# Organisational Identity: A Case Study of the St Mary's Football Club, Darwin Northern Territory

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# Certificate of Authorship

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*To the St Mary's Football Club: now, then and forever.*

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# Abstract

This thesis examines the organisational identity of an Australian football club; the St Mary's Football Club, based in Darwin, Northern Territory. This study investigates the ways in which identity has been constructed, maintained and changed within the context of a successful, community-based sporting organisation. This meant exploring how individuals constructed their collective identity as part of an ongoing association with the football club. To explore organisational identity there were two central research questions. The first question related to how identity was constructed and maintained at St Mary's Football Club. The second research question asked in what ways had the collective identity been changed or challenged over time.

The literature review has been organised into the different theoretical developments of identity, which included national, cultural and ethnic, social, group and organisational identity theories. How identity has been applied to the topic of sport was also examined. From the literature review several broad tensions emerged. It was evident that there had been a dominance of national identity theory in regards to identity in sports discourse; there has been a split between social and psychological interpretations of identity, and a lack of agreed definitions. From the literature review it has been also found that identity has been described as a process, based on individual perceptions of both sameness and difference. Overall, there has been a lack of theorisation about how sporting organisations, at a non-elite level, constructed and maintained identity. There has been also an absence of social and cultural analysis within these types of sporting organisations.

This study identified a lack of published qualitative research that had explored how identity was established in a sporting club. Using the single case study of a football club in the Northern Territory, this research asked how a collective identity has been established by interviewing those connected with the club. Over the course of a football season (October 2009 – March 2010) 28 interviews were conducted with members of the St Mary's Football Club community. The purpose of these interviews was to engage interviewees on their thoughts and opinions on the collective and shared identity of the

organisation. As well as the interviews, there has been a triangulation of other sources of data, which included personal email correspondence, observational techniques and document analysis. The interviews were based on semi-structured, open-ended questions that encouraged interviewees to include their personal experiences and memories into the interview.

The results are presented in two chapters; one for each of the research questions. The first part of the results (chapter four) presents data that illustrates that identity had been constructed in several key ways. This included identity based on the biological and metaphorical construction of family; the physical space of the clubhouse; on male friendship and bonding rituals and in the changing role of women within the sporting club environment. The second part of the results (chapter five) presents data that shows that the collective identity of St Mary's had been threatened by several key events identified by the interview participants. These events were the financial crisis, the introduction of the Tiwi Island Bombers Football Club and the creation of the Territory Thunder Football Club. These events challenged the group identity as each event threatened a core element of the overall collective identity of the organisation.

The sixth and final chapter examined how these results related back to the existing theories of identity. In doing so, it explores how identities could change as a response to external and internal pressures, while at the same time individuals were able to construct multiple identities that form an ongoing, shared understanding of the organisation.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

Studies of sport and identity have predominantly been conducted in the context of seeking to understand the place of sport in national identities or the complexities of fan experiences in connection with sport organisations. Few studies have explored how single sport organisations establish or maintain an identity or how their members may interpret the meaning of this identity. This thesis explores the issue of organisational identity using a case study of the St Mary's Football Club, based in Darwin, in the Northern Territory (NT) of Australia. It examines how identity has been constructed, maintained and changed within the context of a successful, non-elite Australian football club. This introductory chapter outlines the research objectives, the delimitations of the research and a rationale to justify the need for such an inquiry. This first chapter also introduces a background to Australian football and Darwin to fully contextualise the St Mary's Football Club in terms of its contribution to local and collective identities. The introduction also includes some of the theoretical underpinnings that inform identity research more broadly.

## 1.1 More than a game: Introducing Australian 'Rules' Football

This section provides a brief overview of Australian football and contextualises its place within Australian sporting culture. Australian football is often referred to as 'a game of our own' and occupies a unique place within the Australian sporting identity (Blainey, 2003; Grow, 1998). This section includes a background to the history and development, as well as some of the logistical features of the modern game.

While there are several debates about the origins of Australian football, it is generally accepted that the first game of Australian football was played on 7 August 1858 between the two Melbourne private schools: Melbourne Grammar and Scotch College (Grow, 1998, p. 4). The codifying of the 'rules' by Tom Wills, an English migrant, took place later and the modern game is colloquially known as Australian 'Rules' football in reference to these events (Grow, 1998, p. 4). The origins of Australian football remain contentious, however, the game is generally accepted as based on early combinations of rugby and Gaelic football, with two opposing teams fighting for possession of an egg /

oval-shaped ball (Blainey, 2003). More recently, new research has positioned the development of the Australian football as originating from a much earlier Indigenous game, 'marngrook' (Atkinson & Poulter, 1993; de Moore, 2005; Cazaly, 2008). It is difficult to ascertain the influence of Indigenous sports on the growth and structure of Australian football because the cultural decimation as a consequence of White settlement has meant that finding evidence of pre-settlement Indigenous games and sports in southern Australia very rare. Whatever the mix of cultural influences on the origins of the game, the contribution that Indigenous athletes have made to Australian football has been both defining and outstanding.

The contemporary incarnation of Australian football has developed into a multi-billion dollar industry. The Australian Football League[1] (AFL) makes a legitimate claim about being a truly national sport with 17 elite teams playing in a competition that spans Brisbane, Gold Coast, Sydney, Melbourne (suburbs and Geelong), Adelaide, Perth and Fremantle. There are state and territory leagues that have their own Australian football competitions; these are often linked and affiliated with the umbrella governing body the AFL. The St Mary's Football Club operates as part of the Northern Territory Football League, which is a semi-professional competition based out of Darwin, NT.

## 1.2 Darwin, N.T – the heart of the Territory

This section locates Darwin, NT within a broader geographical and social context in order to provide a background for the St Mary's Football Club. To do this, it is necessary to include a brief overview of the historical influences that have impacted on the development of the town and region. The cross-cultural interaction and relationship between Europeans and Indigenous Australians is of particular importance to the background of the St Mary's Football Club.

Darwin is Australia's most northern capital city; it is also the smallest in terms of population. It is positioned on the north-western tip of the Northern Territory in between the Arafura and Timor Seas, with Bathurst and Melville Islands located off-shore. In terms of geographical location Darwin is closer to Singapore than it is to Sydney. The

[1] The Australian Football League is the administrative body that organises and manages the elite level competition; however, AFL is often used as synonymous with the entire game.

ethnic background of Darwin residents is unique amongst other Australian capital cities. According the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006) (ABS), of all Darwin residents 11 per cent identified as being of Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander descent (2030.7, 2006, p. 26). These statistics show that Darwin has the highest proportion of Indigenous Australians in a capital city (per capita). This percentage is significant especially when combined with the 21.4 per cent of Darwin residents who were born overseas (2030.7, 2006, p. 27). The figures highlight how diverse the cultural backgrounds of Darwin residents remain in the contemporary period.

Much of Darwin's local identity was based around its multicultural heritage and its geographical isolation from the rest of Australia (Wilson, James, Dewar & Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, 1997). This sense of geographic isolation and cultural diversity stemmed from a unique sense of local identity that differed from the rest of Australia, both socially and politically.

> As to our identity, our points of difference with the other states have come of age and gained a great value in Australia's current political and social climate. We do not need to look south for answers to these debates—we can find them within our own experiences in our own community. We can be proud of our heritage. (Paspaley, 2005, p. 7)

The population of the whole Northern Territory is just under 200, 000 and almost 47 per cent of those live in or around the Darwin and Palmerston area (Darwin and Palmerston are very closely located towns and almost always given a combined population statistic) (2030.7, p. 16 – 17). This makes the Northern Territory the least populated state or territory in Australia. This geographic isolation and limited population has been part of Darwin's historical frontier identity.

The history of Darwin has two significant ruptures, the Second World War and subsequent bombing of Darwin (1942) and the natural disaster of Cyclone Tracy in 1974. These two events affected how Darwin both developed and grew over the subsequent years. The military build up during the Second World War years established Darwin as a military town that exists to the present day. Similarly, the post-cyclone civilian evacuation and near complete destruction of the town changed the built and social structure of Darwin. Currently, there are few Darwin residents who remember either of these two events. The civilian evacuations after each event represent a fracture within the local Darwin community: many simply never returned. Not only are these events now in

a distant past – once people left many of the memories left with them. For those who stayed the tensions surrounding inclusion and exclusion within Darwin's community have informed the local identity of long-term residents.

Since Darwin was first settled in 1869, it has been a place of interaction between Europeans, Aboriginals, Chinese, Malay, Filipino and Japanese. Darwin was considered a cultural melting pot and meeting point between those who were just travelling through, those who came for employment, the (humid) weather and the locals - both black and white. Reynolds (2003) and Ganter (2006) have both argued that the proximity to Asia, the geographic isolation from the rest of Australia, and the comparatively large numbers of Chinese and migrant labourers from South-East Asia made Darwin's economic and cultural identity uniquely multicultural even during the height of the White Australia Policy.

During this period Darwin, however, was also very much a stratified society despite the many strong multicultural elements that existed within it. The elite of Darwin during the first half of the 20th century were the small numbers of permanent White residents, usually civil servants, bank managers, businessmen and British East Extension Cable Company employees on short-term contracts and homesick for the southern capitals. Much of the complexity about frontier racial identity stems from the negative legal and social ramifications of identifying as being of Aboriginal cultural heritage. For people who were classified as Aboriginal it meant their lives were strictly and prohibitively controlled by the Commonwealth. The 1953 *Welfare Ordinance* had declared most Aboriginal people of 'full descent' as 'Wards of the State,' which gave the office of the 'Director of Welfare' similar sweeping powers to those of the 'Chief Protector'[2]. Those who were classified as Aboriginal were unable to enjoy even basic freedoms of movement and association. In a contemporary context it is difficult fully appreciate the role of racial identity played in an already divided and stratified community. Darwin was a community that had pre-existing divisions along social, economic, geographic, and cultural lines. This was not limited to the social conventions of the era but also legal boundaries resulting from Australian

[2] The Welfare Ordinance (1953b) (1953 – 1960) replaced the Aboriginal Ordinance Act of 1953; the changes concerned the use of 'Aboriginal' instead of 'half-caste' it also prohibited all those who were deemed to be 'Aboriginal' from voting as they were labelled 'wards of the state'. See (2001). *Saltwater People: Larrakia Stories from around Darwin*. Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation.

Commonwealth law that prohibited the physical and social interaction of much of Darwin's multicultural community.

Appreciating the political climate of Darwin during the early 1950s, it must have seemed radical in 1952 when Darwin's Bishop O'Loughlin proposed creating a football team that would allow Aboriginal players from Bathurst and Melville (Tiwi) Islands Sacred Heart Mission to play in the Darwin football competition. The Catholic Church believed that football would provide opportunities for young Indigenous and 'coloured' men associated with the Church, to develop and 'build confidence' within a sporting environment (Pye, 1978, p. 46). The Tiwi Islands had a long history of missionary involvement and the late Brother John Pye once wrote that the Sacred Heart Mission 'are said to take two things with them where they go—Christianity and Aussie Rules' (Pye, 1978, p. 46). The combination of Catholicism and Australian football remains an integral part of life on the Tiwi Islands. Despite a great deal of local resistance from those who wanted to keep the competition racially segregated, to those deemed of 'full' Aboriginal descent, this team would become known as the St Mary's Football Club[3].

## 1.3 An overview of football in Darwin

Most of the historical and cultural analysis of Australian football has focused on inner-suburban Melbourne or the experiences of Victorian country football. The identities of those football communities who fall outside the frame of southern Australia are historically less well known. In terms of northern Australia, the football experiences are even more complex. The NT, due to its proximity to Queensland and the physical distance separating the south-western football communities, make it an anomaly within the Australian football geographical spread. The physical distance that the game of football had to withstand became an influential part of the local Darwin community. The 1863 annexation of the NT by South Australia historically positioned it within the football traditions of southern rather than eastern Australian. By the 1911 Commonwealth takeover of the NT, the majority of white-collar workers who had time

[3] The inherently racist terms 'part', 'coloured', 'half caste' and 'full blood' have only been used in this thesis in a historical context where they were used as self-defining terms by members of the groups themselves. This thesis does not seek to label or impose a particular cultural identity onto any past or present individuals.

to play leisure activities, such as football, were settling from South Australian and Victoria.

Our understanding of the historical development of football in Darwin remains contested. Before 1916, football in Darwin was ad hoc in nature and there is a lack of clear documentary evidence of a sustained competition. The first mention of an official game, rather than kick-to-kick type contests, was 10 February 1916 in the *Northern Territory Times & Gazette.* The newspaper reports that that there had been a meeting of local townsmen at the Vic Hotel on the 2 February in regards to 'playing a match as part of a Red Cross charity event at the local cricket grounds to be held on upcoming Saturday the 12 February 1916' (1916, February 10, p. 7). This game is considered to be the first officially organised match of Australian Football within the Darwin competition. A fortnight later, the paper reported from a contributed article that there had been a second match played on the same day as the one held under the 'auspices of the N.T Football Association in aid of the Red Cross' (1916, February 24, p. 17). The paper mentions a match held between Government and Darwin Combined (1916, February 24, p. 17). The inference is that these two teams were constructed as follows: one from Government workers, which during this period would have been Commonwealth employees, and the other local Darwin workers. The distinction made between the local blue-collar workers and the Commonwealth employees highlights the burgeoning sense of a local Darwin identity played out on the football field (Stephen, 2010; Ritchie, 2006). The paper refers to the team of Darwin Combined as 'Darwinites' - a term still used in the contemporary period to describe people who live in Darwin (1916, 24 February, p. 17). Even though the article concludes that the Darwin Combined lost, the newspaper contributor positioned the loss in terms of a rematch against the Government team, as the scoreboard 'did not reflected [sic] the abilities' of the local team (1916, 24 February, p. 17).

This marks the beginnings of an organised football competition in Darwin. In 1916 the short-lived North Australian Football Association was formed and by 1917 the Northern Territory Football League is established. Initially there were three teams in the competition: Waratahs FC, Wanderers FC and Warriors FC. Out of the inaugural three teams, both Waratahs and Wanderers continue to play in the local competition. While the Warriors folded after only a year from the competition, the third team that took its place was Vesteys (from Vesteys Meat-works Factory). Vesteys had a short but important

history, which included ‘walk-offs’ from Indigenous players – this team became known at as the Buffaloes (Stephen, 2009). While there were several gaps within the Darwin’s football history there were only three teams up until the pre Second World War period: the Wanderers; the Buffaloes and the Waratahs.

Throughout these early football years there were evident racial tensions between players, supporters and umpires. During this period the Buffaloes were identified as representing the ‘coloured’ or ‘half-caste’ communities, while the Waratahs were known for their ‘white-only’ policy for players and supporters (Roberts & Raymond, 1997). It is difficult to accurately quantify the numbers of Indigenous athletes playing football during this time. It was a period of racial exclusion and segregating practices that encouraged individuals to deny aspects of their cultural heritage due to the negative implications they held. This study acknowledges that the system of classifying ‘race’ in degrees of skin colour is racially derogatory and part of a colonial administered system of racial categorisation.

The smallness of the competition reflected the correspondingly small numbers of members of the White elite that organised such sporting activities. The sporting field was often a place of exclusion. The White population of Darwin during this era was in position of minority that would extend until the post Second World War period. This meant that that sporting opportunities were limited to the number of participants. The success of the local Chinese community at soccer and later in basketball highlights the contribution made by those of mixed cultural heritage to Darwin’s sporting scene (Stephen, 2010). The identity of those who played, umpired and watched these games continued to remain contested.

There remained a hiatus, however, amongst current literature in regards to NT football and the topic of identity. The most important work to date has been done by Martinez (2003) and more recently Stephen (2010) who has addressed the importance of football in constructing identity within the communities of northern Australia. Martinez found that, historically, Darwin during the pre Second World War period was a place of cross-cultural negotiation and exchange. She specifically linked playing Australian Rules with creating a sense of a ‘common identity’ and ‘common culture’ (Martinez, 2003, p. 111). She argued that ‘Chinese, Aboriginal and European players fought for the right to play

together, with each ethnic group taking a role in the shaping of the game—each with a sense of ownership' (Martinez, 2003, p. 111).

It appears that football provided a unique opportunity for social interaction that in turn helped establish a sense of local identity within and amongst the playing group. Stephen found evidence of this in the oral histories of the Darwin area during the pre-Second World War period. Stephen challenged how social memory within Darwin's football community has constructed a sense of local identity around certain key events (Stephen, 2010). He concluded that the football field was a 'transformative space where the barriers and segregation of society, while not eliminated, were temporarily suspended' (Stephen, 2010, p. 169). It is a large and impressive research topic that covers the whole of the Northern Territory and focuses on all sports, including basketball, horse racing, soccer, shooting and Australian football. The scope of focus is between (1869 – 1953) and focused on a historical examination of sport in terms of racial contact within the Northern Territory. While it has been an important contribution to the understanding of racial history within the Northern Territory it is largely outside the research scope of a contemporary analysis of identity within a modern football club.

The post Second World War boom of the 1950s brought an expansion to Darwin's local population and with that a fourth football team was added: Works & Housing (though it quickly changed to Nightcliff Football Club). The proposed fifth team was the St Mary's Football Club. While it added a bye to the competition it was proposed that it would allow men from the Tiwi Islands working in Darwin to play in the competition. One former player remembered:

> We put in the application to be introduced to the Darwin competition. And there was... quite a bit of antagonism towards this… [In those days] the Waratahs were constitutionally whites only as a football team. And so they opposed the notion of black chaps in the competition… But the principle opposition came from… the coach of Buffalos football team. He was a really, in fierce opposition… (Supporter 1)

The vote for the proposed St Mary's team passed narrowly and the first St Mary's football team took to the ground in the 1952 / 1953 season. The sensitivities between racial identities are difficult to understand in the contemporary period, however, it is necessary to note that St Mary's changed the football landscape of the Darwin competition permanently. More broadly, Darwin in the post Second World War era was a

period of social and political change. This included the legal ramifications for Indigenous Australians of the 1967 referendum, self-government of the Northern Territory, Land Rights and Native Title. It was also a time of rapid expansion due to the reconstruction of Darwin in the post cyclone period. Similarly, the population boomed as the influx of residents to Darwin as part of the burgeoning mining and construction industries changed the development and 'character' of the town. The pre Second World War 'old Darwin' that is remembered in the accounts mentioned by Martinez and Stephen was being subsumed by a new highly transient and mobile local population. This expansion both changed and challenged the local football community. Because of the growing population of Darwin, the Northern Territory Football League developed into a semi professional competition with juniors, reserves and seniors divisions. The image below was taken from the personal collection of a former St Mary's player from the original 1952 / 53 team. What is evident from the image is that even though the team began as an opportunity to let Tiwi men play – it was never exclusively an Indigenous team. There was always a mixture of Indigenous and non- Indigenous players.

#### 1.3.1 Image One: 1952 / 1953 St Mary's Team Photo

There has been little work done on exploring these changes within Darwin's current football community after the post-Second World War era. Other than the briefest of league histories (Lee & Barfoot, 1995) and research on the concept of the Aboriginal All-Stars (Stephen, 2010; Ritchie, 2011) there has been little enquiry, critical or otherwise, into the football identities that have been established in the post-War, post-cyclone era of Darwin's history.

## 1.4 The Objectives of the Study

This study aims to explore how a football club, as an organisation, both forms and maintains certain identities. In understanding that, this study intends to explore how this identity is context based; it can form over time, endure, challenge and change as part of the social landscape of a football club. Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore the formation, development and importance of identity at St Mary's Football Club (FC). To do this there have been two guiding research questions:

- How has identity been constructed and maintained at St Mary's Football Club?
- How has this identity been perceived to have changed or been challenged within the club's recent history?

The first question explores how social and cultural influences have affected the processes of identity construction at St Mary's. The second focuses on how that identity has been changed. By taking this approach, this research aims to explore the potential for social, cultural and political influences to be discussed within the context of sports organisational identity. Identity is a very large topic and in order to answer the question, 'what the club's identity is' the research questions had to be broken down into component parts looking at 'how has identity been constructed and maintained'. The concept of identity is too large to just ask, 'what is it?' without setting out the boundaries for assessing that identity.

### 1.4.1 The Delimitations

This study was limited to the examination of one football club within the NTFL. Outlined within the methodology chapter are the reasons why St Mary's Football Club was chosen. This study focuses on how social and cultural influences have shaped identity construction within a sporting organisation. As a case study for enquiry, St Mary's also has the advantage of beginning in 1952, which was still within living memory of participants in the study. In addition, because of its on-field success, St Mary's Football Club provides a distinct case for exploring the relationships between individual and group responses to the processes of identity construction in creating a successful club environment.

### 1.4.2 Need for Inquiry

This study aims to fill the silence in both organisational and Australian football studies on the topic of organisational identity within local football clubs. There is a lack of information available about how and why identities are formed, created, promoted and maintained within the context of a sporting organisation. The value placed on these organisations by their members is critical. There is a lack of theorisation about how sporting organisations, at a non-elite level, construct and maintain identity. There is an absence of social and cultural analysis within these types of sporting organisations. This thesis is continuing to build on early work conducted by the researcher on the topic of identity construction and football within the Darwin area (Ritchie, 2006, 2011).

St Mary's was chosen because of its unique history as a club and its remarkable on-field success. Since the club's inception, St Mary's has been clearly the most successful team in the NTFL competition in terms of best and fairest winners and in terms of premiership wins. Over the past three decades, in particular, St Mary's has achieved a level of supremacy arguably 'unrivalled' anywhere in Australia. An example of this is that from 26 February 1994 until 1 March 1997, St Mary's had a remarkable 55 match-winning streak. While comparisons are odious and comparing teams over time and across different leagues is difficult, the average 'strike rate' of St Mary's premiership wins since the club's inauguration in 1952—of one premiership win every 2.1 years—is outstanding. With 28 senior premiership wins and 22 best and fairest medals, their dominance over the NTFL competition has been staggering. The successful mixing of a strongly multicultural community is also an important element of St Mary's. It is important to recognise that St Mary's not an Indigenous club per se but because of the strong historical links to the Tiwi Islands combined with the influence of Chinese and South East Asian families it has meant St Mary's has a strong multicultural core. The place of St Mary's within the local football community is unsurpassed. As a current Australian Football League (AFL) (NT) operations manager commented:

> I always reckon they are an icon club. There's icon clubs in every state. And St Mary's is the one here. Cause you have got Port Adelaide in Adelaide. Probably, I don't like to say this … but probably Collingwood in Victoria. Southport in Queensland. Ainsley in Canberra. They are the icon clubs of the states and St Mary's is ours. (AFLNT Administrator 1).

St Mary's was also chosen because it was not a professional sporting club. The

construction of identity within a professional sporting organisation differs from that of a grassroots or non-elite level club because of the lack of top-down directives in terms of the construction and dissemination of a collective identity. Evidence of this is found at St Mary's through the lack of mission statements, very few football operations documents, no player code of conduct nor 'rights and responsibilities' charter. There was a lack significant of player payments (senior players were only paid $50 a game) and the indication of people staying involved, both players, coaches and administrators, because of personal relationships and friendships rather than professional / financial commitments.

## 1.5 Identity Research

This section briefly raises some of the complexities associated with using identity theory, which include the struggle to find a definition for identity, concepts of the 'self' and subjectivity. It is necessary to constrict the size of the discussion; identity is too large a topic and means too many things not to have some limits placed around it. This section explores how identity studies developed and how the concept of the 'self' emerged within psychoanalytical and psychological interpretations of individual identity. It moves towards more cultural and social representations of identity theory that include organisational approaches.

There are many definitions of identity. These range from understanding identity in terms of the individual, the social, the group, the organisation and the nation. As a result, there was no single definition that fitted all these potential applications. For clarity of meaning, this research uses the definition given by Jenkins (2008) that positions identity as 'a multi-dimensional classification or mapping of the human world and our places in it, as individuals or as members of collectives' (Jenkins, 2008, p. 5). This argument positions identity as a system of recognising and identifying individuals within their membership of groups and organisational structures. Jenkins also made the crucial point that 'identity is not fixed, immutable or primordial, [and] that it is utterly socio-cultural in its origins' (Jenkins, 2008, p. 19). By using Jenkins' definitions, this study is positioned within the multiplicity of identity theory. The duality of Jenkins' definitions allows for the term 'identity' to be used to identify a belonging both for the individual and the group, which can change, shift, endure and be challenged over time.

Identity theory has its theoretical beginnings with the great philosophers who followed the Western enlightenment tradition, including Aristotle, Descartes, Locke and Mill. Over the past century, philosophers, psychologists and sociologists have progressed from viewing identity and concepts of the 'self' as one of the innate processes of human existence, towards psychoanalytical readings that have ranged from being based upon personal identity constructed upon Oedipal-type complexities (Freud & Strachey, 1961; Lacan, 1977), to semiotic interpretations that used the literature and art critiques of language and imagery to provide frameworks that have deliberately sought to break down traditional interpretations of what was understood as identity (Derrida, Bass & Ronse, 1981; Foucault, 1979; Foucault & Kritzman, 1988).

Historically, identity theorists have been divided over the potential meaning of the term for as long as it has been in usage. Gleason (1983) explored the history of the term identity, which he argued has developed an increasing number of meanings from both public and academic usage. Gleason argued that the term emerged out of the social sciences. He contrasted psychological usage with the then, less commonly explored sociological aspects by tracing the development of the term going back through from the 1950s to the work of Freud, Foucault and Derrida. Interesting as a historian who advocated for more historical approaches to the word, Gleason eventually blames the social sciences for the mismanagement of the term (Gleason, 1983). He argued that identity theory was characterised by its changing emphasis on how it was constructed. He created a timeline, which began by arguing that in the 1950s identity was characterised by feelings of alienation and rootless-ness; in his view by the 1960s identity was in crisis, which Gleason attributed to large-scale social and cultural upheavals including the Vietnam War, political assassinations and the beginnings of civil rights movements (Gleason, 1983, pp. 927–931). By the 1970s, identity theorists were concerned with ethnic identity and in reinforcing the rise of recent social moments.

By the time Gleason was writing in the 1980s, the increasing influence of poststructuralist and postmodern theorists was filtering into identity debates. While Gleason only wrote up until the 1980s, it was possible to argue that the 1990s were characterised by an uncertainty over the increasing sense of globalisation, and that in this period humankind had reached the height of the postmodern deconstruction of colonial

and cultural identities. By the time of the new millennium (2000), identities appeared to have come full circle. In the sense that while identities may be fragmented due to the process of globalisation they were not fabricated or false (Jenkins, 2008).

There is a theoretical schism between understandings of personal (individual) and collective (group) identities. Within social theory there have been many definitions of the personal identity or the 'self', with different aspects emphasised. In highlighting the differences, Elliott (2008) argued that sociology viewed the 'self' as shaped through social and cultural institutions that were in turn '[re] constituted and reproduced' to be part of the 'self' and social network (Elliott, p. 6). He argued that psychoanalytical constructions view the 'self' as part of an internal dialogue between emotions and identity that is played out between the individual and the group. Using the language of social theorists, Elliott argued, that 'self-hood', 'the self', 'identity', 'the subject', or 'subjectivity' are used interchangeably. Elliott made it clear that identity was not the same thing as the 'self' because identity could also refer to both groups, organisations and could be used in terms of the nation (Elliott, 2008, p. 14). He considered that collective identities were built up through negotiations of power, of commonality based on inclusion and exclusion. In contrast, the self was based on something more: 'desire, unconscious experience of sexuality, gender, race and ethnicity' (Elliott, 2008, p. 14). Despite the overlap within theoretical discourse, identity and the self occupied quite different positions within the social science debate (Clippinger, 2007; Mathews, 2000). As the concept of the 'self' was intertwined within individual identity debates, it would be an omission not to have explored some of the theoretical influences on the constructions of individual identity. In acknowledging that this study, however, was concerned with exploring individual perspectives on a group organisational identity, so this theoretical approach is necessarily limited in its present application.

Regardless of personal- versus collective-identity debates, the interpretations of collective identity remained highly contested: it was too slippery, too vague, too contested and too important to be taken lightly (Goldsworthy, 2008). Writers from both the academic genre, and from within the popular genre have used identity as an attempt to express concepts of individuality, uniqueness, distinctiveness, commonality and characteristics of sameness. Despite the beginning of every discussion of identity stating that it was a difficult concept to pin down, there was no argument that the question of

identity mattered (Hall, 1996; Hall & Du Gay 1996). This study examines how representations of identity have been presented as fluid, potentially multiple, socially influenced representations that are open to (re) interpretation over time. This is based on identity theorists who have argued that identity construction is fundamentally a social process informed by cultural, historical and political discourse (Barker, 2008; Firth, 1996; Grossberg, 1996; Jenkins, 2008; Taylor & Spencer, 2004).

Much existing identity theory acknowledges the semantic tensions and contradictory definitions of the word (Baumann, 1996; Gleason, 1983). The possible usefulness of identity as a concept has been challenged (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). For the purpose of this study, identity theory has been limited to the social world rather than the psychological one. While acknowledging the important influence psychoanalytical work has had on identity theory in the past (Erikson, 1958, 1968), this study was framed within the social applications and cultural understandings of identity.

Hall has argued that identity 'is like a bus! Not because it takes you to a fixed destination but because you can only get somewhere—anywhere—by climbing aboard. The whole of you can never be represented by the ticket you carry, but you still have to buy a ticket to get from here to there' (Hall, 1996, p. 65). Barker reiterated this position and argued the 'the trick is to try and hold both the plasticity and the practical fixity of identity in mind at the same time, enabling one to oscillate between them' (Barker, 2008, p. 245).

### 1.5.1 Sport and identity

On the surface, identity and sport appear to be intertwined concepts. Much of the sports literature, however, does not go far enough to investigate and challenge what is identity. When sports academics, sociologists or historians have used identity theory it is mostly in the context of national identity (Armstrong & Giulianotti, 2004; Bandyopadhyay, 2008; Blain, Boyle & O'Donnell, 1993; Hunter, 2003; Roche, 2000; Smith & Porter, 2004; Tomlison & Young, 2006) or concerning the complexities of fan experience (Armstrong, 1998; Armstrong & Giulianotti 2001; Dunning, Murphy & Waddington, 2002). In an Australian context the topic of sport and constructions of national identity proliferate in media and social commentary. The 2009 special edition of *Soccer & Society* was entirely focused on the relationship between sport and constructions of

Australian national identity. The dominance of sport has been labelled an obsession and considered a defining part of the national psyche (Ward, 2009). In Australia, discussions of sporting achievement and national identity are positioned side-by-side, however, the dominance of these meta-narratives makes it difficult to challenge identity theories not constructed at a national level. The following chapter will explore some of the gaps and absences within the current sports discourse in regards to identity theory.

## 1.6 Summary

By exploring identity at St Mary's Football Club, there was an opportunity to investigate how individual perceptions, memories and voices contributed to the construction and maintenance of an organisation's identity. Not only does the on-field success of St Mary's make it a particularly unique case study, but also it provided a chance to uncover what aspects of the club's identity have been created, lost or changed or those aspects that have endured over its very successful history.

The subsequent chapter continues to examine identity theory more closely as the literature review explores the further theoretical developments of collective identity. The third chapter articulates the methodological considerations of choosing St Mary's as a case study. This methodology chapter also outlines the qualitative approaches used in the data collection process. The results are presented over two chapters: the fourth chapter examines identity construction and maintenance. The fifth chapter investigates the possibility of identity change as a result of internal and external threats. The sixth and final chapter includes a discussion section, the limitations, the implications for theory and practice as well as the contribution and further questions raised by this research.

The next chapter will provide a review of the literature on the topic of identity. This review includes national, cultural, social and organisational theoretical positions. Also discussed is how the different theoretical arguments present the nature of identity construction. Using social and cultural influences within organisational identity offers an opportunity to discuss these multiple layers within the process of identity construction.

# Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter explores the major theoretical developments related to the concept of identity and how they have been applied to sport. This includes looking at national, cultural and ethnic, social, group and organisational identity theories. The different theoretical positions form the major sections of the chapter. Within each section, a definition of identity is presented, along with a discussion of potential gaps and limitations of previous approaches to identity studies. There is also an examination of how identity has been applied to sport and sporting groups. The concluding section of the chapter links cultural and social identity with organisational identity theory, which provides the overarching framework for this study.

Identity has been traditionally constructed as constant, stable and unchanging (Gleason, 1983). This view became known as the 'essentialist' position and primarily used psychoanalytical frameworks to explore identity construction and analysis (Calhoun, 1995; Gleason, 1983; Mercer, 1990). The essentialist position proposed that identity was formed through shared understandings of history, language and common ancestry expressed through customs and ceremonies (including flags, banners and anthems). Identity is fixed, relatively stable and acquired at birth. It has been proposed that identity is an innate part of a person that exists across time, regardless of geographical place (Robins, 2005). This position suggests that there must also be a corresponding essence of identity that all genders, ethnicities or nationalities share (Barker, 2008).

In contrast, the 'non-essentialist' position developed later as a response to cultural and social anthropology studies. This position views identity as a plural construction. Instead of there being a single common identity, there is the potential for identities to be deconstructed, rearranged over time, to be multiple and changeable (Barker, 2008). Identities are presented as being socially constructed. Due to social, political and historical influences, identities are open to 'continuous change and reconfiguration' (Robins, 2005, p. 173). The non-essentialist position allows for multiple interpretations of individual and group identity. Identities are constructed as a product of the interaction between individuals, groups, families and communities. Robins argues that 'identities cannot be self-sufficient: they are… constituted in and through their multiple relations to other identities' (Robins, 2005, p. 173). The non-essentialist position explores the

demarcation between individual and group identities. This position is also marked by a divergence from established psychoanalytical understandings, which had considered a stable individual identity to be linked to an expressed personality. Identities were viewed as being developed through and as a result of changing social environments. The difference between the two positions is based on whether identity is seen as being constructed as a psychological reflection of a 'true' self, or as socially expressed through individual and group interaction. The non-essentialist position views individual and group identities as being able to change and not a direct expression of a core or innate self.

The divide between the two positions on identity has been eroded over time. Giddens (1991) argued that what stopped a total fracturing of all identities was the 'practical consciousness' of individuals that allowed them to maintain a sense of self and of individual identity through the process of day-to-day rituals and embedded social structures (Giddens, p. 37). Giddens argued that it was because of the day-to-day routines that there was a sense of 'social stability' (Giddens, 1991, p. 37). He viewed individual identity as caught in an intersection between 'the local and global', where individuals are confronted with a vast range of options and diverse opportunities that previously they had been closed off from (Giddens, 1991, p. 5). This meant that local and global identities were constantly open to reinterpretation. Giddens' argument proposed that identity construction was an on going process of adapting, accepting and rejecting particular identities at different times and stages.

Following on from the non-essentialist position, the next section explores how identity has been previously theorised as a social and cultural construction. To do this it was necessary to include the influences of national identity. This section concludes with a broad examination of group and organisational identity. Each section includes how these identity theories have been applied to sport. This is to contextualise the identity debate in terms of its applicability to sporting organisations.

## 2.1 National Identity

National identity has been defined as the experiences of commonality based on a shared nationality. The rise of national identity has been linked to the spread of nationalism

(Anderson, 1991; Smith, 1991). In his seminal work, *Imagined Communities*, Anderson argued that the spread of nationalism was constructed on the logic of citizens being involved in an 'imagined political community' (1991, p. 4). His central contention was that people felt strong bonds of commonality with other members of their community without physically knowing them. The imagined bond created a sense of national identity, which eventually could lead to nationalistic tendencies. The idea of the 'imagined community' had a poignant resonance that justified an increasingly diasporic and globalised community. Anderson posited that all communities were to some extent 'imagined'. He suggested that it was the (imagined) bond felt between individuals that constructed national identity (Anderson, 1991). Political theorists argued that national identity was a relatively stable concept, an expression of an accepted nationality. Since the 1990s, however, there has been shift towards conceptualising national identity as unstable (Smith, 1991). Smith argued that identity was based on political delineations based on changing geographic territory and conceptions of ancestral lineage (Smith, 1991). Current definitions of national identity propose it as constructed through 'negotiation, among forces both internal and external' (Rusciano, 2003, p. 361). Rusciano proposes that national identity is based more often on the inclusion and exclusion of particular groups and minorities at different stages of the political cycle (Rusciano, 2003). The different interpretations have created multiple constructions of national identity. As Bellamy argued, 'when identity is seen a process rather than essence, as arising through interaction with others rather than already existing, then a sea change occurs in how we conceive of states and the ways they are organised' (Bellamy, 2002, p. 299).

From the literature surveyed there is evidence to suggest that identity and community are intertwined. It has been difficult to explore one concept without touching on the other. Many of the debates surrounding what is a community have followed the same theoretical transitions as identity theory. While these concepts are interlinked they are not the same, however, there has been a tendency to equate collective identity with a community. In terms of the identity of sporting communities, and organisations are a part of these communities, there has been a shift away from considering identity viewed as locked or fixed to a geographical location. Brown, Crabbe and Mellor (2008) favoured a postmodern approach, which constructed football communities as less static than traditional geographic communities but bound through a sense of belonging.

Sport has been used to explore this tension between inclusion and exclusion in terms of national-identity construction. From Geertz's (1973) now seminal work on the intricacies of community and social anthropology through the Balinese cockfight to contemporary constructions of identity challenged through post-colonial cricket; sport has been used to examine national characteristics and identity (Carter, 2002). The cycle of inclusion and exclusion has also explored the construction of spectator identities, hooliganism and nationalistic behaviour.

Sport has been used as a case study to understand macro constructions of power, regional and global economic shifts and class politics. The process of constructing national identity through sport has been culturally imbued with understandings of power. Cricket and soccer in India have been explored as a site of on-field resistance against a colonial system (Bandyopadhyay, 2008; Majumdar & Bandyopadhyay, 2006). Sporting events such as the Olympic Games have been used to explore national identity within the context of sport (Tomlinson & Young, 2006). National identity has been constructed through the on-field success of countries, in particular, in terms of sport. Archetti (1994) expressed how Argentina's prominence in football has given it notoriety in world sport, 'through football Argentina became an important actor in the modern world history of sport' (Archetti, p. 226). Sport has provided a lens through which to explore national-identity construction, particularly in the form of nation states in competition.

