particularly emphasised: habitus and enskilment[7]. In this section I include a third: communities of practice. I that this concept argue demands greater attention. My decision to attempt to articulate these different concepts together is due to my failure to think through the research site using only one or two of these concepts. It was only once I started to think through the site in terms of all three concepts that the research site began to make sense anthropologically.

[4] This uncoupling refers to the uncoupling of metabolism from ATP (adenosine triphosphate), the molecule responsible for providing energy to drive processes in cells (van Marken Lichtenbelt et al, 2018).
[5] Recognising the effects of heating standards and building architecture on human metabolic health arguably adds to previous anthropological approaches that advocate a posthuman approach to health (see Cohn and Lynch, 2017). Whereas previous studies note how human health is entangled with microbes (e.g. Helmreich, 2015), for example, health is entangled with heating infrastructure here.
[6] Support for the effectiveness of this practice is evident in studies of Far East Asian Divers (e.g. the Ama and the Haenyeo (Martinez, 2004; Lee et al, 2017)) and Scandinavian winter swimmers (e.g. Lubkowska et al, 2013). These studies outline significant differences between the subjects experienced with cold water immersion and their inexperienced counterparts.
[7] These theories take a non-cognitive anthropological approach. While a cognitive approach can be used (see, for example, Whitehouse, 2001) it is not advocated for in this thesis.

To discuss my thinking briefly and lay out what theoretically what I try to show empirically in this thesis, I see habitus as a useful starting point when thinking about practice. As I seek to show in Chapter 4, habitus allows for grasping how a practice (in a specific context) can be seen as a 'structuring structure' of that practice in that context, how individuals are encouraged to develop in that context, and, more recently, the variety of ways in which dispositions that are part of the practice are embodied. Although carnal approaches to habitus (those that emphasise embodiment in habitus) are making advances in this direction, what is lacking is an understanding of how the habitus can change or how it develops in the first place. At this point, I see a role for enskilment. This is a concept that seeks to address how one becomes skilled in a particular practice. In particular, anthropological studies have largely concerned crafts such as basket-weaving and masonry. Although engagements with enskilment have referenced 'situated learning', the situatedness of this learning studied by scholars of this approach has focused on master-apprentice relationships. Here, the concept of communities of practice has much to offer. This concept is one that has been cited by scholars of enskilment, but in-depth engagement has been lacking. As I present in this section and expand on in Chapter 6, the communities of practice concept allows for investigations into what is valued within a practice, the potential for non-participation by individuals engaging in a similar practice in the same geographical location as the studied practice, and the politics of the practice that emerges out of contestations of meaning. Although the interconnections of these theories have been implied by anthropologists (see, for example, Grasseni and Geiser, 2019), an empirical investigation of their interconnections is lacking. Thus, in this thesis, in aiming to elucidate how the club facilitates cold water immersion, I seek to demonstrate the effectiveness of this triad of theory.

2.2.1. Habitus

In this section I first lay out the foundations of the habitus concept, as elucidated by Pierre Bourdieu (e.g. Bourdieu, 1990). I focus on those concepts that are fundamental to any consideration of habitus. Acknowledging each in turn, I consider an initial definition of habitus, and then walk through the concepts of field, capital, and *doxa*. In doing so, I refer back to Section 2.1 to discuss how the concept of habitus allows for an understanding of thermal comfort as a learnt practice. Following this line of thought, I denote how, aligning with Warin et al (2016), the thermal habitus can be thought of as a *bio*habitus. I then move to consider a recent shift towards 'carnal' perspectives on habitus. Here, I draw on the work of Nick Crossley (e.g. 2004), Chris

Shilling (e.g. 1993) and Loïc Wacquant (e.g. 2005, 2014) to illustrate how a carnal perspective adds significant depth to the habitus concept. In doing so, I seek to denote the layered nature of habitus, and the importance of this layering importance for this thesis.

Though able to be traced back to Marcel Mauss' (1973 [1935]) essay on the techniques of the body, the concept of habitus finds its articulation in the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu (1979) defines habitus as 'a system of durable, transposable dispositions which function as the generative basis of structured, objectively unified practices' (vii). The concept of habitus thus refers to one's tendency towards certain behaviours, through one's unconscious adoption of those social norms that occur around them. The overall habitus of the embodied actor can therefore be thought of as both an individual and a collective achievement. Individual, as each actor enacts the habitus individually; collective, as the habitus emerges from the action of multiple embodied actors influencing one another and articulating their embodied understanding of that specific collective habitus back on one another. In other words, the habitus is a 'structuring structure'.

A range of concepts exist that support the habitus concept: field, capital, and *doxa* (Crossley, 2001). To take each in turn, the concept of field refers to the social space in which the habitus makes sense. As such, an individual may be required to ditch or reconfigure previous ways of doing things so as to fit in with the field. This is not an immediate process, but one that happens over time. As Helle Samuelson (2004) discusses with reference to local healthcare systems in Burkina Faso, the habitus that drives people to seek out local healers rather than biomedical professionals is entrenched. This entrenching is due to the distribution of multiple forms of capital in the field, weighted towards local healers over biomedical professionals. The concept of capital refers to those social resources that affect one's standing within the field. Some common genres of capital exist. In particular, economic (money), cultural (skills and knowledge), social (who one knows) and symbolic (recognition) forms of capital particularly pervade fields (Bourdieu, 1986, 1989). These forms of capital are specific to the field itself, and the acquisition of more capital (of any kind) results in greater status (and therefore greater influence) for an individual in the cultural field. While some forms of capital can be bought (e.g. one can purchase particularly good medical equipment), other forms relate either to one's inherited status (e.g. one comes from a family of healers) or one's status in other, related fields (e.g. one has multiple degrees). These forms of capital relevant to the field are not fixed, however, and may change over time. Finally, *doxa* refers to those foundational cultural beliefs that often go unquestioned within the habitus, resulting in the emergence of habitus-specific forms of 'common-sense'.

Referring back to the practices of thermal comfort discussed in Section 2.1 it is arguable, as Jacobsen and Hansen (2019) do, that the 'configuring' of thermal comfort preference can also

be understood as 'internalised in embodied disposition' (10). Thus, thermal comfort can be seen as a thermal habitus. Furthermore, the biological effects of this habitus on individuals can also be considered within the concept of habitus. To do so is to think of the thermal habitus as a biohabitus (Warin et al, 2016)[8]. This concept is one that draws on both Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* and Deleuze's notion of the *fold* to emphasise the body as 'an "embedded body", that is, a body that is heavily impregnated by its own past *and by the social and material environment within which it dwells*" (ibid.: 67, emphasis added). Thus, for medical anthropologists, habitus as biohabitus presents one means to think through the health effects of social and material environments.

Although the concept of habitus has been criticised (see Crossley, 2001, and Wacquant, 2014, for detail about these criticisms and responses to them), such criticisms, bar one, are not the focus of this thesis. What *is* of concern for this thesis is how critics of habitus point to a lack of specificity about how a habitus can change over time, as well as how it arises in the first instance. Seeking to address this, Crossley (1995) suggests the need to develop a 'carnal sociology'. This approach is 'concerned with what the body does', stressing and examining 'the necessarily embodied bases of the praxical-symbolic constituents of the social formation' (43). In doing so, carnal approaches seek to demonstrate how societal understandings, such as those held within a habitus, are 'constituted through the work of the body' (Crossley, 1995: 43). This carnal perspective has been developed through studies of boxing (Wacquant, 2006), rowing (de Rond et al, 2019), yoga (di Placido, 2018), fitness classes (Crossley, 2004), and martial arts such as capoeira, kathak, and pencak silat (Downey et al, 2014). Recently, developing Crossley's carnal approach, Wacquant (2014) has sought to depict habitus itself as a tool for investigation. He describes this approach as a means to dig into how social conduct develops in contexts such as those of apprenticeship. In doing so, he sketches out how carnal approaches develop the habitus concept.

First, Wacquant recognises that the habitus is layered. Thus, each individual has a primary habitus acquired through one's family, a secondary habitus acquired through 'pedagogical labour' in institutions such as schools, and a subsequent series of habitus layers that one acquires as one spends time in different fields. In the context of this thesis, such layering is important as this position implies that the effects of one (or more) layers of habitus as biohabitus can be countered by the effects of one or more other layers. Thus, developing a cold-water swimming habitus is assumed here to counter the effects of the biohabitus of thermal comfort. Second, Wacquant recognises habitus as consisting of ways of perceiving the world (the mastery of a classificatory system and its 'distinctive semantic tapestry' (8)), the gaining of an embodied ability to act in the

[8] Warin et al (2016) use this term to discuss how the effects of a habitus can be transmitted across generations as a result of epigenetics.

correct manner in the habitus (including the acquiring of specific embodied skills required for that correct manner), and an exertion of both time and effort in the development of these skills, through acquiring a taste for the social 'game'. Third, recognising that:

'social agents are motile, sensuous, and suffering creatures of flesh, blood, nerves and sinews doomed to death, who know it and make their world through and with their enskilled and exposed "mindful bodies" (Scheper-Hughes and Lock, 1987)' (10)

Wacquant proposes a form of research 'from the body' that sees humans as actively and continually involved in the social organisation and construction of their worlds.

Though Wacquant's repositioning of habitus has been criticised for its lack of attention to the sociability of the embodied actor (Crossley, 2014), its lack of examination of similarities and differences within a field as according to the effect of the habitus layers of individuals interacting with each other (Paradis, 2014) and its lack of attention to 'biological, neurological or cognitive processes'[9] (Downey, 2014: 115), this thesis seeks to draw on this carnal anthropology. In doing so, it seeks to pay close attention to the role of bodily ways of being in relation to the life of the club and pay heed to these criticisms.

2.2.2. Enskilment

The second approach to considered in this thesis is that of enskilment. Rooted in the phenomenological approaches of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and also influenced by Marcel Mauss (1973 [1935]), anthropological interest in enskilment emerged out of an interest in the embodied process of the practice itself. To this extent, enskilment can be seen as enquiring into how one *gains* a 'feel for the game'. Enskilment can be understood as a rejection of normative (Palsson, 1994) and cognitive (Ingold, 2001) approaches to learning. Rather than think in terms of stocks of knowledge that individuals transmit between one another through theoretical or analytical understanding, enskilment, first, seeks to draw attention to how individuals learn through embodied practice. From this perspective, an individual becomes adept in a culture not when they know the rules and regulations of that culture, but only upon reaching 'the point where he or she

[9] Drawing on his own research, Downey notes there to be changes in visual perception (Downey, 2007), one's sense of equilibrium (see Lende and Downey, 2012), and a consideration of the head as a limb (Downey, 2008), through the act of capoeira.

is able to dispense with [those rules and regulations]' (Ingold, 1993: 462). Enskilment, further, is understood to allow for creativity in the process of learning how to do a practice. Enskilment sees the learning of a practice as guided rediscovery (Ingold, 2001: 141). It is in the process of this rediscovery that the play of reinvention, and thus change, can occur. Third, by positioning enskilment as embodied, enskilment pushes back against a mind/body dichotomy. Thus, thinking with enskilment allows for the thinking about individuals in their social and ecological context, as well as the 'purpose, agency and dialogue' (Palsson, 1994: 904) that individuals can enact. This move to consider the learning process of a practice as key to the development of culture can be seen as a response to Crick's (1982) call for anthropologists to detail the processes involved in the 'creation of knowledge, of thought, and consciousness' (291), emphasising the importance of 'knowing how' as well as 'knowing that' (Ryle, 1949).

James Gibson's (1979) concept of the 'education of attention' is critical to enskilment. This concept has been defined as 'a relational and contextual process that shapes specific skills of perception, relation and cognition, which are in turn instrumental to justify and reproduce specific contexts of action' (Grasseni, 2007: 206). In other words, it involves the attuning of one's means of perception so as to enable particular actions (Ingold, 2001: 142). The skilled practitioner thus only emerges through this education of attention. As a result, the skilled practitioner grows to understand how their embodied interactions with their environment, and in particular how these embodied interactions incorporate their environment, allow for the solving of problems and the performance of specific activities in that environment. Recognising Downey's (2007) insistence that anthropologists must consider the biological changes that a body undergoes as it becomes skilled, this thesis attends to a practice (cold exposure at an outdoor swimming club) because of its biological affect, as discussed in Section 2.1.

Following the vein of enskilment, anthropologists have focused on a variety of practices, such as Icelandic commercial fishing (Palsson, 1994), taxidermy (Patchett, 2016), kayaking (Walls, 2012), bus driving (Stasik, 2017), and masonry (Marchand, 2008). In recent years, however, there have been calls for two advances to the concept of enskilment: a call to explore sensory enskilment, and a call to consider the sociality of enskilment. The first of these is explored in Chapter 5, the second in Chapter 6. The vast majority of these studies have, however, tended to focus on apprenticeships. This is perhaps because, in Ingold's (2001) formulation of enskilment:

'The novice watches, feels, or listens to the movements of the expert, and seeks through repeated trials to bring his own bodily movements into line with those of his attention so as to achieve the kind of rhythmic adjustment of perception and action that lies at the heart of fluent performance' (141).

While doing so allows for an acute understanding of how an individual learns a craft or particular bodily comportments, with particular attention focused on particular aspects of the body-material relationship that the expert points to, it fails to consider community situations of learning. This is perhaps surprising, as much enskilment literature also touches on the communities of practice concept. In particular, the notion of 'situated learning' (Lave and Wenger, 1991) is drawn on. This notion highlights how an individual learns by means of physical proximity to an activity. However, as I seek to make clear in the following section and in Chapter 6, there is much more to the concept of communities of practice than situated learning. Furthermore, turning to this concept can allow for investigations into settings of practice beyond those of the master-apprentice relationship.

2.2.3. Communities of Practice

The third approach to learning used in this thesis is communities of practice. The understanding presented here draws on Etienne Wenger's (1998) *Communities of Practice*, as it is to his work, and his collaborations with Jean Lave (e.g. Lave and Wenger, 1991) that anthropological studies of enskilment refer. For Wenger, the concept of the community of practice is premised upon four assumptions: humans are social beings; knowledge is a matter of competence; knowing is a matter of active engagement with the world; and, learning produces meaning in the world. The community of practice thus is a means by which people live meaningfully, and, in doing so produce satisfying identities for themselves *together with other people*. To understand the full breadth of the concept, five key areas must be noted. The understanding of these areas presented here must be thought of as an introduction to be expanded upon as the communities of practice concept is deployed in Chapter 6.

First, communities of practice cohere through *mutual engagement, joint enterprise*, and *shared repertoire*. These factors refer to how all members affect each other through their engagement and inclusion in what matters (no matter how large or small that engagement), how relations of mutual accountability are formed through practice, and ways of doing things that are part of the practice, respectively. Second, communities of practice continue to exist through the dual operation of *participation* (embracing the community of practice in a way that shapes both our experience of the practice, and the community in which we participate) and *reification* (both the process and product by which marks on the world, such as photographs and practices, are made meaningful in the context of the community of practice). Third, being part of a community of practice, and learning

within it, involves the creation of identity, through the formation of meaning. Fourth, communities of practice are not necessarily harmonious and collaborative. Indeed, politics and disagreement are key parts of participation. Five, though the discussion of communities of practice so far has concerned participation, non-participation is equally part of the community of practice. Thus, though the boundaries of a community of practice can sometimes be geographical, more often the boundary of the community of practice is one of competence. This competence is therefore not only that of the practice itself, but also of the practices one takes up through embracing the community of practice. These ideas are taken further in Chapter 6.

3. Place, People and Methods

3.1. Place

The club studied in this thesis is located in Hyde Park, London. Though evidence points to its existence as a bathing club since 1846, its origins as a swimming club are from 1864. This year marks the official beginning of the club. In its early years, club members would change under an elm tree, leaving their clothes on a nearby bench. The club itself still resides at the same site as it did then, though the elm tree has since been removed. The purpose of the club was 'for … promoting the art of swimming by practice and mutual assistance amongst its members, by competition for prizes, and rewarding any meritorious act in the saving of life from drowning' (Titmuss, 1964: 13).

The club operates from 05:00 to 09:30 every day of the year, operating even through the Blitz[10]. Within these hours there are rhythms of the club. On Mondays through to Fridays, members come in a routinised manner. On Tuesdays and Fridays, a group of 10-15 of the 'younger' members (aged 23-40 years) will arrive around 6.50am, run around the lake, do core exercises such as sit-ups, planks, and mountain climbers, and then swim in the lake. Set up in the late 2000s by a member of the club, the intention of this group of individuals is to exercise socially twice a week and be finished in time for work meetings. Saturdays are a day that some members would regard as *the* day of the club due to races that mostly start at 08:00. Saturday racing offered me observations not possible on other days, as will be examined in further detail in Chapter 4. Sundays, however, are slower, with most swimmers tending not to arrive until 9am. Though the club is not permitted to swim in the lake after 9.30am, members continue to hang around afterwards in or by the Club Changing Room or in the nearby lido café, even for another hour and a half on some occasions.