Spectators have also been used to interpret the process of inclusion and exclusion in national-identity construction. Many of the most comprehensive studies have concentrated primarily on the nationalistic tendencies found within the culture of 'soccer hooliganism' (Brown, 1998; Brown, 2007; Dunning, Murphy & Waddington, 2002; Giulianotti, 1994; Harris & Alexander, 1998; Hughson, 1998; Wann, Melnick, Russell & Pease, 2001). These studies focused on particular understandings of spectator-identity construction, which were interpreted along nationalistic lines. Identities were bound within cultural, ethnic and religious groupings.

### 2.1.1 Summary

National identity is considered to be crucial to understanding the feelings of commonality expressed between individuals in a country or diaspora: the collective identity of a nation. Interpretations of how national identity has been constructed have varied. On balance, national-identity construction is positioned as being a process of inclusion and exclusion based on the political cycle. This tension between inclusion and exclusion has been explored in the context of sport. Sport has been used as a lens through which to investigate attributes of national character and identity. National identity is used as an entrée into the discussion of meta-narratives including power, class and post-colonialism.

The next two sections explore the major theoretical developments within both cultural- and social-identity studies. The sections are divided between cultural and ethnic identity as one aspect and social identity as another. Both sections explore the application of identity to the topic of sport.

## 2.2 Cultural and Ethnic Identity

Cultural identity has been interpreted as being constructed through historical and on going social–institutional relationships, signs and symbols (Cohen, 1985; Hall & Du Gay, 1996; Mercer 1990). This interpretation of cultural identity was based on the interaction between the individual and the group through the representation of multiple identities. There were strong links to the theory of political and cultural studies, which have used semiotics to highlight the fluidity of identity-theory. This section positions cultural identity in both the essentialist and non-essentialist paradigms and explores the developments within cultural identity theory that resulted in the postmodern ‘crisis’ of identity of the early 1990s.

Within the context of this research it is important to define how cultural and ethnic identity has been used to describe different facets of the process of identity construction. In this study, culture is understood to be an anthropological term used to describe a society’s customs, traditions and belief structures (Geertz, 1973, Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1963, White & Dillingham, 1973). More recently, this view has been overlaid with pluralist versions of culture formed between individuals or groups and their social world (Roche, 2000). Culture is a term that has been used to explain a wide variety of social relationships and experiences. These included culture being used to describe large,

homogenous aspects of society to very narrow examples of minorities and social movements (Rutherford, 1990; Sewell, 2005; Wenner & Jackson, 2009). Due to this complexity it has been difficult to articulate a singular construction of culture (Borofsky, Barth, Schweder, Rodseth & Stolzenbery, 2001). In this study, cultural identity has been interpreted as the ways in which groups and individuals contextualise their own daily rituals, beliefs, attitudes and experiences. This has required an exploration of the social, historical and political context of a group or community.

The term 'cultural identity' evolved as part of the non-essentialist revision of identity-theory. It stressed the multiplicity of individual and group experiences. Cultural identity was interpreted as constructed through distinct ethnic or language groups, customs, rituals and traditions not only defined in reference to the nation state. Cultural identity was viewed in relation to a 'discursive-performative' that allowed for the interplay between representations of race, ethnicity and national identity (Barker, 2008, p. 247). This view suggested that cultural identity construction was a process created through and by social performances and cultural practice. Cultural identity has been heavily influenced by postmodern critiques of language and discourse (Rutherford, 1990; Barker, 2008).

### 2.2.1 Central Features of Cultural Identity

The influence of postmodern theorists was one of the key features of cultural identity studies. During the mid-1990s there was a 'crisis' of cultural identity. At that time, cultural identity theorists oscillated around the central themes of globalisation, ethnicity and the idea of a 'crisis' or 'loss' of identity, which resulted from increased globalisation and the decline of modernist influences (Mercer, 1990). Hall (1990) argued that cultural identity theory offered an opportunity to explore communities that had experienced fragmentation and dislocation because of colonial and post-colonial regimes. He suggested that while cultural identities were a product of historical influences, they were 'far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous "play" of history, culture and power' (Hall, 1990, p. 225). Hall posited that cultural identities were not stable or fixed in an enduring notion of 'the past'. Instead, identities were in a process of reinterpretation because of current political and cultural power shifts within a community. Hall positioned his own argument of the cultural

identity of Caribbean cinema within the paradigm of Said's (1978) 'imaginative geography' and Anderson's (1991) 'imagined communities'. Hall (1990) argued that a sense of collective belongingness could be found through the process of cultural identity construction. He made the key point that cultural identity was a process of identification, which allowed for different voices to be heard, while at the same time recognising the points of similarity between them (Hall, 1990). Hall's argument that identity was a process of identification remained central to social constructions of identity. Hall's (1995, 1996) argument about the immutability of 'the past' challenged not only notions of cultural identity but historical and social constructions (Hall, 1995, 1996).

The notion of cultural identity faced criticism. Even within the field of cultural studies there were those who argued that collective identity was based on individual and group agency and was, therefore, fundamentally socially contingent. Grossberg (1996) used the provocative example of the Tiananmen Square protest to argue that 'there is no common identity, no property that defines them apart from the fact that they were there, together, in that place. It was the fact of belonging that constituted their belonging together' (Grossberg, p. 104).

There has been much equivocating about the usefulness of cultural identity as a concept. This stemmed from the uncertainty over the position of cultural identity within the canon of identity studies. Arguments about cultural identity ranged from studies within national identity, political identity and anthropological understandings of culture and community, to psychoanalytical and semiotic interpretations (Grossberg, 1996; Hall, 1995; Rutherford, 1990). These arguments transposed cultural identity outside of the frame of individuals and groups towards globalised understandings of nationalism and Western connotations of power (Hall, 1996).

### 2.2.2 The Return of Ethnic Identity

As cultural identity became more fragmented, there was an acknowledged erosion of the term's usefulness. Hall (1996) even pushed for a 'return to ethnicity' instead of culture (Hall, p. 304). During the 1990s there was considerable exposure in the popular press to geographical areas of ethnic conflict and the experiences of an increasingly mobile human population have given rise to the change in terminology (Brubaker, 2004;

Brubaker & Frederick, 2000). The 'return' of ethnicity meant that instead of identity being discussed in terms of cultural markings, it became negotiated on delineations between ethnic groups.

As concepts, cultural and ethnic identities were not mutually exclusive. Ethnic identity explored the relationships between different groups based on ethnic bonds using cultural–social anthropology, politics and sociology resources (Alba, 1990; Barth, 1969; Dashefsky, 1976; Engman, 1992, Romanucci-Ross & D Vos 1995). These studies typically used ethnographic research rather than the cultural studies' semiotic approach. Ethnic identity explored the boundaries of group identity and the connections of networks including cultural, kinship and societal obligations (Sanders, 2002). Ethnic identity was interpreted as constructed through the demarcation of group experience along ethnic boundaries. Ethnic identity was not immune to the postmodern analysis. Levine argued that the impact of 'unfettered symbolic discourse' from cultural and political theorists, on the concept of ethnicity, made it 'very difficult to produce general statements about these representations' (Levine, 1999, p. 178). Interpretations of ethnicity were both multiple and convoluted.

Representations of ethnic identity were bound to group identities. There was no concept for individual ethnicity or of having a singular ethnic identity. Brubaker (2004) argued that there was more fluidity of group boundaries than had previously been considered. He suggested that the sense of belonging associated with fixed ethnic boundaries was in itself the product of illusionary feelings of 'groupness' (Brubaker, p. 29). Brubaker and Cooper (2000) had clarified in early work that the problem with using identity, as an analytical concept, was that it was 'hopelessly-ambiguous' (Brubaker & Cooper, p. 6). They were particularly critical of the rise of 'identity politics' and the 'identity crisis', which was attributed to cultural studies and political theory (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, p. 6). The focus of the argument against the use of identity was based on the notion that identity failed to encapsulate the complexities of ethnic relationships and identified group ethnicity. Brubaker (2004) argued that 'constructivist and groupist language' have dominated academic discussion in regards to the examination of ethnicity and identity (Brubaker, p. 3). He considered ethnic identity as destroyed by constructivist language because it 'deprives us of analytical leverage and constricts the political possibilities' of the term (Brubaker, 2004, p. 55). Jenkins (2008) responded to Brubaker's claims and

concluded the logic of not using identity because of definitional challengers took a 'broadly sensible argument to its logical extremity and … [have wound] up [being] somewhere less sensible' (Jenkins, p. 9).

### 2.2.3 Application and Influence of Cultural Identity in Sport

Sport has been used to explore the cultural and ethnic identity of particular groups. These studies have focused on the social, religious and cultural aspects that have influenced individual and group identities (Armstrong & Giulianotti, 1997; Finn & Giulianotti, 2000; Magdalinski & Chandler, 2002). This section explores how cultural and ethnic identities have been applied to sports both internationally and locally in Australia. This includes an examination of identity construction in Australian football literature. The studies on cultural identity constructed through soccer (football) communities have provided a global context for this research. It is also necessary to include male sporting identity, which is often presented through a cultural-analysis lens.

Sport has been used to examine the intricacies of cultural and ethnic identities within certain communities. One of the most successful, and arguably the most complete examples of cultural identity frameworks was used by Giulianotti (2007) to explore the complexities of a successful, regional football club within a local competition. He used ethnographic observation and interviews with the supporters of Rangers Football Club in Scotland to explore the social identities of the club using a popular-culture model (Giulianotti, 2007). He explored both the internal and external cultural politics of the club. He sought to uncover both the internal observations of the fans in 'relating to the specific realm of football, such as regarding Rangers specifically or the Scottish game more generally' (Giulianotti, 2007, p. 262). He also explored the external cultural politics of the Rangers' fans. This included examining the 'broader fields of social relations such as in regard to ethnicity, nationality, religion, and formal political identification' (Giulianotti, 2007, p. 262). He focused on five major sociological domains for the construction of Rangers' fan identities: self-perceptions of supporters; the perceptions of the club; religious sectarianism; the media; and the relationship between Rangers and the Scottish national team in terms of national-identity construction (Giulanotti, 2007, p. 262).

Giulianotti used both an internal and external model for establishing identities. He explored how the Rangers' fans construct their collective identity, as defined by the club, their community and their place within the regional football competition. This model had considerable potential for application because it provided an opportunity to explore the relationship between different local football identities within the one club. It especially focused on the relationship between spectator fans and the entity of the sporting club. Giulianotti examined the club's management structures and showed how they pertained to national and religious identity. Giulianotti (2007) argued that there should be more popular culture-studies' analysis done on the 'cultural politics of relatively advantaged groups' (Giulianotti, p. 260). The identities explored within Giulianotti's research highlighted the potential for investigating successful regional football clubs to uncover their identity, but also to locate their place within a regional competition and community.

Using a cultural-studies' framework, Giulianotti's research on Glasgow Rangers was confined within the pre-existing boundaries of race, ethnicity, class, religion and national identity. This model automatically positioned the sporting organisation as a conduit for an exploration of these themes rather than exploring how individual and group identity was constructed. While the difference in focus may be subtle, in doing so it changed the potential analysis away from the identities created within, from and by the sporting organisation, to identities based on already established racial, religious, national or geographical affiliations. It is important to acknowledge that Giulianotti's research was an excellent example of a recent study that examined the relationship between internal and external identification with a sporting organisation. Giulianotti's work provides one of the most comprehensive examples of this type of popular cultural-studies' research.

### 2.2.4 Cultural Identity: Sport and Gender

There has also been a strong focus within cultural identity studies on male identities created within the context of sport. Cultural identity has been applied to the construction of masculinity and male identity. In the same way that cultural identity acknowledges more broadly the multiplicity of identity construction, masculinity studies have particularly focused on the changing nature of male identity (Connell, 2005). Sport has played a key role within identity debates surrounding masculinity and the evolution of male identity. The literature has ranged from debates over friendship, sexuality, racial

categorisation and bodily discourse (Anderson & NetLibrary Inc., 2005; Messner, 2007; Robinson, 2008; Wellard, 2009; Wenner & Jackson, 2009). The emotional bonds and the male friendships formed through these relationships constructed through sport were considered a central feature of the construction of male identity (Messner, 2007). Robinson studied how masculine identity was constructed through the sport of rock-climbing (2008). Her qualitative work found that through sport, 'true friendships have been forged out of shared, extreme sporting experiences' (Robinson, 2008, p. 105). The construction of maleness through the engagement in hyper-masculine behaviour was also explored within the literature (Hickey, 2008). While football was presented as a 'safer' sport and somewhat less extreme than that of windsurfing or rock-climbing, the literature presented male friendships forged through these activities as a key part of the identity construction process (Dunning, 1999)[4]. Certain male identities were constructed within a context of sport and were reinforced through the on-field–off-field contact of these male friendships. Other aspects of cultural identity have been used to challenge the construction of gendered sporting identities. The examination of sporting minorities, which include women and homosexual men, have been used to challenge perceptions of dominant cultural identities and to give voice to alternative identity narratives (Australia Senate Communication Information Technology Report & Bartlett, 2006; Hargreaves, 2000).

The place of women within Australian football clubs is complicated. McCauley (2008) argued in *Quadrant Magazine* that 'Football is men's business--it is quite possibly sacred men's business--and the attempts to feminise it are ideologically driven, nasty and envious attempts at a weird kind of retribution which could prove absolutely counter-productive' (McCauley, p. 30). He goes on to make several arguments that the essence of Australian football culture was being destroyed as women have 'bullied' themselves onto boards and into 'positions of power' (McCauley, 2008, p. 30). While McCauley's position is contentious it is evident from his argument that the cultural construction of football identity remains undeniably male, and yet forced to be open to ongoing contest and negotiation (Barry, 2006). It is essential to note, however, that the targeted exploration of conflict within male identity or sexuality in sport is not a direct focus of the research questions.

[4] Without argument football is not a 'safe' sport as it is an aggressive, physical, hard, challenging game with a high potential for physical injury. It is not, however, considered an extreme sport (like rock climbing, base jumping, or mountaineering). Robins' suggested football was a 'safer' alternative not safe.

### 2.2.5 Cultural Identity: Through the Lens of Australian Football

In an Australian context, the majority of Australian football literature has explored the cultural implications of the game with only limited reference to identity-theory. There is a wealth of material on the topic of Australian football both from academic sources and in the popular press (Blainey, 2003; Brodie & O'Connor, 1995; Ryan, 2009; Stewart, 2007; Stewart & Hess, 1998). Australian football studies have gained impressive momentum since the seminal work done on football culture and history by Sandercock and Turner (1981). The majority of Australian football literature has focused on the impact of suburban grounds, individual players and comprehensive club histories (Lack & Aus-Sport Enterprises, 1996; Linnell, 1995; Pascoe, 1995; Stremski, 1986). More recently, there has been more of an examination of football literature in terms of aspects of commercialisation, business and policy development of the football brand (Stewart, 2007). Much of the Australian football literature has explored the cultural implications of football in connection to place, family, local characters, performance and community (Nicholson, Stewart & Hess, 2006). The relationship between Australian football and the topic of identity, however, has remained under-examined.

Discussions of identity and Australian football often return to understandings of identity formed through a sense of place and belonging. There has been significant research done on the establishment of local identities around suburban home grounds (Daffey, 2002; Flanagan, 1994). Other studies explore how this attachment to place has been forced to change. These include the changes in Melbourne suburban home grounds that resulted from the expansion of the AFL from the original Victorian Football League (VFL). This changed how local identities were represented in Australian football (Linnell, 1995). Many were critical of the loss of local suburban football identities, local culture and lack of community consultation into this process (Hess, Nicholson, Stewart, & de Moore, 2008, pp. 322–324). The nationalisation of the game was thought to distance clubs from their historic supporter bases of suburban Melbourne (Nadel, 1998). The local identity constructed through community football was presented as being attached strongly to Melbourne's own unique identity (Kingston, 1999).

More recently, the examination of place and identity construction has explored some of the dangerous undercurrents in rural sporting communities (Tonts & Atherley, 2010). The work of Tonts and Atherley is influenced by early work done on social-capital production in rural communities (Tonts, 2005). They focused on identity as being represented through a community, arguing that identity was created through social memory and cultural practice, including sport (Tonts & Atherley, 2010, p. 382). They argued that the construction of identity was formed through the marginalisation of certain sections of those communities. They suggested that sport could be both inclusive but also highly divisive, as it excluded certain sections of the community by their non-participation. Occupational-therapy studies have also examined the relationship between football clubs and the local community in terms of promoting physical and mental well-being. The relationship between the football club and the broader community is explored in terms of sport providing social and physical connections between individuals and groups (Mynard, Howie, & Collister, 2009). It is evident from these studies that the communities outside of the major metropolitan centres are an under-explored area of identity construction.

A key feature of cultural identity is the element of performance in both personally and publicly expressed identities. While not using cultural identity specifically, there were examples within the Australian football literature that highlighted the element of performance. These ranged from identity expressed through the tragedy and performance of the experiences of a football spectator (Fitzpatrick, 1998) to also include the analysis of sports television programs to juxtapose footballers' television personas as examples of Australian masculinity (Alomes, 1998). More recently, this performative element has been investigated through the spectator identities established through the process of cathartic loss. Klugman used the example of the Western Bulldogs memorable preliminary final loss to the Adelaide Crows to examine the process of fan identification as formed through the tragic elements of winning and losing (Klugman, 2009).

Alongside these representations of identity formed through place and performance is the notion that Australian football identity is constructed through family relationships. Cash and Damousi (2006) used psychoanalytical theory to examine the father–daughter relationship in terms of football spectatorship and involvement. This poignant and sensitive work highlights how identification through football could be 'all at once,

personal, familial, and more broadly social' (Cash & Damousi, 2006, p. 231). While they used psychoanalytical theory and the term 'identification' rather than 'identity', it is evident that personal and family relationships are constructed and maintained through watching games and football club culture more broadly.

Smith and Shilbury (2004) in their overview of organisational culture called for more 'humane' approaches to organisational theory in sporting clubs (Smith & Shibury, 2004, p. 134). By using qualitative in-depth interviews they argued allowed the personal and collective to be included in the cultural constructions of an organisation. Their work had been influenced by much early work of Smith and Steward (1995) who had explored organisational cultured within Australian football club. The focus on culture again highlights the preference use of culture as a theoretical tool over identity research.

Cultural identity theory has been used to represent the Indigenous contribution to the game of Australian football (Judd, 2008; McNeill, 2008, Stephen 2010; Gorman, 2005; Coram 2000). The identities of Indigenous players create an opportunity to explore the potentially multiple nature of both individual and group identity. Judd (2008) successfully explored some of the complexities of post-colonial identity within the framework of 'hybridity theory' (Judd, p. 2). Judd used Langton's seminal argument to contend that post-colonial Australian identity was formed through a process of 'cross-cultural dialogue' (Judd, 2008, p. 2). He argued that this exchange of identities created an 'in between' status (Judd, 2008, p. 3). Judd used this argument to explore football identities that resided between the hybrid existence of Indigenous and mainstream Australia. Judd did not make use of Jones' (2007) work done on cross-cultural interaction on the frontier of Australia; however, there were grounds to contend that football identities created a hybrid experience between Indigenous and non-Indigenous players, spectators and team officials. The hybridisation of football identities within Judd's argument suggests that players' identities are both multiple and constructed through a complex negotiation of reinforced cultural norms and attitudes.

### 2.2.6 Summary

Constructions of cultural identity offer an opportunity to investigate individual and group identities based on performance, rituals and traditions. It also allows for a discussion of

broader cultural themes of religion and ethnicity within the context of identity construction. It is necessary to highlight how cultural identity has transitioned as a term to include anthropological aspects, cultural studies, political and psychological interpretations. This transitory period has resulted in criticism that has generated the need to differentiate between cultural and ethnic identity. The challenge of using cultural identity stem from the lack of agreed definitions and clarity of subject matter.

Cultural identity theories have been used to research sport and identity both internationally and in Australia. These studies highlight how identities established through sport are culturally imbued with values. Giulianotti's research on Glasgow Rangers Football Club highlights the usefulness of including cultural approaches to ethnicity and national identity within sporting organisations. The interplay between individual perceptions of the club at a local, state and international level provided a unique insight into identity creation and maintenance within the environment of the football club. The focus on national identity even within a popular-culture study highlighted how often national identity was used as the overarching model for identity discussion. Cultural identity theories focus on themes of race, religion and sectarianism; however, identities constructed through institutions and organisations remain outside of the scope of analysis.

More recent studies have extended these cultural assumptions further and used other techniques including psychoanalytical theory, memory, spectator and fan cultures. Some of the critical themes within Australian football literature include the discussion of place, performance and community. There remains a gap in terms of group identity and organisational theory used within the context of grassroots community football clubs.

## 2.3 Social Identity

This section moves away from cultural approaches to explore the definitions of social identity from the sociological and social–anthropological positions. It also examines some of the key features of social identity, which includes an explanation of identification. The use of the concept 'social identity' is somewhat problematic because it has an array of meanings attached to it from the most specific of theories within social psychology and social-identity theory to the broadest usage in cultural studies,

anthropology and sociology. The consistent use of the term 'social identity' has come about from the need to distinguish identity based on personal psycholinguistics from identity constructed around social, cultural and political influences. This section explores the application of social identity within the context of sport and sporting organisations.

### 2.3.1 Development of Social Identity

Jenkins (2008) proposed that social identity was defined as the interplay between individual and collective narratives of identity construction. There are concerns with the combined use of 'social' and 'identity' because, Jenkins argued, all identities are based on a combination of interaction between an individual and groups both publicly and privately (Jenkins, 2008, p. 17). He went on to argue that social identity was 'a process—identification—not a "thing"' (Jenkins, 2008, p. 5). Once identity is proposed to be a process of identification, it means that identity is no longer fixed but is instead an on going movement, enabling multiple and hybrid senses of self. There is a significant overlap between the described social identity and constructions of cultural- and ethnic-based identities. Social identity particularly emphasises identity constructed through a process of public identification. These socially constructed identities range from a highly structured form of group membership in clubs, organisations, work places and sport teams to the more fluid interpretations of political allegiance, fans and ideologies (Jenkins, 2008).

### 2.3.2 Key Features of Social Identity

A key aspect of representations of social identity is the concern over the difficulty of finding a comprehensive definition. The problem is that there are multiple definitions of identity recognised. At the broadest level, social identity is proposed to be the process of identification that are constructed through perceived similarities or perceived difference (Friese, 2002; Kapferer, 1996; Rutherford, 1990).

The tension is that this definition suggests that identities are constructed by identifying through a sense of collective sameness and / or the sense of perceived difference. Lawler (2008) argued that by designation, 'identity hinges on an apparently paradoxical combination of sameness and difference' (Lawler, p. 2). She argued that the duality and

complexity of identity arose as it described a shared sense of commonality while simultaneously expressing individual difference (Lawler, 2008). This juxtaposition of definitions is fundamentally Western in its historical creation and application. It places identity as being understood through the Latin derivation of 'idem', which defines identity through the contradictory meanings of both sameness and distinct uniqueness (Jenkins, 2008). The argument is that 'Western notions of identity rely on these two modes of understanding, so that people are understood as being simultaneously the same and different' (Lawler, 2008, p. 2). The dichotomy between the two positions of sameness and difference reflects the challenge of social-identity research. Woodward went further and argued that identity was constructed through juxtaposition with an outsider or created through the sense of 'the Other' (Woodward, 1997, p. 35). This argument suggests that identity construction is based as much on the exclusion of certain groups as well as the inclusion of others.

This emphasis on identity constructed on difference or the 'Other' represents the challenge of using Western cultural understandings (Lawler, 2008; Lin, 2008). There has been criticism of Western academic interpretations of social identity as creating negative connotations of 'subaltern others' (Lin, 2008, p. 3). The argument is that the dominant discourse of social identity theory allows for the opportunity of 'mobile, fluid, [and] favourable' representations of our 'selves' in opposition to a non-mobile, fixed and unfavourable construction of an 'Other' (Lin, 2008, p. 3). This argues that while certain identities, particularly Westernised identities, are able to change, 'Others' are positioned as fixed or immutable in their difference. This argument returns to the position of social identities constructed through exclusion.

In terms of how difference has been represented within social identity, theorists were accused of reinforcing 'difference rather than simply representing positions' (Skeggs in Lin, 2008, p. 27). This argument suggested that any identities explored were a tacit confirmation of some positions but a denial of others. Within that frame, researching identity is challenging. By ignoring the topic of identity, the researcher could be accused of effectively disempowering all identities that have not yet been confirmed or explored within the already existing literature. Researchers should acknowledge that identities are constructed within certain ideological paradigms. It would be nonsensical to extend that

argument and not explore identity for the fear of potentially confirming one identity over another.

Another key feature of social identity is the emphasis on public representations of identity. The public enactment of certain social identities is juxtaposed with the 'individualist and psychologistic perspectives that have tended to dominate discussions of this issue' (Lawler, 2008, p. 1). Lawler argued that social identities needed to be both 'collectively agreed and validated' (Lawler, 2008, pp. 25–28). Identities were formed through the 'interconnectedness' of social relationships (Lawler, 2008, p. 143). As in cultural identities, the performance element of identity construction is important. At the collective and individual level, identities are performed, reflected, acknowledged and validated. Social identities matter both privately for the individual and publicly for group constructions of identity.

The central feature of social identity is that it proposes identity as constructed through an open-ended process that is constantly being reinterpreted and negotiated. The potential for multiplicity of interpretation has made social identity unique. Jenkins (2008) argued 'who we are is always multi-dimensional, singular and plural—it is never a final or settled matter' (Jenkins, p. 17). He suggested that all identities 'rely on not being something else' (Jenkins, 2008, p. 3). The anxiety over the representations of social identity as based on binary definitions of sameness versus difference or Western versus 'Other' has dissipated as theorists have constructed both conflicting and layered understandings of social identities.

### 2.3.3 Application of Social Identity to Sport

During the mid-1990s, MacClancy (1996) argued that the topic of sport had been ignored as a serious topic of sociological debate. He suggested that, 'sport might be fun … that does not mean it should be disregarded by academics' (MacClancy, 1996, p. 2). He argued that identities constructed through sport have the potential to be expressed 'simultaneously, seasonally or consecutively' (MacClancy, 1996, p. 3). MacClancy used spectator culture as an example of the fluidity of social identities established through sport. He argued that sports spectatorship was not only entertainment but also played an important social function by establishing boundaries of belonging to a local and regional

identity (MacClancy, 1996). Since then, there has been a range of studies that have used sport to explore social-identity construction. The majority of studies have been applied within the context of football in the United Kingdom. While the bulk of studies remain focused on the experiences of fans and spectators, they provide a successful example of identity theory being applied to the topic of local sport within an international context. Giulianotti and Armstrong explored the social identity of football fans in the United Kingdom (Armstrong & Giulianotti, 2001, 2004; Armstrong & Mitchell, 2008). Mostly, they followed ethnographic and observation-based analyses of social identity constructed through the relationship between spectators, fans, clubs and the local community. In terms of deviant social identity, the behaviour of soccer hooliganism is used as a microcosm for national-identity debates.

Another aspect of social identity enacted through sport has been in Clark's (2006) examination of identity constructed through soccer terrace-chants. He used the context of regional football in Britain to examine the processes of both community and identity construction (Clark, 2006). Using an ethnographic observation technique, Clark explored how chants and songs have been fundamental rituals that have symbolised football fans' identities. Clark used Jenkins' position on collective identities to argue that 'sport has become an integral part of constructing and (re) negotiating place-related collective identities' (Clark, 2006, p. 496). Clark also argued that the identities of smaller regional clubs have been under-researched in favour of larger football clubs. Clark made the point that identities were not 'merely passively consumed, indeed, there is an on going process of negotiation' (Clark, 2006, p. 502). He suggests that over time these chants have changed to reflect the changing identities within the fan group. The idea of identity being a process built through continued social interaction was a repeated theme, also suggesting that identity rituals were able to change without compromising the overall construction of group identity.

In Australia, the concept of social identity has also been used to explore identity construction within soccer communities (Hughson, 1998; Palmer, 2009). Hughson investigated soccer hooliganism as an expression of social resistance, as part of reclaiming a sense of local ethnic identity (Hughson, 1998, pp. 406–407). He argued that as part of the process of the South Australian government's aim to de-ethnicise soccer teams, they have pushed those who value their club's ethnic origins into struggling to

find a space to ‘display their identity’ (Hughson, 1998, p. 408). The public performance of waving flags and chanting ethnic-specific slogans highlights the cultural element of social-identity construction. Palmer also used social identity as a concept to explore identity construction within women’s soccer teams. She particularly focused on social relationships and identity created within a Muslim women’s soccer league in Adelaide. Palmer argued that these women established particular refugee identities because, in part, they were formed out of religious isolation and were exacerbated by gendered tensions within the soccer league (Palmer, 2009, pp. 34–35). Through the public performance of women’s soccer, a bridge was established between the cultural divides within the community: ‘these women … became important ambassadors for their community’ (Palmer, 2009, p. 34). Palmer’s research highlighted the intersection between cultural, religious and ethnic understandings of identity construction. There is a correlation between social identity and ethnic-, cultural- and national-identity theories. The interplay between social, cultural and national identity highlights how it is difficult to separate identity into distinct categories, as they often remain as interwoven concepts.

### 2.3.4 Summary

This research acknowledges that the proposed concept of social identity is constructed within a Western academic tradition. Social identity is constructed as a process that is based on identifying with a common group, which is a public construction performed by individuals, institutions and organisations. Social identity is also based on a perceived sense of sameness or of unique difference. Constructions of social identity are formed through both the inclusion and exclusion of individuals.

Jenkins’ theories of social identity have been used to research identity construction through the process of behaviour, in which terrace-chants were used as an example. The dominant theories of soccer hooliganism use elements of social identity to construct the relationship between individuals, collectives and national-identity structures. There is a strong parallel between the representation of social identity and theories of cultural, ethnic and national identity in terms of their application to sport. Through the research done on Australian soccer communities, social identity has been used to give voice to ethnic, religious or gendered minorities. The central argument of social identity was that it understood identity construction as a social process that was an open-ended negotiation

between individuals and groups, fundamentally influenced by cultural, political and shared history: an interplay between individual interpretations of publicly performed socially enacted identities.

## 2.4 Group Identity

This section explores the construction of group identity. Much of the literature is dominated by the disciplines of psychology and social psychology. Group identity is included in this literature review because of the parallels between group-identity and organisational identity theories. This section examines representations of individual and group identities. It also includes how collective constructions of group identity have been applied to sporting groups and communities. This section explores some of the limitations of this proposed construction of group identity.

During the mid-twentieth century the concept of individual identity emerged in the disciplines of psychology and psychoanalysis. The focus on the individual reflected the modernist sentiments of the period. Identity was proposed to be a part of an individual's personality and was often explored as an innate part of human characteristics. The terminology of individual identity includes: 'subject', 'self', 'I', 'me' and 'mine'. Theorists began to acknowledge the interplay between the individual and group, in terms of, representations of identity. In doing so, theorists acknowledged that identity could be established both through personality traits and through an engagement with the broader social world. At this time the majority of identity research remained bounded to the concept of individual self and an expression of innate personal characteristics (Cooley, 1983; Goffman, 1969; Mead & Morris, 1934). Within that, there were those who situated individual identity within a socially constructed past. Cooley, Mead and Goffman explored the use of language, which included 'I', 'me' and 'mine' when used by individuals to project their sense of self in relationship to their social world. This interest in language as part of the construction of identity, as in the difference between I and me, has been influential on postmodern organisational identity theorists (Hatch & Schultz, 2004). The work of Goffman, Cooley and Mead all offer an approach to individual identity that emphasises the role of social interaction in the processes of identity construction. While they still proposed that identity was innate, they also recognised that

individual human distinctiveness could be lost without interaction with the social world (Goffman, 1969).

### 2.4.1 Key Features of Group-Identity Theories

The social-psychological concept of identity theory (IT)[5] was founded within the discipline of psychology (Erikson, 1959, 1968). Identity theory focuses the construction of identity from the individual-psychology position that suggests identities are stable and constructed over time (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Only through social psychology are the social implications of identity construction more fully examined. Social identity theory proposes that identity is constructed though social groups and is based on dominant categories (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). Social identity theory constructs identity based on a process of self-definition that occurs through identification with particular but broad social categories, which include, 'nationality, political affiliation, [even] sports team', (Hogg, Terry & White, 1995, p. 259). By identifying with certain group identities, people start the process of in-group and out-group categorisation—deciding who belongs and who does not. Defining who retains group membership of the 'in-group' not only creates a perception of an 'out-group' but, in doing so, it strengthens the process of in-group identity formation (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). Hogg et al. argue that the process of self-categorisation, in terms of group behaviour, actually relies on a level of 'depersonalization' between group members (1995, p. 261). Instead of a seeing themselves as individuals, they have to identify as having a distinctly bound group identity.

Social identity theory successfully explores the potential for an individual to improve their self-esteem and enhance their social status by being able to move between social groups. Hogg et al. argue that the individuals seeking 'self enhancement' are unlikely to engage in active competition in outside groups who they would ultimately seek acceptance from at a later date (Hogg et al., 1995). They examined 'low status' in-group members and found that they considered their position as fixed and so remained oppositional to those in a 'higher' status out-group (Hogg et al., 1995, p. 260).

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[5] Identity theory within psychological discussions is often shortened to the abbreviation IT, however, for the purpose of this literature review it will be referred to in full as identity theory. This is the same for social identity theory (which is known as SIT); social categorisation theory (SCT) and realistic conflict group (RCG).

The fluidity and mobility of social identity theory has been challenged within the theoretical debate. Huddy (2001) argued that social identity theory conceptualises identity as being 'multifaceted and situationally contingent' (Huddy, p. 128). She suggested that despite the rise of identity politics there has been little attention paid within social identity theory to exploring the intricacies of political identification. She argued that while attention had been paid to exploring how in-group and out-group bias occurred, there has been little work done on 'strong identities that endure across situations and over time' (Huddy, 2001, p. 136). Huddy used the example where teams that had a membership base assigned to them felt only positive self-esteem when they had won; in contrast, the team who had voluntarily chosen their members felt better about the team even after they had lost (Huddy, 2001, p. 139). Identity is stronger in a team environment or organisational context when it is acquired rather than ascribed (Huddy, 2001). Huddy argued that there was evidence to suggest that 'strong identities are more resistant to social change' than has been previously argued by social-identity theorists (Huddy, 2001, p. 148).

Researchers have used social identity theory to explore a broad variety of ways in which groups establish and define themselves and their identity. Most commonly, social identity theory is used to explore intergroup self-esteem and discrimination based on out-group status (Brown, 2000). Social identity theory has also been successfully able to explore intergroup conflict based on national, religious, ethnic or cultural lines (Brown, 2000, p. 768). The combination of social identity theory with realistic group conflict offers the potential to explore the social processes of identity construction within the context of group conflict and nationalistic identification (Brown, 2000). There is also potential to use social identity theory as a tool to re-contextualise intergroup dynamics that cease discriminatory practices by redrawing the lines of group affiliation. This mobility of identity offers an opportunity within social identity theory to challenge previously conceptualised identity structures within group conflict (Brown, 2000).

A key construction of social identity theory is the ability of group identity to respond to changes. Social identity theory has been used to explore how groups deal with change or challenges when presented with threats to their group identity (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 1999). Often, identity threats are discussed within the realm of

individual psychology. The ability to be able to incorporate changes within a group identity is a fundamental part of social identity theory. Branscombe et al. identified four levels of identity threats:

i) Categorisation threats;
ii) Distinctiveness threats;
iii) Threats to the value of social identity; and
iv) Acceptance threats.

They determined the impact of the threats on the group's identity by the commitment felt by members towards the group as a whole (Branscombe et al., 1999, p. 36). The ability to deal with changes was tied to the same notions of membership commitment and context that established their group (social) identity. It is used, overall, to explore categorisation of individuals within a social context. The notion of group identities responding to identity threats by being able to both categorise and accept parts of those changes is a key aspect of social identity theory.

Social identity theory is criticised, however, for the difficulty in replicating studies outside the control of a laboratory. Groups based on real-world situations are constructed around both cultural and social influences. A majority of social identity theory studies construct identity around the premise of a single in-group and out-group divide. In doing so, the potential exploration of multiple aspects of identity construction is limited in favour of a single in-group identity (Roccas & Brewer, 2002). Due to the very real-world nature of a sporting organisation, social identity theory is not directly applicable to this study. What is useful is the notion that identity is based on a certain level of inclusion and exclusion, which is changeable and when threatened, the group identity is able to respond to these changes.

### 2.4.2 Application of Group Identity to Sport

There is research on group identities found within sport that utilises social identity theories. The majority of this research focuses on understanding the behaviour and motivations of sport fans. The in-group membership of fans is used to contrast the out-group status of the opposition team and their fans. In their research on the construction of spectator identity, Jackson, Sullivan, Harnish and Hodge proposed that identity was formed through the act of watching and supporting a particular team. When the team was

successful, it reinforced the individual's own sense of positive self-worth (Jackson, Sullivan, Harnish & Hodge, 1996). Even when a team was performing below desired expectations, fans were able to retain a positive identification of themselves through in-group bias and competition with the out-group (Jackson et al., 1996). Jackson et al. used the example of hockey fans to highlight that even when their team was losing to an acknowledged superior skilled team, fans were able to discredit the opposition's achievement by 'denigrating' their success (Jackson et al., 1996, p. 242). By denigrating the success of a skilful opponent, they were able to retain a positive sense of self by defining the opposition team as the 'out group on other dimensions' (Jackson et al., 1996, p. 242).

### 2.4.3 Summary

There are similarities between the cultural, social and social-psychological interpretation of identity construction. Social psychology proposed that identity is constructed from the relationship between in-group and out-group biases, while concurrently highlighting the changeable nature of identity construction. Social identity theory challenges many of the traditional precepts of psychological interpretations of identity as an expression of an innate self. In contrast, social identity theory proposes that identity is constructed through the relationship with perceptions of intra-group identification. As it was '*social'* part of identity theory that was primarily concerned with the process of identity formation as part of and in response to group relationships. The difficulty with using social identity theory outside of very controlled groups is that many other factors influence the relationship between constructions of in-group and out-group bias. The reason for its inclusion within this research is to acknowledge the body of literature on the topic of social identity theory and social categorisation theory.

## 2.5 Organisational Identity

The final section of this review explores the construction of identity within the context of an organisation. In regards to this study, organisational identity provides the junction between social, cultural and collective notions of identity. This section explores the historical development of organisational identity as a concept and relates it back to cultural- and social-identity theories. It highlights some of the language differences

between the different disciplinary traditions. In this section is also an examination of how the interaction between representations of the past, present and future are significant to the processes of identity construction within an organisation. This section also summarises how identities exist within communities of practice as an entrée to exploring identity within the context of a sports organisation.

Organisational identity is not straightforward. There are fractures within organisational theories based on the different epistemological debates of identity construction. In the same way that cultural studies expressed these epistemological divides as being between an essentialist versus a non-essentialist position, organisation theory is divided between the functionalist (modern), symbolic interpretivist and postmodernist perspectives. In order to contextualise organisational identity theory more clearly it is first necessary to outline the influences of the different perspectives.

### 2.5.1 Different Perspectives

The modernist–functionalist position is similar to the essentialist perspective as it positions identity research through ontological objectivism and epistemological positivism. This is examined through an exploration of hierarchical elements within an organisation including rules, laws, methods and structures found within each (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). In terms of identity construction, this perspective regarded organisational identity as relatively fixed, stable and able to be influenced or directed through relationships between members, staff and management.

At the other end of the organisational identity spectrum is the postmodernist perspective. The influence of postmodern discourse on organisational identity theories is evident within the language and jargon used. Postmodernists argued that identity in organisations had the potential to be both fragmented and multiple. Hatch and Schultz argued that the 'one assumption that postmodern and critical scholars have challenged was that people in organisations share the sense of "we" that many early researchers uncritically equated' (Hatch & Schultz, 2004, p. 4). The postmodernist perspective argued that the world was constructed through discourses of power, which could only be interpreted through a deconstruction of language. This positioned organisations as 'texts produced by and in language' (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006, p. 14). This perspective argued for a strong social

agenda within all research to explore hidden or previously obscured voices. This meant that when exploring or deconstructing the dominant 'text', the organisation, it was possible to expose those viewpoints that had been 'marginalized' and 'oppressed' (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006, p. 14).

In the middle, between the functionalist and postmodernist perspectives, is symbolic interpretivism. This perspective argues that the organisation should be viewed through ontological subjectivism and epistemological interpretivism. This stresses that the notion of 'truth is socially constructed via multiple interpretations of the objects of knowledge and … therefore shifts and changes through time' (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006, p. 14). Organisations are part of 'socially constructed realities' and are best explored through an examination of how people 'give meaning and order to their experience within specific contexts, through interpretive and symbolic acts, forms and processes' (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006, p. 14). Symbolic interpretivism is used to explore the experiences of organisational members as part of multiple, layered and socially contingent realities. Gioia (1998) argues that symbolic interpretivism allows for both cultural and social approaches to be utilised when exploring identity within the organisation. He argues that the symbolic interpretivist approach was able to produce 'an interesting, readable story, one that has depth and richness' (Gioia, 1998, p. 28). The criticism applied to symbolic interpretivist perspectives concerned the 'demonstrable generalizability' of their approach, which, as Gioia argued, 'is an issue of minimal concern to many interpretivists' (Gioia, 1998, p. 28). The lack of concern over 'generalizable' results highlights the different epistemological backgrounds of these perspectives.

The three distinct perspectives mark the divisions within organisational theory more broadly. In terms of identity construction, the modernist–functionalist perspectives compose many of the same arguments that arise within the essentialist arguments over identity. The symbolic interpretivist perspective is a middle ground between the extremes of postmodern or functionalist arguments. For the purpose of this research, it is considered the most appropriate approach because it allowed for a discussion of multiple identities combined with an emphasis on the narrative 'story' engaged by the participants. The social interpretivist position acknowledges the social influences that have contributed to the formation of identity within an organisation.

### 2.5.2 Collective Identity

The same tensions that exist within cultural- and social-identity theories are also evident within organisational identity debates. Many of these issues stem from the difficulty of using theories originally formulated to explore an individual's identity to explore the collective shared identities of groups and organisations. As was argued by Jenkins, individuals 'are actual entities; groups are not' (Jenkins, 2008, p. 10). The problem of collective-identity construction is in the definition of what actually constitutes a group. Groups have the potential to be highly informal and unstable. As Jenkins argued, groups simply can be 'difficult to grasp' (Jenkins, 2008, p. 10). He suggested that the most 'substantial' kind of group was the organisation (Jenkins, 2008, p. 10). He highlights that groups range from the most informal of once-a-week casual sports teams to the highly structured concept of the nation state (Jenkins, 2008). Regardless of the size or nature of the group structure, whether loose and informal or highly organised, 'we all belong to some groups' (Jenkins, 2008, p. 11). The collective identity of certain groups can be explored through the examination of the organisational structures of that group.

Organisational identity is defined as the process of identification experienced between individuals and groups within the context of an organisation. The simplicity of that statement belies the complexity of the concept, as shown by Blader, Bartel and Wrzesnieswski (2007), who argued that organisational identity is 'composed of a myriad of subgroup and individual identities, which are structured around industry, geographic and functional divisions, occupations and professions, gender, race, religion, education level and nationality' (Blader, Wrzesnieswski & Bartel, 2007, p. 3). The concept of organisational identity has many potential applications (Blader et al., 2007). Organisational identity was once described as having 'the properties of an onion, not merely because it is multilayered…but because an onion produces tears' (Albert, 1998, p. 11).

The concept of identity within an organisation is relatively recent to organisational theory. It was in 1985 that Albert and Whetten produced the now seminal work of organisational identity theory. They considered the topic of identity within an organisation to be a 'profound and consequential one, and at the same time so difficult, that it is best avoided … [as] under ordinary circumstances … [it] is taken for granted'

(Albert & Whetten, 1985, p. 265). They created three key aspects that constructed organisational identity. They sought to explore identity like a 'scientific concept', which belied their epistemological backgrounds as being more functionalist in nature (Albert & Whetten, 1985, p. 265). They argued that organisational identity was constructed through:

i) The 'essence of the organisation: *the criterion of claimed central character*'.
ii) What was unique or could be distinguished from other organisations: '*the criterion of claimed distinctiveness*'.
iii) The aspects of the organisation that showed 'some degree of sameness of continuity over time: *the criterion of claimed temporal continuity'* (Albert & Whetten, 1985, pp. 265–266).

Within the construction of identity they consistently referred to these three key aspects as the, 'central, enduring and distinctive' elements of the organisation (Albert & Whetten, 1985, p. 266). These principles have become referred to as CED. In conjunction with CED they also created a series of hypotheses that tested how potential challenges could affect the identity of an organisation. These included challenges at the time of formation; a loss of a key element; completion of the central task; periods of rapid expansion; a change in 'collective status'; and challenges during periods of enforced employee retrenchment (Albert & Whetten, 1985, pp. 274–276).

Albert and Whetten used these definitions to explore the dual functions of a university's identity. They found that universities were tied within the binary of competing roles between being a competitive business and a place of higher learning. This duality of identity became particularly apparent when universities faced potential budget cuts and staff sackings (Albert and Whetten, 1985). This, they argued, created 'conflict between normative and utilitarian identities, [that] previously latent during growth and stability becomes manifest' (Albert & Whetten, 1985, pp. 284–285). As the university departments experienced change, questions over individual, collective, group and organisational identity came to the fore within the institutions. The principles of CED became a cornerstone of organisational identity theory; however, Albert and Whetten stressed that 'what the identity literature offers is not a single concept of theory but a diverse set of ideas, modes of analysis, questions and propositions' (Albert & Whetten, 1985, p. 293). While their desire to explore organisational identity as a 'scientific concept' demonstrated their own traditionalist approaches, their central thesis that

organisational identity is constructed through the interplay between changeable (central, distinctive and enduring) elements remains pertinent to current identity discussions.

One of the central features of Albert and Whetten's argument that has been more recently challenged is the notion of the 'centrality' of identity within an organisation. In postmodern discourse, organisational theory has removed some of the assumptions about any organisation having a maintained central or core identity (Hatch & Schultz, 2004). That ability of organisations to be able to change and respond to identity threats is a key part of more recent organisational identity theory (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Gioia, Schultz & Corley, 2000). As environments changed, so were organisations forced to change their culture and identity (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). Within organisational identity debates there were two theoretical positions that constructed identity as through the 'social actor' or 'social constructivism' models (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006, p. 434). The social-actor theory approached the construction of identity through the exploration of 'identity claims' that members have available that they use to form a sense of the collective self (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006, p. 435). The social-constructivism model of organisational identity explored the 'shared emergent believes about central and distinctive features of an organisation … identity understandings' (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006, p. 435). Ravasi and Schultz used the social-actor and social-constructivism models to highlight the paradox where, in order to respond to identity threats, organisations had to be able to adapt and change their culture, at the same time maintaining a cohesive identity for the organisation as a whole. The topic of identity threats has been explored most comprehensively in the form of categorisation of member self-perception and the relationship between managers and their performed roles (Elsbach & Kramer, 1996).

The construction of organisational identity is influenced strongly by representations of organisational culture, image and behaviour (Whetten & Godfrey, 1998). There is significant research conducted on how they produce and influence the corporate identities of organisations (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, pp. 20–39; Dutton & Dukerick, 1991, pp. 517–554; Hatch & Schultz, 2004, pp. 89–118; Van Riel & Balmer, 1997). Large organisations rely on being able to brand a consumer-recognisable identity as part of selling both an image and product.

There is a wide range of organisational identity research. This includes the exploration of organisational identity in regards to image, culture, employee identification, corporate reputation and stakeholder representations (Gioia, Shultz & Corley, 2000; Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Schultz, Hatch & Holten Larsen, 2000). This research situates organisational identity as a complex positioning of individual and collective responses to the question: who are we? Organisational identity research is often multi-disciplinary and informed by social and cultural interpretations. To negotiate the collective identities found within an organisation requires multiple lenses for identity construction. Hatch and Schultz argued against organisational identity viewed as 'an aggregation of perceptions resting in peoples' heads' (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 1004). In contrast, Hatch and Schultz suggested that organisational identity was constructed through a 'dynamic set of processes by which an organisation's self is continuously socially constructed from the interchange between internal and external definitions of the organisation' (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 1004). Czarniawska-Joerges used literature techniques to explore organisational identity construction though the engagement with individual and multiple narratives to form a collective organisational identity (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1997, 1999). Through these postmodern and symbolic interpretivist positions, organisational identity is presented as being both fluid and multiple.

Whetten (2006) updated the original organisational identity framework and distanced the concept of identity from representations of organisational culture and image. To do this, he created a list of guiding questions that separated the 'functional and structural' sides of the organisation (Whetten, 2006, p. 222). He argued that it was essential to explore the 'identity of an organisation', in contrast to the 'identity in an organisation' (Whetten, 2006, p. 228). He suggested that 'organisations, like individuals, possess multiple identities, with a core assumption in identity theory that actors strongly prefer a coherent, internally consistent self-view' (Whetten, 2006, p. 230).

There remains debate over the definition of organisational identity. In January 2000, the *Academy of Management Review* produced a special edition that explored the future directions of identity research (Pratt et al., 2000). This included the potential for a fluidity of organisational identity and image contrasted with the conventional approach of it being central, enduring and distinctive (Gioia et al., 2000, pp. 63–63). Also included in this edition were arguments for the use of social identity theory and social

categorisation theory within organisational identity studies (Hogg & Terry, 2000, pp. 122–140). More recently, Whetten (2006) has argued against the use of social identity theory or social categorisation theory within the context of organisational identities due to the subjective nature and acquired-membership status of organisations (Whetten, p. 258). The diversity of argued positions highlights the strength of debates surrounding organisational identity. The most compelling of these arguments were those that suggested that organisational identity was socially constructed, and was historically and socially contingent (Pullen & Linstead, 2005). As argued by Pullen and Linstead, 'identity formation in and around organisations is not only embedded in the demands of the present, but is constructed in terms of the conjunction of past and future … within this process are particular events which significantly affect the shaping of identity and may change its course dramatically' (Pullen & Linstead, 2005, pp. 4–5). From the different perspectives, it is evident that organisational identity is socially constructed through individual responses to the shared collective sense of group identity.

Historical representations are often used to enable individuals to connect with a larger sense of shared collective identity. An excellent example of this intersection between past and present narratives is used by Wenger to explore individual perspectives of an organisational workplace. Wenger explored the intricacies of individual and collective identities within a claims' processor unit at a medical insurance firm (Wenger, 1998). He explored how individuals constructed their personal and collective narratives through their work communities (Wenger, 1998). Wenger proposed that identity was constructed along common lines or, 'markers of membership … gender, class, ethnicity, age, and other forms of categorisation, association, and differentiation'. He argued that identification occurred through a process of individuals interacting with their social world. He argued that there needed to be recognition that identity is 'formed through complex relationships of mutual constitution between individuals and groups' (Wenger, 1998, p. 13). Central to Wenger's argument is the relationship between the past and the present on the process of identity construction. Wenger argued that, 'our identities are formed, inherited, rejected, interlocked and transformed through mutual engagement in practice from generation to generation' (Wenger, 1998, p. 89). Not only do individuals enact and perform their identities over a lifetime but also those identities themselves are a product of intergenerational negotiation.

### 2.5.3 Application of Organisational Identity to Sport

In the context of this research, the most applicable is the case study done on the AFL club, the Fremantle Football Club (FFC) or the Fremantle 'Dockers' in Western Australia (Haimes, 2006). Haimes used the organisational identity dynamics (OID) model devised by Hatch & Schultz (2002) to explore the values, assumptions, symbols and artefacts of the football club (Haimes, 2006, p. 39). He used the OID model to explore how the organisational structures of the FFC worked and how they were able to continue to operate within difficult changing circumstances. Haimes explored how the relationships between the administrations, management staff, the players and supporters effected the organisational identity and culture within the FFC.

Haimes' account provides an excellent organisational model for a football club. The challenges that Haimes explored in terms of identity construction at the FFC and within their newly acquired status within the broader national competition highlight the complexities of organisational identity within the context of a sporting club. Haimes investigated how identity construction was influenced by Fremantle's past WAFL achievements and their contemporary on-field under-performance. Analysing the relationships between management, administration, players and supporters highlighted how Fremantle had failed to meet the expectations of club officials and stakeholders. Haimes argued this was due to particular strategies of the management, administrative culture and identity promoted within the club (Haimes, 2006, p. 107). Haimes took a symbolic interpretivist position in terms of organisational theory. Haimes argued that 'identity is a paradox for organisations because they remain open to a changing environment to remain competitive, yet their identity has to endure' (Haimes, 2006, p. 48). The aspect of organisational identity that Haimes explored directly focused on the relationship between the lack of on-field success with a failing off-field culture and identity of the club. His thesis focused on the relationship between whether 'management practices, or ways of doing things were appropriate' for organisational identity construction (Haimes, 2006, p. 5).

Haimes' thesis provides an excellent example of organisational identity taken from the perspective of the management at a nationally competitive football club. Haimes used organisational identity as an exploration into the 'means by which a company improves

its profile and thereby, its particular market share' within the sporting context (Haimes, 2006, p. 46). His research questions particularly focused on finding ways to improve the organisational identity and the management structures of the club with implied future expectations of both on-field success and a more cohesive club identity. Due to the relatively new status of the FFC, the influence of the past on attitudes and identity was limited to the contribution of regional football clubs and competitions that existed prior to the development of the FFC. The relationship between past and present identities within the club was explored neatly in terms of symbols and artefacts, including the choice of club colours and the 'Dockers' colloquial name. The discussion of regional identities found within south-western Australia provides some of the most interesting analysis of how and why the FFC developed its own sense of its marketable self within the competitive AFL economy.

Haimes' research provides a significant contribution to the literature base on organisational identity within the context of sport. Haimes acknowledged that the topics of identity and culture had previously been under-explored within sporting organisational theory. Haimes explored image and culture specifically as part of his focus on the elite level organisational structure, which affected the symbolism and construction of organisational identity as a whole. There is a difference between the top-down dissemination of identity within a large, elite, professional football club and the bottom-up grassroots formation of identity. The challenge for establishing and maintaining a cohesive sense of organisational identity within community or semi-professional sporting clubs remains unexamined. The tensions that exist at an elite level are different from those experienced by clubs whose continued existence relies on volunteers and 'chook raffle' type fundraisers. The contribution Haimes made to the topic of organisational identity and Australian football is outstanding. There remain, however, gaps within the topic to explore the role of organisational identity found within clubs that are not competing at an elite national level but rather at a semi-professional level.

### 2.5.4 Summary

Organisational identity is a complex field of enquiry that requires individual and collective responses to the question: who are we / they? Until recently, the topic of organisational identity was relatively under-explored within both the fields of

organisational and identity studies. Acknowledging the tensions within organisational studies, this research is grounded within the symbolic interpretivist frame. This constructs organisational identity as potentially multiple, fluid and socially imbued with elements from the past. The tensions expressed by more functionalist and postmodern approaches have also been taken into consideration. It was considered, however, that a symbolic interpretivist position allows for more subtle interpretations of organisational identity without suggesting that identities are fluid to the point of instability or inexistence.

The development of organisational theory from the principles of CED in 1985 to the multiple constructions articulated by Hatch and Schultz only highlight the many potential applications of organisational identity theory. In the context of a sporting club, the potential for organisational identity theory is large. The argument made by Jenkins that we all belong to some groups does apply; however, we do not belong to all sporting clubs and thus organisational identity remains pertinent to questions of identification and belonging. Wenger neatly argued that individual perceptions are what create a 'community of practice'. Part of this sense of collective identity is established through shared historical elements. The intergenerational negotiation between 'who we were' with the question of 'who we are' suggests the potential for an interplay between past and present that needs to be explored within organisational identity research.

Representations of organisational identity have been used within the topic of a sporting club. The research conducted by Haimes into organisational identity at the FFC provides an excellent example of how organisational identity can be applied to an Australian football club. The relationship between organisational identity affecting on-field and off-field success has the potential to be applied to other sporting clubs and codes. The focus up to now on the management practices of elite sporting clubs does present a gap in terms of other more community-based competitions and clubs.

## 2.6 Conclusion

In summary, it is evident that the term 'identity' has many different usages in many different disciplines. This review contains a brief overview of identity theory as it relates to the construction of national, cultural–ethnic, social, group and organisational

identities. The concept of identity has many challenges. The overuse of broad and ambiguous language has characterised identity research and theoretical development. The question ‘who are we’ or as researchers: who are they? Remains complex and challenging with often multiple and contradictory answers. This review situated how the concept of identity has been developed and theorised within the fields of cultural, social, political and organisational studies.

In terms of sport, some of the richest theoretical breakthroughs, in terms of understanding identity, have come about through an exploration of the role of national identity. This review explored how the concept of national identity was examined through Anderson’s ‘imagined community’ thesis, which focused on the spread of nationalism based on the feelings of commonality expressed between people of shared nationality. Those shared feelings of commonality constructed a sense of national identity that could be used or exploited within political regimes. While national identity had been previously considered fundamentally innate, more recently it has been proposed to be a process of inclusion and exclusion as part of a political cycle. It was along these ideas that many sport researchers used national identity as a way to examine questions of identity within the context of sport. This work particularly focused on identity construction in terms of social relationships based on power, class, race, religion and gender within the frame of the nation state. There were excellent examples of sport used to explore political ramifications and social histories within a national and often global context. In particular, sport has been used to explore the political relationships of power during the transition periods between colonial and post-colonial regimes. Without detracting from previous works, most of the sociological, historical and cultural analysis of sport and identity has focused almost exclusively on the two ends of the identity spectrum: psychoanalytical understandings of individual identity or as national identity. The relationships between groups, communities and organisations have failed to attract the same attention. National identity could not be used to fully explore the intricacies within a sporting organisation; however, the relationships between power, race, class, religion and gender continue to be fundamental within any discussion of identity research. The frame of the nation state was too large to explore the bonds between individual, groups and the collective within a single organisational context.

From national identity the review moved to an exploration of cultural identity. Cultural identity was defined as being situated within semiotic interpretations of historical and socially constructed relationships of power. Cultural identity was characterised by its potential instability. This fluidity of cultural identity has been proposed to be both a social and political response to an increasingly unstable global audience. From this, identity was proposed to be multiple and potentially conflicting. This echoes the trend within cultural discourse to move away from fixed interpretations of what is culture, and thus what is identity. The 'crisis' of identity that followed cultural identity theory was concerned about the threats of increased globalisation and the loss of a particular group or collective culture. In the same way that national identity explained identity formation as a process, so did cultural identity stress that it was formed through a process negotiated along historic-political constructions of community-based perceptions of cultural sameness. Exploring cultural identity remained important within the discussion of sport as it suggested that cultural groups consciously and unconsciously enacted a process of identity construction based on both inclusion and exclusion. In terms of this literature review, cultural identity was understood to be the enacted behaviour of both individuals and the group that reinforced perceptions of sameness within the context of the organisation.

This review also mapped the divide between understandings of cultural and ethnic identity. The argument was that cultural identity was based on the sense of group culture and belief structures, while ethnic identity was formed through a sense of ethnic sameness. The differences between cultural and ethnic identity focused more on the epistemological approach taken than on understandings of the concept. Ethnic identity used ethnographic understandings that argued for ethnic identity as part of group belonging, which was a contrast to the semiotic understandings of cultural identity. Both cultural and ethnic identities have the problem of locating individual contributions within the group identity.

Cultural and ethnic identities have been used within sporting discourse to explore some of the relationships between people, place and sense of belonging. Giulianotti's Glasgow Rangers Football Club provided an excellent example of how cultural identity has been investigated within the context of a sporting club. Giulianotti used the interplay between internal and external factors to explore the relationships of power, religion, class and

politics found within. The Australian examples used within the review found that most identity theory had been sidelined within cultural studies and sporting histories. If identity was obliquely mentioned, it has been mainly used as an expression of individual and collective relationships to geographic location—a sense of belonging to place formed through a connection to a constructed suburban identity.

Cultural identity also expressed the performative element of identity construction. This suggested that identities were both established and performed within a public context, which meant identities could be enacted and reinterpreted over time during different periods of a person's life. This supports the argument of identities being multiple and changing and allows for an interpretation of identity that is based on the interplay between constructions of self within the public arena. The identities performed by participation and a sense of belonging remained important.

Social identity presented several semantic challenges. Jenkins argued, by definition, that all identities explored outside the frame of psychoanalysis were, in essence, socially constructed. This meant that all identities were in fact social identities. The concept of social identity proposed that identity was constructed identity within the sociological frame. This meant that both national and cultural identities fell within the overarching theme of socially constructed identities. It was in social identity, however, that identity was most clearly defined as a negotiated process based on individual and collective experiences. Jenkins' argument reinforced identity construction based on an on going interaction between both the individual and their social environment. This included historical, political, cultural and group interaction as part of the process of identity construction.

Identity had been explored within the context of sport mainly from the context of fans, deviant behaviour and the production of national identity. In terms of Australian football studies, identity remained obscured within explorations of community, place, performance and geographic location. The work of Haimes contributed to the organisational identity literature within the context of Australian football clubs. There remained, however, a gap within this to explore the experiences of Australian football identity outside the context of the elite level of the AFL. The application of organisational identity outside of this frame offered the potential to explore the identities

that fell outside the mainstream sporting discourse, to include those experiences of Indigenous or migrant players, supporters and administrators.

**Table 1: Summary of literature review**

| Frame | Discipline | Theoretical implications |
|---|---|---|
| **National Identity** | Politics; history | • Fundamentally viewed identity construction as the expression of the nation-state<br>• Linked to notions of community<br>• Exploration of macro (national) identity in relation to sport through the lens of power relations (example post-colonialism)<br>• Identity considered a relatively stable concept |
| **Cultural Identity** | Cultural studies; history; ethnography | • Essentialist versus non-essentialist identity;<br>• Characterised by fragmentation, multiplicity and instability;<br>• Linked to postmodernism<br>• Identity highly fragmented |
| **Social Identity** | Sociology; politics; ethnography | • The 'social' aspect of identity has been considered the fundamental part of sociological understandings of identity;<br>• Identity a 'process' of identification; based on social interaction |
| **Group Identity** | Social psychology; psychology; sociology | • Micro (groups) examination of inter personal identity constructions;<br>• Examination of personal identity through social identification with group behaviour<br>• Identity relatively stable as part of an 'innate sense of self' |
| **Organisational Identity** | Organisational studies; management; | • Organisational studies split between functionalist (modern), symbolic interpretivist and postmodernist perspectives;<br>• Influences of the 'social' on the symbolic and postmodern perspectives.<br>• Functionalist equate identity to stability while symbolic interpretivist and postmodern approaches consider the possibility of multiple organisational identities |

This review has shown that identity construction has been theorised as a process, created by people both implicitly and explicitly, based on internal and external influences or pressures. This review takes a symbolic interpretivist approach and considers identity as fluid and potentially multiple but not fragmented to the point of instability. Identity construction has been valuable in analysis of sporting organisations but a focus on the elite level has meant a gap has occurred in terms of organisational identity within a non-elite community football club.

# Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the procedures used to explore the research questions outlined in the introduction. The chapter discusses the research design, the selection of the site for the study, the sampling frame and selection of subjects, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and treatment of that data. This section also explores some of the limitations and influences on the research framework.

## 3.1 Research Design and Framework

This study used qualitative research methods in order to allow for 'multidimensional and pluralistic' interpretations of the data (Punch, 2005, p. 134). In terms of sports-based organisational identity construction it allowed the researcher to move away from traditional positivist interpretations towards a more layered and potentially diverse understanding of football club identity. This approach has been adopted by many other cultural, social, organisational and sports theorists who have explored identity using qualitative methods (Giulianotti, 2007). By using the qualitative approach, it also allowed the topic of identity to be explored within a framework of the cultural, political and historical context in which the identity of St Mary's Football Club had evolved. The primary theoretical lens applied in the study was organisational identity.

### 3.1.1 Selecting St Mary's Football Club

A case study approach was utilised in order to explore the research questions in depth, in relation to the identity of a single sport organisation. This approach enabled the data collection and analysis to explore the experiences of a range of individuals associated with a single Australian football club in an attempt to comprehensively examine all the layers of the organisation's identity. This was done in an attempt to move beyond the usual exploration of identity in relation to Australian football that, to date, has failed to contextualise the unique experiences of the game within contemporary theoretical and methodological considerations. The wealth of case study material available reflected the many applications of this design framework. This study fitted within the broad understandings of a case study, as it was fundamentally bounded by the organisational structure of St Mary's Football Club.

St Mary's was chosen for a number of reasons. The club currently fields teams in the divisions: under 14s, under 16s, under 18s, a seniors, juniors, reserves (2nd and 3rd division) and a women's team. In 2008 it began an affiliate program that included a partnership with the 'Hoggies' netball team using the hall for social functions and post game celebrations. In 2011 the affiliate program extended to include Murray Thai kickboxing, Nightcliff Dragons Rugby, St Mary's Hockey Club, Hellenic Athletic Club, Eagles Basketball Club and the NT University Football Club. The St Mary's function hall is available for hire for events (e.g. weddings, wakes, 21sts) and the hall is also used as a dance rehearsal space on Wednesday evenings. The Club hosts regular and well-attended Bingo tournaments during the day.

The validity of the data collection methods was established in a number of key ways. The validity of results was established primarily through the triangulation of data, following Stake's 'validity checks', which were based on observations, interviews and document analysis of secondary references (Stake, 1995, p. 114). The interviews provided the bulk of the data collected; however, they were supplemented by ethnographic observations, photographic materials and club documents combined with media materials. A key part of the validity checks was done through the triangulation of data, in particular, based on the ethnographic observations of social interaction at football games and at the clubhouse. In addition to the formal interviews, I attended ten home and away games; three finals (including the grand final); participated in the grand final banner making; post-match award ceremonies; and attended the best and fairest, the Green and Gold Ball, Legends Day, and the Nichols Medal count (NTFL) Best & Fairest Awards, March 2010). The interviews were recorded on a mini disc-recording device and later transcribed professionally. Personal observations were made, before and after the interview process. These were recorded by hand in three journals over the course of the fieldwork. I recorded both observational notes on the location, the games, the people, the clubhouse, the interview process and broader personal reflections on the data collection experience.

Club documents and media materials were used to provide background information and contextualise St Mary's Football Club within a local football community. A particular example of this was the 'official' history of the clubhouse. This type of material was

difficult to source from the club as much had been thrown out over years of 'cleaning up'. St Mary's also made available photographic materials from the clubhouse that could be used help identify key people within the club and to put together a working knowledge of the complex family groups involved. Similarly, selected media materials were used to explore the impact of external threats to the club's identity.

## 3.2 Sample

The sampling frame used within the study has been founded on typical qualitative approaches of purposive sampling, snowballing and opportunistic sampling. To briefly provide an explanation of how these sampling techniques were utilised it is necessary to provide some basic definitions (or agreed understandings). Purposive sampling is also known as 'qualitative, theoretical, non-probability, or judgment sampling' (Liamputtong, 2009, p. 11). This process involves deliberately choosing participants who would be considered as information-rich sources of enquiry.

Due to the nature of the case study, the individuals chosen for this research have been limited to having a connection with St Mary's Football Club. With this research there were significant challenges in maintaining anonymity. This was because St Mary's was a relatively small, close-knit club. In order to secure Ethics Approval there needed to be a guarantee that anonymity would be maintained for study participants. In the results chapter, every quote has been prefaced with an introduction about the role and gender of each participant, where appropriate approximate ages have been given.

The research questions and theoretical framework required that both past and present experiences be explored. The stories that interviewees chose to highlight through their discussions of club identity reflected past and present understandings of what it meant to be involved at St Mary's. Many of the most poignant parts of the interviews were when people discussed how the club had been an on going part of their life. The intertwining of past and present was a crucial part of the formation of identity construction.

It is essential to clarify that the racial and cultural backgrounds of interviewees was not always obvious. It was made clear, however, during the interview process that the club (St Mary's) valued their Indigenous members highly but did not consider St Mary's to be

an Indigenous club (there was not a majority of Indigenous players in the senior side- for example). It is outside the scope of the research framework as racial identification was not a target for interview participation. It is also culturally insensitive to attach labels to subjects, who have not publicly identified themselves as such during the interview process. In particular, for those members of the Stolen Generations who due to the forced removal from their society have complex familial backgrounds in terms of how they identify with their culture. It was impossible to maintain anonymity while providing more in depth information, and especially inappropriate to assign racial labels that had not been attributed by the participants themselves.

In addition to purposive sampling, interview subjects were also identified through snowballing, referral and direct contact with key stakeholders. Every effort was made to interview people from different backgrounds, ages and genders and those who had filled different roles within the club. As it was a small club, there was a tendency for interviewees to repeatedly recommend the same group of people to be interviewed in a self-reflecting way. In order to seek interview subjects from outside this group, other categories of people were deliberately sought out, such as younger and older players and administrators.

During the course of the 2009 – 2010 NTFL season 28 participants were interviewed and two were interviewed over several sessions. Interview subjects were mostly made up of St Mary's administrators and current players. Overall, nine women and nineteen men were interviewed. The ages of the interviewees ranged between 18 and 78 years. Of those interviewed, there were twelve who were involved with the club in an administrative capacity, which included football operations, as this was only a very small group. Of those twelve interviews, the gender breakdown was five women and seven men. The other major group was players. There were ten players interviewed, and with the exception of one woman, they were all from the senior men's (A grade) side. It is of note that one woman was both an administrator and a current female player, but it was deemed that the majority of her interview discussed her experiences as an administrator, so she was placed within that group. The third category of those interviewed was in the role of supporters, of which two were men and three were women. The two male supporters were also former players who now participated in a supporting role at the club. The three female supporters were all partners of current and former players. They

closely associated their support of the club in terms of being the wife or mother of a player. The male-female ratio of interviewees reflected the predominance of men (players and administrators) within the club, however, proportionally, women were actually over-represented in the interviews overall (see appendix A for dates and breakdown of roles).

## 3.3 Instrumentation

The interviews were based on the qualitative research methods of using extended, semi-structured and open-ended questions to guide and illicit responses. Interviewees were asked to explain in their own words their understandings of organisational identity within St Mary's. They were then asked to explain how they believed this identity had been expressed, in what ways had it manifested at the club, how it had changed and in what ways did they believe it to be on going. The interviews followed a broad schema of questions that asked interviewees a range of general questions about their involvement within the club to contextualise their experiences. As more interviews were conducted, additional questions were included. Often the original wording was adapted from the original questions. During the process of conducting interviews it was apparent that some of the questions were too obtuse and needed rephrasing in order to be more accessible to the interviewees. Interviewees were instructed to 'describe' and 'list' their experiences, which helped some of the shyer interviewees find their 'voice'. The questions were only a guide that was used as prompts within the interviews (see Appendix D for full interview schema). The most successful of these questions were the most open ended or descriptive questions. Getting the interviewees to describe St Mary's to someone who was not familiar with the club was very revealing and often shaped the direction of the interview. The table below illustrates the development in questions that occurred as part of the data collection process. This table also highlighted a key challenge that occurred during the data collection process, which reflected the ambiguity of exploring identity: many of the interviewees were unclear about what the researcher was actually asking.

**Table 2: Development of interview questions**

| Initial question (original schema) | Reworded question (used in subsequent interviews) | Additional question (added later) |
|---|---|---|
| What role do significant families play within the club? | Why is family so important to the club? | ⇒ How has your own family been involved within the club?<br>⇒ Is your partner involved with the club? |
| Could you, in your own words, describe the perceived identity of St Mary's? | What words would you use to describe the club? | ⇒ What words would you use to describe the club, imagining you were describing it to someone from down south?<br>⇒ Describe the club in three words. |
| Do you think understanding club history is important to a sense of identity? | Do you know much about the club's history? | ⇒ Do you think of St Mary's as a traditional club?<br>⇒ Do you think the club has changed since you have been involved and in what ways? |

As the previous table has illustrated, the questions evolved over the data collection period. Over time the questions developed a more colloquial style. This was for clarity of meaning and not to intimidate the interviewees with overly difficult language. It was also done in an attempt to gain rapport and trust with interviewees. For some interviews they were used as a guide to keep interviewees on track, while others responded in very brief sentences to each question. Each additional interview built on the collected knowledge from previous sessions.

## 3.4 Data Collection Procedures

It was important to many at the club (St Mary's) that the researcher explained their own interest in the club. It was often asked, 'Why St Mary's' or 'Are you a Saints supporter'? Each time the topic was explained it was also added that the researcher had grown up in Darwin and attended a local high school (Casuarina Secondary College) before moving away to Melbourne to attend university. It was deliberately mentioned that while conducting interviews the researcher was staying with her parents who still lived in the northern suburb of Malak (traditionally a lower socio economic neighbourhood). Because it was a small town (Darwin) establishing a place within the local community was very important for access to be granted. Some of the players interviewed were only a year or two older or younger and shared similar high school experiences. Staying with parents meant the researcher lived five minutes drive from the St Mary's clubhouse and was often able to attend training sessions, visit the clubhouse and games without difficulty. All of these things reconfirmed her position as someone who was worth

speaking to. Without the tacit position of 'local' it was doubtful that the same level of candour or rapport with interviewees could have been established. For the most part people were very welcoming and gave up their time without hesitation for the project. The chance to promote or help the club was considered reason enough to be involved with the project. The researcher did not, however, have any family connection to the club nor was part of the local Indigenous community.

There were potential challenges to gaining access to the site. As a female it was important to establish that in terms of exploration it was not going to expose the club or its participants to any harm. The importance of gaining trust and credibility was established by contacting those who were well regarded within the football (St Mary's) community. There was a reluctance to view the topic of identity as legitimate field of enquiry (the question, 'what are you **really** (own emphasis) doing here?') By locating the research within organisational studies within the field of sports management there was a perceived sense of legitimacy that potentially would not have been there if taking a purely cultural, anthropological or ethnographic study. It was important to gain trust and credibility by contacting those individuals who were well regarded within the St Mary's community. There was some hesitation by interviewees to speak about the topic of identity and it was difficult for some interviewees not to lapse into a discussion of historical achievements and past successes of the club. While identity itself did draw some blanks, the question of what made the club so unique/successful/important was much more easily answered. The ambiguity of what was meant by identity was again exposed.

To facilitate access to interviewees, key members of the club were contacted initially my mail and then later by email to arrange a face-to-face meeting in Darwin to discuss the study. After agreeing to meet, key members were asked to provide or recommend any further people within the club who they considered important to interview. To a certain extent, it was important to allow these key club members to direct the sampling framework and the process of identifying and contacting prospective interviewees. Care was taken to be aware of potential interviewees who were not being included in those suggestions. The researcher asked interviewees to recommend anyone they thought might be interested in participating in the project. Further, senior members of the club were consulted for their thoughts on who should be contacted as part of the project.

It should be noted that the club was overwhelmingly supportive of the study. Several of the key administrative figures agreed to meet on numerous occasions to discuss the study. They also facilitated the process of securing phone numbers and email contacts for potential interview subjects. The President of the club also wrote and laminated a letter explaining whom the researcher was and that the club supported the project (see appendix C). This was provided to prospective interviewees as a way of explanation of the research topic, to reassure them about participating in the study and to show the club's support of the project. Without the assistance of senior club members it would have been extremely difficult to undertake the interviews. The club was a closed community to outsiders (academic researchers) and agreement to participate was only granted because the club believed the project to be valuable.