The club is subject to the rules of the park, as well as its own rules. As shown in Figure 4.3, these club rules entail proper diving form, conditions for swimming, what is and is not allowed in certain areas of the club facilities, and privacy, particularly around the races that take place throughout the year. These rules are further examined in both Chapter 4 and Chapter 6.

To officially join the club, and thereby get on the list of members, one must pay £20 to the club through PayPal. This grants swimming rights within club hours up until December 31st of the year in which payment was made, unless payment was made within the last week of the year,

[10] In light of the coronavirus pandemic, the club closed from 24th March 2020 to 18th May 2020.

in which case an extension until the end of the coming year is permitted. Individuals are also allowed a guest swim, granting swimming rights for one morning and allowing for an individual to get a taste for the club.

I first visited the site in May 2019 to be introduced to the club by my supervisor, a known swimmer at the club. On that first visit to the club, I was struck by the conviviality of members amongst themselves and their willingness to speak with me. Reflecting on that introduction through my supervisor, I understand that the research could have been more difficult to initiate without it. Introductions to the club through a current swimmer, and a willingness to swim, lend one to be more readily welcomed into the club. Without this introduction, it is likely that it would have taken longer to identify who the key members of the club are and the significance of particular days of the week.

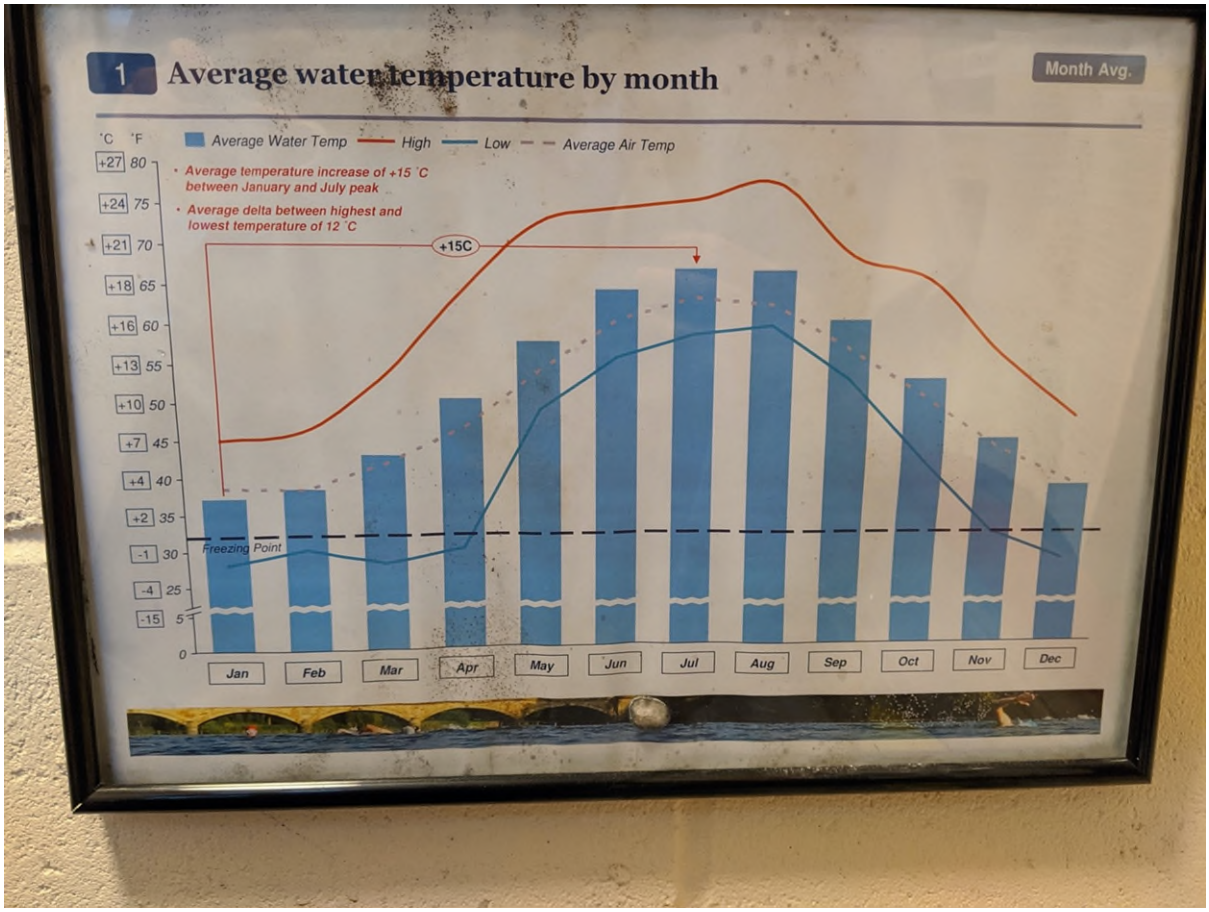


Figure 3.1: Monthly average water and air temperatures for the lake.

3.2. People

The community of the swimming club is perceived by its members as markedly middle-class and middle-aged, with slightly more men than women. However, the list of members for the 2019 Christmas Day race indicates that more women than men (49 to 47) qualified for this race. Part of this sense of there being more men than women could be due to the club historically being men only, with women only allowed to join the club as associate members in 1973, only allowed to race in 1985, and with the unisex changing that is characteristic of the club only emerging in 1995.

When I spoke with members about why they joined, multiple reasons were given. For some, they joined to train for triathlons and long-distance swims. For others, some had previous outdoor swimming experience and sought to continue to swim in London. Some had been unaware of the club for years of being resident in London, prior to joining. A smaller number were brought along by friends, family, or coaches, with an even smaller number joining for reasons of mental health, a commonly promoted reason for doing cold water swimming in popular literature (e.g. Day, 2019). Regardless of their reasons for joining, I gradually found that members were unified in their reasons for staying: a community unlike any other they had found in London. It is this community that is focused on in this thesis.

Although, as of October 31st, 2019, the club officially had 1900 members, these members do not participate in the club equally. Of these 1900 members, it is only some 200-300 members that will participate in the day in, day out workings of the club throughout the year. This is the community that this thesis refers to as the core club – later, in Chapter 6, the club-as-community-of-practice. This community not only swims through the winter, but 'keeps the lights on' in the club, allowing for the rest of the official membership to come and go as they please, dipping in and out of the atmosphere of the club and using the water as they wish. I was informed by the core members that these other members consist of day visitors, early morning swimmers, and people training in wetsuits for long-distances swims and triathlons, using the lake as a means to get used to swimming in a wetsuit. These individuals are referred to by the core members, in a somewhat derogatory but light-hearted manner, as 'wetsuiters'. I quickly became aware that the result of the presence of the core members is that there is the way of doing things that the core membership does, and the way of doing things that all other members do. This is examined in Chapter 4 and Chapter 6. This was made evident to me in the early stages of the research in how

non-core members would be scrutinised by members as to whether they had paid their membership fee, whereas this question was rarely asked of core members, regardless of whether they had in fact paid or not.

Not all members that swam in winter swam all-year-round. David, a man in his mid-twenties who, no matter the season would regularly turn up in little more than shorts, a bobble hat, a long-sleeved shirt, and occasionally a jumper, was one such individual. Coming by in mid-August to check in with the club, though not to swim, he said that he wouldn't start until September at the earliest. It wasn't cold enough before then. Similarly, there are the likes of Claire and Jane. Both of these women stopped swimming when the water dropped below 10-12 degrees Celsius. They reasoned that they were both keen runners and did not want to put on weight. I later found gaining weight to be an unexpected outcome of cold-water immersion. I go further into why members were drawn to the club, even if they did not swim during winter, in Chapter 6.

3.3. Methods

Three factors made this site suitable for this research. First, due to the age of the club, as well as its size, my thoughts coming into the research were that there must be something that allowed it to continue to function as it did that other clubs could learn from. That I found a core community that was integral to the running of the club was both a boon and a complexifying factor for the research, as will be discussed in Chapter 6. Furthermore, the club hires no lifeguards, and yet has never registered a death from swimming among its members. This is in contrast to other outdoor swimming clubs, with lifeguards, that have recorded deaths. Second, the members of the club all spoke the same language as I did. Though for some of them, this was a second, or even third, language, their capabilities in the English language allayed any fears of participants not understanding questions or of there being non-English subgroups in the club that I would not have access to in some way. Nonetheless, I recognise that this multilingual aspect of the club could allow for conversations to take place between members that allowed for conversations that might be more suited to a language (French, Spanish, Italian, and occasionally German) other than English. Although this multilingual aspect of the club added depth to the club's sociality, the core experience of core members' everyday life at the club was similar for all core members. Third, unlike other swimming clubs, the club has no facilities for warming up other than a water tank filled with near-boiling water that can be used to make tea or coffee or pour a mug of hot water. This forces its members to find their own means of warming up, as well as putting the focus of

the swimming through winter on cold water immersion, rather than alternating cold dips with exposure to a sauna, as in Nordic countries. I detail these means of warming up in Chapter 5.

In line with the methods used by other 'carnal anthropology' or enskilment approaches, I used a combination of semi-structured interviews and observant participation over a 6-month period. My focus was on speaking primarily with only those members that swam year-round. Most importantly, in speaking with people and putting myself through the process of cold-water immersion over the course of the winter, I sought to gain an understanding of the different understandings of both cold-water immersion and the club itself that different individuals gain. As Downey et al (2014) note, commitment to learning can help facilitate gaining access to the community of practice one seeks to understand.

The semi-structured interview method allowed for different lines of interest to be pursued, rather than ignored in favour of a more structured, but potentially less relevant as the research went on and the field site opened up, set of questions. In particular, this allowed for the focus of this thesis to develop with the research process. Initially, the semi-structured interviews focused on three themes: the sociality of the club, the folk understandings present in the club concerning the physiological and psychological effects of cold exposure, and people's relationship to comfort and their own bodies. Over the course of the research, these questions developed. Though the first theme remained, the second and third themes I discuss in this thesis changed. A large part of the reason for this change is that, as I began to speak with people at the club and take part in and observe the practices of members within the community, I ran into the issue that people at the club hadn't radically changed their ideas of comfort. Normative approaches to comfort as a concept remained. Though some interviewees had changed how they lived at home, an equivalent number had not. Even for those that had changed how they lived at home; it was more of a turning down the thermostat a couple of degrees rather than a wilful embracing of the cold. Furthermore, the discussions I had hoped people would have in relation to the physiology and psychology of cold-water swimming were, though evident, not as pronounced as I had hoped given the way in which these elements are presented in media-based discussions of this practice. My naïve hope of shattering the notion of comfort by swimming through a single winter had itself been shattered. With a research period of six months, I continued to return to the research site, curious about how facilitation was enabled if not through communicated folk understandings of the physiological and psychological effects of cold-water immersion or through a radical alteration of one's understanding of comfort.

The second research theme that I discuss in this thesis began to emerge after a month of doing research. As the club approached the winter season, a subtle shift in the physical set-up of

the club happened that, the more I reflected on it, grew in interest. In early September, the warden's table disappeared. When I asked members about this shift, the explanation I was given for this was that there was no need for wardens as "the only people daft enough to swim are club members". This not only indicated to me that there was some social core of the club, it also indicated that the health and safety side of the warden's function wasn't deemed necessary, despite the potentially deadly dangers of cold exposure and the inability to see the swimming area from the club changing room. How did members know when to get out? What stopped members from going too far? Thinking in this way turned my attention to the question of how one engages with cold water immersion in a way that allows one to conceive of swimming in 5-degree Celsius water for distances up to a mile as possible.

Following this, the third research theme discussed in this thesis emerged gradually over the course of the research. This theme concerns the matter of who and what belongs to the club. As I discuss in Chapter 6, core members would mention off-hand comments to me concerning deceased members, the correct way of being a swimmer at the club, and the interactions between the parks and the club. This indicated to me that the social core of the club was not passive to its constitution and its context, but actively participated in both of these. Hence, I sought to investigate understandings of belonging in the context of the club, as I understood that this could affect facilitation.

The choice of observant participation as a methodology, rather than participant observation, follows on from the work of Downey (e.g. 2008), Wacquant (e.g. 2005, 2006), and Marchand (2010), and links to the 'participant experience' work of Potter (2008), and Hsu (1999). Both participant experience and observant participation methods put the emphasis on the participation side of the study, leading to them being suitable methods for studying environments in which one learns how to do a practice. Crucially, this methodology is not auto-ethnography. Though the anthropologist is an ethnographic tool, she is not the object of research (Downey et al, 2014). While the anthropologist seeks to understand the community's practice, her focus is on the community in relation to its practice rather than solely her own experience of the practice. Indeed, her analyses of the community are 'shaped in collaboration with informants in the field by discussing situations and events while observing these informants and speaking with them about the observations.' (Fibiger, 2010: 30).

I aimed to visit the club at least three times a week during the research period, with exceptions made for illness or other family reasons. Though the observant participation side of the research was limited, as I only once was I able to visit the research site prior to 7.30am due to financial limitations and the limits of transport to and from the club, the 38 semi-structured

interviews conducted allowed insight to be gained into those who attends the club between 05:00 and 07:30. Interviews lasted between 40 and 125 minutes, and were arranged either in person or over email, following on from introductions by other members to potential new people for interview. Such was the extent of these introductions that at times I found it difficult to keep up with the number of introductions made. Visits to the club lasted just shy of two hours. Within this time, I would walk by the Lido area to observe who was in the water, enter the changing room to change, go for a swim, return to the changing room to change and warm up, speak with people either there or in the nearby lido café, and then leave to write up notes. I limited the length of time I spent in the water to 25 minutes. This was done so that I was immersed for long enough to go through the multiple phases of cold-water immersion and be seen by other members of the club to be taking it seriously, but not for so long that I was jeopardising my ability to either participate in the post-swim environment of the changing room or to write up notes. This latter concern was particularly true in winter, during which I found that spending too long in the water (15 minutes at 5 degrees Celsius) would later put at risk my ability to remember the events of that day's visit. The physiological effect of the water on me in winter (discussed in Section 5.1) was not something I had prepared for prior to experiencing it. However, I do not think this limitation I put on my swim affected my understanding of the process of the swim in relation to others at the club. The majority of those I spoke with were swimming prior to going to work and were aware that swimming for too long could 'ruin a day' due to the resultant fatigue, and so also limited their swims. Having 'overcooked' a few swims in early November, finding myself exhausted in the mid-afternoon, I understand such learning to be intimately part of the observant participation approach, allowing for mistakes to be made and learned from in the research process. Furthermore, I attended club events beyond the site, as I understood participating in these as integral to participating in the life of the club. These events included the club Christmas Party and a carol night at a members' house.

A notable example such a mistake from the research process for this thesis is in the need for, and the subsequent replacement of, earplugs. An ear infection in early October gave me reason to begin to wear earplugs, as this kept me from participating in races for two weeks at a time when I was beginning to be known in the club. However, I quickly found that the downside of the particular type of earplug I had chosen was that that they both hindered my ability to hear what was being said around me, and, once the water dropped below 10 degrees Celsius, they started to lose their ability to keep out water. Speaking with other members helped me find a solution to these issues. They recommended a particular type of earplug that did not distort with the cold and, although it had a hole for hearing, was able to keep water out. This use, and subsequent

replacement, of earplugs thus preventing future ear infections without disrupting my ability to hear what was going on around me.

Data recording was done using a digital tape recorder for interviews, with observant participation notes written up as soon as possible after each visit. Though notes would have ideally been written during each visit, the intimacy of the cramped changing room meant that the act of writing down notes for a lengthy period of time drew attention to the research. I found this attention prevented the occurrence of those conversations I was interested in hearing. Thus, I chose to abandon writing up notes in situ within the first month of the research. This also follows the approach taken by Downey et al (2014), who see that 'what is learnt by participating [is] more important and elusive than anything that [can] be recorded passively' (190). Interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically along the emerging themes of sociality, what one learns at the club, and belonging. Notes were recorded in a handwritten notebook, with analysis of these notes also using the same themes as the interview analysis.

Before moving into the empirical chapters of this thesis, two points should be acknowledged. First, a notable lacuna left out of this account of the club is in relation to the multi-species aspects of the lake. Although members regularly spoke about the dogs that were brought to the club, the various birds that they swam alongside in the water, and the parasitic mites that bit swimmers and stopped some from entering the water in early summer, such data is better left to a multi-species ethnography approach (see Kirksey and Helmreich, 2010). Such an approach is not the focus of this thesis. Second, an unknown with this research was to what extent it was discussed by members of the club. Given the space of the club, the intimacy of the core members, and my conducting interviews in the café where other members also sat and talked over a coffee or breakfast, members would often ask how the research was going and mention that they had spoken to others about the research. When this happened, I would aim to clarify the purpose of the research in broad terms. On the occasions when my supervisor visited the club, he gave a sense to me that members regarded the research I was doing as of interest and valuable in the context of the club, with the potential to contribute towards members' understanding of the club.