The data collection occurred during the AFLNT football season of October 2009–March 2010. The majority of interviews were conducted in Darwin at St Mary's' clubhouse. Due to the time constraints of interviewees, some interviews were located offsite (two were conducted at a local cafe, three in personal residences and two were conducted in Alice Springs). The interviews ranged from 45 to 60 minutes in length. All interviews were digitally recorded. The researcher took handwritten notes during each session. The digital recordings were emailed to a professional transcription service. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and then emailed back to the researcher. The researcher then reviewed the transcriptions while listening to the digital recordings of the interviews to check the transcribed copies. The most common corrections were of names or locations. The transcripts were then corrected and used as the basis of the results' chapters. The quotations that were presented as part of the results have had the colloquial expressions such as 'you know' and 'like' removed. This was done because the neither the expression nor syntax structure was being analysed and the meaning was sometimes obscured by the verbatim expression.

## 3.5 Treatment and Analysis of the Data

The transcribed interviews were first checked with the audio version of the interview to ensure the interviews had been transcribed correctly. Any minor amendments were made to the transcribed interviews. These were usually only names or gaps due to poor sound quality during recording that could be cross-referenced with the notes taken at the time. Once these minor corrections were made, the transcripts were printed out in hardcopy and initially read over to gain a sense of the overall interview. The transcribed interviews were then manually coded in three distinct phases (coding done by hand not computer). The coding process was designed to unpick and uncover the key themes within the interviews. The interviews were analysed and then interpreted in a way to unlock the ideas, metaphors, narratives and descriptive language used by the interviewees as part of the data collection process to explore the interdisciplinary themes that emerged (Greckhamer, Koro-Ljungberg, Cilesiz & Hayes, 2008). The transcriptions were coded and arranged into the themes directed by what was spoken about in the interviews. The interviews reflected the highly personal nature of the research. It reflected the individual representations of the group identity. As hesitant as some interviewees were about speaking for the group, it was the differences and similarities in individual perceptions that were of most interest.

The coding process began firstly with the transcripts being read again and coded using open coding or 'descriptive coding' (Richards, 2005, p. 88). This coding was done to gather a sense of 'what was said'; however, unlike quantitative approaches, no numbers or nodes were attached to these first codes (Richards, 2005). This process was then repeated for each transcribed interview as they were completed. A deliberate attempt was made to code each interview as soon as the interviews were transcribed to maximise the recall of the researcher. Table 2 provides an example of open coding that has been taken from an interview conducted with a senior St Mary's player.

**Table 3: Example of open coding**

| Direct quotation from the transcription | | Open coding applied |
|---|---|---|
| I: | If you had to describe the club in just you know a number of words, how would you do it, what words come to your mind? | |
| P: | Er professional, successful. Um, family club. Um, just a good place to be around I guess. | Professional<br>Successful<br>Family<br>A good place (the clubhouse?) |
| I: | In terms of family, can you talk abo ut that a bit more? Like families, or... | |
| P: | Yeah, well there is, like I said before, like the footballing families, it seems like there is just generation after generation continue to keep coming through and you saw today like the little kids running around playing footy, they just look up to the older fellas that are still running around. It just creates almost like breeds success I guess. Um, what else? Um, I don't know what else to say. What was the question again? | Family (biological)<br>'Footballing families'<br><br>Family / success |
| I: | Well I asked you what words to describe the club. And then we talked a bit about family. | Arriving from interstate to 'feel part of a family' |
| P: | Yeah, um, and also like a lot of people come up from down south as well. And like that's how I first came up here and they sort of made me feel part of the family. Like just one big family sort of thing. So they are very welcoming in that regard as well. | Welcoming to newcomers |

The second round of coding was 'axial' or 'topic coding' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This was done to explore the major themes that emerged as a result of the open coding (Richards, 2005, p. 88). This involved grouping together the quotations under each of the initial open codes and sorting them into emergent themes. This meant that the quotations were sorted and boxed into different broad topical groups. Overall, there were seven key themes that emerged from the data. These themes reflected both how identity was constructed and in what ways this identity had manifested, been expressed or challenged. Table 3 highlights how these open codes were then sorted and grouped into major themes. For clarity it is the same interview with a senior St Mary's player, however, this illustrates how all the data was treated.

**Table 4: Example of axial coding**

| Direct quotation from transcription | | Axial Coding (Collecting the theme of family) |
|---|---|---|
| I: | If you had to describe the club in just you know a number of words, how would you do it, what words come to your mind? | Family |
| P: | Er professional, successful. Um, family club. Um, just a good place to be around I guess. | Family |
| I: | In terms of family, can you talk about that a bit more? Like families, or... | |
| P: | Yeah, well there is, like I said before, like the footballing families, it seems like there is just generation after generation continue to keep coming through and you saw today like the little kids running around playing footy, they just look up to the older fellas that are still running around. It just creates almost like breeds success I guess. Um, what else? Um, I don't know what else to say. What was the question again? | Family |
| I: | Well I asked you what words to describe the club. And then we talked a bit about family. | |
| P: | Yeah, um, and also like a lot of people come up from down south as well. And like that's how I first came up here and they sort of made me feel part of the family. Like just one big family sort of thing. So they are very welcoming in that regard as well. | Family |

The third round of coding was the organising of the topics into what Richards described as 'analytical' coding (Richards, 2005, p. 88). This involved the organising of the quotations within the broad themes that emerged as part of the topic coding to express the multiple layers, ideas and opinions that were raised by the interviewees within those topics. These reflected the arrangement of ideas generated from the transcribed interviews. Since this research was not grounded theory, it was important to note that the themes explored reflected those from the existing literature. Table 4 includes examples of the coding processes using the same data from the senior St Mary's player from Tables 2 and 3 and shows how family was an emerging theme. Table 4 shows the multiple ways family was explored within that major theme.

**Table 5: Example of analytical coding**

| Direct quotation from transcription | Analytical coding applied |
|---|---|
| P: Yeah, well there is, like I said before, like the footballing families, it seems like there is just generation after generation continue to keep coming through and you saw today like the little kids running around playing footy, they just look up to the older fellas that are still running around. It just creates almost like breeds success I guess. Um, what else? Um, I don't know what else to say. What was the question again? | *Family*<br>Football families (The biological families are connected through playing football reinforcing familial bonds)<br>Intergenerational contact between family members ('generation after generation')<br>Children and 'older fellas' – intergenerational contact<br>The family environment (culture) creates success |
| I: Well I asked you what words to describe the club. And then we talked a bit about family. | |
| P: Yeah, um, and also like a lot of people come up from down south as well. And like that's how I first came up here and they sort of made me feel part of the family. Like just one big family sort of thing. So they are very welcoming in that regard as well. | Outsiders being welcomed (dichotomy between north and south – insiders and outsider – metaphor for family?)<br>Part of a family – (imagined) familial bonds maintaining / creating a 'family club'. A welcoming club: Making outsiders feel part of the St Mary's family? |

## 3.5 Limitations

The literature identified three key areas of limitation within case study research, which included validity, rigor and the lack of generalisations (external validity) or transferability of findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). This section explores how limitations have both shaped and been incorporated within the research-design frameworks. In doing so, the shifts within case study research in terms of organisational theory are acknowledged.

The concern expressed over these limitations was often a reflection of the epistemological underpinnings of the research. The more positivist examinations of case study research argue for a more natural-science type examination of cases (Daft & Lewin, 1990; Yin, 2009). This was emphasised in more recent case study literature within the field of business management that called for the need for case study research to focus more on internal–external validity and rigor within case studies (Gibbert, Ruigork & Wicki, 2008). The constructivist approaches also acknowledged the need for validity and checking of data within case studies (Stake, 1995). This was framed as being

done through the triangulation of data, 'observation, interview and document review' (Stake, 1995, p. 114).

From the literature it was clear that there were two key authors that had been highly influential within case study theory (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Both Stake and Yin adopted a constructivist interpretation of research design. The methods employed in the study are drawn from the procedures outlined by Stake (1995) and Simons (2009), as these both explored case studies particularly within the framework of qualitative research. Stake identified that there were three broad categories of case study that influence the approach taken by the researcher. First, he identified an 'intrinsic' case study that was used to explore and gain insight into the particularities of a case (Stake, 1995, p. 3). In an intrinsic case study the scope of investigation was defined by the chosen case: the case provided the boundaries for analysis of research. The second type of approach was the 'instrumental' case study that was used to explore and understand a particular issue or theory. An instrumental case was 'a puzzlement, a need for general understanding and fee that we may get insight into the question by studying a particular case' (Stake, 1995, p. 3). The third type of case study was the 'collective' case study. This was used to juxtapose several instrumental cases to explore a particular theory more closely through the comparison of different cases. This research falls within the instrumental case study framework, as it was being used to explore how identity was constructed and maintained within the context of a sporting organisation. The other features of a case study that Yin (2009) included were that it was examined as bounded, a case study of something, holistic yet focused and requiring multiple sources of data. This research fitted well into those characteristics, as the football club offers boundaries; the examination of identity provides focus yet allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the club and by using individual perspectives for interviews, it requires multiple sources of data collection.

Within the existing case study literature there was an acknowledgement of the lack of generalisation between cases. Punch argues that generalisations can be made within case studies by a two-fold process that examines both the purpose of the case study and by 'developing propositions' (Punch, 2005, p. 146). Punch suggests for the former that, in terms of conceptualising a potentially generally applicable case study, it requires the research to develop or explore new concepts rather than relying on the processes of

description (Punch, 2005, p. 146). Secondly, he argues that in the process of that research the qualitative case study should aim to produce propositions or hypotheses in regards to the research findings. In doing so, Punch inverts the traditional quantitative approach that begins with hypotheses to be tested. Instead, the case study aims to conclude or produce propositions as part of the conclusion to the discussion. Rather than beginning the research, they become the end point: 'they become outputs of the research' (Punch, 2005, p. 146).

With this research, the potential to extrapolate outwards to other Australian football clubs, other sporting codes and other sports organisations both at an amateur, semi-professional or elite level is clear. Exploring the micro processes of individual club identity provides a unique microcosm for understanding the function of identity, and more broadly, within contemporary Australian sporting discourse. An examination of this type allows for the multiplicity of voices and experience to become part of the theoretical and methodological dialogue regarding sporting organisational identity theory. Table 5 outlines the epistemological and methodological framework of this research.

**Table 6: Epistemological and methodological framework**

| **Theoretical orientation** | **Method** | **Analysis** |
|---|---|---|
| *Primary*: Symbolic interpretivism | Extended, semi-structured, open-ended interviews. | Open and axial coding of interviews to explore major |
| *Secondary*: Social constructivism constructions of 'truth' and acknowledgement of the postmodern within organisational theory. | Ethnographic observation; document analysis; photographic materials; personal communication (emails) | Triangulation of data; validity checks within the document for negative cases within the themes. |

This research acknowledges the limitations of using a single, instrumental case study approach, in particular, in terms of the lack of generalisations being able to be made by using only one case for analysis. As Stakes argued, however, 'we do not choose case study designs to optimise the production of generalisations … there is emphasis on uniqueness' (Stake, 1995, p. 8). The limitations around a lack of generalisation have been negated by the concept of transferability that is used now within more qualitative works.

## 3.6 Summary

The methodological considerations of any identity research are numerous. This study used a qualitative approach that aimed to let the personal narratives and the shared experiences of the interviewees come across in the results. Following Stake's approach, an instrumental case study design was adopted as the research framework. This was done because the identity of St Mary's Football Club, as a sporting organisation, remained the focus of this case study. The data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews and was conducted over an entire football season. This section has illustrated how the questions were adapted and how they evolved over the course of the interview schedule in order to get the most information out of the interviewees.

This chapter has explained the procedures that were used to explore the research questions. The chapter discussed and justified the research design, the selection of St Mary's Football Club, the sampling frame and selection of subjects, instrumentation, data collection procedures and treatment of the data. In terms of methodological considerations the research questions do not seek to identify participants on the grounds of racial backgrounds and the need for anonymity of interviewees has been explained. The following chapters present and discuss the results obtained, draw conclusions, explain implications for theory and practice related to the identity of sport organisations and outline future research in this area.

# Chapter 4: Results—Constructing Identity

This chapter explores the individual perceptions of what constructed the organisational identity of St Mary's Football Club. As outlined in the previous chapter, the interviews were coded using both open and axial coding and the subheadings for this chapter reflect the major themes that emerged. Individuals' quotations are presented verbatim in order to allow a sense of personal voice, expression and emotion to be retained. Consequently, the results reflect 'what was said' during those interviews. Names have been omitted in order to protect the anonymity of interviewees. Overall, the interviewees spoke about the club with warmth, passion and candour. As an outsider to the football club, the researcher found it was an incredible opportunity to talk, watch, discuss, listen to and stand on the sidelines of a unique community. The results are organised into four major themes: family, the clubhouse, male friendship and the role of women.

## 4.1 Theme One: Family

Those interviewed repeatedly described St Mary's as being like a 'family' and having the atmosphere of a 'family club'. Interviewees stressed the importance of the family on the club's sense of history. Allowing for a certain element of nostalgia, it was clear from the interviews that the concept of family had been of historical importance to the club. Interviewees also made it clear that the importance placed on family was an on going feature of St Mary's overall organisational identity. Interviewees were able to reflect on how the St Mary's 'family' had changed within the current club environment. Not only was the concept of family used to describe familial relationships between members, it was now used as a metaphor to explain the closeness felt by its members towards St Mary's as an organisation.

### 4.1.1 The Experiences of the 'Stolen Generations'

St Mary's was formed around two key entities: the Tiwi Islands and the Catholic Church. The relationship between the Tiwi Islands and the Catholic Church had a large impact on the construction of family at St Mary's. As mentioned in previous chapters, St Mary's was established by the Catholic Church to create an opportunity for Indigenous men from the Tiwi Islands to play football in Darwin. Up until that point, the local Darwin football

competition was segregated along racial lines. Several of the interviewees commented that it was St Mary's that first allowed men from the Tiwi Islands to play in the Darwin competition. Indigenous people from Bathurst and Melville Island are known as 'Tiwi' (these Islands are often labelled as the Tiwi Islands) and are the recognised Traditional Owners of that land. People that identify as 'Tiwi' are recognised as Indigenous Australians.

The connection with the Tiwi Islands was important for another reason. The Bathurst and Melville Islands were home to both the traditional Tiwi people and also the Catholic mission settlement known as Garden Point (*Milikapiti*). Garden Point was established as a 'home' for children who had been removed from their families as part of the assimilation laws of the era. The Mission on Tiwi Island was part of the then-government policy of forced removal of children from bi-racial unions between Indigenous and European peoples; these families have since become known as the 'Stolen Generation'.

St Mary's was established for those Tiwi men who had previously been barred from competition. At the same time, however, St Mary's also became the football club for those who had grown up at the Catholic mission, as well. In the interviews it became clear that there was an on going connection between those families who were traditional Tiwi Islanders and those who were part of the Stolen Generations. These relationships were complex. It was difficult to attach labels to groups or families within the club. In terms of a discussion of identity construction, the processes of naming and belonging became an undercurrent within the interviews. The current political climate has meant that names have been attached to these groups that were not used at the time. A former administrator at St Mary's, who had been involved with the club since the early 1960s, remarked: 'If you were to call those people Tiwi's in those days they'd have laughed. They'd never heard of the word'. While naming remained an issue, there was an acknowledgement that the Stolen Generation had been a significant part of St Mary's club identity. Just after he discussed the complexity of naming, the former St Mary's administrator went on to reflect on how the removed children were sometimes given surnames that had little to do with their own traditional families.

> They were taken away from their family at (x) station and it's bloody, this is … it's bloody sad. They took these kids away and they just gave them a name, you know, but nothing to do with where they … what their name was, because their father was … (X) who owned the station who didn't want to have anything to do with them and they took them away and sent them to Garden Point and, of course

> they all become Catholics where they get, they were Baptised and then they become Catholics. I dunno what they were before? (Administrator 5)

As the interviews proceeded, it became evident that the line between who was considered Tiwi and who was part of the Stolen Generation was blurred. Since St Mary's was first established many of the family groups have intermarried and some members of the Stolen Generation have been given traditional status and Land Rights on the Tiwi Islands. Within the club the term 'family' was used to describe these complex bonds that reflected both biological and cultural connections between individuals. For those Indigenous children who had been removed from their families, being at Garden Point meant they were still in contact with the Tiwi people and language, which still existed within a more traditional tribal environment. One of the inaugural players from the 1952/53 team, and current supporter, reflected on the relationship formed between those who grew up at the mission and the Tiwi people:

> So they are in daily contact with tribal Aboriginal people who are kindly disposed to them who in many cases taught them bush skills … And so that's, that's why I think in the process a new tribe was created and they'll always call themselves the Garden Point mob and they still have reunions and parties and an association and that's manifested very much via the connection with St Mary's footy club. (Supporter 1)

He went on to add that St Mary's recognised the important role those members of the Stolen Generation had within the club:

> And St Mary's Football Club, the smart organisation that it is, is always the ... the clubrooms are always available for the Garden Point. Yes, they're our people. (Supporter 1)

This quotation highlighted two aspects of St Mary's. Firstly, that the clubhouse was always available and offered a physical meeting point for those members of the Stolen Generation. Secondly, he identified them as 'our people', while he himself was not of Indigenous background. This suggested that the St Mary's 'football family' went beyond the accepted understanding of a biological family. When Tiwi men were offered an opportunity to play in the newly formed St Mary's Football Club it meant that those children who had been removed from their families also found a football home at St Mary's. For those who were part of the Stolen Generation, the football club gave both a connection to place and belonging. St Mary's allowed for a unique local identity to be established.

It was evident in the interviews that the contribution of Indigenous members was a fundamental part of St Mary's overall collective identity. The historical relationship between those from the Tiwi Islands and the Stolen Generation was evidence of those close bonds between family groups. More recently, flying in players from Wadeye had brought about newer relationships with other Indigenous communities. The interviewees discussed the importance and contribution of Indigenous players and supporters in a very matter-of-fact way. One Australian Football League Northern Territory (AFLNT) administrator, in his interview, commented that football in the NT was unique in its multicultural mix, particularly in terms of the dominance of Indigenous talent. He suggested that St Mary's had a unique club history that allowed for such a strong Indigenous representation in their juniors, reserves and senior sides:

> They are you know, they are the number one club, strong, successful. But have that common touch. You can go over there and have a beer and feel comfortable. And that's what is. They've got the Indigenous people over there, and there's alcohol around but they manage it really well. That's good. So, what they've contributed particularly to Indigenous Australia has been enormous. Enormous! (AFLNT Administrator 1)

As the interviews progressed it became clear that the club's identity was influenced by the involvement and legacy of key family groups. The interviewees described St Mary's in terms of the families that made up its past and present playing group. The names of these families were repeated within the interviews. Often, the success of the club was attributed to not only the skills of these family members on the football field, but also their strength of character. As a former St Mary's administrator reflected in his interview, 'I mean these are the people that made St. Marys'. He went to add that, 'it's their sons and grandsons who are now … playing in the 14/16s' (Administrator 5).

The current organisational identity of St Mary's remains influenced by these key families. A current St Mary's administrator described the club as made up of a 'conglomerate of families'. The families he referred to were those families that had a long association with the club. He went on to add that the club was reinforced by the strong historical connection between family groups and football excellence:

> It's a really family oriented environment that has a depth of history that gives it the flavour. Its history really defines it. You won't, you might find other clubs that have a length of history but not the length of consistent excellence that this club has. And even now there [are] new families emerging that are also excellent human beings … They are exemplary individuals. And you speak to them and they are respectful. They are nice people and they play football for the club with a

> passion. And they are why I think this club is so great. And everyone before them has been the same … (Administrator 6)

The success of the club was often attributed to intergenerational bonds formed through the club. This was contrasted with other NT football clubs. The current St Mary's administrator went on to suggest there was a trend within Darwin football families to frequently change clubs. It was notable that the continued support of these families and on going loyalty of its members was considered unusual within Darwin's football fraternity. He suggested that the continued support of these families was what made St Mary's both unique and successful. He added that family to him meant the following:

> I mean family like generations of people. Long involvements in the football club from grandfather to grandson. Great-grandfather to grandson even. We have (y) who was involved very early on in the football club. And now we have his grandsons running around in under 13's and under 14's and under 16s … The Northern Territory has people moving from club to club at a whim. These families don't do it. They are here for generations. They are strong families. (Administrator 6)

From the interviews it was evident that those families who identified themselves as being part of the Stolen Generation had particularly influenced the construction of family at St Mary's. Those interconnected family groups combined with those from the Tiwi Islands represented St Mary's both on- and off-field. More recently, non-biologically related families connected through the experiences of the football club shared this closeness. This was exemplified in an interview with a current St Mary's supporter, who was both a past player and Tiwi Island traditional owner:

> Well history is important because everybody's get involved. Everybody. Mothers. Uncles. Brothers. Supporters. Which is best, best for the club. It makes everything worthwhile. (Supporter 2)

He added that St Mary's 'is like my mother' but quickly changed and said, 'or like my wife' [laughter]. As an organisation, the club offered a place of social interaction that was controlled through the ebb and flow of the football season. The regulated environment of football mimicked, in the broadest sense, some of the familial controls placed by parents on children. The involvement of all family members meant that St Mary's offered a highly inclusive space: keeping family groups together and creating an on going cycle of active participation in the club.

Understanding the family groups at St Mary's was complicated. It was difficult to attach labels or name where people came from, as much remained unsaid within the interviews. In the same way, it was impossible to ask if people identified as being part of the Stolen Generation or from the Tiwi Islands, because many at St Mary's maintained dual identities that were both Tiwi and part of the Stolen Generation. What became clear within the interviews was that value was placed on St Mary's being the club that gave Tiwi men the opportunity to play in the NTFL. The historical link between St Mary's and the Tiwi Islands was considered of on going importance. It was the families of the Stolen Generation that were particularly emphasised for their on going loyalty and commitment to St Mary's. The importance of these family groups cannot be under-estimated; however, it would be an oversimplification to condense the construction of family at St Mary's into only these two groups. The continuation of this family was used in a much broader sense and family was constructed as a metaphor for the club as a whole.

### 4.1.2 A Football Family

In the interviews, family was expressed as more than the biological connection between individuals. The history of St Mary's was described through the diverse backgrounds of the families that had played for the club. The interviews made it apparent that not only was St Mary's made stronger and more successful by certain families, but that it was like a family to be involved in the club. Being able to coordinate the large diverse families was also recognised as being a key part of St Mary's.

A current St Mary's administrator and former player in the 1980s described how the strength of the organisation was derived from the diversity of families associated with the club. He maintained that it was the combination of the families from different nationalities and ethnicities that strengthened St Mary's.

> I don't know if you ever ask what the, what you think the secret of St. Mary's success is, it's a real complex question, but I think it's … how we've been able to mix our families, all nationalities, Indigenous, non-Indigenous and, and give people guidance without violence I think is really the secret to it all. (Administrator 1)

He went on to attribute the success of St Mary's to the ability of the club to act as a family to its participants. He used the example of being able to settle disputes, both on- and off-field, through the committee and in most cases without external help or

unwarranted media attention. He said that even when members or players acted in socially unacceptable ways at the club it was important to resolve issues 'in-house':

> There's been the odd fight and all that but it's mainly alcohol fuelled and there's generally an outside influence that might float in and really push the ... every wrong button you could think of but amongst ourselves we, we've been very disciplined I suppose. If not, when there was lack of discipline we've been good at dealing with it in-house and not making an issue of it in the media or anything like that; we do all the things in-house and, and I think we still do that to this day. (Administrator 1)

The term 'family' was used repeatedly within the interviews. In a broader sense the 'football family' was reinforced on-field as junior players and less experienced players were expected to follow the example of senior players. A former player commented that the junior players 'love it [football] more than probably what some of the senior blokes do'. He went on to suggest that this was part of the culture of St Mary's that reinforced a cycle where junior players had watched their family members both play and then go on and hold leadership positions in the club.

> The uncles, the fathers, the grandfathers, been part of their lives for so long and they're just a part of the, the culture … we have very good people in those coaching and leadership positions so; it's just a big cycle. (Player 4)

The football family of St Mary's was not just for those who had a long connection with the Darwin-based families. For those who had more recently arrived at Darwin, the club offered a type of surrogate 'football' family. By joining St Mary's it allowed access to a genuine expression of authentic local identity by being part of the St Mary's football family. A current female administrator of St Mary's described how both she and her husband were made to feel welcome at the club. Her own Darwin football identity was established through an association with St Mary's and that extended to feelings of belonging within a broader local community.

> Sport does give, not just football, but I mean sport does give a sense of identity and it gives you that instant family I suppose. And it goes back to like your inclusion thing that you were talking about that once you belong to a team, you're family. And I know when I moved up here within the first two weeks I was playing netball. And they were my family like, in the first year, you know we had just moved up here and we all clicked and we were ... we just had each other's backs sort of thing. You just, you had people to be social, you know you have your social stuff and your place where you belong. (Administrator 9)

The sense of familial belonging was conditional on supporting St Mary's. A current supporter and former administrator mentioned this aspect of St Mary's 'football family'.

He used the example of a very successful footballer who had left St Mary's and played at other NTFL clubs before making it in the VFL:

> 'He played for St. Kilda, he represented Victoria' and they go 'yeah, oh no he was best when he played for us!' [Laughter]. You know … and you think 'hang on he's achieved so much', 'oh he shouldn't have left, his brother was better'. His brother played all this footy with Saints, you know! [Laughter]. (Supporter 3)

The football family was based around the support and loyalty to St Mary's. As another current football operations manager discussed, in his interview, that when he accepted a coaching position with a rival NTFL club, he missed the social inclusion of being part of the club. He remarked that he did not like being unable to participate actively in the social life at St Mary's.

> I missed being able to bring my son down and have my son play with other kids and while we sit back or we go for a swim or ... It's really the social side of the club is something that separates it as well. But, I think playing for St Mary's, you win a flag or whatever or you don't but ... when you spend as much time as you do with the people that are at the club, you become a St Mary's family. So it's not just a biological family, it's like your extended family and my kids will go around saying, 'oh uncle (d) and uncle (g)' [senior players in the A grade side] and, all sorts of things so ... I see everybody here at this club as part of my family if not at least part of my football family. (Administrator 2)

He went on to add that this social side of the club and long associations over time contributed to the 'winning culture of the club'. He regarded his experience as being part of that broader engagement between generations, within the football club, enacting and expressing what it meant to play and be part of St Mary's over and over.

> I guess the one thing that clicked to me was it had always been a family club. Fathers played and their sons grew up playing. And when people had finished playing they'd go back and coach, whether it was coaching their kids or not. Or coaching a different grade. And the club was always good at recycling you know, people into the system instead of just letting them drop out and disappear. (Administrator 2)

The football family of St Mary's went beyond the biological relationship of certain groups. The football family of St Mary's was based on several key parts. It was built on diverse family groups. It was committed to solving problems 'in-house'. It offered a genuine local identity to those not from Darwin. It also valued fathers and sons/daughters being part of an on going generational cycle of football playing. To be included within the 'football family' was conditional on supporting or playing for St Mary's.

### 4.1.3 A Family Club—A Place for Women and Children

St Mary's was described as a having a strong family environment. It was mentioned in the interviews that it was a safe place for women and children. Much of the sense of family was attributed to women and children being included in the culture of the club. The ability of wives and girlfriends to bring children down to the clubhouse after the games was considered a key aspect of the club's successful family atmosphere. Many of the senior male players mentioned that it was very important to be able to include partners in social events. Both players and their partners repeatedly discussed within the interviews how the clubhouse offered a space where children were welcomed.

The family atmosphere that allowed for wives, partners and children to be welcomed at the club was considered a unique part of St Mary's. In particular, it was the current players who commented on the importance of including partners and children at the club. A former player in his late twenties discussed the importance of family and included his experiences of his younger brothers playing for St Mary's. He emphasised that it was the way the club had accepted both his partner and children. He put forward that it was the family atmosphere that had helped contribute to the on-field success of the club.

> You've probably heard this already but it's very much a family, family orientated club … Even, the names that filter through the team lists or the A Grade teams those have over the years like the (x), (y) … I guess they're just a couple but they're very big families, and I mean very talented football families but in terms of numbers as well it's a lot of them [laughs]. Ah but it's a, it's a great fit for the club … You can bring your kids … your wives, your partners and they can just hang out, so … It does reflect on the footy field as well that we, that we are, are a fairly tight group. (Player 4)

He added that St Mary's differed from other semi-professional football clubs where he had played. While playing in Adelaide he had felt that partners and children were not as included within the environment of the football club. He added that:

> It's much easier for people to come into an environment like that when you've got family, you might have a partner and you've got kids and they're welcomed as well. Where I have played at different footy clubs and they're not really the partners and the children are on the outer and you have to organise the family has to stay at home and you organise, or you go out with the team to, to do your activities. Where at this club … the whole family's very much a part of it. (Player 4)

The family atmosphere was highlighted as a key difference between St Mary's and other interstate clubs. Another player, in his late twenties, who had a successful state football career in the South Australian Football League (SANFL), the Western Australian Football League (WAFL) and in the Victorian country leagues discussed how St Mary's had made him feel welcome within the playing group. He attributed this to the lack of money being offered at St Mary's because it meant that players came and stayed because of their love of the playing group, of the administration and coaching staff and of the club in general.

> A lot of clubs when they get recruits they come up [and] go places for money and then leave. Most of the people we get are just decent genuine people who like spending time with other players and their families at the club and yeah we don't, we don't really get paid next to nothing here anyway, that's another good thing that people don't come here for the money. Just come here for the love ... (Player 5)

He went on to add that it was the family atmosphere of the clubhouse that allowed that sense of shared bonds to develop.

> The main families that the clubs have gone through and there's just kids have just gone through and all that … every night you can just bring your kids and family down here. There's a pool. There's always, there's always heaps of kids running around. Everyone's kids always just muck around with each other always playing out here … I think it is a family, a good family club and a good family atmosphere … (Player 5)

One female supporter who had met her husband at sixteen and had grown up at the St Mary's clubrooms recalled:

> Oh you know the saying, 'a family that plays together stays together?' Well that's very true. And sporting codes quite often can vary … it doesn't make or break families, it just strengthens family bonds. And with Saints, they have a lot of functions where it is always family orientated. You know after the games the whole family goes back to the club. We used to sit around the back and they would bring the guitars out and they would have a barbeque and someone would be cooking. You would go and get your steak sandwich or whatever and you would sit around and sing the song. So there were wives, there were kids. The kids would run around, mums would bring their rugs and their prams and if the kids went to sleep that night they would be comfortable. My rugs are still there from when my girls were little. And they've got a little play area for the kids. And very much so the family, the family orientation is there with Saints. (Supporter 6)

The interviews repeatedly highlighted how important children were within the people's perceptions of the club environment. This was despite there being things at the St Mary's

clubhouse that would not necessarily make it a particularly attractive environment for children. The clubhouse had gambling (pokies machines), smoking (in the bar area) and the consumption of alcohol. Only one interviewee remarked on the somewhat unlikely mix of young children and families with the smoking, gambling and drinking culture of a semi-professional football club. She expressed that significant changes had been made within the club recently, in particular, the building of a pool, which had been done consciously in an effort to promote the clubhouse as a family space. As an administrator she was the only one who raised the point that, 'pokies generate income but they're anti-family'. For the rest of the participants it was an innocuous juxtaposition of children within an adult football club environment. She commented that the inclusion of children into the club was part of Darwin society more broadly:

> I think St. Mary's has been founded on families. I think that the history of St. Mary's if you go back and you look at the (x), the (z), the (y), they're family and family attracts family and a lot of it has to do with the people that are involved. They're family orientated. Their children are part of their life, they're not to be just left home, but there might be a little bit like a Darwin culture too, the things you do you tend to do together because it is that kind of environment. (Administrator 10)

The family atmosphere of St Mary's was expressed as being different to other football clubs. Another of the female administrators commented about her on going experiences of family within the club context. She added that since she had arrived from Melbourne it was through her involvement in women's football that she found herself taking on a family role within the club.

> I've sort of been involved with the girls now for over a year and I'm like Aunty (W), or whatever … I've had calls from kids, you know, 'Can you pick me up?', or, 'I'm stuck.' Or, 'Can I get signed out of school and stay at your house on the weekend?' and stuff like that. So it does become like a, your St Mary's family … (Administrator 9)

It was of note that the connotations of Aunty do also suggest the strong linguistic influence of the Indigenous heritage of the club, where elders within the community are prefixed with the title of 'Aunty' or 'Uncle' as a marked sign of respect. This was not to suggest that a more typically Indigenous structures of language were being used within the club; however, this typified the distinctive 'family' bonds that were established within the connection to the club.

The clubhouse was repeated referred to as a 'family' space. The inference being that with the strong family dynamic, particularly with a club that welcomed children, attracted the type of player who was comfortable or sought that family atmosphere. In doing so, the recruitment strategy was not so much attracting good players or even 'good people' but those 'good people' were the ones for whom the family environment of the club appealed. The mix of ages within the club did mimic that of a large extended family. As one supporter expressed, 'the elders do matter. And the children matter and everyone else fits in between really' (Supporter 4).

Certainly while conducting interviews it was not unusual to see children of all ages, male and female, watching TV, jumping in the pool or hanging about underfoot. Yet, the clubhouse at St Mary's remained a very adult space. For the most part, people were smoking, drinking (alcohol) or playing the pokies and KENO machines. The majority of people there were male adults engaged in adult conversation. The 'family atmosphere' appeared an incongruous mix of young children within a very adult football club.

It is of note that while everyone within the club was included within the 'family' there were certainly some members; particularly those who knew or had a long-standing connection to the club's history felt that sense of family had changed. A former St Mary's administrator, as well as a current senior player reflected upon the sense that aspects of the club had changed and that the family values were changing. Both had a lifetime of association with St Mary's and their comments indicated that there were aspects of the construction of the family atmosphere that had changed.

> You talk to some of them old footballers … I used to get them, you know, they'd come and work for nothing to make a few dollars for the club and things like that, you know. You talk to some, like old [W] or … you should talk to some of these old footballers too, you know, don't talk to these modern blokes they wouldn't know … know fuck all [laughter]. And what happened to the St … they just listen to what the old people tell them, you know [laughter]. (Administrator 5)

> A lot of the recruits they know nothin' about it, so, but I reckon it's our responsibility to let them know a bit about the club and a bit about the history of the club ... (Player 2)

### 4.1.4 Summary

In summary, families were a very influential part of what constructed and maintained identity within the club. The interviewees repeatedly expressed the connection felt to both the Indigenous people of the Tiwi Islands and those who were connected with the Stolen Generation. In particular, interviewees who had a long association with the club reflected on this shared past and recognised the continued influence of these groups within the current St Mary's Football Club organisational structures. The overwhelmingly positive nature of the family atmosphere of St Mary's was countered somewhat by the discussed challenges of the pokies machines, smoking and drinking within the adult space of the clubhouse. They reflected the complexity of community and grassroots organisations, which are based upon and maintained by arrangements between families and friendship groups. Those shared histories between the Tiwi Islands and the Stolen Generations created familial relationships that made St Mary's uniquely successful but also presented challenges as the club moved towards being a more professional sporting organisation.

The notion of family was used to describe both the actuality of a club established and built around several large football families but also as a metaphor to link all members to the idea of being part of an extended football family. Family was also used to explain how people became involved at the club. The intergenerational contact between grandfathers, fathers and sons was very important to understanding the connections expressed over time and both on- and off-field. The club also promoted itself as a family environment that welcomed young children. This positioned St Mary's as being different to other semi-professional clubs, in particular, those football clubs outside of the NT. This reflected their membership base but also the general attitude that the clubhouse and facilities were a place for both women and children.

## 4.2 Theme Two: The Clubhouse

> The club had a large barn-like feel. Inside the wall of the bingo hall was adorned with flags from previous premiership winning teams, making it an impressive and formidable sight. There were tables and chairs set up for the bi-weekly bingo tournaments. It was overwhelmingly dark, as the curtains (green and gold Tiwi print design) were always pulled shut … The bar, in contrast, was quite well lit as the sound of a television and pokies machines hummed on

> in the background. There were announcements on screens that let patrons know about when the next round of KENO was to be played. After the senior men's side played on the weekend supporters were encouraged to go back to the clubhouse, which after a win was busy but remained quiet after a loss. [Interviewer's personal fieldwork journal, 28 October, 2009]

The clubhouse featured prominently within interviewees' reflections about their experiences at St Mary's. Having a clubhouse was identified as a significant part of what it meant to be at St Mary's. It was the structural embodiment of the on-field success of the club and the hard work of volunteer labour. In terms of constructed identity, the clubhouse positioned St Mary's as unique relative to other Darwin football clubs not only because of the facilities but also in terms of ownership, access to grounds and the ability to claim their clubhouse as their own.

The interviews were divided between those that remembered what it was like not to have a clubhouse, those that remembered the construction of the current clubhouse and those for whom the clubhouse had been a constant part of their St Mary's experience. The majority of interviewees mentioned the recent structural improvement and upgrades to the club as being evidence of the on going success of the club.

Interviewees discussed the importance of the clubhouse in several key ways. Firstly, the clubhouse was used in conjunction with the notion of family, as a place where members were able to come together before and after games. Having a permanent clubhouse created interaction between players, supporters, partners and children. It was also mentioned as being evidence of the club's on-field success in terms of facilities and professionalism as it was used as a place for board and subcommittee meetings. It was also used to highlight the club's off-field as well as on-field success. The fact that the club continued to operate during periods of financial and organisational instability was used to highlight the cohesion and hard work of staff and volunteers. Keeping the clubhouse open was symbolic of keeping St Mary's' on-field future alive. These themes were discussed openly and often very candidly. Having a clubhouse was a source of pride and was evidence of the many years of lobbying and hard work by club members. During the late 1980s and early 1990s St Mary's had lobbied the NT Government for access to land which been made through grants, specially available to sporting organisations. Originally $100,000 was provided that included access and ownership of the land to develop as a sporting club.

### 4.2.1 Background to Building the Clubhouse

The St Mary's Sporting and Social Club was built adjacent to TIO Stadium, the premier sporting facility in the NT, where the majority of NTFL football games are played (oval 1). The sporting complex is located in the suburb of Marrara, which is both near the airport and the 'northern suburbs', built during the post-cyclone boom.

The relatively modest premise of just wanting to have a space of their own (a clubhouse) was a consistent theme within the interviews. The story of how St Mary's achieved the goal of having an independent space was only discussed by those who had been connected with the club long enough to remember the period prior to relocating to Marrara. As with many local sporting organisations, much of the material produced about the club, either in the form of newsletters or pamphlets, has been thrown out, forgotten or lost within the process of running a football club from season to season. In a preliminary interview, one of the interviewees recalled a booklet being produced when the clubhouse was formally opened that recorded both the history of the club and the clubhouse. The booklet consisted of 36 pages, black and white of A5 format. It included a brief history of the club, the St Mary's Honour Board with season, captain, coach, best and fairest, leading goal kicking and number of goals recorded from 1952/53 until the 1994/95 seasons. It also included the 200+ game players, the 'St. Marys goal kicking machine' and reminisces from previous captains and coaches. It had a section entitled, 'From Chook Raffles to Marrara', which explained in a couple of hundred words the process of finding a clubhouse. Even the title of the section positioned the story of St Mary's clubhouse through the symbols of the local football club. The suggestion being that St Mary's had come from the 'chook raffle' to the multi-team stadia over the course of several decades. The article described how 'by the late 70's the club was at the cross roads, either to press ahead or consolidate the current status' (St Mary's Football, Sporting & Social Club Inc., Commemorative Souvenir Booklet, 1994, p. 14). It described the process of wanting a clubhouse and using the Darwin showgrounds as a venue during this time.

In a surprisingly critical analysis of the club's position, the article went on to suggest that, 'the club was under the mistaken impression that having a bar, homeground and the

ability to hire out the venue it was a license to print money … Within two years the club was on the "bones of its ar—" and the future looked very grim' (St Mary's Football, Sporting & Social Club Inc., Commemorative Souvenir Booklet, 1994, p. 14). Going on, it explained how the club had formulated its first business plan and reorganised the committee into two sections; one responsible for the financial management of the club and the other devoted to football operations. This division on the committee suggested a forward-thinking attitude within the St Mary's executive that continues within the present committee. In the early 1990s when the then Country Liberal Party (CLP) government decided that there was a need to expand Darwin's sporting facilities, there was the opportunity for local sporting organisations to apply for grants of $100,000 and land packages were made available towards building permanent structures around the facilities. At the conclusion, the article noted that it was 'the many thousands of hours of volunteer work by members and supporters' that made the building of the clubhouse possible (St Mary's Football, Sporting & Social Club Inc., Commemorative Souvenir Booklet, 1994, p. 16).

### 4.2.2 Remembering a Clubhouse

For those interviewees who remembered the time before St Mary's had a clubhouse, understanding the processes of building and organising was a very important part of 'who' the club was. The ability to have a space to train, to meet before and after games, to have a function room and to continue the bingo tournaments were all seen as very important parts of the club's growth. A former St Mary's administrator remembered the difficulty in getting land and how limited the sporting facilities were within the Darwin area during that time.

> I could fill ten pages of how the, the bloody strife, and the trouble and the … that we went through trying to get land, all the excuses in the world and City Council they're, they were hopeless just bumbled along and didn't know what to do until the, the Government took all this land back off them … that Government particularly understood the need for sporting facilities for the young people in Darwin because it was all pretty bloody haphazard ... (Administrator 5)

The club was allowed access to land as part of a package deal through the building of the Marrara Sporting Complex. By the mid-1990s when these political deals were being done, St Mary's had already established itself as part of a sports lobbying process. The

Country Liberal Party government of the day was particularly influenced by the case for clubhouses to be built as part of the newly constructed sporting facilities. In a small town it was clearly a case of both worthy cause and 'who you know'. As the former St Mary's administrator went on to add:

> I used to be able to get in their ear and talk to them and, particularly (N) who was always a good listener for sport because he was the Minister for Sport … and the first thing they did was built the Marrara Stadium there, ah, the basketball and then they said 'right we're going to build a grandstand AFL' … (Administrator 5)

Once the land was granted, the actual process of constructing a clubhouse was very important. The clubhouse was built almost entirely with volunteer labour. There were some supporters, in particular partners of players, who had watched from the periphery the various stages of building the club. One supporter remembered how much it had meant to both the players and supporters in having a space of their own:

> So we've had people that, that's heart and soul, belong to the club and they wanted to see the success. More so than that … That club means so much to people. We didn't have a club for many, many years. We were, as most of the other football clubs … we went from one venue to having our social out … you know social get-togethers and functions to at people's houses and stuff in the earlier years. To getting, being granted some land a lease from the government. And that club was built with the hands of supporters, sponsors, donors and the footballers. I can still remember going there and helping prepare the barbeques and lunches for the boys while they would help to wash the brick walls that had just been bricked up with acid. And seeing my husband's clothes come home with holes in it everywhere. And the club always put on barbeques and drinks for the boys afterwards. So it's built with so much love that they actually feel a part of it. (Supporter 6)

The clubhouse offered a site that was both used by the broader Darwin community and by those members of St Mary's who felt that it offered a second home. The building of the clubhouse offered a unique example of that sentiment. The feelings expressed by one of the interviewees suggested that the combination of volunteer labour and time spent in the proverbial wilderness, without a clubhouse, meant that people identified strongly with the physical elements that held the club together.

The clubhouse was built during a period of financial success at the club during the early 1990s. It was the culmination of years of negotiation and lobbying to and within the NTFL, local and Territory governments. Having a physical space was seen as incredibly important to those who remembered the period prior to the construction. It was a point of

difference between some of the older interviewees and the current administrators and players, because for most of the interviewees, the actual process of acquiring land and building the clubhouse was not critical to their understanding of the place. As part of the generational renewal, that sense of importance has become imbued with familiarity and the clubhouse tied more closely to the sense of family.

### 4.2.3 Finding a Home?

It was necessary to explore the history of the clubhouse because, in terms of identity construction, the search for a 'home' fits within the family paradigm. If St Mary's was a family then the clubhouse was the home. The clubhouse was repeated in the interviews as being an important symbol of the success of St. Marys. It exemplified both the shrewd business sense of being able to capitalise on the government grants and on the achievements of supporters and players in physically constructing the club.

From an administrative position, the function of the club and clubhouse was to support the football team. As a current female administrator saw it, the primary focus of the club was getting a senior side out into the main football competition and being as competitive within that role as possible. She stressed that, 'we're a football club and we want to win a premiership, the clubhouse all want to make a centrepiece for the area'. It was also important to make the clubhouse an inclusive space. She added, 'we want to make it extremely family friendly'. The clubhouse was a place where women and children were welcomed and offered a physical space where social activities could occur that included all the family, not just the male players. A current female supporter offered insight into the role the St Mary's' clubhouse fulfilled within the wider community, outside of the context of football.

> Without the St Mary's Football Club there are probably so very many families that would be lost. The club provides an outlet for not just the young people of the Territory for sport and it's not just football, now its synonymous with Stolen Generation people. It gives them a venue to go and have their meetings and have their get together … And Saints see themselves as a provider of so many outlets for young footballers, the mums and dads and families, their grandmothers, you know, their granddaughters … I have seen so many weddings, 21st's, birthdays, and so many sadly enough, so many wakes at that club. So it's the hub of the northern suburbs' sporting facility. (Supporter 6)

It became evident in the interviews that there was a counter-narrative to that of the St Mary's clubhouse. This came across when interviewees compared their clubhouse (St Mary's) with that of their neighbours, the Wanderers 'Eagles' Football Club. As one of the original three clubs that has existed since 1917, the Wanderers occupied an important place within Darwin football history. At Marrara Sporting Complex there were two ovals, one a training oval and the other the main playing oval that was equipped with broadcast quality lights to allow for night games. Both St Mary's and the Wanderers had TIO oval one as their home ground. Similarly, both clubs share training facilities, alternating years between what club trained on either the main oval or the training oval. Both clubs were granted access to the land on the same NT government grant for sporting organisations at the time of the Marrara Sporting Complex development. What came out during the interviews was the perception that St Mary's had managed to capitalise on their original investment, while the Wanderers were left with little more than a shed and beer fridge. As a former St Mary's administrator added:

> … but we had letters, you know, about land and Wanderers Football Club over here, they some years … many years later, they got onto what we were doing and they started lobbying the Government for land as well. (Administrator 5)

The suggestion was that while both clubs started out with the same investment from the NT government, it was only St Mary's, however, that managed to capitalise on the original investment. As a current St Mary's administrator (former player) went on to add:

> That the club took the $100,000 from the NT government, as did Wanderers … I'll never pay Wanderers out for what they have there. It's paid for, it's theirs, it's their home … all right they've got a shed like this. A little bit more closed in but it's their humble home so I haven't got a problem with that … (Administrator 1)

It was more than just the physical difference between the two clubhouses. As a female supporter commented, it was the difference in atmosphere between the St Mary's club house compared to that at of the Wanderers 'shed'.

> You know, it's [St Mary's] just a very relaxed, happy atmosphere. And I would say, probably more so than other clubs because I mean I must admit I haven't gone to other clubs as much, I have just seen Wanderers next door and stuff, you know. (Supporter 6)

The difference between the two clubhouses was summarised best by a supporter (former player) who added:

> Everything [at St Mary's] is done on a very functional basis. Everything works okay. There is room to move, there is room to play. There is now room to swim and have barbeques and it is easier for a harmonious club to operate with facilities like that than for say, Wanderers, who have a shed just up the road but nothing other than a beer fridge. And the others after all these years have nothing. (Supporter 1)

### 4.2.4 Facilities—Something Gained

The majority of interviewees reflected on the space in very practical ways and emphasised the recent improvements that have been made in the last decade to the clubhouse. It represented St Mary's as being a successful and progressive sporting organisation. The ability of the club to progress and grow was emphasised. The club had changed significantly since it first opened in 1994. As a female supporter mentioned, 'it's right here in our back yard. And, it's definitely the capital investment in our club since, in the last 10 years have been phenomenal'. She included that there had been on going improvements and changes to the club. She added:

> You saw the huge swimming pool, the facilities they've got there. They never stop enhancing the club. The club is just constantly growing, progressing and just getting better. (Supporter 6)

Administrators, players and supporters mentioned the upgrades in facilities repeatedly within the interviews. The most significant example of these changes was the upgrade in facilities, which included the building of a swimming pool. Of all the improvements it was surprising how many interviewees mentioned the importance of building and having a swimming pool. From the different perspectives of administrators, supporters and players (past and present) the pool represented distinctive features of what made the clubhouse special.

The St Mary's committee was aware of the many benefits that could be gained from having a swimming-pool facility at the club. From an administrative perspective, the pool symbolised the growth of the club and offered an opportunity to highlight the financial resurgence of the club to its members. It also was seen as a way of encouraging members back to the clubhouse before and after a game, as well as rewarding members who had stayed with the club during the periods of financial difficulty. As a current female administrator recalled:

> So my dream was always what I'd love to see is a swimming pool out the back and I mentioned it at the Audit Committee and for some reason (g) knew someone who knew the cigarette man who gave us a $15,000, loan, or advance on our tobacco commission and that was our pool fund so it basically started within twelve months of me being here that we had that put to one side and we were going to match it with funds as soon as we could so that gave us $30,000 which built the pool. (Administrator 10)

The ability to be able to finance construction of a pool was symbolic because it showed that St Mary's had been able to recover both financially and was able showcase the growth of the organisation. While the financial crisis the club went through in the mid-2000s will be discussed in the next chapter, it was the building of the swimming pool, along with the bridging networks between affiliated sports clubs that signified the end of the financial troubles at the clubhouse. As a current female administrator remarked, the continued improvements to the clubhouse was a deliberate part of St Mary's overall progressive strategy. She added:

> That's where Saints are trying more so than what other club ... like they put in a pool area, they want to get a basketball court, they're trying to build affiliate memberships so that they are associated with netball clubs and hockey clubs. (Administrator 8)

The pool was more practical than the symbolic show of wealth by St Mary's administration. The swimming pool offered an activity for children to be involved in outside of juniors' football. It meant that children could be occupied while parents were able to socialise and be in a safe family environment. It also provided entertainment for children too young for junior football. Similarly, it offered an activity for girls who were not involved within the football program. A current male supporter discussed the importance of getting families back to use the facilities at the clubhouse. He made the case that having family friendly facilities brought more families to make to the clubhouse and create the desired atmosphere. He considered:

> It's always been about getting the families there, I think, that is getting families … attracting families to the club and that's why we've looked at various things including … putting in the swimming pool and all of that just to bring families back... (Supporter 3)

Another female supporter mentioned how important the swimming pool had been for her and her children. As a partner of a current player, she added:

> Going back after the game, the kids would all be in the pool, where you can sit there and watch them. It is good for the kids, they've got facilities for the kids

> to keep them occupied while you are there. Especially when you are there most weeks during the football season. (Supporter 5)

The swimming pool represented the increasing professionalism of St Mary's. Current players acknowledged that the pool was good for children but also mentioned that it was used in hydro recovery sessions, which were for the first time being held post-games. A current player discussed how the facilities had changed over his time in being involved at the club. He used the pool as an example of St Mary's being ahead of other Darwin clubs.

> On the field training, back to the club itself. It's pretty good facilities. It's you know got a pool now. And you know, it's leading the way I guess you could say. (Player 9)

The swimming pool was repeatedly used as an example of the club being able to set up and match up professionally, in terms of facilities, with other successful clubs within a regional and Australian context. A current player added:

> St. Mary's has become more professional; we've got a pool now over there the boys can go back there. We've got a Jacuzzi where … we do our rehab over there so we … pool sessions, you know. You jump in the Jacuzzi where they've got this hydro bar hooked up with it so helps you recover quicker then you've got your ice baths as well … I remember when I was a junior the club never used to have that it was just the hall and that was it. (Player 2)

The players were also aware that it allowed a space for children to play, which was seen by many as very important. This highlighted that many of the players were also fathers and saw building a pool positively, both in terms of facilities for players but also for their children when they were at the club. Only one player made the somewhat obvious comment that a swimming pool was useful in Darwin because of the extreme heat.

> Oh you don't realise it, especially in Darwin, how valuable a pool is. Just cause it is so hot here. And you can do recovery there. When we have after-game functions the kids go to the pool. (Player 1)

The swimming pool encouraged families back to the club and an interstate player commented:

> There's a pool. There's always, there's always heaps of kids runnin' around. Everyone's kids always just muck around with each other and always playing out here. (Player 5)

The notion that 'good' family men were encouraged to attend the club was part of these changes. The pool encouraged professionalism and at the same time, brought families back to the clubhouse, which was a unique juxtaposition of intended purposes.

> I know that the values are still there … but, I mean, we've definitely put in a pool and [laughs] we've got an outdoor entertaining area and, yeah I think we still attract the right type of people. (Player 4)

The swimming pool was used as an example to highlight the continued improvements being made to the club. The different perspectives offered insight into how the facilities were viewed by the different users of the St Mary's clubhouse. The themes of family were reinforced alongside the notion of professionalism through the development of facilities being highlighted. The improvements were mentioned as a positive example of changes that many of the interviewees felt it important to include within their own reflections of identity at St Mary's.

### 4.2.5 'Clubmanship' — Something Lost

Having a clubhouse was always mentioned as being very positive. There was a sense, however, that with these changes that had occurred more recently there had been a loss of some club spirit. Across the interviews there was a broad consensus by administrators, players and supporters that there had been a change in the levels of participation and involvement at the club. This was reflected in the attendance of post-match awards ceremonies, social functions and who came back to the clubhouse after training sessions. The perception was that some of the camaraderie had been lost.

These changes in club spirit were often the result of interviewees juxtaposing their own pasts with the current attitudes within the club. It would be difficult to determine how much the club spirit of St Mary's had changed; there was a perception that it was less than a decade ago, despite all the improvements. One current player remembered that when he was younger, how after the game the attendance by supporters and players to the clubhouse was high and how it had now got significantly less. He spoke about his own childhood and added:

> I do remember though that when I was younger the ... everyone used to get back after the games instead ... yeah, have a few beers and crack out their guitars or whatever. Doesn't happen to the same extent any more … Although the club functions that they put on are still pretty good. But just after ... just after a

> normal round game, there are not as many people getting back to the club. (Player 3)

Other players reflected upon the need of players to come back and support the club by attending after matches, particularly going back to the club on a Thursday night after senior men's training. One of the younger players, who had grown up with his father and grandfather playing at the club, restated the idea of the club needing the players as much as players needed the club.

> You should come back to the club. You are paying your money here, you know? Put 20 bucks in the Pokies, you win, if you lose then that goes to the club sort of thing. Just helps everything, just helps, you know, helps pay the bills! (Player 7)

With success came the potential for complacency within the membership and playing group, in particular, towards the clubhouse. In terms of a football lifecycle it had been fifteen years since the clubhouse opened officially. St Mary's had seen many changes within the playing, coaching, administrative and even bar staff. The majority of young men that have played junior to seniors' football at the club did not remember a time without a clubhouse. Current senior players would only have been peripherally involved in the building process that shaped the lives of those within the previous decade at St Mary's. As one administrator remarked, despite the recent expansion of the club, perhaps some of the personal connection had been lost within the clubhouse.

> In fact we probably lost a bit of our clubmanship because we're more successful now … It's more like 'Oh we can afford to pay someone to do this', or you know the working bees are gone and the yard cleans are gone, the gardening, the things that everyone would meet together on a Sunday and have a barbecue and do a big clean up or, it's more like 'OK well you can pay the cleaner more hours or you can get a gardener in or you can pay someone to do this' so you lose a little bit of your comradeship and close knitness because they don't need to be so supportive of the club because they think they've done that and the club can now stand on its own two feet … It's something that I stress quite frequently in my reports that no matter how much we can afford, every time they do something for the club it's profit that goes back into the community. (Administrator 10)

Later in the interview, she compared the facilities at St Mary's with those at the neighbouring Wanderers. In contrast to the other comparisons of the Wanderers that had been about the size or lack of facilities, she noted that perhaps there was a stronger sense of 'clubmanship'.

> But, I mean they've done well because Wanderers next door, we were both given the same grant and the same block of land and this is where we are and they've still got the tin shed, but they've probably got more clubmanship [laughter]. (Administrator 10)

Another female administrator commented that because of the overwhelming dominance of football there was a lack of awareness about the other participants who used the facilities at St Mary's. While the administration was aware of the other people who used the clubhouse, she questioned how aware the players were of the shared status of their clubhouse. The point she made was that in terms of community contribution, while St Mary's primarily operated as a football club, the space was shared and thus the clubhouse meant a great deal more than just a space for footballers.

> It's hard because footballers wouldn't see things like, there's a dance group that comes here every week and has a permanent booking and things like that. Footballers wouldn't really see that as part of their St Mary's. But that dance group [the] same thing, they wouldn't see the connection between, they wouldn't come down to the game on the Sunday because St Mary's is the club that they go to do their dance group. So I think somewhere along the line, if you are clever with your marketing and how you target things, like everyone will feel part of the whole same entity. But the bigger you get, the more you get, the more you become focused on the income rather than the people and the ambience of the place. I think you lose some of that opportunity to be personal. (Administrator 8)

Certainly the senior playing group was insulated in some ways from how the clubhouse was used and viewed by other members of the public. A current senior player, however, noted that the club was definitely moving in a positive direction and he recognised and described how the club provided a service within the community. He went on to add:

> I suppose providing Darwin with a family friend club, and that is what they are doing. There's a swimming pool. They obviously have functions there and there's a bar, there's a kitchen. So they are providing the community with a good service they are ... They are getting supporters in and holding functions that might not even be related to football. We got the bingo and, yeah, so obviously providing a service to the community which is a good thing. (Player 1)

### 4.2.6 Summary

The clubhouse was considered an integral part of what constructed identity at St Mary's. Being able to have a place to come after training, to hold functions, to socialise and to have an administrative headquarters that was owned and operated by the club was

considered very important to all interviewees. In terms of understanding the constructed identity of St Mary's, the clubhouse offered a place for interaction between players, supporters and administrators. Having this space was considered essential to the operational and organisational functions of the club. The clubhouse offered much more than simply a space to organise team lists or as a meeting place, as it offered something back to both young children and the community in general and was considered as important.

How interviewees reflected upon the space was influenced by their own personal involvement. For those who remembered a time prior to the construction of the current clubhouse at Marrara Sporting Complex, just having a space was hugely important. It was built with the 'love' of volunteers. To those who were younger or newly arrived at the club, the clubhouse offered a space to be accepted within the St Mary's family. It was both professional and familial in its application to current players. Only those who had been around the club since being children themselves reflected that perhaps some changes in 'clubmanship' had occurred.

The fact that the clubhouse was mentioned repeatedly in the interviews highlighted how important it was to those connected with St Mary's. It was mentioned to highlight the off-field success of the club. It gave a physical point of comparison so that St Mary's' members were able to juxtapose themselves with the other clubs of the AFLNT. Being able to highlight the success of St Mary's by comparing it with the 'shed' built by the Wanderers next door reinforced the construction of identity at St Mary's as being 'the' dominant football club. By comparing St Mary's with another local football club, it allowed participants to construct their own identity as being part of a very successful sporting organisation. St Mary's' on-field dominance was reinforced by the organisational competency of the club, which in turn was symbolised in the form of the clubhouse.

When interviewees mentioned the improvements to facilities for both players and supporters, it highlighted how the club had progressed positively through the periods of financial hardship. The example of building the swimming pool provided a mixed vignette to discuss these changes in facilities. The swimming pool meant different things to different groups interviewed at St Mary's. It was always a positive view, but it was

mentioned both as an example of the continued professionalisation of the club in terms of allowing hydro recovery sessions for players and as a place for children to be able to swim when it was hot. The pool featured repeatedly within the interviews. This was arguably because it was the most recent significant change that had taken place to the clubhouse. The pool and surrounding landscaping of the gardens reflected the new financial position of the club but also the continued hard work of volunteers and the administrative committee. With these changes, however, some of the community and camaraderie that had been established through the necessity for volunteers had been lost. The lack of 'clubmanship' was something that only two of the female administration staff reflected upon. Within the success of St Mary's it was clear that changes to the clubhouse reflected larger changes within the organisational priorities of the club.

Ultimately, the clubhouse was a space for members to be able to interact, meet and socialise with past and present players and supporters within a very familial space. It reflected the past glories of teams and players through the décor and premiership flags. Similarly, it offered a space for families to come and use the facilities, particularly the swimming pool. Having a space that was air-conditioned, with a pool and gym, with a barbeque area and with, most importantly, a bar was considered a very important part of why St Mary's was so unique. Within that, the clubhouse existed primarily to facilitate the success of the senior men's side.

## 4.3 Theme Three: Male Friendship

The interviewees discussed the importance of the male friendships formed at St Mary's. The bonds established between current and former players were a crucial part of the process of identification within the organisation. This sense of identity manifested in male friendships that created a sense of belonging and on-field success was attributed to the off-field closeness of players. While these positive aspects of identity formation were evident, they were tempered by the acknowledgement that some players could feel excluded at times, particularly players of lesser ability. These male friendships also tacitly excluded female players.

### 4.3.1 Male Friendships: A Sense of Belonging

The male friendships that developed at St Mary's were fundamental to the organisation. Many of the interviewees repeatedly reflected on the friendships established through the connection to the club and time spent playing alongside each other on the football field. The on-field success was attributed to the tight friendships between several of the senior playing group men. A former senior player (formerly part of the leadership group and now in his late twenties) recalled that the structured environment of training and playing together created not only long-term friendships but also feelings of 'belonging' at the club. He went on to include that it had offered structure to his life.

> I just think consistency in anyone's life is, is beneficial, um, and, and Saints provide that I suppose by … by having a place to go and, and catch up with your mates and play footy and, yeah, it gives you, gives you direction I suppose as well. And it comes back to that sense of belonging too. (Player 4)

The closeness of the male friendships established players' sense of belonging within the club that was reinforced as players chose to participate in off-field activities with each other. The former player went on and continued to explain that many of the on-field friendships were cemented with experiences outside of the domain of football. Being involved with the St Mary's offered a way into a lifestyle, which was part of the unique experiences of the NT.

> It's very much a part of the Darwin or the Territory lifestyle and I can see it happening, and I know it happened through the 80s where they were so successful, and as far as around the club with the … people around … on the guitar singing around the pool, just, those catch-up days which is a good environment to be around and it attracts people to the club. (Player 4)

### 4.3.2 Effects of Friendship

The experiences of male friendship were remembered as being created and reinforced through on-field success. The relationships formed on-field were part of the friendships that extended off-field. The physicality of football meant that the time spent playing on-field with certain teammates was finite, as players retired and finished their playing careers not in seniors' football. A current administrator (former player) remembered his own playing career fondly. He discussed the emotional involvement of having on-field friendships that had extended from when he was a teenager to his mid-thirties.

> I'll never personally forget the look in the eyes of the other guys who are our age, my age … We were the five old farts. Thirty, thirty-one years old when I came back. If you could ever say five grown men nearly cried, that was as close as you would get to it before we ran out on the field, because we hadn't played together for ten years and I'll tell you what, that, personally, that season, those five guys were in the top ten best and fairest and I think we bled off each other and, you know, sorta said 'hey guys we might not have much longer to play'. (Administrator 1)

These friendships were a very positive part of the football experience for both past and current players. The cohesion of the playing group was one of the most important parts of what made the team successful on-field. This cohesion was team-specific. As was discussed by one of the current players when he reflected on the differences between the A grade and B grade teams. He used the example of the post-match awards ceremony to show the differences between the two teams in terms of attitude and exclusion.

> Now they never have the B Grade awards. I don't know if the B Grades have something to do with the B Graders or something like that, they don't feel welcome because it's ... a couple of them were staying they just didn't feel welcome as much … Yeah, the B Graders think that cause ... (Player 7)

He described the fractures that he believed existed within the club between the reserve and senior men's side. He described the senior side as a reasonably closed, if not cliquey environment.

> I know that you know, the blokes sorta don't really speak much to the B Graders. I've got a few cousins and that in the B Grade so I hang out with them a bit. But I think they feel a bit, you know, left out … I don't know, most of the ... some of the A Graders are pretty cocky and that. They don't really ... they stick to their own a bit. (Player 7)

This comment was somewhat of an outlier. This was not to suggest that there weren't subtle divisions within the friendship groups. A current female administrator also mentioned the divisions between the senior and reserve sides. She commented in an aside about the lack of attendance at club functions by reserve players.

> The reserves aren't attending anything at the moment. The B grade team. I think ... to me it goes back to culture at the club and leadership. And it happens some years that it just doesn't click and in some years it does. And it seems to be not clicking with them this year. So, the senior group have been excellent. They have all been attending. (Administrator 9)

There was a preference towards the senior men's side at St Mary's. The differences between the two teams would have been more apparent for certain individuals depending on their overall status within the club. One of the older and more experienced members of the senior side, when asked about potential divisions, responded by saying:

> From the Captain to your best handful of players, there's absolutely no difference between them and the players who aren't quite as good as them. It's just you know, if you are a good person, you are fun to be around, as simple as that. We want you here. And obviously every club has different egos and stuff but you know, they get weeded out and ... But obviously you want to be surrounded by good people and we are very lucky that we attract those types of people. So yeah, nah, between the first grade, the second grade and the under 18's and Juniors, you know there's no difference between any of them. (Player 1)

The divisions between the different teams did exist. They did not appear to threaten the cohesive quality of the club. The male friendships were formed through the on-field contact and became team-specific, which had the potential to be exclusionary.

### 4.3.3 Rituals

Social events outside the clubhouse reinforced those male friendships. The off-field activities discussed by many of the senior players included eating together prior to the weekend game on a Friday night at a local Italian restaurant (Fasta Pasta), attending social functions at each other's family homes, camping together during the off season and fishing. Socialising together away from the football oval was illustrative of the close bonds established outside of the context of the clubhouse. It was also considered to build rapport and trust within the senior side as a playing group. A former player spoke about how important he considered the social activities were to on-field success. He commented that, 'a key aspect to our success is we've gone to fishing trips, camping trips, go out for dinner'. He went on to add, 'just having that mateship outside of footy training … We're able to catch up with each other outside of those hours and it just improves your performance as a team' (Player 4).

It came up during these interviews that going away fishing and hunting together was a large part of social bonding. One of the current players mentioned activities that included Magpie Geese shooting and pig hunting as part of off-field team bonding. He also

mentioned that many of the players had gun licenses and it was an opportunity for local players to introduce a genuine Territory experience to those from interstate.

> So a lot of the boys have their gun, gun licenses and, you know, and it's a good thing to take … guys that have come from interstate out shooting or pig hunting and fishing, they've never seen it before or to actually witness it I guess it's, it's an eye opener to them. (Player 2)

Other activities included camping trips outside of Darwin. One current player, who had come to St Mary's from interstate, reflected on the importance of being able to 'get away' with other teammates and their partners as friends.

> Someone said let's just hook up and go to Litchfield on the weekend and see if anyone's keen, so we just thought … put it to the group during the week and that. And then on a, on a Sunday we say 'alright we'll meet here at whatever' and went out Litchfield and we had about, oh, I'd say, I dunno like, nearly twenty-five people just go out Litchfield. Take, take an esky, if you wanna have a few beers have a few beers, jump in the water, have a feed, muck around, go home, like, just things like that and we get so many people that, that come along and as I said the Fasta Pasta things and if we do, we had pasta nights at our house last year. (Player 5)

Within the interview he went on to suggest that the closeness off-field helped working together on-field and thus the cycle of on-field success was part of the off-field friendships.

> Just things like that that, that people come along to just brings you closer together and if you're playing, you're playing friends … footy with your mates, not just your team mates sort of thing it's just a lot better and a lot better feeling and you want to, I guess without trying to, work harder and enjoy it a bit more. (Player 5)

He was not the only current player to suggest that the workmanship expressed on-field was in part because of the sense of being part of something larger, and working for your friends. The construction of identity was expressed through a desire to work harder for the sake of the team.

> We really enjoy coming to training, working hard, doing the extras and then you obviously you build such good friendships through it. And you know, you find that we don't just go to training but we go to dinner together. We go camping together, fishing together, goose hunting yesterday together. So, I think that plays a massive role when you're playing footy because we can really rely and trust each other and just look forward to hanging out and that so, I think it gives us an advantage over teams. (Player 1)

The strength of the male friendships was that they were formed through the relationship on-field that was extended off-field and, in turn, was thought to establish a more cohesive on-field team. For the players that felt this connection with the club and the friendships formed there it was an important part of their own personal connections to the clubhouse and St Mary's in general. While these male friendships were formed through playing on-field together, there was the suggestion that the friendships went beyond the playing arena. One current player argued that that was the strength of St Mary's:

> It's why the club's so good because we actually want to be around each other away from football. So you form better friendships and stronger bonds. So it really helps. (Player 1)

### 4.3.4 'Good Bloke' Phenomenon

The idea that St Mary's was able to attract and recruit good people, in particular good men to the club was seen as one of the unique strengths of the organisation. The idea of 'good people' was repeated over and over across the interviews and roles within the club. While some were able to articulate very clearly what they considered was a 'good' person for the club, overall, it was a perception that the club was able to draw in the services of not only skilful people (both on-field and off-field) but also decent men to the club. A current player, in the leadership group, in his late twenties, who when discussed why he chose to stay at St Mary's despite not being from Darwin, reflected on the 'good' people phenomenon.

> The people that are here I guess are good people. Yeah they are good people that are at the club … We don't really attract dickheads to the club. (Player 6)

This perception that the club was able to attract and retain good people was mentioned again by those who served within the administration side of the club. A current administrator in his early forties said that both families that had a long or a more recent association with the club fitted into the 'good people' category.

> They are exemplary individuals. And you speak to them and they are respectful. They are nice people and they play football for the club with a passion. And they are why I think this club is so great. And everyone before them has been the same … They are all well-mannered, quietly spoken, lovely people. So that's what makes this place so good. (Administrator 6)

It was necessary to unpick what type of person was described by the administration as being a 'good person'. A current administrator who worked closely with the football

operations department regarded the success of St Mary's as being due to the 'good' people both currently, and those that had stayed involved with the club.

> A part of it is about fitness and your game style and that but you know I reckon if you've got good people at a football club you're gonna have a good football side … I just think people that are down to earth and they are humble and they are selfless, they'll do things for others with little gain for themselves. (Administrator 2)

The interviews repeated this notion of 'good' people being of service to the club. A current administrator reflected upon a former captain of the club. He typified the type of 'good people' the club wanted to promote. The former captain was repeatedly described as being 'inspiration' and 'hero' within the interviews.

> He's a role model. He's not squeaky clean but he is the perfect role model. He's gentle, he's kind, he's nurturing, he leads by example, he's strong, he's fit, and he's a family man ... Yeah, and a wholesome, I mean wholesome is a stupid word but it fits the character. If you see him on TV, you hear him speak … he's beautifully groomed, you know he's just, he doesn't put a foot wrong. He still knows how to relax and party and he loves to take his shirt off and sells raffle tickets with the ladies for bingo in a singlet top because they buy more tickets, you know he's a clubman through and through but he has respect, respect of everybody. You know he doesn't ask anything of anyone that he doesn't do himself and if the going gets tough he's the toughest. (Administrator 10)

The former captain was discussed in similar terms in other interviews. The masculine identity expressed reflected the clubs desire to have a family environment and produce good community minded people. In a preliminary interview, only recorded in notes, a current administrator stated that St Mary wanted to produce 'good citizens' who looked towards 'finding a female, buying a house, and becoming a tax payer'. The 'good people' found within the club reflected the organisation's own priorities, particularly in terms of being community outward-looking.

The notion of being both a football player and a role model was not lost on many of the current players. In an anomaly, a significant proportion of the senior side (at least six) worked at the Clontarf Academies based at certain public schools across the NT (they also existed in WA, Queensland (QLD) and Victoria (VIC)) working with Indigenous children coordinating football and schools programs. The link between these players getting those jobs at the Clontarf Academies was (at least partially) due to their football-playing careers and their connections to St Mary's. Thus, it reinforced the image of St Mary's as producing good people as well as good players. A current female administrator

reflected upon this dichotomy of male identity between being a good footballer and being a good person.

> We value you as a man in the community and part of your identity is being a football player but part of that identity of a football player is broader than that and it means being a good family man and whether it's, you know, you do have a girlfriend or not, you know, it's how you treat your family, your parents … And Saints has got like their team structure, if you look at their league. It has got that varied age group. (Administrator 8)

A common thread within the interviews was that St Mary's was able to retain good people/players once they had finished their playing careers, as active members of the club. The interviewees placed a great deal of importance on the idea of family but also male friendships as a reason why people chose to stay. As a current administrator, who had been a former player and who was now currently involved with the football operations department, remarked it was the club's ability to retain 'good people' within the organisation that made it so uniquely successful.

> Fathers played and their sons grew up playing. And when people had finished playing they'd go back and coach, whether it was coaching their kids or not. Or coaching a different grade. And the club was always good at recycling people into the system instead of just letting them drop out and disappear like. We kept good people around the club. And good people that knew what it took to win. And I think that's how they've built a winning culture. (Administrator 2)

The notion that St Mary's managed to keep talented people involved within the club was a recurring theme within the interviews. There was a darker side to the construction of 'good people' at St Mary's. One AFLNT administrator spoke from a position of being a relative outsider to the club. He also mentioned that St Mary's was unique in the way the club kept 'good people' involved but added that this created a parochial view within St Mary's about their own success.

> They appoint good coaches, they appoint good people to their Board, they look after their people, but they are bloody parochial! Ha, ha, ha! Which is a good thing! They are very parochial. Which to me is great. Because they will stick up for their club. But they are very, very parochial and probably a general statement, most of the people around Darwin would like to see them get beat, because they have been the top dog for so long. (AFLNT Administrator 1)

The notion of 'good people' was repeated throughout the interviews. There was a sense that these relationships, between 'good people', were reinforced across different ages and intertwined between and amongst the current players' friendship groups. While close

male friendships are not uncommon within a sporting club, it was noteworthy how often they were stressed as important to interviewees. The emphasis placed on these male friendships that were formed through close family networks suggested that identity construction was based on the interaction between family and friendship groups.

### 4.3.5 The [Inadvertent] Exclusion of Female Players

In reference to the close male friendships established at the club, a theme emerged in regards to the potential exclusion of women through those friendships. The male friendships were almost formed exclusively through playing together in a team. The role of women within the St Mary's Sporting and Social Club could not be underestimated; however, the place of women in an on-field sense remained a contested part of the club's identity. The place of women on-field was often inadvertently positioned in binary opposition to the senior men's side.

Most interviewees celebrated the role of women at St Mary's. The sense of male friendship was not threatened by women serving as club managers, administration officers, water 'girls', board members, banner makers or medical trainers. One participant, mentioned in the same breath as he celebrated the achievements of St Mary's Women's Football team, that it had changed aspects of the football environment.

> We've led the way with our girl's footy ... Not a big fan, I must admit. I used to think it was sort of our last domain of being a bloke, was our football. Now the girls have eroded it! [Laughs]. (Administrator 3)

Not all within the St Mary's administration shared this view. One of the current female administrators suggested that there would always be a divide within football clubs because priority would always be given to the senior men's side (the A grade competition).