4. Sociality

In this chapter I aim to respond to the question 'How does the club encourage a sociality that facilitates cold-water immersion?'. In doing so, this chapter seeks to discuss the social life of the club through the lens of habitus, breaking this social life down into three sections. First, this chapter turns to the space-time of the club, introducing parts of the club that will be important for the later chapters focusing on enskilment and communities of practice. Second, this chapter turns to the practices of the club, demonstrating how a club habitus is maintained through these practices. By club habitus, I refer to those valued practices and ways of being, undertaken by core members of the club, that lend the club its distinctive character. Furthermore, this section seeks to draw attention to how members can elevate their position in the club through gaining particular forms of capital in the field of the club. Finally, this chapter turns to the particular sociality generated through winter swimming as an embodied act. Drawing on both Nettleton's (2013) concept of *existential capital* and Shilling and Mellor's (2011) concept of *embodied intoxication*, this section argues that immersion in cold water generates a particular embodied experience that allows for swimmers to share a form of existential understanding that only they, as swimmers, know. This chapter seeks to argue that the effect of this embodied intoxication, related to the generation of existential capital, is amplified within the space of the club itself.

4.1. The Space-Time of the Club

In this section, I first discuss the layout of the area used by club (shown in Figure 4.1). In doing so, I draw attention to how particular sites are used at the club. I then move to focus on one site in particular: the changing room. This site is of significance for the club given its role as not only a changing space, but also a social hub. Here, I seek to capture the experience of being part of this space, as well as the character of the space. At this point, I shift to discuss how the experience of being part of this space differs with time. Thus, I draw on the work of Casey (1996) and Pink (2015) to consider the space as *lived*.

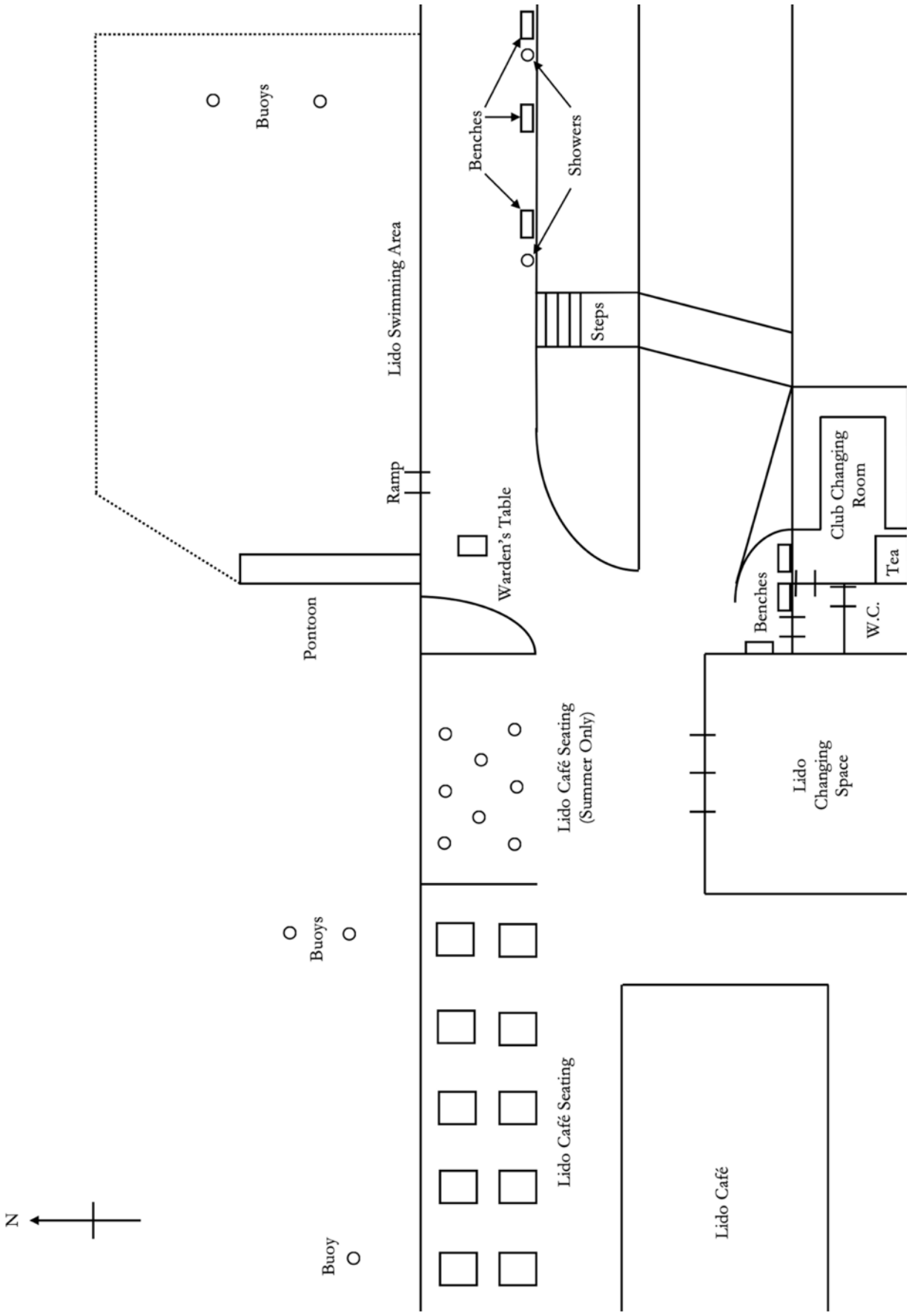


Figure 4.1: Layout of the area used by the club (not to scale)

The layout of the area used by the club is illustrated in Figure 4.1, with Figure 4.2 showing the lido swimming area and the path next to it. The lido swimming area is just over 100m in length, with 100m between each set of buoys. This gives a total swimming length of 300m. However, the Western 100m stretch is only used between spring and autumn. Members enter the water by diving from the pontoon, going down a set of steps at the end of the pontoon, or walking down the ramp. During the week, the steps and the ramp are most frequently used, with diving largely saved for the Saturday races. The warden's table is a seasonal fixture, present only in the summer months. After a swim, members may take a shower using the western-most shower, and, having changed, will often frequent the benches outside of the changing room, with member's dogs usually tied to the legs of these benches by their leashes. Additionally, some members will visit the Lido café for breakfast with other members.

To change, some members used the steps, with a smaller number using the benches next to the Lido Swimming Area. The use of the steps, in spite of the changing room, was due to the recent increase in membership resulting in crowding in the changing room. Furthermore, I was told by Adam that there even existed a 'step culture', with regular members using particular steps and even leaving things for each other on each other's' steps. Nonetheless, the space most commonly used for changing was the Club Changing Room, to which I now turn.

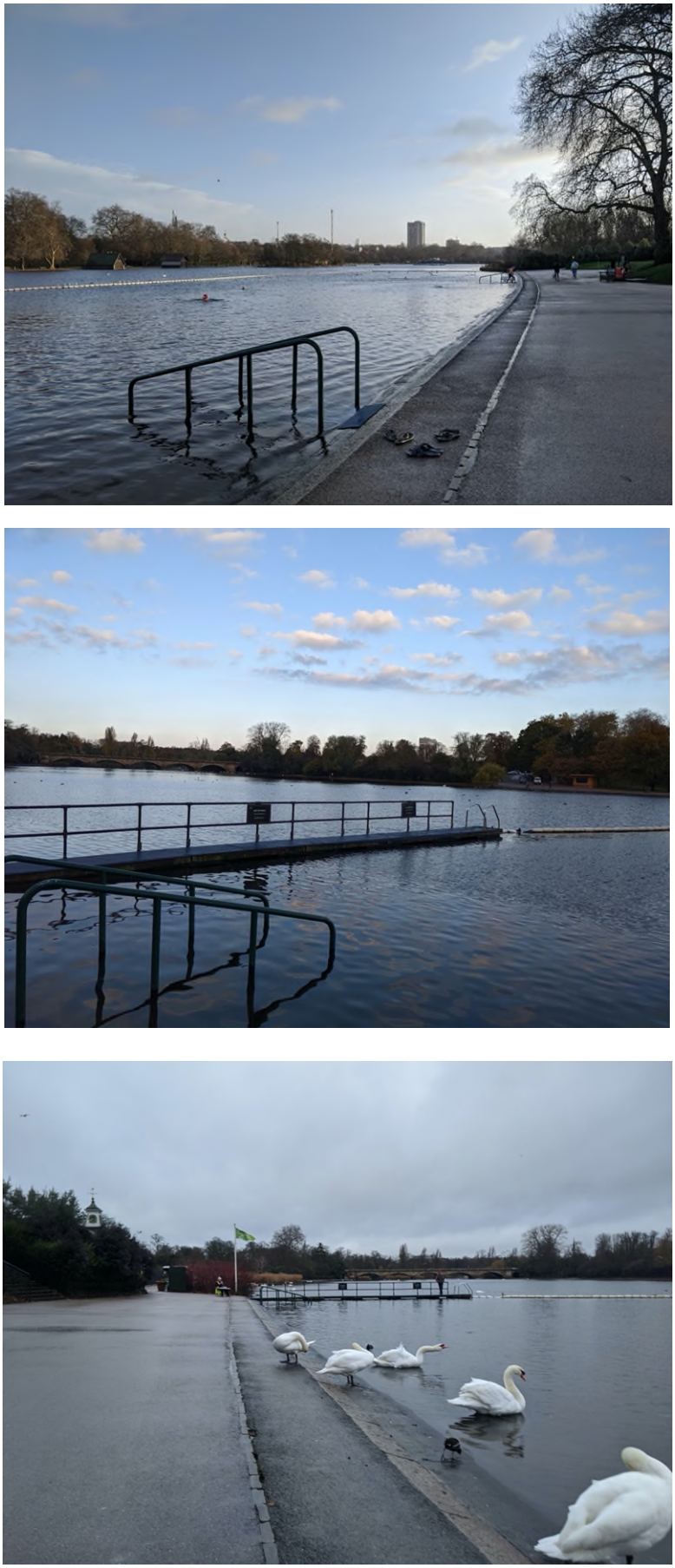


Figure 4.2: (top) the swimming area, facing west; (middle) the swimming area, facing east; (bottom) the swimming area, showing the lido path.

Figure 4.3: (top) the changing room; (middle) the table, kitchen area, and lost property in the changing room; (bottom) the changing room in use

Frequented by a majority of members, the Club Changing Room was more than a changing space: it also provided a space for social interaction, tea-making, gifting cake or other sweet foodstuffs to the club, and the posting of club notices. These practices are discussed in Section 4.2. On entering the changing room, club information is visible on a noticeboard to the right, a washroom fitted with a toilet and club equipment inside it lies ahead, and the changing room itself sits to the left. As shown in Figure 4.2 the changing room is a rectangular space, lit by three fluorescent lights. The middle light shines more brightly than the others as it is missing the covering that dissipates light across the changing room. On the far side of the changing room, the ceiling is a foot lower, closing the space available below for changing to little more than six feet. Bordering the North, South, and Eastern walls of this changing room are slatted wooden benches with a shoe rack beneath the benches, the painted iron legs of which are rotting, flecks of painted rust falling to the floor on occasion. Above the benches are 46 pegs for clothing, with a further slatted wooden rack for bags and other items above these pegs. To the right, immediately on entering the changing room, is a metal sink with one cold tap on its far-right corner. Above this sink is a metallic hot water point, below are two bins, one for general waste and the other for recycling. To the left of the sink is a metal work surface with a cooling rack on its far side, used to help dry the multitude of mugs used by the club members. Above this work surface miscellaneous mugs of multiple shapes, sizes, and colours hang on S-shaped hooks. Some of these mugs are ones made by the sister-in-law of the former president of the club. These particular mugs are awarded to attendees of a yearly club swim in the River Nene, their surfaces depicting individual members of the club. These mugs will be considered in more detail in Chapter 6. On the shelf above these mugs sits a pot of Yorkshire teabags, a pot of instant coffee, a pot of crystallised squeezable honey, and a Tupperware pot of damp granulated white sugar. Below the worksurface are three drawers, whose contents are about as eclectic as the membership itself.

To the left of the work surface, and in front of the western end of the southern benches is a wooden table marked with the initials of the club. This table has been part of the club for a significant period of time, with evidence of its use stretching back to the 1930s. Underneath the table is an air conditioner, consistently unplugged. Behind the table (collected in a wire shopping basket on the bench), in various bags hanging on the pegs above the bench, and on the shelf above the pegs are various pieces of lost property and spare kit. This kit and lost property are regularly dived into by members in search of an otherwise forgotten towel, cap, gloves, boots, flip flops, or even costumes. On the shelf in the South-East corner of the changing room sit two pool buoys, a soft, thin plastic mat no more than one by two feet, and a pair of neon pink crocs belonging to the ex-president but used by other members on occasion. Decorating the walls of the club are

various photos of current and former members held dear to current members both for the images they depict (for example, a member cycling across the lake when it was frozen) and the members featured (such as those now deceased or those who have committed significant time or effort into the club). These photos will be considered further in Chapter 6.

To the immediate left of the changing room entrance is a board of club information in relation to proper club etiquette, swimming regulations, and hypothermia awareness, referred to by members as 'the etiquette board'. To the right of this, just before the row of u-shape of benches, shoe racks, pegs, and shelves start, is a second noticeboard giving information on the Christmas day race, Celsius to Fahrenheit temperature conversion, club regulations and what each temperature feels like according to a 'true' swimmer. Finally, the floor of the space is covered in a red slatted plastic mat, whose keep member's feet elevated above the wet tiles below; a saving grace in a space that otherwise lacks drainage.

All of this description, however, fails to depict the sensory experience of being part of this changing space. The space, as a result of its lack of ventilation and the steady comings and goings of swimmers bringing in water from the lake each morning after a swim, is thick with the smell of the lake. The smell – rich with ammonia – is distinctively that of the accumulated excrement of water birds. It is similar to that one can taste if one is unfortunate enough to take in water near the ramp of the Lido area. Similarly, a pure description of the physical features of the changing room fails to do justice to the crowding that takes place around the time of the races on Saturday mornings and later in the morning on weekdays when multiple members attempt to change. Despite the size of the changing room, some 30 people can be squeezed inside of it, each one busy changing, making tea, chatting, eating a sweet foodstuff, or simply warming up. Though some members disliked this crowding, as it can leave one unable to change until sufficient space emerges, others, such as Sandra, 'love the crush'. Bodies unintentionally rub against bodies, cold brushes warm, armpits go over heads and bottoms can appear mere inches from one's face as one is getting changed. Partial nudity, as this implies, is not uncommon in the changing room. Indeed, to accept its presence is arguably part of the club habitus. Despite this – and the glimpses of breast, testicle, bottom, or penis that one may catch sight of – the space is non-sexualised[11]. As Chris noted:

I think there's something really liberating because you get beyond that staring and worrying about it. There's something really natural about it. It's not a sexual, in your face. There's something really natural and wonderful about it. Now it comes second nature, I don't really think about it. And you're next to somebody that may be quite beautiful, male or female, and it's just not an issue.

[11] Scott (2010), studying the sexual dynamics of indoor pools, also notes swimming pools as desexualised spaces.

Comments of the sexualised kind are greeted with swift disapproval, and, although glimpses of one's naked body are seen as what one buys into in the club, ogling is sternly opposed, and club members rebuke the idea of other members ogling. However, this does not stop some people, particularly younger, female members that are new to the club, choosing to change in the club toilet. Nor does this desexualisation eliminate the possibility of awkward encounters. As Michael expressed to me, he remembers being stuck between two female members of the club, both in a state of undress, and therefore unable to do anything but look ahead, much to the amusement of another man in the changing room who had caught sight of the whole incident.

This incident, and the reaction of amusement, typifies the character of the space. It is one of close interaction and light-heartedness. This close interaction is forced in part because of the nature of the space. Though only a unisex space since the decision of one woman in 1995 to change with the men as opposed to the women in a disabled persons' toilet set aside for them, the unisex nature of the changing room was seen as a key part of the club for the members. To participate in this space was to be part of the club. Similarly, the space could quickly turn acrimonious if arguments began to emerge. To this extent, the flow of conversation, where upon comments by one person could be picked up by another in the room and so intimate conversations could turn into whole changing room conversations, allowed for the atmosphere to remain buoyed. This flow of conversation that the changing room facilitated was referred to by Grace as a 'random conversation generator machine'.