> I think St Mary's are very supportive of their women's team. We have brand new [pause] Guernseys and our shorts, with all our sponsors of the club … We are given access to the facilities. We've got a coach who does get a bit of a financial incentive. I don't know what he gets. But we are included. But the reality to me is where there's only four teams playing in the comp, I think it is fantastic … You know, there are opportunities there. I think it's sort of just a fact though that your men's A grade team will always be the most important team. And they are the ones that get the sponsorship. And they are the ones that people come and see play. Because they are the most highly skilled sports

> people sort of in the club. And that's not me putting down women's football. I just think that's just how it is … [laughs]. (Administrator 9)

While she positioned women's football as secondary to the male competition, she spoke about the same on-field camaraderie experienced by the men's team. As she was both an administrator and a player in the women's team she reflected on the same 'belonging' that was articulated by some of the current male players. She mentioned the challenges of including her husband within the club when he himself had prior friendships and established connections to another football club.

> I think as once you get involved in a team though, it goes to a whole new level. Like you sort of become ... you belong. I know my husband he's sort of 37 and you know blokes he's played footy back home and grown up with and that sort of thing, they are like his mates for life, like his family. Whereas up here like he runs the water and stuff but it's different a little bit. And he knows a heap of blokes and that. But it's just different. It's hard to explain. Whereas I am in a team and involved ... He just [pause]... but it is different once you have played in a team to just being involved I suppose. (Administrator 9)

The women's football team had to fit into the tight structure of the men's competition. The relationship between male partners of female player did challenge some of the conventional gender roles associated with the dynamics of a football club. A current female administrator argued that the place for women's football was difficult to negotiate because the competition was still in its infancy and the organisational structures at a broader more macro competition-based level were still being decided.

> I think there's a space for women's football. I think in the Territory I don't know if it's ever going to be a sport that's commonly played by women, just because (a) we don't have the ... there's just not enough people here ... St Mary's women are reasonably successful. We've even tried to do a Junior, we've even had two teams of St Mary's, but what I have found with the consensus of women's football is you get four teams, but you can never get the extra one because that one folds which creates the other. So therefore your pool of women is only sort of so big. And that's why they are developing that Junior at the moment, they have got Junior girls, whatever they are calling it, girls footy they are trying to ... But you see the other thing too, AFLNT have only just put someone in that handles women's football. So it was never under that banner, it was just sort of a club-by-club thing. So that would probably make it improve. (Administrator 7)

She discussed the difficulty of establishing a competition at an administrative and operational level. She also mentioned some of the challenges of including women within the pre-existing, predominately male environment.

> I don't think that … from a female's point of view too, I don't think that it's ever going to be a star-studded sport for women, but I do think there's definitely a place for it. And we've tried pretty hard to keep our sort of women's footy happening. But over the last five years it just hasn't grown. You know, say Nightcliff had a team, which was replaced by a Palmerston team. But you can't keep the Nightcliff and keep the Palmerston to make that competition grow. But eventually I suppose [the] average age is about 28 so all those little girls have got to be playing something some time. (Administrator 7)

Another current female administrator reinforced this view. She reflected that the dominance of St Mary's actually had an inverse effect of reducing competition within the other sections of women's football. The overwhelming success of St Mary's at the women's level meant that there was potential for stagnation within the league.

> They recognise it, as you know, biggest growing female sport in Australia. They are doing all that. We can't even get like a youth girls' competition up, you know? Our women's league has gone from seven teams to four da da da. I mean it is good for Saints cause they continually dominate and win all the Premierships but how does that do anything to strengthen the league and the level of competition for women really, overall? (Administrator 8)

The comparison was made with other football clubs, particularly those in South Australia and Victoria that operated in an integrated Football and Netball competition. The differences between football competitions in the NT and leagues elsewhere in Australia were highlighted. A current female administrator who was involved with women's football highlighted the difficulty in retention rates of female players, as well as combating seasonal drift southwards and the lack of desire by some to change the perceived attitudes of senior club officials. She went on to add:

> So that they have tried to amalgamate the women's team in with the club. Like prior to that it used to run like its own operations, own fundraising, own budgets ... So, now they're brought into the club, the club you know attracts sponsors for the women's teams, things like that. You know like they're integrated into all the functions, like presentation night and the ball and things like that. So, which is much more traditional to what structures are like down south. You know like there is a league team, a women's team, da da da at each club. So, but there's still obviously a lot of work to be done to, you know, so that women feel that they are too a priority as opposed to it's all about the men. (Administrator 8)

There were challenges of finding sponsors for the women's team. The female administrator also commented about the need to integrate both the men's and women's teams at social functions or fundraising events, which she believed had not been done

adequately. Prior to the women's football team, at social functions women were there mostly with partners or on the administrative side—the notion of female players was unknown. The female administrator expressed the difficulty of finding a place for women's football within the traditional structure, while the club's main priority remained the success of the senior men's team.

> There's definitely a stronger emphasis on the men because you know that's what historically has been a football club … obviously the women have brought Saints success and stuff, there needs to be recognition for that. And how to better target the functions so that the men and women integrate. And even training and stuff like that. Like when I played down south we used to do pre-season with the boys. And one of the boy's players would take us for pre-season and the boys were always ... spend like some one-on-one time with each of the new girls and teach them how to kick properly da da da like ... things like that that you know coaches don't necessarily have the time to get around and do. And there's a lot of young girls that play for Saints. So it is hard, because even if you integrate the men's functions with the women's functions there are so many underage girls that they are not necessarily suitable! (Administrator 8)

Another perspective relating to this view was that of one of the younger female players towards the role of women in the club. She noted that the women's football team had more recently started attending social functions at the club. She made the suggestion that they would participate in the culture of the club by 'showing' up the boys at their own social functions. Presumably she was talking both about the general frivolity of the evenings but also in terms of alcohol consumption.

> I know yeah a couple of the girls from the club, the women's, they get into it, pretty much the functions like the Legends Day. I don't think this year but last year they have and the Green and Gold Ball I went to last year. That was the first year that the girls were there, which was good. Yeah, no I think we pretty much get into it a lot. I know one of them is like, 'Let's show the boys how to do it and…' (Player 10)

Since football in Darwin was not traditionally integrated/affiliated in any way with a 'sister' sport, such as netball (or even arguably hockey, which is popular in the NT), there has never been a need to include female athletes within the playing culture of St Mary's. A female administrator went on to add:

> Whether it is part of the NT culture or not, like it's just a bit of a blokey thing. Like footy is where you go with your guy mates, you hang out. Like if you are a girl and your partner is going to footy at the weekend, it's like, oh well I am not going. You will just be with all the boys—I'll go do something with the girls. But I think that's where Saints are trying more so than what other club ... you know like they put in a pool area, they want to get a basketball court, they're trying to build affiliate memberships so that they are associated with netball

> clubs and hockey clubs and stuff. So maybe if the girls go and play netball or hockey they'd still come back here because they are associated through their sport. (Administrator 8)

For the most part, the administrators at St Mary's considered themselves quite 'progressive' in terms of the effort they had made to include female athletes, both by fielding a women's football team and by having an affiliated arrangement with both hockey and netball clubs. A current male administrator commented that there was a need to change within the club, which included bringing on female sports.

> Seeing the need to increase the participation at our venue, ah, attracting affiliates to come in and join us. Um, being progressive means that we didn't want them to change their name or colours to St. Mary's. We want the people here. We're noticing that, the facility needs participation. It needs the community to support it. (Administrator 1)

This affiliation profited St Mary's by encouraging their affiliated member base to come and use the facilities at St Mary's clubhouse including the pool, gym and bar area. In recent years the club had self-consciously changed towards being more accommodating towards female players. A current administrator admitted that there had been tensions within the club between more traditionalist members and those who wanted changes. He went on to add that the changes had been made with great success.

> The modern changes, [to get the] kids you want to attract you've got to have, have ladies cuts and, the club was a bit traditional in those things sayin' 'no no no the boys wear the shirts, you know, you wear a dress' [laughter]. (Administrator 1)

It was clear that the women's team did fit somewhat awkwardly within the traditionally male-dominated space of the football club environment. Due to the relative newness of the affiliation between the women's team and the rest of the club, some tensions were still in the process of being negotiated. The willingness of the club to incorporate a women's team was indicative that there was a place for female players within St Mary's. As a former player noted:

> I am sure it is one of the best things that has happened to Aussie Rules Football. Because the female presence was there via interest in the game. And it's not such a brutal game that women can't play it. And if they start playing it as tiny little girls they will do what Lauren Jackson has done to women's basketball. (Supporter 1)

### 4.3.6 Summary

The construction of male identity was an important part of considering all the relationships formed at St Mary's. Understanding the bonds of male friendship was crucial to appreciate the bonds formed between individuals and the group. Most of the interviewees were male and thus prioritised the place of male friendships within the bounds of what makes a successful sporting organisation. Even the female interviewees discussed the importance of friendships intertwined within the construction of being 'good people'. As was evident with the descriptions of the former captain, however, they placed a high importance on situating those themes within the context of the club's family environment.

It could not be overstated that both former and current players placed a very high value on the friendships they had formed at the club. The importance of having strong bonds with other men was considered an important part of both the on- and off-field success of the club. These friendships did have the potential to exclude women due to their closeness and the primacy placed on having the on-field experience. Due to female players being included in the club this was becoming (perhaps) less important to current players. The inclusion of female players meant that women were involved in what had been a previously exclusively male space of the football field. There was a sense within the interviews that the introduction of a women's team had fundamentally changed the club. While the majority of interviewees regarded women's football as positive, it was evident that there needed to be on going negotiations for both time and space within the club. The prioritisation of the women's team could be done without compromising the sanctity of the male space and friendships, while recognising the success that female football brought to St Mary's.

Both the off-field male and female friendships were interlinked with the on-field team environment, regardless of whether playing on the same team, so it spanned different ages. It was enough to just have played. As a consequence, former players and their families dominated St Mary's, whether as sons or daughters. The direct connection to on-field performance created friendships that continued to have power, influence and direct the organisational makeup of the club.

The interaction between former and current players was important because of the intergenerational negotiation it provided. Many of the players had been part of the club because their fathers or uncles had played at the club. This on going reinforcement of family, from father to son, and bonds formed through male friendship strongly influenced how interviewees reflected upon their own St Mary's identity. Many of the interviewees considered the retention of good players and coaches within the St Mary's system as important. The notion of who was encouraged to stay and who was promoted within the club reflected those players who fitted into the overall values of the club. The argument that 'good people' stayed with the club, while not overtly stated, was juxtaposed with the idea that the 'bad' or 'wrong' types were not encouraged to stay.

## 4.4 Theme Four: Women

The next section explores the role of women within the context of a predominately male environment. As was touched on in the previous section, the role of women was constructed both on- and off-field as female players added a new perspective to the traditional environment of the football club. Outside of the playing capacity, women contributed hugely to the success of St Mary's as a sporting club. There were multiple roles for women at the club that ranged from female players, partners of male players (wives and girlfriends), mothers, volunteers and serving as committee members on the council of the club. Some of the interviewees also discussed how the role of women had developed historically at the club and acknowledged the unique history of the 'bingo ladies'. The organisational identity of St Mary's was intertwined with the role of women. Female involvement in the club in the form of players, supporters and administrators was repeatedly discussed as being fundamental for the club's on going success and survival.

### 4.4.1 History of Female Involvement

Historically, women have always played an important role in St Mary's. There was a long association between St Mary's and women due to the significant support roles filled by women since the club's creation. This included some of the logistical requirements of fielding a team that was predominately made up of very traditional men from the Tiwi Islands. One former player commented:

> All the Catholic women, typically because the Bishop said they would do it, they set to make the jumpers that they are wearing in that photo there, which were shirts … And so my place in Darwin on Saturday morning was a hive of activity because there'd be, there'd be 10 people there, women ironing and folding and sorting jumpers and socks. (Supporter 1)

After the initial success of the 1950s and as the club developed in the 1960s, the role of women changed from primarily washing uniforms to actively being involved within fundraising and organising social activities. The logistics of these ventures were organised by women. As a former administrator remembered,

> A lot of football clubs where the women raise a lot of money in these country clubs around the bush, and the main committee eventually take the money off them because [sigh] the dynamics of football clubs is that they wanna win Premierships, right? That's fairly simple. So, a lot of the money that these women … each club … nearly every club's got these volunteer women workers but they rarely see the fruits of their success because the football side of it eventually takes the money off them to buy players. If you've been around football clubs and I think that's pretty obvious to you too and that's why a lot of the clubs don't have … the country clubs have, ah, um, very good facilities, you know? Anyway, these were pretty tough women, that they wouldn't allow the footy club to touch their bloody money. (Administrator 5)

The interviewees that remembered these women from the early years were imbued with a sense that St Mary's' women were both strong and hardworking, giving more to the club than was expected. On the St Mary's website there is a vignette discussing the work done by Shelia Clarke, who attended every home game she could before she eventually passed away. The website concluded that 'once she was a saint, and now she is angel'. This example highlighted the recognition paid to a woman who was actively involved through five decades of football. Other women, similar to Shelia Clarke, were mentioned in the interviews. They historically were highly respected members within the club, as women of authority, even if their positions remained unofficial.

> You see the women who do all the work around the club, they're the ones who say. 'We're not working in this club for idiots like you, son. Just sit down and shut up'. (Supporter 1)

### 4.4.2 'Strong Women': The Changing Role of Women at St Mary's

The current role of women at St Mary's has remained varied and wide-ranging. While the clubrooms were an overtly masculine place, women worked behind the bar, volunteered, sat on the committees, brought their children down to the clubhouse, and

strapped male players and female players. The presence of a female football team has also added another dimension to the gender dynamics of the club. In a personal communication prior to interviewing commencing, the researcher received an email that explained, 'the key words with St Mary's Football Club are family, discipline and strong women' (Supporter 1 pers. com).

The interviewees discussed the role of women within the club in several key ways. Most often, the former or current players reflected on the role of women within the club firstly in terms of their own wives and girlfriends. The relationship between wives and girlfriends was negotiated primarily through the need to be able to spend time away from them either training, playing or socialising within their close male friendships. This was not to suggest that there was a 'laddish' culture at the club. As a former player commented, the atmosphere of the club pre- and post-match had changed as more players had more serious relationships. The notion that the women were friends with each other, mirroring the friendship experiences of the players, was a recurrent theme through the interviews with the players.

> Now that all my mates have got stable girlfriends [laughs] it makes it an easier environment for my partner to go down and watch the footy because they … the girls hang out and they don't really even watch the football so, which is fine … It just makes our life easier at home. (Player 4)

The majority of current players believed that their wives and girlfriends were not only welcome at the clubhouse but were an important part of the social functions held at the clubhouse during the season.

> Knowing that the girls play a big role in, in a successful footy club, we do have that social function … where they've got the opportunity, especially up here and dress-up … The club does put on a ladies day for one of the games where they hire out the corporate box and they get to go up there and have champagne or whatever and talk about whatever they wanna talk about. (Player 4)

For one of the players that did not have a long-term partner (he felt it necessary to say), he commented that having women and children present within the club was part of what made St Mary's unique.

> I don't have a girlfriend but … say for example you want to go to the club and then the girlfriend says 'oh well I, you know, I don't really have any friends there' and then that puts pressure on you not to go do something with the group sort of thing, so it's yeah, that's real handy. (Player 5)

The role of women as supporters and volunteers was essential to the organising and running of club functions, fundraisers and events. Female supporters were involved with the club because of having a male player as a partner or sibling. While the current male players involved with the senior football team discussed the place of women firmly in terms of their own wives, girlfriends and mothers, many of the actual partners spoke often about the women's football team and how women had changed the environment of the clubhouse. A current supporter and partner made the comment:

> With the women's footy they've tried for a long time to try and get it up, up in acknowledgment and get the numbers up where I suppose the recognition is nowhere near the men's in terms of the footy. Out of sports that I suppose that you know, same again, where they play both sports, soccer or hockey, you always hear about the male athletes but not so much the female athletes. (Supporter 5)

At the same time, the role of wives and girlfriends within the club was discussed in terms of the inclusive way the administration had encouraged women to feel welcome within the space of the clubhouse. The football operations department, in terms of coaching staff, stated that acknowledging the partners was seen as a particularly positive aspect of the club. The on-field side of St Mary's acknowledged the time sacrificed and the support given by partners within the football season and beyond that, with social functions and activities planned by club officials that expected the attendance of the players and their partners.

> St Mary's is really good in terms of involving partners and trying to get them to the club and meeting other partners and sort of having that circle of friends … There is the Ladies Day next week or the weekend after where they try to have all the girls come to the game ... So to me they are really good … I mean if anyone sees you at the club they will always say g'day, have a chat. They do acknowledge you and do I suppose appreciate the support that you do provide to the players. (Supporter 5)

The inclusion of partners within the social activities did revolve around the male friendships. Many of the male interviewees implied that the women had become friends outside of their friendships. The partners interviewed suggested that the female friendships were formed through a proximity and inclusion within the official and unofficial social activities undertaken by the male players.

> We've all gone out to Florence Falls and things like that, 20 people from the club, partners and players and there are the ... you do, do those things, so ... it is good. And I suppose it is based around the close friendship of the guys and then obviously anyone who has got partners or girlfriends do go along. (Supporter 5)

In terms of how welcome women were in general at the clubhouse was an issue. While wives, girlfriends and mothers were legitimately encouraged to come back to the club, the place of female supporters not directly connected with the senior players was more ambiguous. A current supporter commented about his own wife's enjoyment of the clubhouse.

> I know as well that my wife has a great love for St. Mary's but she has no great love for hanging around at the club. (Supporter 3)

The suggestion was that while women were evident at the club and that families were encouraged to come back to the clubhouse, there was a sense that it remained very much a male space. He went on to add:

> I think like attracts like so inevitably if you get more women going back in particular, children going back, it will attract the friends of those people and inevitably it can only be good for the club. But I do think it's, it is really still a bit of a blokes' hangout after the game… (Supporter 3)

The role of wives and girlfriends was a sensitive topic to discuss within the interviews. Many of the players were anxious to highlight how grateful they were to be able to play football knowing they had the support of their partner. This was not surprising, because it was the partner who shouldered the burden of looking after children, watching games and attending social functions where their male partners primarily bonded with their teammates. In terms of interviewing partners of players, many of these women emphasised the enjoyment they felt in their support role, particularly when it was acknowledged by football operations and club staff (committee members and coaching staff).

The role of female partners within the club was, however, more complicated than first suggested by some of the male players. One of the female administrators made the point that the female partners of senior players did not take an active enough role in the organising of the club. The suggestion being that they enjoyed the social activities without being responsible for the process of coordinating them. A current female administrator compared her own experiences of regional football within Western Australia, where the role of wives and girlfriend was synonymous with active involvement. She particularly discussed the role women played in the running of social

functions. It was of note that none of the administrative officers interviewed were wives or girlfriends of current or even ex-players.

> The player's partners they just turn up. Things like that where other clubs I've come from, that's who normally would do it all. And so you do have full participation because it has been all their own ideas and what they've wanted and da da da and things like that [compared to Western Australian regional football clubs]… It's such a competitive thing, for the player's partners there. Like who can bring the best dish and who can organise the best function … it's pretty much the partners of the players that organise all the social events. And that's good and bad in a way. It brings a bit of in-girl club bitchiness sort of for want of a better word! But it means everyone is in the kitchen helping out when it needs to be, it's such a strong identity. (Administrator 8)

The lack of involvement by current players' partners was seen to be a relatively recent phenomenon. One supporter whose husband had played in the 1980s and early 1990s remarked that she felt that the attitude within the club of both players and their partners had changed since she had been at the club.

> They want everything put on for them. They want everything organised for them. And it just doesn't happen. You've got to make it happen. I mean, Saints were very lucky in the early years where they had leaders … and all the girls, all their wives and partners who were willing to get up and say, 'I'll make the salads, I'll set up the table, I'll organise the boys'. (Supporter 6)

There had clearly been a change within the club's organisational culture between the expectations of female partners to volunteer within the club instead of attendance being the key requirement of participation. It was noted that the level of support shown towards the women's football team by their own (male) partners was not comparable to that of male players.

> You know and even in Canberra when my girls' team, like you know all the boyfriends came and ran water and did whatever! Like they weren't allowed to sit on the sideline and watch their girlfriend get smashed. They were out there doing stuff for us like! (Administrator 8)

As the club has progressed from being a small, close-knit organisation dominated by several large families, it was evident that some of the bonds of reciprocal responsibility between both players and partners had been, in a sense, lost. What it allowed was the opportunity for women to be involved actively within the organisational structures of the club without being bound to a pre-existing romantic or parental relationship with a current or past player. One supporter noted the changes he had seen at a corporate box at the football.

> Just last weekend I've noticed that, um, there were three women in our box who had just popped in to say g'day and people just drop in, and there were three, and they, and they all just got together to talk about the club and they're all involved in the committee and, and they were talking about these very things … how can we get people back, how can we get the families back there. (Supporter 3)

The interviewees reflected on the changes that had occurred within the club both on- and off-field in terms of female inclusion. There was a range of women that worked, played and attended social functions at St Mary's. The women that served on the committee were all professional women, mostly with strong business backgrounds. Many of the women that played football were younger, with a strong multicultural mix of players. The partners of male players often had long associations with the club but had not actively sought to become involved in the administrative side of the club. The changes towards a more professional club, combined with the inclusion of women at an on-field level, have significantly influenced the way women were viewed within the club.

### 4.4.3 Bingo Women

An unusual element about women at St Mary's was the role played by the women who attended the daytime bingo sessions at the clubhouse. Bingo was organised by St Mary's women as a way of fundraising for the club in the early 1960s. Currently, St Mary's clubhouse looks like a bingo hall with a large sign displaying the times and sessions available for bingo participants. In terms of the demographics of bingo participants, it was often remarked that they cover a cross-section of the community and, most importantly, not all of them barracked for St Mary's. A current supporter commented:

> I know from speaking to a number of people who aren't even St. Mary's supports during the day, and before and after, bingo sessions there's a lot of women there. It's, it's a different group of people. (Supporter 3)

A former administrator at St Mary's reflected on how the bingo fundraisers had shaped the club in the 1950s and 1960s. He added:

> Getting back to those early days … some of those women they worked … oh! Worked so bloody hard on bingo. Now bingo … these ladies they were bloody terrific. (Administrator 5)

The bingo women were seen as evidence that the club provided a service within the community beyond the context of football. In the past much of St Mary's fundraising was based on the weekly attendance of women at these bingo sessions. Bingo was run three times a week, during the day at the St Mary's hall. A former club president announced the bingo numbers. The bingo sessions were an interesting example of how football clubs operated within a community context that sometimes was very much beyond the realm of football loyalties. In the case of bingo, many of the women who attended these sessions were Darwin 'Buffaloes' Football Club supporters. The relationship between St Mary's and the Buffaloes was complicated. A current female St Mary's administrator commented that while the rivalry on-field was intense the 'Buffalo ladies' put it aside during the midweek daytime bingo sessions held at the St Mary's clubhouse.

> We have a lot of Buffalo ladies here because we have bingo. Bingo's the life blood of this club and the Buffalo ladies, although they're not St. Mary's supporters, they've got one blue eye and one blue eye. Um, they respect that this is St. Mary's club and they expect that you would respect being here, so it is a word, it's not they love the club, they don't, but they respect it and they expect their relatives to respect it as well. (Administrator 10)

It was noted that times have changed and while bingo was still very popular and runs up to two sessions a day, it no longer provided the lucrative financial lifeblood it once did. A current administrator acknowledged that while the bingo sessions were open to all, the women who attended were not of the same financial importance and, thus, the importance of the men and women (mostly) who played was somewhat downplayed.

> The primary focus of the St Mary's football supporting and social club is through football. Okay. Our bingo sessions are not discriminatory. We have people in there from all of the clubs you know. Buffs and Wanderers. The women in there, and the men, come in and they play their bingo. Bingo in itself doesn't generate that much money for the club. What generates our money are the poker machines. (Administrator 6)

There was a clear contrast between how the female and the male administrators viewed the importance of bingo within the club. The male administrator chose to highlight that bingo was no longer the financial mainstay it had once been. While the female administrator viewed bingo in terms of how many people it brought into the clubrooms during the day and how this influenced the club as a whole. The difference between the two does indicate that the value being placed on those 'bingo ladies' has lessened over time, as other avenues of fundraising have become more financially viable.

### 4.4.4 Summary

Historically, there have been long associations with women at St Mary's. The relationship between the Catholic Church and female volunteers meant that the female partners of players and administrators did much of the fundraising effort. The bingo tournaments held during the day at St Mary's reflected this historical connection between women and fundraising at the club. Over time the role of women has changed at St Mary's. The inclusion of female players and the continued push for the professionalisation of the club has meant that women were serving in roles previously only open to men. There was an inverse to this positive inclusion of women, as it meant that there was a reduced imperative for partners of senior (male) players to volunteer or be involved in organising social functions.

The role of the 'bingo ladies' had also changed. The unique situation where women from the rival Buffaloes football club came and played bingo was, due to financial reasons, no longer accorded the same status within the club. The 'Bingo women' were a link to St Mary's past, however, the bingo sessions were not considered as important to some within the administration. This change within the financial structures of the club reflected the on going professionalisation of the club, as revenue from the pokies machines and club sponsorship became the largest financial contributors to the football department.

The changed role of women within St Mary's indicated broader societal changes. The women who worked in an administrative capacity as club managers and marketing officers did so in terms of paid employment. The female committee members who served on the council were all professional women from a range of business, legal and educational backgrounds. The changes in terms of volunteer commitment meant that partners of players were pushed towards a more peripheral or strictly supporting role within the club. The space for women within the club continued to be negotiated in terms of roles fulfilled within the club context (player, supporter, partner, volunteer, employee or administrator).

The next section will continue to examine the examples of how this organisational identity has been influenced by changes and challenges both on- and off-field. It will use

the examples of the Tiwi Island Bomber, the financial crisis and Territory Thunder to show how they have all challenged aspects of St Mary's identity.

# Chapter 5: Identity—Dealing with Change and Challenges

The previous chapter explored how individual members constructed the organisational identity of St Mary's. This chapter explores how individuals dealt with perceived threats to the organisational identity of the club. The analysis revealed three events that had the potential to significantly threaten key aspects of St Mary's' organisational identity. The events had all occurred within the past decade (2000–2009). An exploration of these events revealed how external and internal pressures had shaped the organisational identity of St Mary's.

The three key events had all affected the club in different ways. The first crisis was an example of internal pressures within the club brought about by financial mismanagement. Those interviewees with administrative roles in the club discussed this event as precipitating the largest cultural shift in terms of the business practices of the club. The second key event was the Tiwi Bombers Football Club entering the AFLNT competition in the 2006/07 season. This was an example of an external event that impacted on the internal identity of the St Mary's 'family' and the strong historical links it had with the Tiwi Islands. It also created a direct football rival out of what had previously been one of the main sources of St Mary's Indigenous talent. The third event was the creation of the Northern Territory Thunder Football Club in 2008, which was part of the Queensland Australian Football League (QAFL). This external event challenged St Mary's' dominance within the local league, as will be explained further, as some players were no longer able to be selected to play in the NTFL competition. It also compromised some of the on-field leadership structures within the club. This third event changed St Mary's' place within the local football hierarchy and challenged St Mary's' unrivalled success as a more professional level of NT football was created.

The interviewees discussed these events in very matter-of-fact ways. On balance, the interviewees were quick to acknowledge the difficulties and hurdles the club had faced. In the retelling of these events, interviewees highlighted the eventual positive outcomes that resulted from these events. They were able to contextualise these events as ultimately bringing positive results to the club. This was very revealing of the overall collective identity of the club. Where additional background information is deemed as necessary to the understanding of these events, it is included. The bulk of the data

presented was from the interviewees' thoughts, recollections and opinions of these events.

## 5.1 Challenging Business Off Field

The financial breakdown of the club was not a simple event. Several of the interviewees discussed many reasons why the club had found itself in such a precarious financial situation. Some of the interviewees alluded to it being the result of internal theft, which was never proven. It was acknowledged that for a number of reasons financial mismanagement had occurred. There had been significant failures in keeping up to date with administrative law and best practice. This included the club's failure to comply with new taxation laws, which included the goods and services tax (GST) and pay-as-you-go (PAYG) wages. There were also questions raised about the accountability and transparency of the club's cash-flow systems. The reality was that St Mary's had become a significant business, with poker machines and a liquor license, while those within the administration were still running it very much as a smaller, local 'chook raffle' type football club.

Several members of the St Mary's administration have mentioned the financial crisis in detail. There were reasons offered as to how and why the club's financial systems had spiralled so out of control. A current supporter and former St Mary's administrator of the club discussed in his interview how the financial crisis happened. He offered the simple summary that it had occurred because 'the club [was] pretty much becoming too big and was collecting too much money'. He went on to add that the club had been, 'unaware of the need for proper corporate governance and implementation of adequate safety systems. That led to non-payment of tax, which involved a lot of pain and heartache'. It was more complex than a straightforward situation of the club becoming too big, too fast. The financial meltdown represented a watershed for St Mary's business practises. This was shown in the interview with one of the current female administrators who recalled her experiences of joining St Mary's just as they were in the middle of financial chaos. Her memories provided a background to contextualise the financial situation of the club. She highlighted how the club had failed to keep up to date with creditors, suppliers and even utility repayments.

> [St Mary's was in] Huge, huge financial difficulty … There was no stock and there was no money. The book keeper met me the first day and we sat down and basically found every scrap of money that we could find in the place and put it all together so we knew where we were at and what we could do and proceeded then to try and work out priorities in first thing getting the club up and running again, secondly finding out the extent of that debt, and thirdly trying to keep the staff paid which was a main priority because we weren't going to get anywhere unless we had someone to run the club. (Administrator 10)

She spoke about how the club dealt with creditors, organised repayments and consolidated the limits of funds available. She went on to add that:

> First week I was here, the first day, the power got cut off because they hadn't paid the power bills for a long, long time, something like $30,000 worth of power bill owed. Rang them up, explained the situation and where we were at and what we were trying to do … so we got the power back on and then 2 days later the phones all got cut off, so we sort of had to do the same thing again and organise that … We sat down and worked out there was probably in excess of $200,000 owed to creditors just in Darwin. (Administrator 10)

The magnitude of the debt owed to both Darwin creditors and the Australian Government was startling. That St Mary's was able to recover was remarkable. It did become evident that St Mary's had been given exceptions from some of its creditors, in particular the Australian Tax Office (ATO) arranged to have the debt, in the form of unpaid taxes, wiped from St Mary's. This was not an easy process, despite some interviewees referring to it in a somewhat flippant manner. There were those with strong legal backgrounds involved with the club who managed over the course of years to negotiate an outcome that did not see St Mary's crippled by debt repayments. A former administrator recalled the processes involved, particularly the difficulty in negotiating with Canberra. He said they were advised that their pitch to the Federal Finance Minister would not be successful unless they were able to show the importance of the club within a community context. He said that St Mary's needed to present a case that 'put forward human reasons for the minister to exercise his discretion and waive the taxation obligations' (Supporter 3). He added that the club ended up using an article from *The Australian* newspaper that argued that sporting clubs formed a microcosm of society and thus, provided an integral function in terms of social interaction. The former St Mary's administrator who put together the pitch for the Finance Minister said, 'we couldn't have the families that are part of St. Mary's, left without this framework that the club gave them, which allowed them to progress both as members of the club but also as good citizens of Darwin'

(Supporter 3). The proposal rested on the idea that St Mary's provided its members with a structure and social inclusion for the multicultural families that made up its membership base. The awareness of St Mary's of its own cultural importance was remarkable.

The financial crisis was discussed openly by the St Mary's administration. It was discussed mostly in the context of a change that needed to happen. The reframing of the financial crisis was interesting, as instead of it being presented as mismanagement or financial negligence it was retold as a difficult transition time that ultimately led to better systems and a stronger club. What became evident in the interviews was that interviewees were very wary about alienating or criticising former administrators and committee members, even if only obliquely. One former administrator discussed the process of change within the club due to the financial chaos as something that was necessary; however, he quickly added that he meant no criticism of the former committee. He added:

> I really thought that the club was being restricted and it was needed to ... and no slight on [former administration] or the committee at the time, but it certainly needed to be going to another level. (Administrator 3)

Another administrator who was directly involved in the organisational coup that brought in another committee and changed the President (after forty-plus years) recalled his own surprise at realising the extent of the financial problems. He described his own feelings towards standing for Presidency.

> When I put that nomination in, their current committee and other members of the association started approaching me, saying that the club was in extreme financial difficulty and almost to the point where … to, for the club to survive at that point of time we had to make some major changes at the top of the club from the President down. (Administrator 1)

The biggest change created by the financial crisis was that it forced changes in both the committee and, most importantly, the Presidency of the club. It was not an easy time for the club, as it meant a very long-serving President was not endorsed to run for another term. It was very hard on those within the club as there were conflicting loyalties, particularly due to the closeness of those involved. A current male St Mary's administrator discussed how difficult it was to change Presidencies, but regarded it as

necessary for the survival of the club. He described how the former President was unaware of the changes of financial practise needed to run the club. He went on to add:

> [Former administrator] I think he just didn't realise that our creditors were extremely powerful creditors … We had ATO knocking on our door. You know, it was a serious situation that needed rectification. So much so that I think the worst phone call I got must be one of the worst in the history of the club. It was from the head person at the tax office in, in Northern Territory, in Darwin. Four days after the AGM, saying '[M] I need these two BAS forms, I need these other PAYG forms by one week or I'm coming to collect the keys'. So that was a pretty serious phone call and it made me realise how serious the situation was ... (Administrator 1)

He stressed how much the club maintained its sense of cohesion by coming together in those difficult times. He particularly mentioned how the former President was absolutely included and was a highly valued member of the club. He considered it indicative of the club's overall strength that it could survive something that had the potential to be so divisive. He described his own feelings towards keeping the club solvent. He said:

> The proudest thing we've done collectively with all the people who've been on the committee in the five years I've done it, people will say 'this is great, the pool's great, the canopy's great' and all that. You know what the greatest thing is? We've got the key to the front door. We've still got the key to the front door … (Administrator 1)

The financial crisis changed the club significantly. It forced a turnover in the position of the President and the administration committee within the club. It also meant that the club had to modernise very quickly in terms of how it dealt with cash flows, accountability, auditing of services, taxation, wages, sponsorship and income generation. The club had to acknowledge where it had failed to act quickly enough or stay on top of the complexities of running a financially stable sporting club. Within the interviews it became clear that many of the changes that happened as a result of the financial crisis had a positive effect on how the club was managed. A former administrator, now supporter, reflected on the many changes that he had seen within the club as a result of the financial crisis. He described how the club's former committee (and President) had, 'come from the chook raffle days'. He went on to add that in the past,

> People didn't have to count cash, cash was king … as long as the club had players on the field no one seemed to be too concerned but now there's greater importance placed upon management … [The] business logic to the running of the club, transparency became everything instead of it just being spoken of, which was … financial control was taken away from a few and given to the committee as a whole. An audit committee was set up. Finances became

> critically important. Cash money, which was commonplace in the club forever going right back became accountable. Checks and balances were put in place … (Supporter 3)

The changes that the financial crisis brought, while acknowledged as significant, were discussed as being a positive reflection on the hard work and determination of those involved at the club. A current administrator reflected on joining the club's committee during those difficult times. She felt that while they were hard, they also meant that a great deal of change could be enacted at the club. She emphasised how many people had been pulled together by this event, how it brought the club membership together and highlighted the support for St Mary's within the general community. She went on and described:

> That was when times were hard. St Mary's were really struggling. But because we have made so many improvements and we have got out of that oh terrible debt and even though so many people were supportive, you know, when they were going to shut the doors, it was just amazing how many people sort of supported it, regardless of whether they actually were St Mary's supporters. So that was really helpful. (Administrator 7)

She alluded to those who criticised the club now for being too financially prosperous.

> Ha, but then it's funny, isn't it, you're such a successful club and you keep it open and then you get canned for that as well. (Administrator 7)

It was an enormous challenge keeping St Mary's financially solvent. There were many people involved who advocated for the club at many different levels of State and Federal government. The power and awareness the club had of its own value within the community came across in the interviews. One interviewee took a particularly positive interpretation on these events. He suggested that the situation was resolved due to the ability of the club to generate revenue and because of the hard work of those St Mary's members who negotiated this outcome. He went on to optimistically note that he believed:

> The rest was always going to come, it was just a matter of keeping the finances tight and the generation of funds through this club is enormous and it would only be a matter of time that we recovered. I mean, we were very lucky, we fought that hard and the group of people we put together were that smart. (Administrator 1)

The huge impact of the crisis and subsequent changes in administrative policy were remarkably almost unmentioned by supporters and players. This absence reflected the gap within sporting clubs between casual supporters, members and players, who while essential to the club's longevity, were very much on the periphery of decision making. There were few mentions of the financial crisis by players. If it was mentioned it was in vague reference to the changes in the administration (the transition from one club President to another). One player who did mention it was in the leadership group with the current A grade men's side, he had played juniors to seniors football and had an older brother at the club. He referenced the financial crisis by asking whether the researcher had been aware that the club had been close to shutting down. He went on and added that at certain times he and other senior players had said to club officials, 'look you don't have to pay us, pay the recruits that are, that are coming up' (Player 2). He described how it got to the stage when players weren't paid on time. He also said, 'you could tell things were tight around the club. Like, not having ice sometimes in the esky to ice bruises or sore ankles' (Player 2). He made the telling remark that it 'wasn't kept secret to us' (Player 2). Despite that comment, the majority of players were quick to distance themselves from discussing the administrative functions of the club. One current player when asked about changes, obliquely mentioned that he might have read something in the local newspaper; however, on further questioning he could only add, 'I don't know cause I don't read into it. I can read the headline but I can't remember anything' (Player 1). The absence of player and supporter comments on the financial crisis within their interviews indicated just how removed the organisational capacity of the club was from both players and members.

The club's financial crisis was a key event that forced several important changes. Firstly, it brought about a change in leadership in the form of a new President, which challenged many of the previous styles of club organisational policy. Secondly, it forced the club to adopt a current and regulated business policy in terms of cash flow, accountability and transparency of its business operations. The days of the 'chook raffle' were over. Thirdly, it forced the club to consciously fight for its own survival and articulate its importance in the local community. The financial crisis was discussed as a watershed moment in the club's recent history. It was discussed as a very difficult time; however, it produced many positive changes. The chance for a younger generation to take the reins in the running of St Mary's was considered a very good thing. Interviewees framed this event

as a significant challenge that was able to precipitated important changes. From this event the club was able to progress and recast itself in a much more professional manner with up-to-date business and management practices.

The interviews were divided between those that discussed the financial crisis and those that did not. For those members of the administrative committee who were around during that time period it dominated their interviews. The interviewees regarded the financial crisis in a very upfront manner that was unexpected. There was a sense that this was a trial that had been overcome by the hard work of club members and now could be discussed with candour. In their narrative style these interviewees conveyed a club brought back from financial ruin to become highly prosperous within five years. The fact that players and supporters were removed from the drama of these events was disjointing, however, not unsurprising. The administrative committee certainly did not hide these events, however, on-field St Mary's still performed relatively well and thus concern would not have been immediately raised.

## 5.2 Challenging Notions of Family

There are few football clubs in Australia that have the amount of shared history that the St Mary's Football Club and the Tiwi Bombers Football Club have. Both clubs have been based on the same foundations of family and place. This section explores the threat presented by the Tiwi Island Bombers entering the NTFL competition (on a trial basis in 2006/07 and then being fully incorporated into the competition in the 2007/08 season). From the analysis it was evident that having a separate team from the Tiwi Islands threatened many of previously held constructions of the St Mary's 'family' and broke their historical link to the communities of the Tiwi Islands. It also threatened St Mary's premiership chances as it created a new on-field rival. As a former administrator commented:

> From an on-field perspective, the two things that have happened in the last say four years, that have impacted on St Mary's more than any other club, which has actually showed the resilient qualities of the club … Thunder and the Tiwi's have probably impacted more than anything. (Administrator 3)

Understanding how interviewees felt about the establishment of a team from the Tiwi Islands was complex. It was important to note that while concern was raised, many of the

interviewees wanted to celebrate the success and voice their support for the Tiwi Island Bombers' initiative. The familial bonds between the two clubs remained strong and most of the interviewees equated the success of the Tiwi team as being directly related to the long-shared history with St Mary's. The tension expressed was that while the support for the Tiwi team's existence in the competition was unequivocal, the majority of interviewees expressed uneasiness about the possibility of the Tiwi Bombers winning a flag—at St Mary's expense. Thus, the majority of interviewees, when asked about the Tiwi Bombers, were concerned about the on-field effect of losing quality St Mary's trained 'Tiwi' players to the rival team. At the time of data collection during the 2009/10 season, the Bombers experienced a 16-game winning streak, which resulted in a grand final decided between these two teams (St Mary's and Tiwi Island Bombers grand final played March 13, 2010).

The relationship between the Tiwi Island Bombers and St Mary's was complicated by the historical links. St Mary's was established as a football club for the Indigenous men from Bathurst and Melville Island (now known as Tiwi) working with the defence-reconstruction effort in Darwin during the post-Second World War period. The historical link between the clubs cannot be understated. As one AFLNT administrator noted, without St Mary's many Tiwi men simply would not have had the opportunity to ever play in the Darwin competition. He described the image of the inaugural 1952/3 team: 'I think there is probably about 14 to 15 Tiwi Islanders in that photograph'. He went on to add that St Mary's had 'made an enormous contribution to Tiwi Islands' football, St Mary's, number one by giving them the opportunity to play' (AFLNT Administrator 1)

Over the next sixty years, the link between the two clubs remained strong. There was, however, more flexibility for Indigenous players including those from the Tiwi Islands to join other Darwin-based clubs. Regardless of the strong connection, there were repeated suggestions from the broader football community for a team, based on the islands (Bathurst and Melville), to be represented in the NTFL competition. The Tiwi Islands has its own Australian football competition that runs concurrently with the NTFL season in Darwin. The game is hugely popular on the island and many young players move over from the Tiwi League to the NTFL, to being drafted to the AFL within seasons. The idea had been floated for several years, but it was not until the 2006/07 season that the Tiwi Bombers first entered the competition on a trial basis. There was a great deal of

excitement about a team from the Tiwi Islands and their success showcased the incredible football talent that was available on the Island. In 2009 the ABC aired a documentary 'In a League of their Own', which followed the Tiwi Bombers for a season in the NTFL (McGregor et al., 2009). There were interviews from those connected to the administrative and player side of the team. Similarly, there were interviews with members of other AFLNT clubs, including St Mary's. The clips that were used from St Mary's as part of the documentary reflected on what the club had lost as part of the transition process, the amount of clearances and the loss of good players. The documentary also explored the benefits of having a team based on the Islands in terms of providing an opportunity and role models for young men. It touched on the sensitive issue of youth suicides, which had been become a significant problem on the Island. A former St Mary's administrator (now part of the coaching staff at St Mary's) discussed in his interview that the club had been supportive of the development of the Bombers, particularly because of this issue. He commented that:

> From my perspective I was really behind the Tiwi concept. I think it's great the fact that (G) now has got these kids all training. Suicides and stuff like that is not accepted as a natural form of death, which it was starting to be in the early 2000's. Suicide was so prevalent it was like, oh yeah, that person will die of heart disease, or stroke or suicide. Or, you know, it was almost an imperceptible form of death, which I don't believe it should be. So from those perspectives I am fully behind the Tiwi Islands with the great way they play their footy. And they are really becoming an integral part of the competition. (Administrator 3)

What the documentary did not focus upon, however, was the complexity of family connections between the two clubs. In terms of identity construction, the clubs are often referred to in newspaper accounts as big and little brothers or cousins, which was often the case, with players from both sides often being directly related. The battle for clearances became a feature of the competition as St Mary tried to hold onto some of their best Tiwi players. As one NTFL administrator commented, it would often be up to the families as to who played for which team. He noted that, 'it caused a bit of angst because players wanted to go back, or players wanted to stay at St Mary's and family were putting pressure on to play'. What became evident in the analysis was that the connection between St Mary's and those from the Stolen Generations remained incredibly strong. While many of those families identify now as Tiwi, their football connection remained bound primarily to St Mary's rather than the Tiwi Island Bombers. A former player (from the inaugural team) recalled this tension between the two identities. He added:

> I think that probably the most important factor to come out of the development of St Mary's is the Garden Point connection … Particularly now with Tiwi Bombers taking nearly all their Tiwi players back which is totally understandable. But the Garden Point mob as they call themselves, are just so loyal and faithful to St Mary's … the archetypal product of the Stolen Generation, is just so loyal to St Mary's. (Supporter 1)

The off-field family connections were what made the on-field presence of the Tiwi Bombers such a potential threat to the organisational identity of St Mary's. The threat was not only that they would siphon good players away from St Mary's but also that they would be a rival threat in their own right. The majority of those interviewed within the administration side of the club acknowledged that the Bombers presented an on-field challenge; however, they quickly argued that this would ultimately only strengthen the St Mary's playing group. The administration discussed the loss of Tiwi players more as a logistical difficulty. The challenge was to stop the loss of quality players from affecting the on-field performance of the club. Some administrators were confident that the loss of Tiwi players could be managed and cited the previous two grand final wins (2007/08; 2008/09) as evidence. A current St Mary's administrator added, 'we went through the Tiwi thing where we lost lots of players and we've still won a grand final. We lost more Tiwi players again last year. We still won a grand final'. He optimistically noted that, 'I think we will find our feet pretty quickly this season. And we will win the grand final [again]' (Administrator 6).

There were those within the administration who believed that the club had underestimated how difficult it would be to replace those key players. The suggestion was also that the club had miscalculated how many transfer requests would be processed. Similarly, in terms of long-term planning, it was unclear how this would affect the drain of talent from the club, in future seasons, as younger players from the under eighteens did not go on to play seniors football with St Mary's (there is currently no juniors, under eighteens or reserves football program for the Tiwi Bombers). A current female administrator commented that:

> I don't think we expected it to be as hard. I think that we thought there was going to be all those sort of upheavals and changes but to be honest … I think it has worked out for example, that since Tiwi Bombers started St Mary's have transferred one and a half teams worth of players to Tiwi Bombers … (Administrator 7)

The many Tiwi player clearances forced considerable changes for the football operations strategy at St Mary's. Previously, significant amounts had been spent on flying Tiwi players to and from the Island for games. While the loss of Tiwi players from the side created a gap within the playing group, it presented an opportunity for those funds to be spent on other areas. One administrator mentioned that because of the Tiwi Islands having their own team it now allowed for players to be flown in from other areas, including the remote Indigenous community of Wadeye. A current St Mary's administrator recognised that the some of the local identity was lost with fly-in / fly-out players not participating in many of the social or training aspects of the club. He regarded, however, that the flying in and flying out of players was a necessary part of the talent-finding process and that the club could easily absorb new players without compromising core values or club identity. He added:

> Predominantly in the past that's been for getting Tiwi players here. Because that's been our significant connection. Now, they have got their own team and we are happy and proud of that, we still have Tiwi connections but [the] budget for bringing those kids over isn't as large any more. So that allows us to do other things. In this case we have got Wadeye boys coming in. (Administrator 6)

The challenge that only one administrator commented on was that with all those clearances from St Mary's and other Darwin clubs, there were more Tiwi players cleared to play than could possibly be included in one senior side. One female administrator made the point that being cleared from St Mary's to play for the Tiwi Bombers and then not getting a game presented its own difficulties. The benefit of the Tiwi Bombers recruiting good players back to the club was not to have them sit on the sidelines. She went on to question:

> Which is such a shame too, because we have given, like I said, a team and a half of football players there, so if they are not playing for Tiwi what are they doing? (Administrator 7)

The politics of player clearances from one team to another are a negotiated part of football clubs. In terms of the Tiwi players, the notional loyalty to family presented difficulties in terms of a discussion of club identity. An AFLNT administrator considered the strengthening of the Tiwi Bombers at the expense of St Mary's a good thing because it allowed an opportunity for a more competitive league. The question of family remained a contentious topic in discussions about the Tiwi Bombers and St Mary's connection. He continued with:

> They are still strong and they have still got Tiwi representation in their team. They would have five or six Tiwi's, ex-Tiwi's in their team. So they are keeping the link, which is a good thing, don't get me wrong. But they have, they have cleared a lot of the better players back, which has been good. But a lot of that is because of family pressure, not so much the St Mary's footy club. It's family pressure saying, okay, you're Tiwi, you play with Tiwi. The kids have got no choice. Or, they are told to play with St Mary's too. (AFNT Administrator 1)

While most administrators were very keen to voice their support for the Bombers, they also quickly wanted to reinforce that it had not changed or compromised the St Mary's' on-field abilities. In terms of how it affected the club's off-field sense of identity, it was difficult to gauge, as the Tiwi Bombers had only played for three seasons within the competition. It was a point of tension, particularly for older members of the club. For the club to move forward there needed to be some distance between the Tiwi Islands past and St Mary's future.

The inclusion of the Tiwi Bombers into the NTFL competition was difficult for St Mary's supporters. It was a challenge to many because it was seen to undermine the historical links between the two clubs. Much of the on-field success of St Mary's was attributed to the talent base of footballers coming from the Tiwi Islands. The Tiwi Bombers was a direct threat to the future on-field dominance of St Mary's. As one supporter identified, the generational link between the Tiwi families that had always supported St Mary's had been broken, as now young Tiwi men would instead be aspiring to play for the Tiwi Bombers. She went on:

> Saints have got a very close affiliation with the communities, more so than any of the other football clubs … So, it was a bit sad in a way because we thought, oh we are going to lose so many of our champion young footballers that have come through from families … their dads and grandfathers played for us. And now they weren't going to, the generations weren't going to play for Saints because they were going to be representing their own homeland, their own communities. (Supporter 6)

The links between the two clubs were difficult to describe, as they remained very much intertwined. The overwhelming sense from supporters was that the club had withstood the loss of Tiwi players well, particularly because the on-field success of St Mary's had not seemed compromised by the Tiwi Bombers inclusion. She added that, 'Saints have sort of stood strong, as you know from winning last year and the year before, so, it's been a real eye opener actually' (Supporter 6).

There was a sense that the success of the Tiwi Bombers reflected on the skills and development being provided at St Mary's through quality juniors' training and senior coaching services. Thus, the transfer of players and coaching staff merely reflected the quality of St Mary's. The movement between staff at a football operations level was evident as the current coach of St Mary's was both a former St Mary's player and ex-Tiwi Bomber coach, while the current Tiwi Bombers' coach was an ex-St Mary's player. One supporter directly referenced this movement of coaching staff: 'when you think about it now, both the two years the Bombers have been in, both times they have been coached by ex-St Mary's players' (Supporter 6).

It was clear that the majority of St Mary's supporters felt that the link between the two clubs was more fundamental than who played for what team and when. Both clubs remained linked through the development of younger players. The link was clearly expressed by one supporter who mentioned that the Tiwi juniors would continue to play for St Mary's (and arguably other Darwin clubs) while there remained no junior Tiwi Bombers side. He went on to add:

> Some of the comments that have come back from the island, from former players and traditional owners even have been, this is … St Mary's is our club and … we've still got a, a solid Tiwi connection … We've got a number of Tiwi boys who still play for our team, particularly the kids. They don't have a junior's team. (Supporter 3)

The reality was that while the Tiwi Bombers remained only a senior side, other clubs, particularly St Mary's, would have the opportunity to develop and train junior Tiwi footballers. When current players discussed their opinions about the inclusion of the Tiwi Bombers into the competition and what it meant for the club, it was usually mixed between both support and disappointment about losing quality teammates. One of the current players within the senior side mentioned the loss of Tiwi players in terms of acknowledging the divided loyalty between playing for 'their home team' versus remaining loyal to St Mary's. There was a sense within the discussions that players were very wary about casting themselves as unsupportive of the concept; however, they were challenged by the practicality of losing teammates and friends from their playing group. A current senior player mentioned this tension. He added:

> They are obviously trying to be loyal to their home team and I've got no problem with that. But we have managed to keep a number of quality Tiwi

> players and it is great that they are being loyal to St Mary's. So, yeah, obviously a number of them players did go back to ... it does make it a big tough. I mean you don't have those players in your side but I think we've, we've dealt with that pretty well. (Player 1)

Current players were more candid than those within the administration when acknowledging what skills had been lost on-field. The emphasis on the dynamic on-field performances of certain Tiwi players was spoken about in interviews. A former captain noted:

> Their talents on the Tiwi Island are very freakish and, and something that is pretty rare and you don't see too often and it … it's a dimension to your team that you need to have. And it gave us that advantage by having a good mix of local players, Tiwi connection, and even the … injection of southern players. (Player 4)

One senior player, who had grown up playing juniors' to seniors' football, noted that of the top sixteen players, three of the best had been given clearances to play for Tiwi. This loss of talent from any team had understandable on-field consequences. Another senior player added that:

> We have a strong history with the Tiwi Islands with our players, the history … I think it's a good thing … because it just makes the competition stronger and I guess they're going home to play for their people and their town it's probably a good thing … But it's hard, we had three guys … three they were in our best sixteen players or they were in the top sixteen of our club and at the start of the year they're playing for the Tiwi's. (Player 2)

The player went on to add that while it had been difficult for St Mary's, he recognised that the chance to play for the Tiwi Islands and represent their families and country was an important and special thing. He added, 'it's a big loss for us but for his town and the people over there I guess it's something special'. Similarly, the loss of the talented younger players was seen as a disadvantage to St Mary's in the future. The challenge of conflicting loyalties was also raised within the interviews as current players acknowledged the difficult situation their Tiwi teammates were in. A senior player who had arrived from playing previously in the SANFL reflected on how the inclusion of the Tiwi Bombers had affected the club since his arrival five years previously. He made mention of a particular player who was going through the difficult decision of what team he played for, the senior St Mary's player reflected on the pressure that the Tiwi player

must have been under from both his Tiwi and St Mary's families. A current senior player noted that:

> They'd be under pressure by a lot of people to go back and play for Tiwi and, um, you know we've got [at the time of interviewing a current Tiwi St Mary's player], he was so confused at the start of the year, didn't know what to do. Get him ready for a clearance and then we ended up keeping him and, 'cause yeah they put enough pressure on him and then his family's putting pressure on him, then there's probably people here saying 'well you've been here forever, you know, you've won a couple of premierships. What are you doing?' (Player 5)

The majority of St Mary's players viewed the inclusion of the Tiwi Bombers into the competition as being both positive for the league and ultimately for St Mary's. It was used as an example of how the club had been able to overcome on-field issues to become a more cohesive off-field unit. It was also stated by a current senior player that the shared history between the two teams meant that there would always be a strong link between the two clubs. A senior player said that, 'we have still got strong links to the Tiwi Island … I think it is good to keep those connections' (Player 6)

There was a great deal of anticipation and excitement over the inclusion of the Tiwi side into the competition. One of the players mentioned the energy and excitement that the Tiwi Bombers brought to the competition. He spoke in his interview about how the inclusion of the Tiwi Bombers, 'gave a bit of excitement to the competition' (Player 4). He also added that it 'brought people back through the gates and they got one of the most vocal crowds' (Player 4).

The challenge for the St Mary's' administration, players and supporters was that while overall the inclusion of the Tiwi Bombers was considered a positive, it did mean that there was a significant rival for St Mary's on-field. A senior player in his late teens commented with foresight that the Tiwi Bombers had the potential to be a very difficult team to beat in the future. He made the comment that, 'you got to look at the bigger picture. St Mary's lost a lot of players but it makes the club, the comp better I reckon, having Tiwi' (Player 7).

The majority of players interviewed recognised the gap left by the Tiwi players in terms of on-field talent. The historical links between the clubs was considered an important and valid reason for why players believed this had affected the team's on-field performance.

At the same time, players quickly acknowledged that the Tiwi players were leaving for the legitimate reasons of playing for family and their home/country. The opportunity to represent 'their' people was considered a compelling and important reason for leaving St Mary's. Overall, players considered it as reinvigorating the competition in general. Joking references were made to how the loud Tiwi supporters were and how it created an exciting atmosphere at games. The players were unanimous in their support for the concept, however, they admitted that it had affected them on-field in terms of losing talented players and in the future, the loss of talented juniors.

On grand final day, March 13 2010, before the game began, several Tiwi women came out to perform a traditional Welcome to Country ceremony on behalf of the Tiwi Islander community. Most of the women wore the Tiwi Bombers colours (red, black and white) and some were in Guernseys; however, there were was one woman dancing with them who remained wearing St Mary's green and gold. The link between the two communities was stronger and more complex than football teams; however, the challenge for St Mary's was in how this removal of connection from their off-field past would affect their on-field present. It was interesting to note, however, that during the time of the interviews being conducted, a public media battle was being played out for clearances, particularly for a prominent ex-AFL player who had been drafted from St Mary's but wanted to return and play for the Tiwi Islands. This player would be refused a clearance and then go on to snap the winning goal that would win the premiership for St Mary's over the Tiwi Island Bombers. In the 2010/11 season St Mary's granted clearance and he is now playing for the Tiwi Island Bombers. Only the current players mentioned this battle over clearances.

## 5.3 Challenging Success

The third event threatened the on-field success of the club. St Mary's had enjoyed a dominance over the local competition to such an extent that winning had become a synonymous part of the club's identity. Managing expectations of success from administrators, players and particularly supporters was an important part of creating a sustainable club identity. This winning culture was thrown into crisis by the creation of the Northern Territory Thunder Football Club (Territory Thunder).

Success was a fundamental part of the identity of St Mary's. In the analysis, it became evident that winning games was important to understanding the collective identity of the club. The on-field record of winning premierships at every level of the competition was mentioned repeatedly. The interviewees identified that success was a key aspect of their club, both in how they constructed themselves, but also in how they perceived that outsiders saw them. As a current St Mary's administrator simply stated, the club was, 'one of the most successful clubs in club records in Australia'. Another current administrator echoed that somewhat hyperbolic sentiment. He was involved in football operations and spoke about the idea that St Mary's' on-field record was well known in Darwin and across Australia.

> So, the club's been very successful. And obviously success is something that a lot of people down south they know nothing about Darwin footy. They know nothing about any of the other clubs but you say St Mary's and they know St Mary's. They've heard of St Mary's. (Administrator 3)

It was not only administrators who commented on the success of the club. A current player (in the leadership group) mentioned the importance of being at a successful club. He candidly discussed how the club's winning record was part of what attracted him to the club. He added:

> The difference is just I guess the success that the club has had. Yeah, not many other clubs in Australia have had this sort of success on-field as what St Mary's has had. And yeah, that was a big attraction to come here because, yeah, everyone likes to win I suppose. You play footy to win, so. I thought it would be good to come here for that. (Player 6)

A collective identity was formed around the concept that St Mary's was one of the most successful clubs in Darwin and possibly even Australia. It was how St Mary's members constructed their own identity and how they juxtaposed themselves with the wider football community. As a current female administrator mentioned, 'St. Mary's was always a powerhouse and everyone hated them. If you didn't barrack for them you loathed them because they were so successful' (Administrator 10).

The creation of a new elite level of NT football team threatened that success. In 2009 the Territory Thunder played its inaugural season in the Queensland (QAFL) state football competition. It was part of a long-term strategy of advancing Australian football in the northern parts of Australia. Supported strongly both financially and intellectually by state/territory governments, industry and the AFL, it was viewed as an opportunity to

strengthen the Queensland competition, while concurrently showcasing the abilities of talented junior NT players. The initiative sought to keep young local talent, in particular those from regional and remote areas in the NT, while offering them a talent pathway that would potentially lead directly to the AFL (which suited the AFL well as it fitted into the current corporate strategy for attracting talent to the newly formed Gold Coast [GC17] as part of the AFL's expansion strategies).

The concept of Territory Thunder fitted well within parochial notions that because of relatively high representation of players drafted from the NT there should be an Australian football team based in Darwin (often synonymous with the NT). Discussions initially included the prestigious SANFL (semi-professional league) competition, which ranked as one of the most competitive state-based competitions (outside of Victoria and the VFL). When the concept of the Territory Thunder team was announced, some were surprised to be part of the Queensland competition. While not recorded on tape, rumours circulated within the Territory football community that the skills in the SANFL would be too strong and that an NT team would be unable to compete with either the high cost of a SANFL license or the higher salary caps, thus effectively pricing the NT out of the competition.

The difficulty of establishing an inaugural side that was required to play in another state was not without its challenges. One of the largest practical concerns was the NTFL season ran from October to March, while the QAFL season ran (along with the rest of the country) from April to September. This meant that NT players would potentially be playing continuously. This was considered not to be feasible for the sustained longevity of either competition. With that under consideration, the AFLNT administrators, along with their counterparts in Queensland, established rule 1.1.5, which allowed twelve players from the NT to be nominated as 'marquee players' who were committed solely to playing for NT Thunder in the QAFL competition. These players were unable to compete for local clubs in the NTFL season. The stipulation was for a maximum of three players from each NTFL club. Of those selected from each club, two had to be marked as 'development' players and under the age of 20. Other Territory Thunder players, while not labelled as 'marquee' players, were only available for selection in a limited number of NTFL games, outside of finals. This meant that several NTFL clubs faced the situation that not only were their best players unable to play, but that other talented players could

only be selected occasionally. For St Mary's the creation of NT Thunder meant several key players, including the captain, were unable to play in the 2009/10 seasons. As Territory Thunder played its inaugural season in 2009 the 2009/10 season was the first season since the creation of Territory Thunder that clubs were able to assess the impact of the team on the local competition. At the time of interviews being conducted, some of St Mary's players had not resigned to Territory Thunder; however, they were unable to play due to injuries sustained during the QAFL season. This impacted on the on-field performance of the team.

From the analysis it was evident that St Mary's had been significantly impacted upon by the creation of NT Thunder. The results found AFLNT officials, St Mary's administrators, players and supporters, acknowledged this. The generally accepted view was that while all Darwin clubs had given players to Territory Thunder, because of the wealth of talent at St Mary's, they had given the most. A current AFLNT administrator acknowledged that the impact of Territory Thunder had affected St Mary's in particular due to their dominance in the local competition. He posed and answered the question, 'has it impacted on the St Mary's NTFL season this year? Yes. Because of unavailability of players and concentrating with Thunder' (AFLNT Administrator 1).

The analysis found that the St Mary's administration constructed the crisis presented by Territory Thunder as the loss of experienced players and on-field leadership. A current St Mary's administrator commented that it had been difficult to manage the expectations of both players and supporters during the transition period as the team adjusted to the on-field absences of key players. He felt confident that the team would be able to regroup and incorporate those gaps without losing (too often) on-field. He was particularly confident, as at the time of being interviewed, three prominent Territory Thunder recruits were in the process of quitting in favour of playing on for St Mary's in the 2009/10 seasons. He went on and added that:

> [It's a] huge challenge in terms of maintaining expectation I think more than anything else. There is a strong expectation out there amongst our supporters. It's St Mary's who still dominate the competition or still beat our big fours … I have heard it's fragmented, the football club … I don't believe it has done that. Actually I reckon it's solidified us in some ways. Three guys have recently turned around and said they are not going to play for Thunder any more. They are going to be St Mary's people. (Administrator 6)

A former coach reflected on the changes that Territory Thunder had brought to the club in terms of losing key players from the leadership group. He went on to describe how this was in fact a positive, as these players became leaders in the broader community and acted as 'ambassadors' for the club. It reframed Territory Thunder as a showcase for the talent within St Mary's. He spoke about how Territory Thunder had impacted on St Mary's' on-field performance in a similar way to the loss of Tiwi players. He added that 'once again [this] affected St Mary's more than any other club' (Administrator 3). A member of the current football operations staff also stressed the impact on St Mary's and repeated this opinion again. He went on the stress that St Mary's continued to support both the concept and the players who chose to play for Territory Thunder. He commented that it had particularly impacted on the leadership group as it had taken the older, more experienced and most talented players. The rebuilding phase within the leadership group was something St Mary's was dealing with at the time interviews were being conducted. The transition between former and current captaincies was reflected upon in terms of a significant change within the club. A current administrator (part of the coaching team) added:

> The club's very supportive of the concept as well but when you lose, probably the two players in particular, (A and B) who have ... play a massive part in the club, there is a bit of a dent left … But we've worked through it and so we had to go through a whole new process of electing a new leadership group and almost starting from scratch. (Administrator 2)

There was concern that Territory Thunder could undermine the strength of the local competition by removing talented junior players. A current female administrator mentioned this concern within the local football community. She made it clear that she believed it would only enhance the local league. She pointed out that having initiatives like Territory Thunder meant that high-profile recruits lived and worked in Darwin while playing out their season. She noted that through Territory Thunder contacts were established with other clubs (outside of the NT) and connections made that encouraged talented players to come and play both for NT Thunder and in the local competition. The drain of talent from the NTFL competition had traditionally been more one-sided. Often players had to relocate to southern states for career advancement in more competitive competitions. With Territory Thunder there was a movement of quality players back to the NT. As the current female administrator went on to add, 'now Thunder's here, then there's the potential for them just to stay here, still be involved in the club and get that expertise and represent the club playing for the NT side'. (Administrator 8)

From the analysis, it was apparent that St Mary's encouraged and supported their players to perform at a higher level. A current female administrator suggested that St Mary's players at the club had not realised from the outset how many players would be required for Territory Thunder week. She went on an added, 'but I don't know whether we thought it through, or even they thought it through. And as the season progressed to Thunder, it was six players and then it was eight players and then it was 10'. She asked a tongue-in-cheek question as to who would win in a match between the Territory Thunder side and the full-strength St Mary's squad. She continued with how it 'would have been really curious for St Mary's to actually play against NT Thunder and just see how competitive the game would be'. The view that St Mary's provided the bulk of the talent pool being used for the Thunder program was repeated throughout the interviews.

Those interviewed within the St Mary's administration were positive about the opportunity that NT Thunder presented for the local football community. Within that positive sentiment was the acknowledgement that Territory Thunder had significantly affected the on-field performance of the team during this AFLNT season (2009/10). This was attributed to Territory Thunder being in its inaugural year and the dramatic loss of marquee players for the senior playing group. There were those within the administration that raised the issue about how the long-term strategy for dealing with these losses had been addressed by the club and what future implications this created for the competition in general. Overall, the dominance of St Mary's players within the Territory Thunder team was considered a direct reflection on not only the excellent training and skills but also of the 'characters' of these young men in representing their club.

Supporter's perceptions of Territory Thunder were mixed between enthusiasm and concern about the on going impact of the team on the local competition. Most supporters viewed the selection of St Mary's players as an example of the team's success and that it reflected the strength of talent within the club. One female supporter suggested that in some ways St Mary's had been more disadvantaged than other Darwin clubs because of the number of St Mary's players recruited to Territory Thunder. She added, 'this year it's hurt us a lot as you know' (Supporter 6). She continued to add that the concept of Territory Thunder was overall worthwhile and important to NT junior sport development. The opportunity to compete at a higher level and create pathways for talented players

was considered a very important part of St Mary's supporters' acceptance of Territory Thunder. The general view amongst supporters was that it would keep talented players in the NT for longer, 'strengthen' the local league and was an important channel outside of the national draft for players to showcase their skills at a national level. A current supporter continued:

> It's opening up the Territory to the rest of Australia. It's showing them, showcasing our talented young men. You know, we've got so many talented young men in the Territory, they don't get to see that. You just get to pick the cream of the crop for AFL … But by playing, being involved through Thunder with the QAFL they get seen every week; they're showcasing their skills and every week somebody's looking at 'em … And I can only see the Territory also winning from this in both ways. We'll have a lot of southern players. We'll be interested, 'Ooh I wanna go and play in the Territory. Look at this quality of footballers they've got in their Thunder team. I'd like to go and have a look.' So it's been a win-win situation both ways. It is strengthening our local comp in years to come … As much as I was a little bit sceptical at first I thought, nah, it will also give our boys a chance to be in the AFL you know? (Supporter 6)

One supporter was a little more equivocal and stated that mostly supporters were just uncertain about how it would change the competition and thus affect St Mary's on-field performance. He argued that some of the St Mary's players who had played a full season for Territory Thunder had 'looked tired' and not performed at their best. He went on to add, however, that he believed the concept of Territory Thunder was a critical part of football development in the NT. He went on and added that:

> I think supporters are also unsure as to, what impact Thunder has had … We gave up a lot of players to go and play over there off-season. But I think, I still just think Thunder is too important a concept for it to be put into second place behind the club structure in terms of a career path for the juniors. (Supporter 3)

The challenge for St Mary's supporters was acknowledging that Territory Thunder brought changes to all clubs and the competition more broadly. No longer was the NTFL the most elite level of state-based competition. The dominance of St Mary's was in part due to its ability to attract and retain a strong local and interstate talent base, which was now being directly threatened by Territory Thunder. For supporters, the concept of Territory Thunder presented a large, on going on-field challenge for St Mary's. At the same time, optimism came across through the analysis that St Mary's would be able cope with this crisis due to the strength of the organisation. There was also an awareness that football presented opportunities for young men that extended outside the domain of the local competition. Providing pathways for junior development and chances for success at

a national level was considered a highly important function of Territory Thunder and something encouraged by both supporters and administration.

It was evident that Territory Thunder had affected St Mary's leadership group and core team structures. One of the current St Mary's/NT Thunder players acknowledged the difficultly the club was going through, while at the same time he believed an added bonus was it allowed junior players an opportunity to showcase their skills within the senior St Mary's side as more experienced players were unavailable for selection. He went on and added:

> Obviously we have been restricted through the Thunder and that and then obviously injuries and work commitments and family commitments have kept some of our more experienced players out. Which obviously doesn't help. But there's always a positive though. Like our Juniors are getting exposed to Senior footy and it can only do them a world of good. So and then, we are finding out what players and the depth of the club and what players are ready for Senior footy … But we are obviously finding that out now which is a positive for the club. (Player 1)

Another senior St Mary's player who, at the time of being interviewed, was reviewing his commitment to NT Thunder, said the biggest challenge was the loss of leadership within the St Mary's senior side, particularly the example of changing captains. The sense that quality individuals were unable to play at their optimum or even play at all, affected the team's strength and cohesion on-field. He added, 'people are more tired, didn't get as much rest, mentally fatigued sort of thing as well, so, yeah, definitely. I think it definitely has affected our leadership. I'm not saying we've got a bad leader now it's just changed' (Player 5). This view was reiterated by another NT Thunder/St Mary's senior player who was also in the process of reviewing his decision to play for NT Thunder. He commented that it offered an opportunity for player development for junior players wanting a career in football. He aligned himself with the views expressed by the St Mary's administration that the club wanted to support junior development programs and pathways to the best of their ability. He mentioned, however, that he believed it had eroded the quality of the local competition because the most highly skilful and experienced players were no longer playing in the NTFL. He added somewhat cautiously, 'So I think it's a good thing, but at the same time it brings the standard down because you're taking quality players away from the league' (Player 2).

One NT Thunder/St Mary's player was more defensive about the position of NT Thunder's place within the local football community. He suggested that those who did not support NT Thunder were being parochial in their attitudes as in the long term it would be a positive development for NT sport. He made the point that it illustrated the strength of St Mary's administration that the club supported the NT Thunder program and was supportive of player movement between the teams. He added:

> I think some people, especially if they've been in Darwin for too long and haven't been out of Darwin at all their lives, they don't see that. They're very one-eyed and narrow-minded [laughs] … we're, we're lucky that we can, we can see the bigger picture … [Playing for NT Thunder] Was just too big of an opportunity to pass up and create something that will hang around for a very long time. (Player 4)

One the players interviewed had been perceived to choose Territory Thunder over his St Mary's commitments and he was the most enthusiastic about the opportunities and importance of the Territory Thunder program. Owing to his unique position he was the only one to make the point that Territory Thunder players were becoming better footballers, who, after their commitments to Territory Thunder, he concluded would filter back to their original 'home' clubs as better footballers. He continued, 'if I can come out on the other side of Thunder I'm going to be a better player, better person, actually be fitter for it and still be able to come back to Saints' (Player 4). He went on to also highlight that it had significantly changed the leadership group within the senior St Mary's side. He clarified that because of the physicality of the game, it was 'impossible' for players to play a continuous season (from AFLNT to the QAFL competitions). He finished by adding:

> In regards to St Mary's it has … destroyed our group of people that have played at a higher level because now we are limited to, to certain games and just physically it's impossible to do back-to-back seasons. (Player 4)

Whatever challenges Territory Thunder presented to the players, without fail, those interviewed were both supportive of the concept and those who chose to play, played either as a marquee or restricted game player. As one younger senior St Mary's player commented, most of the players could make significantly more money by playing in a southern-based competition. The Territory Thunder program and the opportunity to be an NT representative were worth something to those interviewed. He continued with the impassioned response:

> You are representing your state. It's an honour, not a privilege. And so, that's what you've got to remember I reckon. I think a lot of blokes, like every bloke gets offers for down south and that, you know? Cause down south clubs, you get offered a shit league but you'd be offered 800 to 1000 bucks a game and they'll fly you down on a Friday night and you come home on a Saturday night. And you only miss one day of work instead of missing two days of work playing for Thunder. (Player 7)

Within the interviews, with those players who had chosen to continue to play with Territory Thunder, there was a clear sense that this was a relatively short-term football commitment and once it was completed it would eventually see them playing out their senior football careers back at St Mary's. When a senior St Mary's/NT Thunder player was questioned about whether he would accept a marquee position at Territory Thunder he remained adamant he would not. He succinctly put it as, 'I mean marquee player, what are they offering you? They are stopping you from playing with your home club'. He went on and added, 'so I am not going to stop … St Mary's means too much to come back to play for the club from down south and then to stop' (Player 1). Overall, the players acknowledged very candidly the on-field effect of Territory Thunder on St Mary's. At the time interviews were being conducted, St Mary's was losing games and there were many questions being raised about their ability to absorb these significant losses, their on-field discipline, consistency and the new captain. The players interviewed were very positive about the team's chances and about the Territory Thunder initiative. They viewed it as both an opportunity and an honour to be selected in the representative squads. The question of club loyalty was negated as St Mary's/Territory Thunder players stressed their on going desire to return at a later stage.

The club was supportive of their players joining Territory Thunder. The opportunity to showcase their skills at a higher level and, in particular, the chance to represent the NT was very important to the St Mary's administrative committee. While the initiative was acknowledged to have affected the club, both on- and off-field, it was discussed as being a positive step forward for NT football.

> So has Thunder impacted? Yes. It has. Right now. It will have a long-term impact. Things will flatten out and this club will … we are proud of the fact that we are able to push these players up. And I think that is the thing that I think people have got to understand really. There is an element of running a football club that is about making that football team the best but in any level of sport you've gotta have pride in the guys that pop out the top and play the next level up, and then the next level up. (Administrator 6)

There was an acknowledgment that it had affected the club's on-field performance and it was not clear how much this would affect subsequent seasons. At the same time interviewees stressed their support, particularly those within the administration and current players. The current players were the most supportive and there was a sense that they valued the junior player development program and the pathway it created. It was also noted that Territory Thunder was a temporary part of their football identities and they would return, at some stage, to playing out their football days with St Mary's.

Dealing with the loss of quality players from within the leadership group was very difficult. Managing the expectations of winning was also a challenge because players were unavailable, injured or exhausted from their Territory Thunder commitments. It came across in the interviews that players were divided between maintaining a loyalty to St Mary's and wanting to pursue their own playing careers to the best of their abilities. The club being supportive of the Territory Thunder initiative was very important to those players who continued to play on for both teams.