However, the importance of time on the character of the collective space of the club must also be considered. As Chris noted to me:

Each time, I think, has its own mini culture and its own group of friends. There's an early morning one, self-righteous people that get up really early (laughs), swim in the dark. And I've done that a few times. They're a bit more reserved, and that's probably why they come early. A few more introverts at that particular time. Because they don't want to see the others, and this is a good time to come: they don't have to interact if necessary. Later on in the day, as you know, as the time goes on, the louder it becomes and the more potty it is. So, there's a definite time to come if you don't want to interact with a great deal of people. So, I'd imagine from 6 until 7.30 that's the time and the people that come along at that time are more reserved. And there's a younger group. A group of people that go running. They're the adrenaline junkies. They're there from 7.30-8, professional young people needing to get to the office. And there's the others that are retired and are a bit more flexible with their time. And then there's the others, the eccentrics, those that push the boundaries. There's an eccentric, weird group that come at twenty past nine.

Thus, this is a space that waxes and wanes. It is a space whose character echoes both Casey's understanding that '*lived bodies belong to places* and help to constitute them' (Casey, 1996: 24, original italics) and Sarah Pink's recognition that places are not static but 'an "event" that is in process, constantly changing and subject to redefinition' (Pink, 2015: 34; see also Ingold, 2008: 1808). As much as the club consists of specific spaces that club members use, such spaces only thrive during specific time periods such as the races and late on weekday mornings. This was made clear to me by Richard:

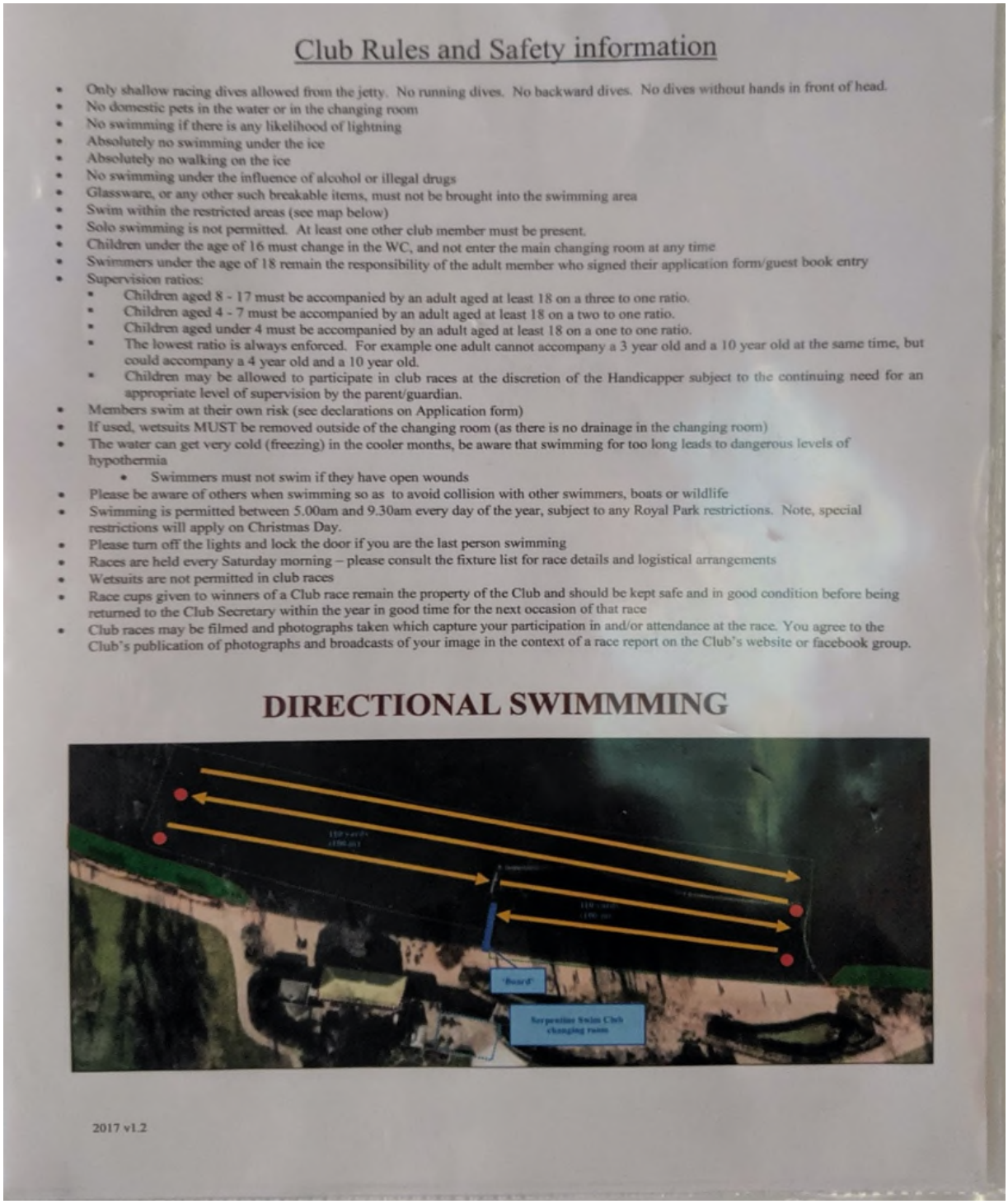
It's a funny space. But it's also very comforting. Occasionally I used to use it to pump up a bike tire or go to the loo. It's a very useful spot. And then if you go in there at an odd time of the day, it feels odd, it feels weird, I think. Because you'll go in and it's the middle of the day and you think 'it stinks in here'. Or you notice things and you think 'that's odd'. Like you'll look at the scratty tea towel on the side or the flies on the wall or the rotting ceiling. Whereas when you're in there in your swimming headspace you're talking to people, and you're kind of distracted. Maybe it's a bit like becoming accustomed to your own filth. I'd imagine that the average member of the public would go in there and think 'what is this, are we still in England?'. But you get used to it.

Thus, the space of the club is much more than its layout. Indeed, the dwelt character of the club emerges out of the interactions of members both with each other, and with the space itself that funnels certain interactions over others. Furthermore, that interactions occur within specific time frames is arguably critical to the character of the club, with members reflecting that the core club really comes out between 07.30-09.30. It is within these times that the practices of the club are most important to club, and where the club habitus becomes most apparent.

4.2. Practices of the Club

In this section I draw attention both to how members engage in everyday negotiations of the rules of the club (see Figure 4.3), and to those practices that define members as engaged in the club habitus, despite not being hard rules per se. However, because the rules were not strictly imposed (they were rather loosely adhered to), I refer to the totality of these behaviours as practices, rather than splitting them into rules and practices. In doing so, I attempt to show how a willingness to accept the club habitus grants one recognition as a member of the core of the club. In addition, I note how frustrations with those that did not take up the club habitus emerged. Further, I seek to demonstrate through field analysis how the performance of different practices within the club

lends individuals forms of capital that serve to demonstrate that one is a core member of the club. Analysing the different behaviours of members in turn, I divide the behaviours into *In Water*, *Changing*, and *Club*.



Club Rules and Safety information

- Only shallow racing dives allowed from the jetty. No running dives. No backward dives. No dives without hands in front of head.
- No domestic pets in the water or in the changing room
- No swimming if there is any likelihood of lightning
- Absolutely no swimming under the ice
- Absolutely no walking on the ice
- No swimming under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Glassware, or any other such breakable items, must not be brought into the swimming area
- Swim within the restricted areas (see map below)
- Solo swimming is not permitted. At least one other club member must be present.
- Children under the age of 16 must change in the WC, and not enter the main changing room at any time
- Swimmers under the age of 18 remain the responsibility of the adult member who signed their application form/guest book entry
- Supervision ratios:
  - Children aged 8 - 17 must be accompanied by an adult aged at least 18 on a three to one ratio.
  - Children aged 4 - 7 must be accompanied by an adult aged at least 18 on a two to one ratio.
  - Children aged under 4 must be accompanied by an adult aged at least 18 on a one to one ratio.
  - The lowest ratio is always enforced. For example one adult cannot accompany a 3 year old and a 10 year old at the same time, but could accompany a 4 year old and a 10 year old.
  - Children may be allowed to participate in club races at the discretion of the Handicapper subject to the continuing need for an appropriate level of supervision by the parent/guardian.
- Members swim at their own risk (see declarations on Application form)
- If used, wetsuits MUST be removed outside of the changing room (as there is no drainage in the changing room)
- The water can get very cold (freezing) in the cooler months, be aware that swimming for too long leads to dangerous levels of hypothermia
  - Swimmers must not swim if they have open wounds
- Please be aware of others when swimming so as to avoid collision with other swimmers, boats or wildlife
- Swimming is permitted between 5.00am and 9.30am every day of the year, subject to any Royal Park restrictions. Note, special restrictions will apply on Christmas Day.
- Please turn off the lights and lock the door if you are the last person swimming
- Races are held every Saturday morning – please consult the fixture list for race details and logistical arrangements
- Wetsuits are not permitted in club races
- Race cups given to winners of a Club race remain the property of the Club and should be kept safe and in good condition before being returned to the Club Secretary within the year in good time for the next occasion of that race
- Club races may be filmed and photographs taken which capture your participation in and/or attendance at the race. You agree to the Club's publication of photographs and broadcasts of your image in the context of a race report on the Club's website or facebook group.

DIRECTIONAL SWIMMMING

2017 v1.2

Figure 4.4: The rules of the club

4.2.1. In Water

Although behaviours in the water itself were to some degree dictated by the rules (Figure 4.3), these rules were not necessarily adhered to. For example, dogs were known to jump in the water and follow their owners into the changing room. Similarly, people were known to both swim on their own and briefly stay in past 9.30am, particularly when the Lido Café's clock stopped.

Just as important as these rules were the practices of looking out for other swimmers. This is clear in this comment from Christine:

There's also the unspoken rule that if you are swimming in this direction then the people swimming in that direction have to watch out for you. Because of the sun. Also, I follow it, but I don't think everyone does, where you go in a loop. So, you go to the left going that way and then the left, so you should be doing a circuit. And that's particularly for the season when these wetsuiters start.

Swimming to the east, it was common for the sunrise to make it difficult to see swimmers coming to the west. Though sticking with the directionality of the water allowed for swimmers not to bump into each other, looking out for other swimmers is arguably more important than the direction one swims in, particularly as some swimmers could move in diagonals, crossing the paths of other swimmers. Thus, sighting (in the context of this club, the practice of looking out for other members in the water whilst you yourself are also swimming) when one is swimming is part of the club habitus. Indeed, it was the lack of sighting by non-regular members, particularly those wearing wetsuits, that led to members particularly complaining about these people.

In addition to members looking to see other members, equally important was the practice of letting yourself be seen. As Chloe mentioned:

People hate you if you wear a hat that's not bright. I actually got hailed. I had a neoprene hat that was black, and I got shouted at from the side. Again, safety. From the side of the bench by a guy that was out of the water. He goes 'I don't approve, we don't approve, we don't approve! Turn it around!'. So, I took off my neoprene hat and I put the inside on the outside and he was happy. He actually yelled. There's a huge emphasis on the fact that we're looking out for each other and safety. My safety was much more important than him offending me.

Thus, wearing a bright hat is to show that one is part of the habitus specific to the club. This proposition is further supported, first, by how, after a race in mid-November, the prizes given to

the top five finishers for that race were brightly coloured hats. Second, it is also supported by how members would further be frustrated by people who swam in wetsuits that chose to wear black hats. It is thus not only that these individuals don't look out for other members, but also that members cannot see them, that adds to club members becoming frustrated with them.

Where one swims in the water is also part of the club habitus. In winter, it was rare for members to leave the lido area. Those that did were those swimmers that were recognised as highly accustomed to swimming even in sub-5-degrees Celsius water. For all swimmers in winter, however, they would re-join the lido area for the final portion of their swim. This behaviour, I was told was explained by one thing: safety. As will become evident in later chapters in this thesis, the safety aspect emphasised within the club habitus referred not only to the safety of members, but also to the safety of the club. In this instance, members staying in the lido area in winter keeps members close to the exit in case they were to get into trouble. A further example of this was in how members would be called back to the swimming area if they strayed too far into the lake. Though some members thought this didn't matter so much because of being nearer the other side of the lake, where they could pull themselves out, others complained that these individuals were breaking the rules of the club and putting its future in jeopardy. Thus, part of the club habitus was to behave in such a way that did not put the club in jeopardy. This will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

4.2.2. Changing

Practices specific to the club habitus could also be found in relation to the process of changing. Unisex changing, as pointed to in the previous section of this chapter, was a core part of this habitus. So was only using one (or, at a push, two) pegs for one's clothes, with bags and other items going on the racks above the changing benches. With space at a premium in the changing room, this behaviour was core to the club habitus. Other practices were also present. For example, having changed, one doesn't hang around: one changes and then heads out. The longer one spends in swimming kit without going out, unless it is a race day, the more likely it is that one will be nudged towards going for a swim through comments by other members. Similarly, one doesn't hang around after a swim. Members of the club would head into the changing room straight after exiting, with changing and warming up a priority. For example, members ushered a man standing near the pontoon into the changing room shortly after he exited the water. Although he sought to watch the race that was about to take place, members were aware that, as will be

discussed in Chapter 5, he was at a critical point in his process of re-warming, and needed to get to the changing room as quickly as possible to avoid the adverse consequences of the cold.

Finally, starting in early September, the door to the changing room is closed so as to keep the heat in. When it is opened, cold air blows inside the changing room and one or more members, after becoming aware of this cold air, will usually shout 'close the door!' to all of those present in the hope that the person nearest to the door will close it. To purposefully leave the door open is not seen as proper behaviour in the club. As Ben, a man in his early 30s, noted while speaking to his partner about the club, 'if you don't do it, you're seen as a bastard'. Thus, taking responsibility for maintaining the communal warmth of the changing room can also be seen as part of the club habitus.

4.2.3. Club

Core to the club habitus was the taking on of roles by members of the club. Some of these roles were official club positions, such as those of the president, the secretary, or the handicapper. Others were unofficial, everyday actions that people took upon themselves. These actions included cleaning the pontoon of bird excrement or the metal sink of tea dregs, taking out the recycling, fetching milk from the café, tweeting from the club twitter, or holding the shower for another member, among other things. These practices themselves are not part of the club habitus. They can be considered as habits. However, the community maintenance that lies behind these actions is arguably part of the club habitus. In this section, I focus on three practices that are integral to the club habitus in how they are readily taken up by core members: tea making, bringing cake, and the races. I argue through field analysis that taking up these practices enables one to be seen as a core member. I follow this up by highlighting how symbolic capital can, to some extent, circumvent one's need to fully take up the club habitus to become a core member.

First, tea making was regularly referenced by members as central to the sociality of the club. What was critical here was the act of looking out for someone recently out of the water, offering them a cup of tea, and then giving the tea to them. The folk physiological reasons as to why this was seen as important in the club are discussed in Section 5.1. What is relevant here is that the act of offering someone tea and making it for them is something that lends itself to gaining social capital in the club. For a swimmer just out of the water, the prospect of freshly brewed tea is welcome. This was indicated by how swimmers would express thanks to whoever made their cup of tea. Furthermore, those with tea would sometimes note to others who made their tea.

Members might also shout to those making tea to ask for a cup for another member. The more one engages with the act of making tea for others, the more one gains social capital, critical to becoming a core member of the club.

Second, among the membership, people were encouraged to bring cake[12]. However, some days people would bring other forms of sweet things. Digestive biscuits were a common replacement. Furthermore, members used the club as a refuge for sweets leftover from Halloween and Christmas. Other sweet things, such as the apple jam that was brought in early November, were greeted with indifference. The 'proper' sweet thing to bring was therefore something grabbable that didn't require manipulation. When such a thing was brought to the club, it was common for members to not only share in it, but also seek to know who brought it (particularly if it was a homemade sweet thing), so that they could pay compliments to that person. Indeed, such was the quality of the cake that certain members brought that when, towards the end of the research period, one such member, Shania, was leaving the club to move to the USA, members of the club rallied around to present her with gifts explicitly thanking her for the cakes she brought to the club. Thus, I suggest the bringing of sweet things allows one to gain social capital in the context of the club. However, it should be noted that what was valued by club members was not the quality of the sweet thing (except that it had to be edible), but the act of bringing it. Thus, the habitus of the club is not something that is passively taken up by members, but something that members who have that habitus actively encourage through their continual praise of the practice.

Finally, there are the races. Initially, I did not intend on racing with the club. However, during the first month I spent at the club I was repeatedly told of how important the races are to gain an understanding of the club. This should be mentioned with a caveat. Not all members who were part of the core club turned up on Saturdays, and not all of those who turned up on Saturdays raced. Nonetheless, the vast majority of those that did turn up on Saturdays to race were also those for whom the club meant a great deal and would turn up to club meetings. As such, I consider races a practice that individuals are encouraged, either implicitly or explicitly, to participate in. Because of the great number of members that one is exposed to during a race morning, I consider participation in the races as a means of being seen and therefore gaining cultural capital within the field of the club that improves one's standing. Particular to the majority of the races is that they are handicapped so that all participants finish together. In my first experience of racing, I was assisted by Erica to get a handicap from the handicapper, Mark. He sized me up, asked how fast I swam 100m (I replied that I didn't know how fast I could swim that, so I guessed a couple of minutes), and gave me a handicap of 15 minutes for an 800m race. My going up to him to ask for

[12] Throsby (2016) also notes the pairing of cold-water swimming and cake.

a handicap continued until he both recognised who I was, and I had competed for three consecutive races in a row. Fulfilling these requirements gives one a place on the handicap list. Both of these requirements drew frustration from some members of the club. The former was joked about at the Christmas Party. A sketch acted out by Erica, Elise, and Vivian joked that if Mark didn't know who you were, you wouldn't get a time, regardless of how many times you had raced. The latter drew particular frustration from Philippa, a junior doctor, who was unable to get a set handicap due to her work-shifts preventing her from racing each fortnight. Nonetheless, regulation of the handicaps is both honoured by the members (demonstrated by how begrudgingly accepted handicap regulations) and encourages participation. Further, the type of participation it enables (allowing all members to have a chance at winning a race through hindering the role of physical ability in the result of the races – resulting in Jack referring to the club as 'the world's worst competitive swimming club') is arguably critical to the maintenance of the club habitus. As Adam mentioned to me:

It's poor form to win a race in your first year. You're sort of handicapped out of it. Which obviously makes things harder for you to accidentally win. But if you do accidentally win it's sort of poor form. Worst case scenario was Christmas Day, 2008. A guy won that was quite a new member – the handicapper was dying, so he wasn't on the ball with the handicaps. So, someone got a handicap they shouldn't have got and he was very new and no-one really knew him and there was a lot of animosity that he had won the blue ribbon race which is sort of reserved for those that have done their time.

Indeed, it's not unusual for members to be part of the club for years before winning a race. Jim, a member for four years, only won his first cup in mid-December 2019. Bella, also a member for four years, only won her first cup in mid-January 2020. Furthermore, with reference to the non-handicapped races, Sarah noted that:

Sarah: If every race was unhandicapped it would be so boring. It would be a core three/four people that would win it. I think we'd lose people racing.

Me: So, do you think the character of the club would move so that Saturdays wouldn't be such a key day?

Sarah: If it wasn't handicapped, yeah. Nobody would swim. It's utterly pointless. Because when people see scratch races they think 'urgh, it's a scratch race'. I don't swim scratch races anymore. I hate them.

Thus, I suggest that the 'level playing field' of the club, an essential part of its habitus that allows any member of any age or background to speak with a member of another age or background, is in part driven by this handicapping system. Such is the strength of this habitus that, although there are regular members that do particular jobs (such as Mark doing the handicapping), members can fill in for each other. This was evident on the morning of the first race after Christmas, when Tim filled in for Mitch, the member who would usually sign people up for races. Thus, the habitus present here is not a matter of following what other people do. Rather, it involves developing an understanding of what each job entails. This allows for the club to continue to function as it does, and thus facilitate its sociality, regardless of which core members are present.

Furthermore, after the races, unless it was a series race[13], there are presentations. These presentations involve not only the presentation of a cup to the winner and prizes to runners-up (the number of runners-up depends solely on how many people the sponsor of the race has bought prizes for[14]), but also an introduction to the sponsor of the race, and background to the history of the cup itself. Following the presentation, those at the presentation give three cheers to the club. What is important to this process in the context of the club habitus is not so much the awarding of the prize itself (although this confirms to individuals the club as a level playing field). Rather, it is the gaining of cultural capital by the sponsor through their investment in economic capital. I address the importance of the names on the cups and the related speeches in Chapter 6.

Thus, in taking up the club habitus, one is able to refine one's position within the field through acts to gain capital relevant to the field. The effect of this is that, as one gains such capital, one gradually moves from belonging to the membership *en masse* to belonging to the core 200-300 individuals mentioned in Section 3.2. These core members are recognisable by the nods and hellos that a significant number of other members greet them with, as I too came to be greeted over my time at the club. Furthermore, it is this shifting to the core club that maintains membership numbers and thus keeps the lights on in the club. However, there is a caveat here. Because of the nature of some of the individuals in the club, it became clear to me that symbolic capital gained outside of the club allowed certain individuals to be welcomed into the core club much more readily than those without this symbolic capital. For example, Robert, an Olympic gold-medallist, was warmly welcomed into the club despite not competing in races, taking up jobs for the club, or attending general meetings. Similarly, Grace, a film producer, said to me that:

[13] A series race is one that is part of a collection of consecutive weekly races. The winner of the series is the member that has accumulated the largest number of points from the races.
[14] This can range from prizes for only the top three swimmers to more prizes than there are participants.

Grace: Also, I come with a certain status anyway because I'm a film producer and some people have heard of me, or they've heard of who I work with. So, you're coming into a place, and, you know, but you bring a certain status with you that reflects on the club as it were, which gives the club a little boost in themselves. You can see that the club was thrilled to have Duncan come and be part of it. Certainly, when I was a kid, he was probably the most famous swimmer I'd ever heard of. Because he'd won his gold medal decades ago. He was really well known and that boosts the status of the club because they've got Olympic swimmers coming in – channel swimmers coming in. There's an eliteness that comes with it. You've got MPs or you've got writers. You know, people that come with a certain status which automatically buoys the status of the club.

Me: And by the club here you're meaning the club within the club?

Grace: Yeah. Because there definitely is a club within the club. And I see myself as being on the cusp of being in the club within the club, but I don't see myself as a full member of the club within the club. But because I also come with a status, it's been easier for me to gain that access, I think. (pauses) And because I don't race I won't be fully in the… you know.

Thus, even though this symbolic capital *does* allow for individuals to gain readier access to the core club, it is not sufficient on its own. To continue to elevate one's status in the club one must continue to demonstrate one's willingness to take up the club habitus and gain social and cultural forms of capital relevant to the club. Regarding facilitation, the club habitus, and its associated forms of capital, mean two things. First, the practices that are part of the habitus arguably encourage participation. Second, that participation in these practices enables one to improve one's position in the club, and that this is encouraged by aspects such as the races, provides a means for the community to be maintained through its members. However, a further aspect of the club must be considered regarding its sociality: the cold water of the lake.

Figure 4.5: (top) Swimmers preparing for a race; (bottom) swimmers mid-race

Figure 4.6: (top) spectators watching the race; (bottom) a post-race presentation

4.3. Existential Capital and Embodied Intoxication

In this section, I seek to consider the effect of immersion in cold water on the sociality of the club. Drawing attention to the addictive quality of winter swimming, I note how members engaged with lay understandings of endorphins to explain this addiction. Thinking with the concepts of embodied intoxication and existential capital, I aim to describe how the engagement of swimmers with the cold generated a shared understanding and characteristic of winter swimming that, in turn, would bind the core club together. I argue that this quality, together with the club habitus and its space-time, are critical to the encouragement of the club's sociality and thus the facilitation of cold-water immersion as a metabolic health intervention in the Anthropocene.

In winter, the sociality of the club is characterised by a buzz. This buzz is felt and seen through the energy of conversations in the changing room space, occupying space in the changing room shivering, chatting, holding cups of tea, water or coffee, and in various states of dress. The following ethnographic field note characterises one particular moment of the buzz that I experienced.

My body shaking, I fumble with my hands to try and pull my shoes and socks on, brushing off the dry leaf matter and grime that have accumulated on the soles of my feet. As I continue my struggle, I hear Bella's voice next to me ask 'Are you ok, dear?'. I turn to tell her I am fine, but a bit confused by the use of dear. She responded that she was in fact talking to her dog, who is also shivering just inside the door to the changing room. At this realisation, both of us burst out laughing, and Ann puts her hand on my shoulder and jokingly repeats her original question. I find myself giddy, laughter emanating from deep within me, a far cry from the tired state in which I arrived at the club that morning.

This feeling of giddiness is one that other members commented on as well. As Rachel noted to me:

I think the winter swimming - on the days where I do come down, that is a better day than I day where I don't swim in the morning, without a shadow of a doubt. It just – it's an endorphin boost. There is a – there is a buzz. It's the equivalent of taking drugs for me. I've never taken any kind of recreational drugs, so I don't actually know what that experience is like, but I feel like cold water swimming or winter swimming, going for a dip in the morning, it creates that kind of euphoric experience. And that's definitely addictive. Well for me it is. It's why I come back regularly.

This trope of 'addiction' was something that was commented on by other swimmers. Regular swimmers described themselves as going through moments of low mood when they spent time away from the water. As such, they found themselves returning if not every day, then at least once a week. Furthermore, some swimmers described themselves as tied to the club to such an extent that it was something that kept them in London. I discuss this further in Chapter 6. Rachel's comments were echoed by Brendan:

In the height of summer, although I can stay in longer, I don't enjoy it as much. It becomes almost like pool swimming. Unless I'm swimming in a lake or a river where there's a changing environment and trees and something to look at, it becomes almost like pool swimming. It becomes almost sticky. Whereas when the temperature starts to drop, I think it becomes slightly more invigorating – you get a bit of a buzz out of it. In fact, sometimes when I dive into cold water it's almost like I'm giggly – I'm giggly internally with the pleasure of I suppose endorphins or whatever in my system, which I don't get when it gets warmer. So, I do think I get a chemical buzz from the temperature dropping.

Later in the interview, Brendan noted that:

When people talk about the social interaction in the club, I think what they're talking about is almost like the post-swim endorphin rush that's still there. I think people are much more chatty, much more sociable than they would be three or four hours before the swim or three or four hours after the swim. Some people say it lasts all day. But people here are really quite hyper a lot of the time post-swim, quite like I am here. I think that's the result of that endorphin and that feeling of wellbeing going through them.

As these excerpts from both interviews and field notes recognise, the embodied interaction with the water not only elevates the mood of the swimmers, it also engenders social interaction between swimmers. Members noted that conversation flowed more easily post-swim, with the regular improvement of mood leading to the trope that 'you never regret a swim'. As the interview excerpts show, the club reasoning for this lay in a folk understanding of endorphins. The folk understanding of endorphins in the club was that they were understood to give the 'chemical buzz' of the swim: a legal high that is accessible only in winter. As was clear through the debates I overheard as to when this high started to happen, there is not a universal temperature at which this starts for all swimmers. The experience of this boost is much more individual. For some it was only present below 5 degrees Celsius. For others, sub-10 degrees Celsius was sufficient. This

boost was one that would engender the particular grin of the post-swim swimmer, with people reporting the 'endorphin boost' of 'happy hormones' as raising their mood throughout the rest of the post-swim day. Chris noted this particular grin – the 'glint in the eye' – as that which allows one to recognise another cold-water swimmer. This recognition is one that he noted as going beyond the club, allowing one to acknowledge another who swims outside and providing a channel for conversation. This channel was described by Bradley, referencing a recent swim he had in Scotland:

There's more of a common bond in the winter and you'll find that wherever you go. I was up in Scotland over Christmas and I was on a small island and I've never seen anyone swim summer or winter actually and then I went to one beach and went for a little swim at the cottage where I was staying and there was another guy just about getting in. I think he was Greek with a Scottish girlfriend and he was just going for a swim as well. And it's great. So, we both went for a swim together and had a chat and you've got an instant bond with, you know, a winter swimmer that you won't get anywhere else, you know with a summer swimmer for instance. So yeah, I think it's particularly here because there's a lot of you. But anywhere, you know you go if you find just one person in another place and you've got that instant kind of bond and understanding.

I seek to argue here that the post-swim rush that engenders this sociality, and the understanding within the club of the link between the rush and immersion in the water can be thought of as both 'existential capital' (Nettleton, 2013, 2015) and 'embodied intoxication' (Shilling and Mellor, 2011). This is not to refute members' suggestion that endorphins are responsible for the post-swim high. Rather, it is to present an anthropological, rather than a physiological, understanding of this sociality.

For Nettleton (2015), studying fell running in the Lake District, the concept of existential capital 'seeks to mesh embodiment and sociality and implies that carnal practices generate resources that cement social relations' (128). These resources are understood as 'a unique phenomenological profit which… establishes solidarity with others who share their passions' (ibid.). This is a phenomenologically rooted concept that draws on Leder's (1990) understanding of a body open to the world. Leder recognises three modalities that contribute to this openness to the world. First, this openness involves *compassion*: the sharing of an existential experience with others, generating a communal, empathetic identification rooted in this existential experience. Second, there is *absorption*: the understanding of porosity both between bodies and between bodies and environments. Third, there is *communion*: the recognition that these 'existential gains' (Nettleton, 2015) are both collective and individual. Below, I relate these modalities to the club.

For Shilling and Mellor (2011), the concept of embodied intoxication draws on Durkheim's (1995) theory of effervescence (see Parkin, 2007 for further anthropological uses of this concept)[15]. Examining religious collectivities, Durkheim suggests that such collectivities emerge through two factors. First, the bodies of members are marked (through practices, clothing, bodily marks, and/or means ways of interacting) in ways that facilitate recognition of and interaction between members. Second, individual members of these collectivities must be excited or intoxicated to such an extent that they are able to engage with their embodied self as a religious (or social) being (Shilling and Mellor, 2011). In the context of the club, such markings are clear in how participants of the club would wear kit marked with the club insignia, stitch club badges to other items of clothing and personal accessories, such as bags. Further, such intoxication can be seen in the club by the giddiness that members feel both in the water, and out of it having swum. For Durkheim, this 'collective intoxication' (1995: 233-4) encourages people to 'instinctively' take up the practices of the collectivity. As Shilling and Mellor (2011) note, this intoxication allows for the transcendence of one's egoistic self, and that 'individuals become attached or cathected to the collective dimensions of their bodies, and motivated to pursue impersonal ends and collective "rules of conduct"' (22). Thus, the embodied intoxication engendered through cold water immersion can be seen as a key means for how individuals can begin to embrace the club habitus.

Following Nettleton's (2015) deployment of these concepts in relation to fell running, these concepts are also of use when trying to understand how the embodied experience of the cold, and its giddy aftereffects, relates to the sociality of cold-water swimming. Those in the club habitus develop existential capital through the embodied act of cold-water immersion and, in doing so, generate camaraderie (alternatively, *compassion*) with those around them doing a similar activity. The embodied intoxication that occurs through immersion in cold water and the *absorption* of the swimming environment 'affirms the intensity and meaningfulness of the action' (ibid.: 134). Furthermore, this embodied intoxication is both visible in other members and experiential, engendering a sociality that can be recognised through a shared understanding between swimmers, a *communion*, visible as the glint in another swimmer's eye. This is something that persists even amongst those that are unable to swim due to life events. Contrary to what I had assumed prior to starting the research, those swimming regularly in winter did not do so for reasons of the health

[15] Shilling and Mellor (2011) note that another means of considering collective intoxication is through Deleuze and Guattari's (1972) concept of the 'body without organs'. An anthropological example of such use of this concept is in Einat Bar-On Cohen's (2009) study of the Kibadachi exercise performed in karate. However, for Shilling and Mellor, Durkheim's approach is preferred to that of Deleuze and Guattari as it allows for the consideration of a collectively marked body.

benefits of cold-water immersion. They do it because, barring major life events, they can't give it up.

This perspective on cold-water immersion provides another angle on behaviours within the club towards those that trained for triathlons and open-water swimming events in wetsuits in summer. Though part of the reason why these individuals were not considered as 'true' swimmers may be explained through their lack of interaction with the core club members, in part enforced by their requirement of not changing in the changing room, another explanation lies in club questions around how the wetsuit changes the experience of the water. In interviewing members of the club, it was expressed to me that by swimming in a wetsuit, one does not get the same buzz achieved by those swimmers that swam without a wetsuit. This was particularly expressed by Chris:

I think at first there was the – I suppose the initial thing was the embarrassment of – I suppose there was the macho thing really, if I'm being really honest. 'Crikey, these people doing this without the wetsuit. Surely I should.'. I think there's the euphoric thing. There's definitely something chemical that changes that you don't get with the wetsuit. That euphoric feel – feeling really good and warm for the rest of the day.

To this extent, those wearing wetsuits could be seen as missing out on the feeling of a 'true' swim. Thus, the joking with those in wetsuits about them going in without the wetsuit, and encouragement to swim without the wetsuit, can be thought of as club members being aware of the gains to be made in existential capital and wanting to share the embodied intoxication of the swim.

Thus, regarding the facilitation of cold-water immersion as a metabolic health intervention in the context of the Anthropocene, the encouragement of the club's particular sociality is not only due to the space-time of the club and its practice, it is also due to the effects of the water itself. It is this effect, and the eagerness of those who share it, that arguably led to multiple occurrences where core club members encouraged others to go without wetsuits. Given that wetsuits can hinder one's ability to acclimatise to the cold (Lee et al, 2017), such a sociality arguably encourages that particular kind of cold-water immersion necessary for it to be a metabolic health intervention.

5. Thermal Enskilment

In this chapter, I respond to the question 'What does one learn in the process of becoming a cold-water swimmer at the club?'. In doing so, I address a sub-section of the anthropological area of enskilment: sensory enskilment. I address this through engaging with Cristina Grasseni's (2007) work on 'enskilled sense'. Here, I hope to demonstrate how enskilment in cold-water immersion involves learning an embodied sense of the effects of the cold on oneself, and thus what one needs to do to warm up. Pointing out a lacuna in Grasseni and Geiser's (2019) advancement of enskilment theory, regarding the body itself as a mediator, I turn instead to Merleau-Ponty's Ontology of the Flesh. I seek to show how doing so allows for a consideration of how the body acquires new capacities without a formal apprenticeship, with learning instead occurring in a tacit manner through reflections on the bodies and practices of others and one's own experience. It is this collective learning of the process of the swim and its associated practices that I argue gives insight into how spaces of cold-water immersion could be designed, including the acceptance of discomfort. Throughout this chapter, I put enskilment in conversation with habitus where appropriate. Furthermore, it is implicitly recognised throughout this chapter that becoming skilled in cold water immersion is critical to enabling continual exposure to the cold, and thus the hopeful consequent effect of changes to metabolic health through the production of brown fat.

5.1. The Process of the Swim

I seek to argue here that the process of the swim extends beyond the limits of the water itself. Enskilled in this understanding, members are able to craft their swims in relation to the water. This craft involves a developed sense of the effects of the water on one's own body both during and after the swims, and an understanding of what is required to warm up. I discuss this in relation to anthropological work on the notion of an enskilled sense and recent contributions to this work on the idea of skilled mediations. Questioning this work for its focus on mediating objects, ignoring the body itself as both that which is focused and that which mediates, I expand on this argument through a discussion of the various facets of enskilment that take place through the club.

Though, as was discussed in Section 2.2.2, much anthropological work on enskilment has focused on the crafting of objects and bodily skills, a recent strand of enskilment has turned to the

enskilment of the senses. The work of Cristina Grasseni (e.g. 2004, 2010) on 'skilled vision', has arguably been critical to this development. For her, skilled vision refers to the 'capacities and capabilities that only some people own… to highlight the fact that we all use our eyes skilfully, i.e. in an educated way' (2007: 215). Developing this concept in relation to communities of Alpine Brown Cow breeders in Italy, Grasseni demonstrates how this 'attunement of the senses' develops through one's engagement in the community of breeders (in the form of acknowledgement of 'good looking' animals at fairs). Furthermore, toys, trophies, commodities, and freebies designed to model the 'ideal' form of a cow are also integral to this attunement. Thus, she concludes that vision, within the community of Alpine Brown Cow breeders, can be understood as an 'enskilled sense' (2007: 217), developed through a specific social context and specific processes within that context (see Grasseni, 2009, for further examples of skilled vision). Recently, Grasseni and Geiser (2019) have built on this work to consider how such toys, trophies, commodities and freebies act as 'focusing media' that enables the social learning of a particular way of sensing. Thus, they argue that focusing media are integral to enskilment.

While such an approach may work well when considering the senses required to 'know' Alpine Brown Cows (Grasseni, 2007), chainsaws (Geiser, 2019), or Hunnic practices (Dreschke, 2019), what happens when the body is both the medium one has to listen to and respond with? Here, I turn to Merleau-Ponty's Ontology of the Flesh. For Merleau-Ponty (1968, 2003), this ontology is a way of thinking about the body 'as a site of reciprocity and mutual responsiveness where perceivers and environments shape and co-constitute each other' (Hoel and Carusi, 2017: 50). What is important in this co-constitution of perceiver and environment is that its effect is not only that the perceiving body is shaped by, and shapes, the world, but also that the body is a 'measurement of the world… a standard of things' (Merleau-Ponty, 2003: 217). In other words, the perception done by a body is unique to that body, processually emerging through the intra-active entanglements of body and environment (see Barad, 2007). In the context of this co-constitution of the body and its environment, Merleau-Ponty recognises that actions within this environment are pre-reflexively 'planned' through a 'system of references': the body schema. However, because of the co-constitution, this body schema is not just of the body, it links to symbolism as well as to expression (Hoel and Carusi, 2017) in the sensible world, resulting in the environment being understood in a certain way as according to that symbolism and expression. In other words, the body schema is not acultural, but is actively influenced by the culture in which it emerges. Furthermore, and important for this section, not only can this body schema be modified through enskilment, it is also connected to others. Through this carnal connection, 'there is an identification and co-perception between body schemas; living beings live the behaviours offered

by others as their own; *they perceive other living beings as perceiving the same sensibilities that they could themselves perceive* ([Merleau-Ponty,] 2003: 225)' (Hoel and Carusi, 2017: 56, emphasis added). Thus, and crucial for understanding how one begins to develop the enskilled sense of thermoception that will be discussed in this section, critical for knowing how far one can go, being witness to the potentialities of another's body opens up oneself to the possibility of accessing similar potentialities. However, the potentialities of one body will never be the same as those of another body, as the co-constitution of perceiver and environment is unique to that body. In doing so, one ends up opening oneself up to new ways of measuring the world. In the following discussion of learning the process of the swim at the club, I seek to demonstrate how the club encourages such potentialities to be developed in relation to cold water swimming. Thus, I discuss how these developed potentialities are critical to cold-water immersion as a metabolic health intervention.

Upon entering the water, pain floods one's fingers and toes, one's body tightens up, and one's breath is temporarily taken from oneself. The pain sensation was described to me by multiple members of the club as 'biting'. In October and November, I would often feel a ripping sensation tear across my chest during the first 100m of the swim, also noted by other members. However, this feeling subsided as I swam into winter and acclimated to the cold. Following the biting sensation, the pain subsided, replaced by a feeling of inner warmth as blood rushes to the core. At this point, I found that my body would begin to relax into the water and, though some could dive in and set straight off, I found it was only having reached this point that I could begin to swim with a free-flowing front crawl stroke. Having acclimatised to the cold, I found this point would often come shortly after 100m. Once swimming, however, one begins to look out for one's own signs of when to get out. As Throsby (2013) notes in her reflections on marathon swimming, knowing when to get out is a puzzling thing initially, as the sensation is unfamiliar.

As such, in both interviews and through informal discussions, I would ask people 'how do you know when to get out?'. The responses given were mixed. For some, there would be a signal given by some part of their body: aching testicles, light-headedness, the inability to touch one's little finger and thumb, pain in the part of one's hand between the thumb and the index finger, painfully cold feet and hands, a hurting face, the jaw going slack and letting in water, an overall sense of slowing down, a cold small of the back, an inability to keep a straight line, shivering in the water, sore hip flexors, or a change in stroke rate. For others, the signal would be more mental: an inability to do mental arithmetic, dizziness, a sense of things going black, or a feeling of either being too uncomfortable or getting comfortable to a level of euphoria. These signs were often determined by the individual, as the signs were understood to be specific to each person's body. The exception here were those signs of shivering in the water and getting comfortable to the level

of euphoria. Both of these sensations were understood as a hypothermia risk sign, rather than as a sign of to get out before that risk level would begin.

For other members, the question of how one knows when to get out was more a matter of calculation than waiting for an embodied sign. The baseline calculation used by members was 100 meters per degree Celsius. For some, particularly those that would keep a record of their swim distances and relevant temperatures, they understood that they were able to push to do more than the baseline calculation would suggest. For others, it would be less. What is important to understand here is that the relationship of calculation and sign is not one of opposition, but of duality. Though members might go out expecting to be able to 400 meters in 4 degrees Celsius, they would equally be attentive to their bodies, potentially getting out before or staying in slightly longer than the calculation would suggest.

As Nigel suggested to me, swimmers 'adjust as they go', using their bodies as a guide for when to get out. To this extent, one's sense of when to get out is the achievement of a learned understanding of one's body in relation to the water, taking into account the conditions of both the local environment and one's body on the day of the swim, a historical understanding of oneself in relation to the temperature of the water, and also the weather conditions of that day. It is the development of this learned understanding that is critical for cold-water immersion as a metabolic health intervention. The 'craft' of knowing when to get out is something that can also change, as one's signs can change both with temperature and in relation to changes to oneself. Such changes to oneself include pushing past previous signs of when to get out, such that one is forced to become aware of new embodied signs of when to get out. Richard, a man in his late 20s, confirmed this sense of craft to me when discussing the advice that he gave to a new member of the club a few years previously. He advised this new member to take increase his distance gradually, and to recognise that upping the distance as the temperature is dropping is itself a new learning experience. Further, he alerted this new member to pay attention to his body, letting him know that, each new embodied sign offers the chance to see whether it's a 'time to get out' sign, or one to ignore, bearing in mind that these signs might change swim to swim. Finishing this anecdote, Richard noted that:

It's like spinning clay on a wheel. You're moulding yourself to the environment which is around you and which is so totally unnatural.

Thus, it is not sufficient to be told what to do, nor is it sufficient to read about cold-water immersion from the boards in the changing room. One must engage with it. Furthermore, it is

possible to see how this is a form of enskilment in terms of the Ontology of the Flesh. Through immersion, one becomes enskilled in how one's unique body responds to the water at various temperatures, developing an understanding of what triggers one's sense of when to get out and how far one can go. Unlike master-apprentice forms of enskilment, there is no sense of what the correct way is of doing this sensing. It is up to the individual to recognise how their body measures the world, and then assign meaning to such measurement in conversation with other members. Thus, the system of references referred to by Merleau-Ponty could, in the context of the club, be said to be conversations about the temperature before the swim, conversations about responses to the cold, one's bodily response to the swim over the course of one's time in the water, and one's previous experiences of swims in that temperature. As discussed in Chapter 4, the sociality of the club is critical in enabling such conversations to take place.

However, this presents a simplistic picture of members' reasons to get out. Indeed, each day some swimmers would comment that they had 'cut a swim short'. I understand this cutting a swim short to be due to three reasons beyond subjective sensations. First, members running late on their daily schedules or who came just before the swimming time ended would cut their swim short either due to their need to get on with their day or due to their needing to get out at the end of the swimming period. Having a shorter swim was preferable to having no swim at all. This is in accordance to the addiction to swimming laid out in Section 4.3. Second, members would cut their swims short due to the fatigue that could sometimes hit after a swim, later in the day. As Rachel noted to me, a long swim in winter could 'ruin a day', making it difficult to work due to the onset of drowsiness. Third, there was a clear culture of avoiding hypothermia. This led to the majority of members not pushing their limits. Recalling what was noted in Section 4.2, this culture did not arise solely out of individual desires to avoid hypothermic experiences. It also arose out of a collective desire not to endanger the existence of the club through the need to call emergency services. Thus, members might scold those members that pushed themselves too far (for transgressing the club habitus of putting the club before one's own swim) while simultaneously warming them up so that an ambulance did not need to be called to the club (aligned with the club habitus that emphasises club maintenance by looking out for other members). Richard, discussing his experience of hypothermia at the club, illustrated this duality well:

I think it was about 5 degrees. And frankly, what I did then was a classic example of thinking 'was it really that far?'. So, I did my normal 600m or whatever it was an then I did a bit more. So, I took it up to a K. And as I got to 800, I was really going through the processes of hands were heavy, swimming a bit fuzzy, really focusing on getting the distance done. This was quite dangerous because I'd set myself a target and said 'right, I've got to hit

that'. And then I got out. I felt… ok? I felt throughout the whole process that I was in control and I was aware of how far I'd gone and that if I'd gone much further, that would be too far. But at the same time, I'd had to push myself harder than I'd have liked to. Anyway, I got out, and sort of put a few of my clothes on and then I was falling over a bit, unsteady on my feet. It got to a stage where people had to dress me and I sat in a corner for about half an hour, wrapped up in woollen blankets and I went completely ashen-faced and grey, to the extent that I felt really guilty. Because it's a really selfish thing doing that. It's a really selfish thing dropping your core temperature that low because you can't help yourself. Other people have to help you. If no-one helped me, I'd be in a really bad situation.

Referring back to the Ontology of the Flesh, it is arguable that such moments are crucial to the enskilment of an individual in cold-water immersion. In witnessing a member become hypothermic, and the response of members of the club, one recognises that that same experience that one is witnessing can also be experienced by oneself. Furthermore, in witnessing the response to that hypothermic experience, one also is able to understand the symbolic value of that experience in the context of the club. Thus, regarding cold-water immersion as a metabolic health intervention, community facilitation is critical to the safety of participants.

Enskilment in the process of the swim does not end at the water's edge, however. Nor does it begin there. Rather, one also changes one's non-swimming practices, takes up the club habitus (see, however, Section 6.1), and engages with science-oriented folk knowledges that justify what one does after a swim. Here, I examine this through three frames: re-warming; pre-swim preparation, and; the anxiety of acclimatisation.

Members recognise the process of rewarming both through their personal experience of previous swims – in line with the Ontology of the Flesh – and through the club's folk knowledge of how the re-warming process happens. The collective warming up processes that one becomes enskilled in, through this recognition of warming up, can be divided into the time of warming up, getting heat to the right places, and what to wear to warm up.

First, the time of rewarming depends upon how long of a swim one has had and one's individual time to warm up. The longer the swim, the longer it takes to warm up. Further, certain physiologies may take longer to warm up than others. However, to warm up, as understood by the club, refers to the time it takes for your body, in its totality, to return to the thermal state it was in pre-swim. This process could take hours. Even after a short swim, I would regularly find that the skin covering the area of my stomach continued to be cold well into the afternoon. When I discussed this with members, they concurred, noting that, for them, it might be their lower back or their buttocks that remained colder for longer than other parts of their body.

Second, in order to warm up properly, heat must be applied in the way that members of the club understand to be the right way. This refers to the application of heat from the inside (drinking some form of hot beverage) and the layering of clothes. This way of heating up is defended through both a folk knowledge of blood circulation and a related understanding of what happens to a body if heat is applied in the wrong way. Taking each of these parts in turn, the folk knowledge of blood circulation is that upon immersion, blood moves from the extremities to the core. This keeps the core warm. Exiting the water, this warm blood flows back to the extremities. As a result, cold blood returning to the core must be warmed up by the application of heat to the core. This folk knowledge also acts to explain as to why one's core suddenly feels colder a few minutes after a swim; a feature of cold-water immersion known as the after-drop. Though members did not comment on how this came to be the right way, members did comment on the wrong way to heat up. This 'wrong way' refers to the use of hot showers or baths after a swim, and the effects this had on members' bodies. The common theme from these stories, told to me by Rachel and Barry, was that one would be colder for longer if heat was applied to the outside of the body. Similarly invoking the folk knowledge of blood circulation, it was understood here that the application of external heat 'tricked' the body, causing it to seek to lose heat from the core, moving warm blood back to the extremities. Thus, the spartan nature of the changing room was defended through this folk knowledge.

Finally, what to wear when warming up was made clear through both observations of other members (putting on woollen hats first, then upper layers, then layers from the waist down), and through the correction of changing methods by other members. For example, some members would point to others' heads to ask where their woolly hats were. Such hats were seen as important as one's head was understood as the part of one's body from which one loses heat most readily. Secondary importance was then given to one's torso as this is the location of one's core. Though items of clothing below one's waist are typically of the least importance, on more than one occasion I found my habit of not immediately putting on my socks and shoes to be corrected by core members, as it was seen as important to wrap oneself up completely after a swim.

Given that clothing is a core part of re-warming, it is arguable that the enskilled process of a swim begins when one recognises and gathers what will be needed to warm up after the swim, given the conditions of the day. That the correct clothing for warming up is part of the swim was emphasised by Florence who, speaking with me in mid-December, inquired as to whether I had all of my gear sorted yet. When I told her that I wasn't planning on buying the neoprene gloves and boots that some others would use she told me: 'No no, for warming up. Have you got all of the layers you need?'.

Second to rewarming, club members would sometimes comment on what pre-swim preparations they thought made a difference to their swim. For example, if one drank alcohol the night before or was experiencing poor mental health, joint pain or (for women) menstruation, it was understood that one's swim would risk being shortened. If one ate prior to coming, used 'neoprene assistance' in the water (consisting of neoprene hat, gloves and boots, to alleviate the pain of the cold), or had a good night's sleep, one's time in the water could be extended. The effect of this is that members would often mention adjusting their routine on the basis of either what type of swim they wanted (e.g. deciding not to drink alcohol the night before so as to have a longer swim) or what type of swim they could have (e.g. a shorter swim as a result of forgetting one's 'neoprene assistance'). As this latter adjustment was less than preferable for swimmers, swimmers sometimes to either borrowed kit from one another or raided the spare kit bag in the hope of finding kit that might allow for a longer swim (e.g. spare neoprene gloves or boots), as mentioned in Chapter 4. As Brendan noted to me:

Your first year or two of winter swimming is an education. You start realising your own limitations and what you're comfortable with. You don't particularly want to spend the rest of the day feeling unwell and not particularly pleasant. So, you think, 'Oh, ok. I'll not do that again.' And also, you tend to – I wouldn't say ignore what the water temperature is and listen more to your own feelings – but lots of things can make a difference: whether you've had a good night's sleep, whether you've had alcohol the night before. And once you get below 5 degrees, it all makes a difference.

Thus, pre-swim preparation is not only about what clothes one brings, but also how one recognises and accounts for the total state of one's being prior to a swim. Reconsidering the 'rule' of 100m per degree, one can see here how, having become skilled in the process of the swim, swimmers are able to dispense with this specific rule, attending instead to the entangled context of both themselves and their environment (see Ingold, 1993, 2000). Furthermore, in terms of the Ontology of the Flesh, swimmers became skilled in how alterations to their physiological constitution could affect their 'measurement' of the water, and thus the distance they were able to swim.

Finally, there is the anxiety of acclimatisation. This refers to how, in becoming skilled in the process of the swim, one becomes aware of quite how fickle this skill is. As I discovered having been forced to take a week off mid-fieldwork due to illness, I found that my ability to control my breathing on entering the water had waned.

Swimmers were hyper-aware that taking time off would result in this loss, and that extended periods of time off could mean the loss of a winter swimming season, unless they were

not prepared to go through the process of re-acclimatisation in mid-winter. Though it is tempting to call the control of one's breathing a separate skill (e.g. Mcnaughton, 2020), I consider it only part of the total process of the swim, in which one becomes enskilled. Further, it was noted to me that if one takes even longer periods of time away from the water, one's ability to cope with the cold is also detrimentally affected. This anxiety at the potential loss of acclimatisation is exemplified in this ethnographic vignette:

Leoma was in the changing room today, the first time she's been around for a few weeks. When I commented that I hadn't seen her for a while, she noted that she had been away with work, but that she knew that if she hadn't come today, she wouldn't have been able to come back until late February. She was aware that she wouldn't be able to stay in for long, but, in her words, better that than miss out on qualifying for the Christmas Day race.

This echoes Bunn's (2015) understanding that practice-related dispositions, such as the ability to swim in cold water, must regularly be enriched so that one does not lose said disposition. In the context of the club, the aversion to losing said disposition can be seen in the difficulty individuals have when returning to cold water after a break, and the anxiety swimmers spoke of in terms of how much time they could take off without losing their acclimatisation. Thus, it is not only the addiction to the swim that pulls members back to the water, but also a 'sense of urgency towards [the] development and maintenance [of dispositions] relative to a greater or lesser immersion in a given field' (Bunn, 2015: 16).

Thus, in the context of the club, one learns not only those signs of when to get out. One also learns how long the effects of a swim last for, how to warm up and prepare for a swim, and the importance of maintaining interaction with the water. Regarding cold water immersion as a metabolic health intervention, it is arguable that the insights of this chapter point to the importance of community in the process of safe and individually nuanced enskilment, as well as the need to recognise that access to cold water is insufficient for thorough enskilment in cold water immersion. In addition, one must recognise the need for a proper rewarming environment that supports the ready discussion of how one might adapt a swim and the need for continual exposure.

6. Belonging

In this chapter I aim to respond to the question 'How is facilitation affected by club understandings of who belongs at the club?'. In doing so, I focus on how a deeper reading of the communities of practice concept can add to the concepts of habitus and enskilment. I do this, here, by drawing attention to four areas that the communities of practice concept can add to a dual use of habitus and enskilment. These areas are the duality of participation and reification; meanings; the place of non-participants; and politics. In the first section, I attempt to address the first three of these areas. I seek to do this by highlighting how the duality of participation and reification overlaps with habitus, by illustrating how meaning was created for members through the club, and by describing how non-participants dwell alongside those that actively embrace the club habitus. In doing so, I seek to demonstrate that the core club can be considered as a community of practice. This identification of the core club as a community of practice, and theoretically linking this concept to that of habitus, is critical for enabling a theoretical connection to the second section of this chapter. In this second section, I consider how the ambiguity of meaning generated through the club-as-community-of-practice leads to the emergence of club politics. I attempt to illustrate this through discussing how the prospect of changing room refurbishment led to two different, yet linked, discussions. One pertaining to the relationship between the club and the space in which it operated, the other referring to the relationship between the club and the park authority that provided the license for the club's existence. I argue that recognising the politics that can emerge within cold water immersion learning spaces must be acknowledged as a potential limiting factor to the facilitation of cold-water immersion as a metabolic health intervention.

6.1. The Club-as-Community-of-Practice

As mentioned in section 2.2.3, the duality of participation and reification is core to the communities of practice concept. In the club, this duality is evident in a number of examples that were mentioned in Section 4.2. Bringing sweet things is one such practice. From the communities of practice perspective, members both participate in this practice and reify it through either compliments paid to the person that brought the cake or comments about the lack of cake. Similarly, the races are not only a practice that members participate in, but that they reify through the awarding of cups that the winners keep for a year, the speeches after each race or series of

races that are part of the process of awarding cups, and through their positioning in the rules of the club (see Figure 4.3). These speeches often discussed the contributions to the club of both the sponsor of the race and the person after whom the cup is named. In doing so, previous – even deceased – members continue to participate in the life of the club. For example, after a race sponsored by the family of a previous – and now deceased – president, some members wore Hawaiian shirts in memoriam of how that president would dress (see Figure 4.6). Furthermore, I found that such reification was often used to support a particular idea of being part of the club. For example, sitting with Kirsty and Charlotte in the changing room shortly after club hours had ended, Kirsty pointed to the photographs of previous members on the walls of the changing room (e.g. Figure 6.1) and noted how she, Harry, Clint (deceased) and Leo (deceased) would clean the changing room every Wednesday. She recounted how Clint would sing in the changing room, an act that she thought elevated the spirit of those inside of the changing room. A further example of the reification of the core club can be seen in how, as was mentioned in Section 4.1, members produce objects such as the club-specific mugs produced after an annual River Nene swim and the various pieces of club kit such as swim costumes, hats, badges, and swim caps. As well as being a sign of reification, however, these items can also be understood as a means by which members expressed the meaning of the club for themselves. The duality of participation and reification

arguably drives a sense that those members who take up the core club habitus and its associated practices belong to the club in a different way to those that don't take up these practices. This belonging through practice is arguably the first way that the club can be understood as a community of practice.

Over the course of my time at the club, I grew to understand that members cared greatly about their access to swimming, year-round, at the club. This focus on meaning is the second aspect of the communities of practice concept that can add depth to habitus and enskilment. For those who belonged to the core club, it defined who they were and informed understandings of who else belonged at the club. One reason given for this caring about the club was linked to health. Of the 38 people I interviewed, half declared themselves to have had fewer colds since starting to swim than before swimming. Others claimed the swimming had made them more resilient to illnesses, allowed them to recover faster from both illnesses and wounds, and improved their wellbeing, with one member also declaring their sex life had improved. Another reason given for this caring about the club was linked with the sense of achievement that members would get out of a swim. This was described to me as a moment of 'doing something for yourself before the day starts' and engaging with the challenge of a cold-water swim, allowing for one to reset from the

Figure 6.1: Photographs of former members on one wall of the changing room.

troubles of the day before and recalibrate before the day ahead. For example, Tess, a Russian-American who had swum at the club since 2017, told me that engaging in a swim allowed one to change her sense of where the limits are, enabling her to push herself through challenges in life. Finally, multiple members described the community of the club as that of a 'village', a 'little idyll in the middle of London'. For example, Adam and Sarah noted the club to have its own rhythms in the form of the seasons, the conversations, and the races that structured their year. Similarly, Lisa, drew meaning out of being seen and acknowledged at the start of the day, in comparison to the busy-ness of London. Richard, speaking to the character of this 'village' noted the pub-like atmosphere of the club in the mornings:

It's almost like a little village in the middle of the city, that you can turn up to – once you've been coming for a little while, like in any village frankly. It's a bit like going into the village pub and you know you'll know at least two or three people that you can have a chat to. And I think that's the feeling. It's a bit like having a community pub that serves tea instead of pints.

Furthermore, for these members that are part of the core, this 'village' is one that people saw as being particularly strong in winter, when the 'true' club is not diluted. As Gerald noted:

It's clear that in winter – because now there are a lot of triathletes here and they kind of drop out in winter – so of course in winter, our club becomes more what the club is about: about the core people who swim all-year-round. We do have a bond, and we look out for each other as well. So, if someone is staying in the water for too long, we go out and check what's going on. Are they still swimming ok or does it look funny? So of course, wintertime condenses the social aspect of the club. So, it's less serious, but it's the ones that are serious about, and love, winter swimming. It's a certain type of people.

The reasons for the strength of this sociality in winter have been discussed in Chapter 4. Such was the pull of this 'village' that members who rarely swam at the club in winter, such as Claire and Jane (mentioned in Chapter 3), would continue to come to club. This includes people such as Jemima, who moved to the Lake District in 2016 and had subsequently rarely swum outdoors. However, visiting London in late December, she not only found time to come back to the club, but also took part in a Saturday race as well.

These meanings that the members of the core club held influenced how they approached the lake in two ways. First, there was a perception that the lake could 'do no wrong'. This idea first emerged in a discussion I had with Boris during my first month at the club. He had heard earlier

on the radio of a study conducted by University College London that found high levels of antibiotic resistant genes in the lake (see Xu et al, 2019). Rather than put him off coming to the lake, his reaction was to show up. His reasoning was that all of the detrimental things hadn't done him any harm so far, and he wasn't going to let a study tell him that he had to stop swimming in the lake. If the lake had affected him in any way, he thought, it had only made his immunity stronger. This sense of swim before health was also expressed by Beatrice. Speaking with a friend of hers she had brought to the club in early November, she noted that the rash on her thighs was something that happened to her in the cold. Regardless, she continued to change and head into the water as the thrill she got from the cold of the lake meant more to her than its effect on her. Neil, discussing a medical report of his that was followed up by the Ministry of Health, expressed similar sympathies.

I think I may have had a couple of illnesses. Basically, I cut my foot out there on a buoy anchor and, a few days later I had an infection. No, I had a gastric, a really bad reaction. And I went to the hospital and they sorted me out and I got this letter from National Health saying, 'this is one of the illnesses, or potential dangerous diseases that we monitor, and we'd like to know where you might have picked it up'. And then I did a bit of research and it suggested that usually you ingest it. So, I thought, because of the cut that I may have become – I would never go in there with a cut – but because I got it in there, there was nothing I could do. I wasn't sure, and I didn't particularly want the club to be closed down, so I didn't say anything.

The second way in which the meanings of the club affected how members approached the lake was evident in how members were defensive of their ability to swim in the lake unencumbered. In mid-October, when a half-marathon was taking place in the park, the energy at the club held an almost acrid tone. Maya and other members who would usually cycle to the club complained about the half-marathon getting in the way of their ability to cycle to the club. Another member chipped in from behind me to add that it 'better not be a triathlon' as those, and similarly with swimming events that happened in the lake, would disrupt the ability for members to swim. Similar comments came up in interviews when members mentioned how the lake had changed since the Olympics in 2012, when the lake was used for the swimming portion of the triathlon and the 10 kilometer marathon swim. They hypothesised that the chemicals used then to clean up the water had radically changed the ecology of the lake, resulting in the thickening of weeds and the occurrence of swimmers itch due to the flourishing of duck lice. Positively, swimmers noted that these issues were becoming less of a problem and the ecology was once again finding a balance. Likewise, Zara commented on a vast sculpture that had been placed near the swimming area in

2018, a sculpture that other members had also complained about to me as it intruded on their space and hindered their ability to swim. In her words:

And then we had the sculpture last year. There was a sculpture by Christo in the middle of the lake which was horrible. It was just a stupid intrusion. A big, phallic – an enormous statement of power. It meant we only had – from here to that – to swim in outside of the buoys.

The third aspect to consider, key to thinking of the club as a community of practice, is that of participants in the community of practice co-existing alongside non-participants. This co-existence is noted in Chapter 3, and something that manifests itself in different ways. It was unheard of, for example, for a non-core member to bring cake to the club, unless they were becoming part of the core membership. Similarly, regarding tea-making, a non-core member might make tea only for themselves or for their friends. A core member, however, would be inclined to make tea not just for themselves, but for other members in the core club. In late December, I noticed the difference between these two modes of approaching tea-making when, having made tea for myself and another member of the club with whom I was speaking, I found myself feeling guilty for not making tea for another member that had just come in from the lake. Similarly, non-participants would usually talk amongst themselves, whereas participants would talk with each other. As Rachel commented concerning her first year or so at the club:

So, I joined the [club] when I moved to London with work in 2010 and a colleague of mine was training for the London triathlon, and she suggested I do it. So, I signed up with her and she said come down, and I trained in the [lake] with her. I think I wore a wetsuit the first two times or so, but it was so much faff carrying it around. There were three or four of us colleagues that would go fairly regularly, and then, for about three years, that was my experience of the club. Going before work, with a colleague, never spoke to anybody else. I occasionally went on my own, but then I wouldn't speak to anyone else.

A question this provokes, therefore, is why is it that some members of the club (in the broadest sense of that term) took up the club habitus when others did not? While Wacquant (2014) would argue that individuals are drawn to particular sites that satisfy their social libidos, this is problematic here because both participants and non-participants practice alongside each other. Thinking with the communities of practice concept, however, allows for a way around this. The participants, those that are part of the club-as-community-of-practice, are those that embrace the club habitus. Furthermore, an individual's willingness to embrace the club habitus is that which

allows for both their enskilment in cold-water immersion and their recognition as a legitimate participant of the club-as-community-of-practice. Thus, Wacquant's formulation that individuals are drawn to particular sites can be reworked to say that individuals are drawn to particular *relations* that satisfy their social libido, and that, as the communities of practice concept demonstrates, multiple different forms of relations can be present in the same site.

Associated with this participation is arguably an achievement in competence, and thus legitimacy, within the club-as-community-of-practice. This legitimacy refers not only to the enskilment in one's ability to swim in the cold. Rather, to learn to bring cake, to respect the history of the club, to see the club as a 'village', to place club before self (as was mentioned in Chapters 4 and 5), to ultimately embrace the club habitus and embrace appropriate community maintenance is to competently belong to the club-as-community-of-practice. Engaging with the community of practice concept in this way and drawing out the club-as-community-of-practice, ultimately deepens both habitus and enskilment. For habitus, it allows for seeing how learning is contingent upon particular relations in a site, rather than a uniform development of habitus for all those that enter the site. One can choose not to embrace the habitus of the site. For enskilment, it allows for seeing how one does not only become skilled in the core practice of a site, one also becomes skilled in the ethos of a site. This echoes Geoffrey Gowlland's (2019) recent discussion of the sociality of enskilment. Here, he notes how, through interacting with his pottery teacher in Taiwan, his attention shifted from the question of "'how do I do this?" to "how do I act in response to this person's attitude and expectations?'" (Gowlland, 2019: 518). What the communities of practice concept adds to this becoming skilled in the ethos of a site, where there is no master to look to, is the role of the participation/reification duality and the assignment of meaning to specific practices and focusing media (such as the photographs) in the development of the ethos of the site. Thus, it is arguable that one's becoming skilled in the sociality of the club-as-community-of-practice can be seen as the initiation of embracing the habitus of the club-as-community of-practice. However, and this is a further strength of the communities of practice concept, this becoming skilled in the sociality of the club-as-community-of-practice does not remove the potential for contestation.

6.2. A Contested Future

As mentioned above, the meanings of the club, held by club members, differed greatly. There is no single meaning of the club to its members. Rather, the meaning of the club, for the club-as-community-of-practice, was ambiguous. Furthermore, it became evident that

contestations in the club not only concerned who belonged to the club-as-community-of-practice, but also who in the club-as-community-of-practice had the correct sense of what was right for the club. To think about the club as a community of practice thus gives the opportunity to think about the politics of the club, a factor ignored by both the habitus and enskilment approaches. In this section, I discuss how the prospect of renovations to the club changing room resulted in the emergence of multiple, conflicting understandings of the club-as-community-of-practice that the club was required to negotiate together for the sake of its future.

I first became aware of the upcoming refurbishment to the club when speaking with Nigel in late August:

Well there's a big debate now about upcoming renovations. So, the parks are going to renovate this. Potentially they're promising to expand the changing room – there will be enough space to even make separate women and men. And I'm quite reticent for anything to change. I would be from the conservative part of the club that I don't want anything to change. For me this space-constrained, unisex changing room is actually a big part of the character. And I would not give it up. So, I would hate for members to say, 'we can have five times the space with a big changing room, and then there will be an atrium where we drink tea' and so on. But I think that would be to the detriment of the social fabric. Because then there's a place where you only change and there's not much talking, and then the fun part where people drink tea and so on will be lost.

These worries were reflected in my interview with Erica, who pondered whether a refurbishment would keep the spirit of the club as it was during the research period:

One thing that immediately comes to mind in the value of the space is that intangible quality. That if you improve the fabric of the space – you can repaint, you can recoat, you can create beautifully framed artworks, all sorts of things – will it have that spirit that is in there right now? And I don't know. You get to see how attached people are and how aware people are of that existing.

Grace, similarly, pointed to the existence of this spirit in the materiality of the club, highlighting aspects previously mentioned in Sections 4.1 and 6.1:

It's quite a major thing. I don't know what the old club think of that. Because, in a way, one should do what they want more than anything else because they're the people who own the club more. But also, there's the new guard, it's like the new people who've come over the last decade or so. It's got to work for them as well. But it seems to me that a common cause is that you don't want to… it needs to… for it to work the intimacy of a small changing room

which is communal and has a tea urn in it – tea is quite important… and the club ephemera – that's important – the pictures on the walls, the leftover clothes, the spare kit, the hypothermia kit and all those things. You don't want to lose what those give you because the tightness of the changing room is probably what keeps the club a manageable size. I'm sure that that puts off quite a lot of people. But I think the fact the changing room is communal is a very, very important element of the whole thing. Because you can talk – men and women are equal in there, and there are not many places where that is the case. And because you're bumping into each other all the time you can chat freely.

Indeed, some members went so far as to say that the club wouldn't be the club without that specific changing room. As Mitch commented:

If the changing room was like a public swimming bath, where you've got cubicles and you wouldn't talk to anybody, the number of people who swim in the serpentine in the morning would be… a handful? It's that little changing room. It's what binds us together. Because we don't do anything else. We have the Christmas Party, but that's the only thing we do.

Thus, in speaking with members about the future changes to the club changing room, what was brought to light was the significance of the changing room to the club. However, it should be recognised that a core question being asked was the extent to which the changing room was responsible for the character of the club. As Brendan put it:

When you speak to the older members, this is about the fourth or fifth changing facility they've had. And I can remember when I first started swimming here, in the mornings there would maybe be half a dozen people swimming and you could sit down and have the space in the changing room. Increasingly now, the space we've got is very very limited for the amount of people we've got, even swimming during the winter. And I notice more people getting changed outside. I notice that our younger members, particularly our younger female members, tend to use the toilet to get changed. So, it's a question of: is the changing room unique to the social life of the club, or is the social life of the club played out in the existing changing room because we don't have an alternative?

This either/or question that split the club-as-community-of-practice on the matter of the meaning of its space found its expression in a sign posted on a noticeboard inside of the changing room in December. The sign (Figure 6.2) expressed frustration at 'Changes to Our Club Home' proposed by the parks. It noted that these changes would result in a lack of benches, hooks, kitchen space, club memorabilia, and communal space. Of note here are two things. First, the denotation of the lake as 'our pond'. This echoes the attachment of members to the lake, as noted in Section 6.1.

Second, at the bottom of this notice was a plea for members to express their views to the committee so that the club could be fully represented. Thus, as discussed above, there was a clear sense in the club that there was no one single position on the club's future. Written over this message was one from the committee itself, telling members that the plans shown are a previous version that was drawn up by the park and that new plans have been given to the park by the committee of the club. Discussing the matter with the club secretary in the days after the notice was posted, he commented that he had left the notice up so that members were aware that the changes proposed came from the parks, and not from the club.

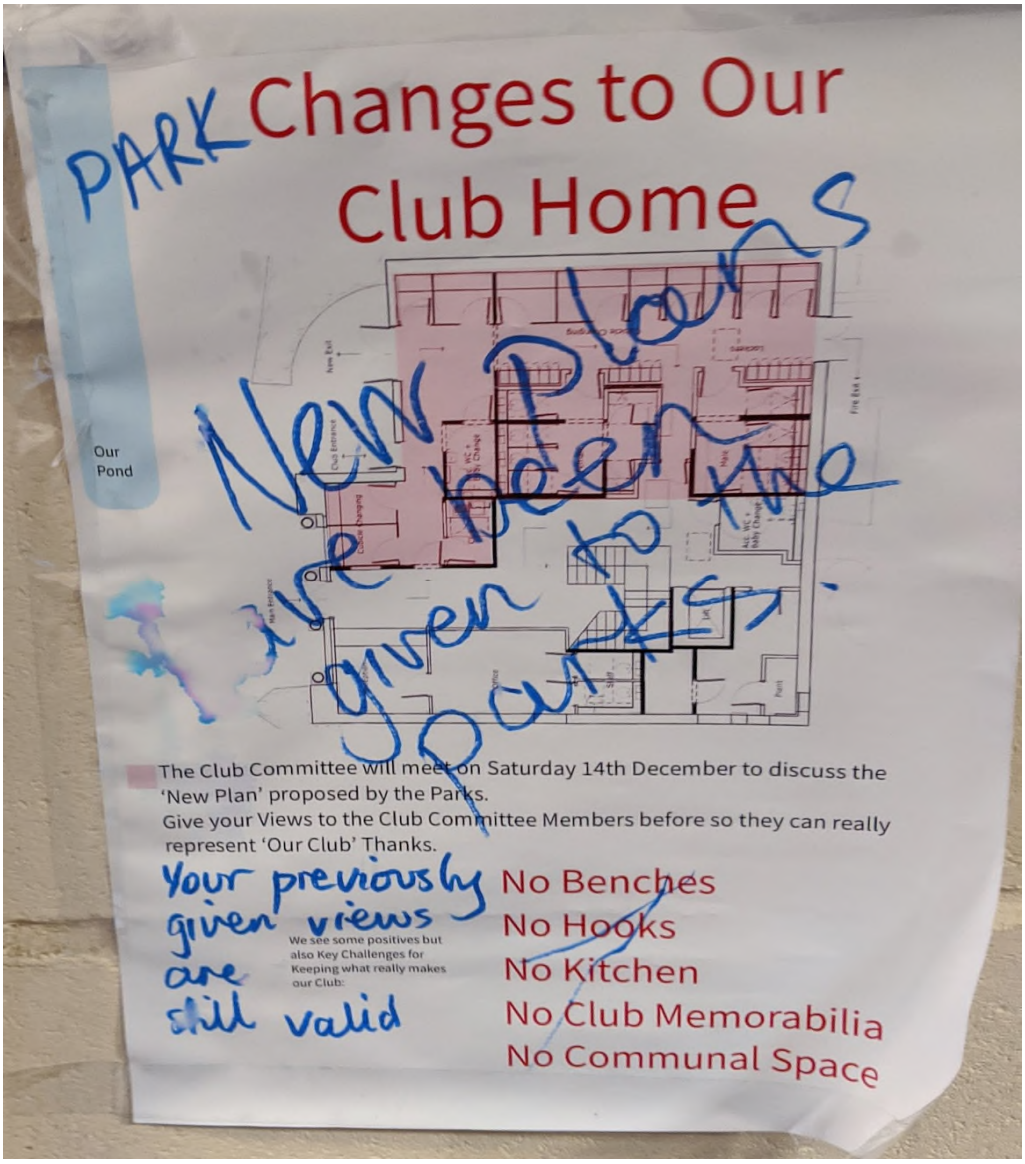


Figure 6.2: The notice objectifying to the proposed changes to the club space

This relationship with the parks is critical to the second either/or question that defined the politics of the club during the period of research: Is the priority of the club-as-community-of-practice to ensure the right to swim, no matter the changes to the club, or is the priority of the club-as-community-of-practice to act for the core members of the club? Given that this is closely tied to understandings of the meaning of the club that are part of the facilitation of cold-water immersion, acknowledging the potential for this either/or is arguably critical foresight for other cold-water immersion sites in pursuit of metabolic health. To clarify, the true relationship between the club and the park is that each year (during the research period this was changed to every five years) the club is required to negotiate a license with the park. During this negotiation, the club

and the park decide on a price for the license, and also discuss any potential changes to the license that the club wishes to make. In recent years, such changes have included the extension of the swimming area by 100m and the securing of swimming from 5 am, year-round. As such, the club itself has no right to exist except through the benevolence of the park. It is for this reason why, as was mentioned in Sections 4.2 and 5.1, the club habitus prioritised the continued existence of the club over an individual's enjoyment of a swim. Were an individual to fall seriously ill as a result of swimming-related activities, they risk not only their own ability to swim, but also that of all other members. Although some saw the relationship with the park as a means for both the existence of the club and the possibility of asking for changes to the club environment without dipping into the coffers of the club, others saw the license as the closest thing the club had to a Faustian pact. For these latter members, the club's existence was at the whim of the parks, and the lack of an independent changing space was a sign of the parks attempting to force the club out of the park so that their space could be used for greater profit. The precarity of the position of the club is exemplified by the following quote from Bella:

I never actually thought about it, but I think I probably thought that we had a license in perpetuity, which means forever. And that we didn't have to worry about that. But now I know different so it is something that has to be the relationship with the park has to be forged and maintained and every time they have a new director or whatever and they're responding to commercial pressures as well. So, we'll have to respond to whatever commercial pressures they put on us to stay there. So, that is going to be an interesting side of it. Which is sort of more important than worrying about tinkering with the Constitution if you know what I mean, just our very existence.

This awareness of the growing potential for commercial pressures was a driver for the emergence of politics in the club. What thus emerged was a divide between those who thought the club could persist while negotiating the commercial pressures of the park, and those who thought the club could persist only by becoming independent from the infrastructure of the park. This is particularly given that the parks had previously attempted to close the club in the 1980s. Entangled with this were differing perspectives on the history of the club.

Though it was common knowledge amongst the core club that the club had existed since 1864, what was less frequently known was the how the physical set-up of the club had changed over that period of time. As Brian noted in a presentation aimed at informing the membership of the history of the club, the changing facilities of the club have changed at least eight times in the club's history. Further, the original Lido swimming area has shifted over to the East of the café, whereas it was previously in front of it. In asking him about his motivations for giving this

presentation, he told me that he thought members needed to know that the club would survive changes to its infrastructure. He had seen four different changes and the club spirit, as he understood it, survived each one. However, for other members, this information, while interesting, did not change the fact that the changing room that had been there since the late 1990s would soon be different. This changing room was, for all bar some 20 members, the only changing room the membership had experienced. Thus, for some of these members, their experience of the club was tightly bound with the physical set-up of the club. Thus, it is possible to say that the question of who belongs to the club is not solely a matter of embracing the club habitus or becoming skilled in the right spatial-temporal context. Even amongst the club-as-community-of-practice, the answer to who belongs at the club is ambiguous. This ambiguity is arguably the result of the different meanings and perceptions of the club held by individual members, and the manner in which these perceptions and meanings interact with one another.

Therefore, seeing the club as a community of practice not only allows for the recognition of habitus as a choice and enskilment as entailing becoming skilled in the ethos of a community of practice, through engaging with meaning and the participation/reification duality. In addition, it involves recognising how embracing the habitus, and becoming skilled in the ethos, of a community of practice does not absolve one of the possibility of politics. Politics is an inherent part of communities of practice as individuals do not become skilled in the community of practice uniformly. Like a game of Chinese Whispers, the perceptions different individuals can have of the community of practice can be radically different. Politics, therefore, emerges from this ambiguity. As discussed above, debates about whose knowledge of the 'sense of the game' is correct for the community of practice and who is skilled in the sociality of the club in the right way are ultimately contests over who rightfully belongs to the community of practice. Such contestations are arguably crucial to the development of the club habitus and therefore changes to the various ways in which one becomes skilled through the community of practice.

Therefore, regarding cold water immersion as a metabolic health intervention, its facilitation might be hindered by the emergence of such politics. The conversations surrounding the changing room refurbishment inevitably led to individual members questioning whether they did belong, and thus whether they had a future at the club. Lacking such a sense of belonging, or having it removed from the learning site, risks untethering people from their desire to participate in cold water immersion. As such, being able to successfully negotiate such politics is key to the continual facilitation for both new and old members, and thus continual access to a means to improve metabolic health.

7. Discussion

The aim of this thesis has been to understand how the club facilitates cold exposure through cold-water immersion. In doing so, I have sought to respond to the three research questions laid out in Chapter 1. Four findings are of importance. The most urgent of these findings is that relating to the third research question. The club, as a sight of learning, is inescapably political. The practice itself, and the ability to do this practice carry meaning for those involved. This meaning differs between individuals, with the negotiation of these differences leading to the active shaping of the future of the club as a site of learning. This politics that arises out of negotiation deserves further consideration at other sites, both of learning in general and specific to cold-water immersion. Second, relating to the second research question, the learning that takes place through the club is not reliant on an expert that guides new members through the practice. Nor is it solely reliant on the use of verbal communication. Rather, learning how to be a cold-water swimmer is a process that takes places through the community and that involves picking up the correct means of engaging with both the club and the practice through observation of, and interaction with, multiple members. Finally, relating to the first research question, two findings are of importance. First, the practice of cold-water immersion itself has addictive potential. From the perspective of facilitation, this is intriguing, as it is an unexpected finding that can help drive facilitation. Second, and related to the previous point concerning the politics of the site, the character of the site changes temporally. Thus, the people with whom one interacts with and who assist one's own facilitation vary, therefore allowing for variations in one's understanding of the learning environment.

In order to theoretically grasp the community of the club from an anthropological perspective, and thus recognise the lessons that this site can offer anthropology, this thesis has attempted to interrelate the concepts of habitus, enskilment, and communities of practice. This theoretical decision was made having entered the site. Engaging with these theories, this thesis has sought to demonstrate that habitus provides a solid foundation for understanding the practices of learning environments and how these practices facilitate the community specific to that environment. In drawing on enskilment, one is encouraged to focus on the process by which one is guided to do a specific practice in a specific manner. Engaging with Merleau-Ponty's Ontology of the Flesh, this thesis has argued that enskilment in the process of the swim involves the co-identification of self and other, the ready experimentation with one's body in conversation with others and stretching the boundaries of what the practice of cold-water immersion entails. Furthermore, Chapter 5 argued that enskilment is place specific. Engaging with communities of practice allows for the

matter of intra-club politics to be considered. Seeing the club as a community of practice adds a layer of meaning to habitus and enskilment, noting that these meanings are contested. Furthermore, it denotes how mere co-presence in a site is insufficient for habitus adoption. Rather, one must seek to embrace the habitus.

Throughout this thesis are lessons that can be learnt for potential future sites of cold-water immersion. Here, I wish to lay out four such lessons. First, there is a critical role of the community in facilitating cold-water immersion. Advice is able to be passed from member to member, the presence of others can give people faith in their abilities to enter the water, and an addictive energy is shared amongst members that pulls them back to the lake. Second, the funnelling of individuals through narrowing club hours and enclosing the space available for changing is a viable means of facilitating the development of this community. By driving people together, conversations emerge, people are able to be seen, and a sense of who belongs at the club is able to be grasped. This, in turn, allows for lifeguards to be unnecessary to requirements at the club. This is not only because of the continuous trickle of people able to keep an eye on the water. It is also because of the skill in the process of the swim that members are able to develop through conversations and interactions with other members, and how this skill is directed towards safety by the club habitus. Third, contrary to common-sense, facilities for rewarming, such as hot showers or baths, should be avoided. The multiple comments I heard from members about the 'right way' of warming up should be seen as a warning against the use of externally applied heat. Finally, sites of cold-water immersion are recognised as sites of great meaning (see Deakin, 2000; Foley, 2015). The site studied in this thesis is no different. Contestations over how such sites develop will likely be common, and it is important that they are anticipated and dealt with appropriately so as to maintain access to the site for all.

Finally, a note on a potential future-oriented medical anthropology of the Anthropocene. In this thesis I have followed the activities of an outdoor, year-round swimming club because, given the understanding of human metabolism laid out in Section 2.1, this practice could be a potential key to metabolic health that in missing in traditional approaches to metabolic health. It is for this reason why, throughout the empirical chapters, I have sought to return to the aim to understand how cold-water immersion is facilitated at the site, because of the implications of the practice on metabolic health. The particular approach considered here is of particular interest given its addictive potential, noted in Chapter 4. Furthermore, in light of the current environmental crisis, it is essential to create ways of living that bring about both human and planetary health at minimal resource cost. As such, this thesis can be considered as an attempt at a 'future [medical] anthropology' (Salazar et al, 2017). Drawing on human geography, physiology, and anthropology,

this thesis has been transdisciplinary because it has to be. Furthermore, this thesis has heeded Pink and Salazar's (2017) understanding that phenomenological approaches to anthropology, such as observant participation, allow for research that is 'energized by the tension between speculative inquiry into what life could be like and a knowledge, rooted in practical experience, of what life is like for people of particular times and places' (Ingold 2014: 393). Such speculative inquiry is the work that a future-oriented medical anthropology must do. As medical anthropologists, we are in a privileged position of being able to critically understand what aspects of health people lack in their everyday lives, which practices might be able to address that lack, and then understand those places that support those practices. Through this understanding, it is hoped, here, that engagement with the triad of habitus, enskilment, and communities of practice can allow for the exploration of a thousand other ways of nature-based flourishing that can be enabled in the world.

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