## 5.4 Summary

It was because of the financial crisis that better business policy was introduced to the club. This meant that as finances improved there were new opportunities for financial investment back into the club and this led to the building of the swimming pool and general upgrade in facilities. Similarly, the change in Presidents meant there was a more progressive style of leadership amongst the committee. The decision to incorporate affiliates in the form of netball and hockey clubs was done all within the wake of the financial crisis. The financial crisis changed many aspects of the identity of the club in a permanent way. The older style approach of football clubs funded by chook-raffles had changed and with that the financial systems had to be significantly updated. The enforced need for clear and transparent book keeping meant that some of the longest serving members of the St Mary's administration were no longer welcome as members of the committee. The organisational identity shifted towards a more professional outlook off field. The interviews reflected the enormity of those changes, both at the time and on going into the future.

In summary, the interviewees identified several ways the Tiwi Bombers had affected St Mary's both on- and off-field. Firstly, it changed the historical link and familial bonds that had existed previously between the Tiwi Islands and St Mary's. Secondly, it affected the existing talent pool within St Mary's current senior squad as large numbers of Tiwi players sought (and were granted) clearances. Thirdly, in terms of future development it meant that talented Tiwi junior players would not go on to ever compete for the St Mary's senior side. For the most part interviewees were pragmatic about the changes and were positive about benefits of having a Tiwi Bombers team—both to the Islands and the NTFL competition more broadly.

The main threat posed by Territory Thunder was that it challenged both supporter and player expectations of winning. St Mary's had maintained such a stranglehold on the local competition that many outside of St Mary's considered the shakeup to the league a good thing. At the time interviews were being conducted, St Mary's was not performing on-field. They would, however, go on to win the premiership that year (2009/10) for the third year in a row. It would be of interest to explore the changes in attitude if St Mary's had lost the premiership or if they were unable in future seasons to make the finals. The place of St Mary's as a secondary tier in the NT football hierarchy was still open to negotiation.

The challenge presented by Territory Thunder would have to be an on going negotiation for St Mary's. The interviews were all optimistic that St Mary's dominance within the local competition would not be compromised due to losing key players to the Territory Thunder program. The opportunity to create better pathway programs for junior development and highlight the skills of younger players at a higher level was considered a very important function of Territory Thunder. The parochial attitudes expressed or the concerns were not surprising. The large changes to the AFLNT league and the sustainability of a team playing in another local state's competition were difficult to envisage. Overall, the interviewees were very proud of the achievements of their players—extrapolating that success as a direct reflection on the club. The effects of Territory Thunder were not clear after only one season played; however, the interviewees all stressed they hoped for the program's continuation.

# Chapter 6: Discussion

One of the main purposes of this chapter is to discuss and draw conclusions from the results of this study. To do this the discussion chapter is divided into two sections. The first part aims to use the identity theories presented in the literature review to answer the research questions. To do justice to the complexity of the identity at St Mary's the discussion will be shaped around the major themes that emerged from the results. The first piece of the discussion examines how identity is constructed and maintained at St Mary's and follows the same main themes of family, the clubhouse, maleness and women. The second part will explore how the identity of St Mary's has responded to changes and challenges. This is done through an examination of the key events identified from the results of the financial crisis, the inclusion of the Tiwi Island Bombers and Territory Thunder.

The second section of this chapter aims to contextualise this study within a broader overview of identity. In order to do this, it is necessary to identify its major limitations. There is also a discussion of implications for theory and practice, particularly in the study of organisational identity within a sporting environment. This is followed by a number of recommendations for future identity research. Finally, the contribution of the study to the field is discussed followed by a concluding statement.

## 6.1 Construction and Maintenance of Identity at St Mary's

There are several major elements that construct the identity of St Mary's. From the results, four main themes were identified as being key to the process of identity construction: family, the clubhouse, maleness and women. Using some of the theories presented previously in the literature review, each of the themes will be explored within the discussion, to highlight the how identity is constructed through a process of public performance, a sense of shared history and how it is fundamentally based on a sense of inclusion and exclusion.

Jenkins argued that identity is best understood, as 'a process—identification—not a "thing"' (Jenkins, 2008, p. 5). The identity of St Mary's is formed through the process of identifying with certain key elements of the club. As chapter four highlights, individuals

are able to identify with some of the main themes of family, the clubhouse, maleness and women, which form the overall identity of St Mary's Football Club. Most members are able to identify themselves as being part of several of those categories. It is very unusual to be able to identify with all the themes, as often the male friendships were mutually exclusive to the role of women. In contrast, it is women who most strongly identify the clubhouse as being significant. The process of identifying with these categories is what constructs the overall identity of St Mary's.

### 6.1.1 Family

In terms of identifying with a category, it is evident that the construction of family is the dominant theme. Family is represented in three distinct ways. The first is the construction of identity based on 'family' as an actual biological family. The results show there are key family groups and that strong intergenerational familial relationships exist between club members. These familial relationships are particularly important to those members of the Stolen Generations. The second way individuals identify with the notion of family is when it is used as a metaphor to describe the broader St Mary's community, which is constructed as a 'football family'. The third example is of how members identify with family when it is used to describe the type of environment fostered and encouraged at the club. This is used when individuals described St Mary's as a 'family club' where women and children were made to feel both welcomed and safe.

When members describe St Mary's as being part of their own biological family it is a very strong personal identification with the club. The importance placed on the identification with certain biological families highlights two distinct ways in which identity is constructed at the club. The construction of interpersonal relationships within a football club context, as Cash and Damousi (2006) argued, are 'all at once, personal, familial, and more broadly social' (Cash & Damousi, p. 231). Family provides a clear example of identity constructed through a sense of sameness, literally being part of the same family. This is evidence of individuals forming a group identity by identifying through a process of inclusion. By identifying St Mary's as being their biological family, members are able to construct the overall identity of the club as being shaped through 'sameness or similarity with others' (Friese, 2002, p. 1). Through this process of identifying these similarities, the overall collective identity of the club is constructed.

These central families epitomise the overall values of the club; they are very successful at football and have maintained a loyalty to St Mary's over a long period of time. The sense of sameness is reinforced through these families' groups because they have a shared history.

The second way identifying with a biological family shapes identity constructions is through a link to a common past. The results highlight that these families are central to the on going processes of identity construction and maintenance at St Mary's. Through these family groups there is a clear, on going link between St Mary's' past and with the modern club in the contemporary period. Individuals identified these families as providing a link between St Mary's' past and potential future through the on going representation of these family names in junior leagues. This is a clear example of the argument that organisational identity 'is not only embedded in the demands of the present, but is constructed in terms of the conjunction of past and future' (Pullen & Linstead, 2005, p. 4). Identifying with these family groups shares St Mary's' past with a collective present. Members are able to identify through these family groups with the history of the club, as well as with potential future players. Identity at St Mary's is constructed through the link between a common past, based on these biological family relationships, and a collective present that is included in those memories.

Individuals who were not part of these family groups identified the importance of those family groups to the overall construction of identity at St Mary's. This is arguably because several of those biological families were part of the Stolen Generation. The fracturing of those family groups prior to their involvement at St Mary's in the 1950s has meant that, as an organisation, St Mary's is identified as a place of the on going importance of family to these people. This confirms Wenger's argument that identity is formed through intergenerational behaviour. The identity of St Mary's is constructed through several biological families' 'engagement in practice [football] from generation to generation' (Wenger, 1998, p. 89). The complexity of identity construction formed through family groups in an organisational environment is under-explored. While the connection between social relationships is discussed within most identity theories, there is a lack of reported research on the effects of familial bonds on the construction of identity within an organisation. Overall, the discussion of family as a biological term is something previously under-represented in the literature.

From the results, it is evident that family represented more than a descriptor of biological relationships; rather, it was used to describe the club as a whole. Family is used as metaphor to express the close bonds between club members. The club itself is described as a family. Being able to identify as part of a larger St Mary's 'family' meant individuals who were not connected to the biological families were able to share and construct an identity based on the sense of sameness (Friese, 2002). Unlike Anderson's (1991) 'imagined community', the collective identity of a football family at St Mary's is constructed through close personal relationships between individuals that extend both on- and off-field and over many football seasons.

Crucially, the metaphor of family offers a way to reconcile the diverse backgrounds of different club members. By identifying as part of a larger St Mary's football family it negates some of the tensions that might exist between different racial, religious and cultural groups within the club. As Giulianotti's (2007) study of the Glasgow Rangers Football Club highlighted, successful clubs are able to draw together the disparate views within the organisation. Identifying with family constructs an identity that avoids members having to identify with the club on strictly racial, religious, ethnic or gendered lines. The metaphor of family also constructs a shared collective identity that is able to be inclusive for members of different social backgrounds. The construction of racial identity, particularly in negotiating the divide between Indigenous and non-Indigenous members, could have been very difficult for the club. The metaphor of a larger St Mary's football family offers an inclusive collective identity not based on racial backgrounds. That is not to suggest that St Mary's is anything other than unequivocally supportive of their Indigenous players and members. As Giulianotti found in terms of religious identification of fan identities within the Glasgow Rangers Football Club, successful clubs are able to negotiate these sensitive tensions and identify as being part of a larger collective identity rather than on identity based on religious or racially prescribed categories (Giulianotti, 2007).

It has been established that family is constructed as a way of identifying the key relationships between individuals and the club. From the results, it is also evident that St Mary's was described as being a 'family club'. Being able to identify the atmosphere and environment of the club as like a 'family' reinforced the sense of inclusion and sameness.

This construction of a family atmosphere is done through the public acceptance of both women and children being welcomed at the clubhouse and at club events. The example of women and children being welcomed is repeated alongside the 'family' atmosphere of the club. The public acceptance of women and children is a key part of the reinforced overall family identity of the club. This confirms some of the sociological representations of identity construction that emphasise how identities are performed publicly. As Lawler argued, identities are both 'collectively agreed and validated' (Lawler, 2008, pp. 25–28). The family atmosphere of the club reinforced the performance element of identity construction through the public display of families. At a collective and individual level familial identity is performed, which in turn constructs the overall St Mary's collective identity. This explains why family is placed with such high importance to club members despite only some having biological connections to each other. Lawler described how identities were 'forged' through the 'interconnectedness' of social relationships (Lawler, 2008, p. 143). The family atmosphere of the club reinforces the social relationships built through familial and friendship groups. Since families, which included partners and children, are welcome in the club, it confirms that family is a key part of the shared collective identity.

Without argument St Mary's was a highly multicultural club that was distinctly proud of its strong historical links to Indigenous families. It was of interest then that a discussion of racial identities did not occur during the interview process. This could have been for a number of reasons, including the sensitivity of discussing racial identity with a non-Indigenous researcher. Acknowledging, however, that possibility it is important to put forward the idea that racial identity perhaps was not considered as important a tool of identification given the strong bonds of 'family' felt within the club. The poly-ethnic mix of Darwin's local community has meant that identifying people through a traditional racial lens fails to explore the biological and metaphorical bonds of family and belonging that were so strongly articulated in the interviews. St Mary's has never been exclusively an Indigenous football club despite the historical links to the communities of the Tiwi Islands. The mixing of families groups, from all racial backgrounds, suggests a fluidity of identity and confirmed Jones' (2007) argument about the 'hybrid' nature of frontier identities.

The results confirm family as the central force in terms of understanding identity construction at St Mary's. Family is presented as being historically important to the club, in particular, the intergenerational connections formed out of the experiences of members of the Stolen Generation. Individuals are able to identify a sense of sameness and similarity with other club members through the biological families, the family metaphor and through the public acceptance of family within the environment of the clubhouse.

### 6.1.2 Clubhouse

The clubhouse is another major part of the process of collective identification at St Mary's. Primarily the clubhouse offers a physical space for members to be involved with the off-field socialising, events and official business of the club. It represents the physical embodiment of off-field success, in terms of the hard work by volunteers required to physically build and maintain the building. It is considered of fundamental importance to maintaining the club's on-field success that an off-field space is available for players and members to interact. In turn, the clubhouse provides a facility that reinforces the family environment of the club. The clubhouse is constructed as a distinctive point of difference between St Mary's and other clubs in the NTFL.

The process of constructing identity based on an attachment to place has been explored within the Australian football literature and in particular, the construction of a local identity built through a sense of belonging to local home grounds and facilities (Nadel, 2002). Many of the cultural and sports history theorists have investigated the process of local identity construction based on communities coming together at the suburban or country sporting ovals (Daffey, 2002; Daffey & Kenins, 2003; Flanagan, 1994). These studies examined how the local sporting oval was a site for social interaction with the broader community. In contrast, the St Mary's clubhouse has been defined by what offers its members specifically, rather than confirming a local identity for the broader Darwin community. The clubhouse offers St Mary's members a place to interact and socialise that is closed to the general public. The clubhouse is the physical representation of the off-field labours of individual club members. The importance of the clubhouse is not tied to where it is located, adjacent to the sporting oval, but to its actual existence.

The St Mary's clubhouse is presented as being the distinctive feature that sets St Mary's apart from all other Darwin clubs. Albert and Whetten's original principles of identity construction argued that organisational identity was based on a sense of distinctiveness or difference (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Jenkins, 2008). The results show that having a physical place 'to call home' was a distinctive part of their identity. By identifying the clubhouse as being a central and distinctive element of the club, members were able to construct their collective identity through a sense of difference with other local football clubs. The section on family highlights that mostly club members identified with each other through a sense of sameness; however, the clubhouse offers a way of St Mary's members identifying themselves as separate. The clubhouse creates a point of difference with other clubs and constructs an identity around that opposition. Woodward argued that the process of identity formation is based on finding and creating a binary opposition with an outsider or 'Other' (Woodward, 1997, p. 35). This perceived 'Other' was found in the comparisons between the St Mary's clubhouse and their neighbours, the Wanderers Football Club. The narrative of how both clubs were offered the same land deal was repeated through the interviews. The divergence in the construction of the two clubhouses offers those within St Mary's an opportunity to construct their club as defined through success, while concurrently contrasting the other clubs as the 'Other' who had failed to capitalise on presented opportunities.

The clubhouse is presented as a way of allowing family to be present in the environment of the football club. The section on family highlighted that being able to maintain the family environment of the club is part of the overall construction of a collective identity. The clubhouse is a site for this interaction to occur and it reinforced the desired family environment. The interaction between members within the family environment of the clubhouse emphasised identification through a sense of sameness with other members. This meant the clubhouse represented the club's identity both externally as it provided an 'Other' with other NTFL clubs, while internally the facilities, such as the pool, reinforced the family environment.

St Mary's members identify the club's off-field success with the clubhouse. A local identity formed through a sense of belonging fitted within cultural and sports history theories, which have emphasised the importance of home grounds in Australian football. The results suggest that it was the clubhouse that represented the key physical space for

identity construction rather than a home ground. The results confirmed that the clubhouse allowed a site of interaction between members, which confirmed the bonds of clubmanship between members and reinforced the familial relationships. It meant that members could construct a shared identity by comparing St Mary's facilities to other teams. Through the St Mary's clubhouse, members were able to construct their collective identity around the off-field success of the club.

### 6.1.3 Male players

The construction of male friendships is central to the overall collective identity of St Mary's. The process of identifying maleness and classifying male friendships is presented in several key ways. These include maleness being represented through friendships formed through on-field contacts that extend to off-field, that were both typical in the form of eating and drinking together and also atypical in the form of hyper masculine activities. These friendships have been maintained long after playing careers have ended. The results represented this phenomenon of continued involvement by former male players within an administrative capacity as part of the cycle, which meant 'good people' stayed around at the club. There is a darker side to these friendships. The results showed that the closeness between the male players had the power to tacitly exclude other members of the club, which included reserves (B grade) and female players. The male friendships were represented as being both an inclusive and exclusive part of identity construction.

The results found that the football friendships constructed through on-field contact are part of the overall shared identity of the club. Jenkins argued that much of the confusion over identity stems from the illusion that identity can never be defined or established as a singular entity—identity does not exist in a vacuum; it is a product of ever-changing social relationships. Instead of viewing identity as a 'thing', Jenkins argued that identity had two parts: firstly the process of classification and secondly the association or the attachment to something or someone (Jenkins, 2008). Many of the social and organisational elements of the club were formed through these friendships, which was identity formed through the attachment. It was through the male friendships created through on-field interaction that a type of masculine identity was presented off-field, which was reinforced by those in authority and of influence within the club.

A construction of male identity is formed and maintained through the playing of sport (Aitchison, 2007; Messner, 2007; Wellard, 2009). Some of the results confirmed Robinson's qualitative work, which argued that male identity and friendships are formed through the shared experience of a sporting activity (Robinson, 2008). Robinson's theory that men were aware of and valued these personal relationships and friendships constructed through the connections made through sporting activity, were in that case established through rock climbing (Robinson, 2008, p. 105). The results highlight how at St Mary's, male friendships are formed through the shared experience of playing on-field. Interviewees were able to identify and articulate the importance of these friendships in their personal lives, as well as in their on-field playing careers. The overall St Mary's collective identity is informed by these male friendships, as the club both values and encourages the on-field and off-field contact between players. The friendships mean players who work harder for each other are likely to work harder for the club.

These friendships were presented as being a crucial part of the off-field social interaction within the interviewees' everyday lives. Going away together is considered an essential part of the players' bonding process. During these trips away, players engage in fishing trips, mud crabbing, pig hunting and magpie geese shooting. This was presented in the interviews as being a reflection of Darwin's unique culture but was also part of the club's own promotion of identity. Identity is constructed through a unique narrative of the NT 'frontier' experience. This was substantiated in the results in the way 'southern' players were represented as being included into these bonding-type rituals. Hickey presented a construction of 'hyper masculinity', which viewed male personality traits that favoured 'hardness, stoicism and loyalty' (Hickey, 2008, p. 148). These activities performed by St Mary's players, which include fishing, camping and hunting, represent hyper masculine activities.

The masculine identity presented at St Mary's is layered. One level of the masculine identity constructed at St Mary's is overtly masculine. The flip side of that image of 'hyper masculinity' was presented in the idealised form of the former captain. The image of the former captain is presented as being a good player, father and provider while concurrently being able to bond with the other senior players over pig hunting and having a gun license. The results highlighted that masculine identity was performed in an overtly

physical way. At the same time St Mary's valued maleness highly, which reinforced the strong family relationships. Maleness is both imbued with hyper masculine overtones and concurrently presented within the construction of a family club that valued fathers and role models over laddish football behaviour.

Masculine identities were presented as being based on both inclusion and exclusion (Coad, 2008; Messner, 2007). Much of the sporting literature focuses particularly on sexuality as a site of both potential inclusion and exclusion (Anderson, 2005). Other than the dominant representations of male heterosexuality there was an absence of sexuality discussed at St Mary's. It was evident that these friendships did include and exclude certain members within St Mary's. There was a strong emphasis placed on the senior men's team. The reserves' team did not feature within the results nearly as prominently as the senior side. The focused attention on the senior men's team positioned the reserve players outside of these close male friendships. Their influence within the club was a lot less and they were less likely to be involved in the social aspects of the organisation.

The reserve players were not the only ones tacitly excluded from these friendships. The position of female players was noticeably less than those of either the senior men's or reserve sides. The relationship between the female and male players highlighted a more ladette drinking culture within the female team. In part, this was due to the young ages of the female players. While the relationship between male and female players is not without tension, however, the results did not support the argument that the intrusion of women into the male dominated organisational culture of a football club had been detrimental to the overall success of the club (McCauley, 2008). At worst female players were more marginalised from the inner workings of the club. Many of the male friendships were based on the ability to be able to socialise in an environment where partners were welcomed and yet distanced by their tacit exclusion from the playing experience—a dichotomy within the construction of the family environment of the club.

Constructions of maleness were fundamental to the overall collective identity of St Mary's. Through the shared experience of on-field contact, St Mary's players were able to construct off-field friendships. The off-field socialisation often took the form of hyper masculine behaviour. The ritualised activities created those close male friendships. Presented in the results is another type of masculinity constructed at St Mary's, which

valued players as male role models particularly in the terms of being good 'family men'. The closeness of the male friendships had the power to exclude both reserves and female players. The preference shown towards the senior men's team within the results is not surprising and highlights the performed masculine identity constructed through inclusion and exclusion.

### 6.1.4 Women

The role of women within St Mary's confirmed the influence on the family in the overall collective identity of the club. In terms of identity constructed through a process of semiotic reading of rituals and symbols, women presented a challenge to this collective identity of St Mary's (Hall & Du Gay, 1996). Due to their gender, women are both included and excluded from club proceedings. The results highlight that women are closely involved with club activities, for example, female volunteers were the ones who made the banners before grand finals, yet the women's football team occupies a lower status than the men's senior side. The results show that women occupied important administrative roles within the club. The duality between inclusion and exclusion made it challenging to place the role of women.

The environment of the sporting club creates a dichotomy that includes and excludes female players and club members. Hargreaves suggested that sport overlooked its 'softer' side, which included the role of women and ethnic minorities (Hargreaves, 2000). The role of women at St Mary's is constructed in three ways. Firstly, women are discussed in terms of their administrative involvement within the club. The results highlight that historically there had been an on going legacy of women volunteering within an administrative capacity. This is presented as the club being run by 'strong women'. The second part of the female involvement within the club has been shown in the way women are constructed as fulfilling a supportive role, as wives or girlfriends of current/former players. The results show that this supportive role has evolved over time and currently there are tensions over their level of involvement within the club. The third part of the female involvement within the club has been the contribution made by the 'bingo ladies' to the overall sense of club identity. These women represented a link to St Mary's past but also were another part of St Mary's collective identity that was formed outside the realm of football.

In terms of sport, women are either placed within a binary of male hegemony or the literature focuses on the role of female athletes and representations of female sporting performance (Heywood & Dworkin, 2003). The women of St Mary's did not construct their involvement in terms of feminist discourse or as being in binary with male athletes. The role of women at St Mary's has been shown to be as a part of a much broader construction of collective identity. One layer of this collective identity confirmed the role of women as wives and girlfriends, who fulfilled the support role more traditionally associated with women on the periphery of sporting experience. The process of identifying with the shared St Mary's identity also showed that women had an essential role within the club. Over time, the role of women at the club had subtly changed. In particular, partners of former players lamented the lack of commitment to the club by current wives and girlfriends in the organisation of social functions at the club. Female administrators currently organise the social functions, which had previously been done by wives and girlfriends. The level of commitment to the club by wives and girlfriends has become much less than that remembered in the past. There is a gap within the literature for a feminist interpretation of the changing role of women within male-dominated sporting organisations. The presence of women on-field playing football and off-field being on the general committee reflects how the position of women in football clubs has changed significantly.

The role of women at St Mary's is formed through rituals and the balance between a process of identified inclusion and exclusion. The role of women has been changed over time. Women previously have been involved in a volunteer capacity and wives or girlfriends had filled these roles. These tasks, more recently, have been done by women serving within an administrative capacity within the club, particularly sitting on the club's social committee. This highlights the transition and professionalisation of the club. It illustrated a gap within the literature in regards to the evolution of female roles within traditionally male-dominated sporting clubs. The role of women being involved in an administrative capacity in a male-dominated sporting code is an area for considerable feminist discourse.

The role of women at St Mary's was changing even at the time of conducting interviews. The complexity stems from the process of inclusion and exclusion. Women were

welcome as supporters, volunteers and administrators, however, the role of women as players and their partners challenged some of the previously male dominated space within the football club. Much of the literature remained focused on the influence of sexuality and gender on particular constructions of identity for female athletes (players). The challenge for understanding the organisational identity of the club was that it remained inconsistent. The same woman could feel a sense of belonging while occupying multiple roles within the club, being overtly included as an administrator and yet only tacitly being included as a player.

## 6.2 Identity Change and Challenges

This section explores how St Mary's responded to threats to their collective identity. This addressed the second research question, which examined how identity has been changed or challenged in the club's recent history. Over time, organisations have to act in response to both internal and external changes, challenges and threats to their shared identity. The results identified that there were three key events that had challenged the organisational identity of St Mary's. These events represented both internal and external pressure on the club. The premise that identities are able to change is at the cornerstone of cultural and social theory. The organisational identity was expressed through multiple narratives that described the many facets of identity construction within St Mary's (the family club, the successful club, the club created through male friendship, the club dominated by women, the progressive club, the traditional club, the financially rich club, the club built by volunteers). These multiple 'identities' created an opportunity to explore how these have shaped the overall identity of St Mary's changes and challenges. St Mary's provides an example of how organisations are able to respond and incorporate changes as a defining part of their collective identity.

The results found that there were three significant events that had recently changed or challenged St Mary's' identity. The first of these was the internal pressures forced upon the club by the financial crisis. This forced large changes within the business culture of the club. The second event challenged the family structure, with the introduction of the Tiwi Island 'Bombers' Football Club (Tiwi Bombers) in the NTFL competition. This changed the historical family link between the Tiwi Islands and St Mary's. The Tiwi Bombers also created a direct on-field football rival. The third event challenged the

successful winning culture of St Mary's due to the creation of the Northern Territory Thunder Football Club (Territory Thunder). The formation of an elite level changed the football structure of the competition as it syphoned away talented players from St Mary's. Territory Thunder challenged the off-field cohesion of St Mary's because it removed 'good people' as well as good players from the club.

The concept that identities could change is explored in the literature review. This research has followed Jenkins' argument and found identity constructed through a process of identification within a cultural and social context (Jenkins, 2008). The ability to respond to these influences and adjust identification accordingly is at the foundation of sociological discussions of identity theory. This viewpoint is often articulated as the anti-essentialist or non-essentialist position, which positioned identity as fluid, multiple, constantly reinterpreted through interaction within the social world and potentially in a stage of flux or 'crisis' (Barker, 2008; Grossberg, 1996; Jenkins, 2008; Lawler, 2008). The tension created as identities could change, yet be maintained over time, was argued for by Barker, who proposed a 'plasticity and the practical fixity of identity … enabling one to oscillate between them' (Barker, 2008, p. 245). The results found that these three events had altered St Mary's as a football club significantly. The financial crisis had forced changes in administrative policy and represented the increased need for St Mary's to operate under business guidelines and act in accordance with current business administrative law. The inclusion of the Tiwi Bombers ruptured the historical link with the Tiwi Islands and forced major changes in terms of player clearances. The Territory Thunder initiative removed talented leaders from St Mary's both on- and off-field. All three events fundamentally changed St Mary's as an organisation.

Many of the debates around the construction of identity arise from the tension that while identities can change, there are identities that maintain and endure over time. Giddens argued that it was the 'practical consciousness' of individuals that allowed them to maintain a sense of identity through the process of day-to-day rituals and embedded social structures (Giddens, 1991, p. 37). The results found that while the three events changed St Mary's as an organisation, instead of fracturing the overall identity, the events themselves and the way the club responded to those threats became part of the collective identity of the club. A central premise of Albert and Whetten's original organisational identity approach proposed that identity was constructed through the

enduring elements of the organisation (CED) (Albert & Whetten, 1985). Haimes described identity as a 'paradox' because a football club had to respond to the 'changing environment to remain competitive, yet their identity has to endure' (Haimes, 2006, p. 48). The ability to be able to respond to changes was a key part of the identification process argued by Jenkins within social-identity construction (Jenkins, 2008). The results confirmed Haimes' paradox. The overall collective identity of St Mary's had changed but St Mary's members were able to build these events into their own sense of shared identity. This argument was reinforced by Hatch and Schultz, who constructed identity as 'both a dynamic process that unfolds over time and source of stability for those who depend on it' (Hatch & Schultz, 2001, p. 5). Individuals at St Mary's were able to include these events into their collective understandings of the organisation because they had embedded daily rituals, which depended on the club. The daily, weekly and seasonly rituals included but were not limited to the regularity of training on a Tuesday and Thursday night, game day preparations, getting ice, strapping players, monitoring the scoreboard, sitting on the right hand side of the grandstand, wearing green and gold, going back to the clubhouse after a win, staying away with a loss, the social functions, the Thursday night team selections, the post-match awards and drinking sessions. The interviewees spoke about how all these activities continued and the St Mary's 'family' was able to endure despite the loss of connection to the Tiwi Islands. These rituals allowed the concept of family and the Tiwi Islands to become constructed in multiple ways. It still represented an important link to St Mary's past and an on going link to the Stolen Generation families, who still identified strongly with St Mary's.

The events brought about essential changes to St Mary's. As a result of both internal and external forces, St Mary's was forced as a club to re-evaluate how it operated, how it constructed notions of belonging to family and how it viewed success. Much of the identity threat literature grappled with the contradiction that organisations were able to change, yet maintain a sense of overall cohesion (Gioia et al., 2000; Pratt et al., 2000). The interplay between image and culture within an organisation meant that identity 'threats' were part of how organisations responded to changed environments. The results highlight how social and cultural attitudes had been forced to change within the club as a result of these events.

The ability of organisations to maintain a cohesive collective identity in response to these changes and challenges suggests evidence of multiple and overlapping identities existing within the one organisation. The anti-essentialist position proposed that identities were 'multiple and changing' (Barker, 2008, p. 227). This position constructed identity as being in 'continuous change and reconfiguration' (Robins, 2005, p. 173). Similarly in organisational theory, Whetten argued that 'organizations, like individuals, possess multiple identities, with a core assumption in identity theory that actors strongly prefer a coherent, internally consistent self-view' (Whetten, 2006, p. 230). The key events identified in the results highlight how St Mary's members were able to construct a cohesive identity in response to the threats by engaging in the multiple narratives for identity construction. The concept of individual narratives forming the overall identity confirms Czarniawska-Joerges' argument that organisational identity is in part formed through 'an analogy between organisational narratives and autobiographies as narratives constituting identity' (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1997, p. 142). The multiple narratives of identity construction allowed a cohesive identity to be maintained when under threat from internal and external challenges.

The three key identity threats highlight how identity could be constructed in multiple narratives at St Mary's. In terms of the financial crisis it was presented as being evidence of the club's ability to be progressive. This was used as an example in changed uniforms and inclusion of affiliated sports teams. Secondly, it was constructed as a positive, as it forced the club to become more professional through the changes to business practise. Thirdly, it was identified as being an opportunity to bring in new leaders but at the same time not to lose the traditional values of the past. These narratives were repeated throughout interviews and highlight how members were able to construct a cohesive identity of a successful off-field club, as a response to the internal identity threat of financial ruin.

The inclusion of the Tiwi Bombers also represented multiple constructions of the collective St Mary's identity. The addition of the Tiwi Bombers was positioned as being positive for the league overall and bringing large crowds back to the game. Secondly, it was presented as being a positive for the Tiwi people themselves. Thirdly, it was used as an example of St Mary's' overall success in training and development of junior players and coaches. The positive spin that St Mary's members were able to give the inclusion of

the Tiwi Bombers showed multiple narratives in play to explain the loss of the Tiwi Islands, without compromising the shared past or future of the two clubs. This suggests that organisational identity was not finite but multiple. Yet, the ability to position the success of the Tiwi Bombers as St Mary's own success highlights the strength of the overall collective St Mary's identity.

The third significant event was presented with the same positive interpretation. In terms of Territory Thunder, the loss of talented players was reframed within the bigger picture of overall player development. St Mary's positioned itself as a club that fostered player pathways and junior development; even to the detriment of their on-field chances. Territory Thunder was used as an example to highlight the talent and skills' development of players and coaches as ambassadors for the club and league. The positive construction of these events suggests that the overall collective identity of St Mary's is based on multiple interpretations of the overarching values of the organisation. The multiple identities of St Mary's related back to the different major themes identified in the results.

These identity threats produced acknowledged changes at the club. The overall sense of club identity was not altered. From social, cultural and organisational theory it was evident that identity was able to change. St Mary's responded to the identity threats by incorporating them as a defining part of their collective identity. This was due to members being able to identify multiple narratives that contextualised these events as being positive for the club overall. Being able to overcome these difficult periods became considered as a defining part of St Mary's identity.

## 6.3 Summary

The organisational identity of St Mary's was constructed and maintained by a process of identifying with certain fundamental elements of the club. The interplay between representations of past and present influenced the sense of familial sameness and belonging. Identity was based on a process of defined inclusion and exclusion within the club and more broadly within the general community. Identity was also established through performed cultural rituals, which were mostly maintained by women in volunteer and administrative roles within the club. At the same time, the on-field shared experiences between players created a masculine identity that extended off-field. The

shared experiences of engaging in overtly masculine behaviour represented another side to the highly valued family environment of the club.

The uniqueness of the case in terms of the importance of family presented a challenge but also highlighted the multiplicity of identity creation within a sport organisational context. The theme of family both influenced and affected all other aspects of the club's identity structures. This was highlighted clearly by the changed role of women within the club, as family identity became more fluid, so too were the roles available for women within the club's administrative structures.

It was evident from the literature review and the results that identity was able to change. The results identified three key events within the club's recent history that had represented significant crises both on- and off-field. The results found that while these events had forced changes, they had not compromised the overall cohesion of the club. Individual members were able to reframe these events through multiple narratives. A clear example of this was in the ability to recast the loss of the Tiwi Island connection within the positive frame that repositioned the strength of the Stolen Generation families. The key events represented challenges and forced changes to occur. Individuals were able to construct multiple narratives for these events that confirmed the overall identity of the club. The ability to incorporate these challenges into the existing sense of identity exemplified the solidity of St Mary's.

## 6.4 Limitations of the Study

This section briefly explores the limitations of this study. Despite the complexity of identity debates there were and had to be clear limits to this project. This study was limited in several key ways that included methodological considerations, theoretical frames, and time and distance from the case..

There were limits within the theoretical discussions used within the study. As this study strongly emphasised the need to include cultural and sociological discourse within the examination of organisational identity, there were some theories that were not relevant; however, that were influential within identity studies more broadly. These were briefly discussed within the introduction and literature review chapter. This study, however,

acknowledged the contribution of national-identity theory, psychoanalytical perceptions of the self, identity theory and social identity theory as all part of the much broader identity literature. To fully contextualise and explore the organisational identity of St Mary's there needed to be limits placed on the number of identity theories used.

The limitations that arose out the methodological choice of a case study were clear. With any case study research there are always limits to what is and what is not included within the confines of the case. Similarly, there was only one case used—that of the St Mary's Football Club. It was acknowledged throughout the study that this was an examination of only one club's identity. The same limits applied to the type of sport chosen. The single focus on Australian football meant that other sports were excluded from the analysis. While the single case study could be open to criticism it also, however, allowed the most opportunity for in-depth examinations. Using the single case study of a football club in the NT this research explored how organisational identity was constructed by interviewing those connected with the club. The purpose of these interviews was to engage interviewees on their thoughts and opinions on the nature of club identity. While this study focused on the contemporary period since St Mary's was formed in 1952, which was still within living memory, was significant as it meant there was a depth of age ranges within the sample of interviewees.

The sporting club offered a unique chance to examine how organisational identity was constructed outside of the domain of the elite level, nationalised sporting club. A case study approach was used for the research design. The bulk of the data was based on qualitative interviews. As well as these interviews, there was a triangulation of other sources of data, which included personal email correspondence, observational techniques and document analysis. The interviews were based on semi-structured open-ended questions that encouraged interviewees to include their personal experiences and memories into the dialogue. The depth of themes uncovered, the range of experiences and the emotion that interviewees spoke about the club justified using a single case study. While it is recommend that future research can compare organisational identity across sporting clubs, for this research a single case offered the most in-depth and insight into this unique organisation.

This study could be criticised for the lack of transferability of findings because of the qualitative and case study methods that were employed. This was acknowledged in the methodology and was combated through the triangulation of data, which included photographic material, club documents, ephemera, media sources and a personal data collection journal that documented the data collection process. As the study focused on one club and one sport, it meant there was both an in-depth and complete approach taken towards identity at St Mary's.

This study was limited by practical considerations. A key limitation to the study, particularly in terms of an exploration of identity changes, was that data collection occurred over a single football season. The study was not longitudinal. This was done for several reasons. The first being the most practical, as the football season provided a fixed period for interviews to be collected. As the season progressed the interviewees were able to reflect on the highs and lows of the season. It also meant that people were more likely to be available for interviews. The second was related to the ethical considerations of intruding into people's lives. The ethics committee only approved data collection from October to March—one football season (see appendix 2). The third was related to distance. This study was based at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Victoria while St Mary's operated in Darwin, in the NT. The challenges of distance were overcome by many flights up to Darwin. I lived in Darwin from the period of October – April 2009 / 2010. I returned in May, June and July of 2010 to continue informally speaking with club members and attending Territory Thunder games. While it was outside of my data collection period I also returned in early March (2011) and attended a NTFL preliminary final (St Mary's defeated Tiwi Bombers). There was an ongoing commitment to achieve in-depth results and build ongoing rapport with the St Mary's football community.

The area of gender equality of interviewee selection was a limitation within the study. There was a difficulty in getting access to women within the club, particularly the women whose roles within the club were as wives, partners or supporters of the club. Further, it was very difficult to secure female players to be interviewed. This perhaps reflected the uneasiness between male and female players in terms of inclusion and attitudes towards the club. Of the female players that agreed to be interviewed, it became clear within the interviews that some identified significantly with St Mary's through their fathers and brothers playing at the club, much more so than through their own playing

careers. This lack of female voice was overcome, however, by interviews of several women who served on the administrative committee within the club. Their perspectives added an important dimension to the interviews. There understandings of the administration function of the club were highly insightful and reflected the importance placed on women serving in an administrative capacity within the club.

This study identified an absence of qualitative research that explored how identity was established at a sporting club that used a combination of organisational, social, cultural and historical theoretical influences. From the identity literature reviewed, several broad tensions emerged. These were in what ways identity has been constructed, how it had been confirmed or maintained and how that group identity had responded to changes or challenges. These themes have been explored within the context of a single sport organisation, but not in terms of community sport more generally.

The limitations of this study have been identified as being methodological, theoretical and practical. This study recognised the theoretical importance of other works that were not practically applicable to this study. Similarly, the practical limitations imposed by time and distance did not compromise the study, as there were many flights back to Darwin and an ongoing presence within the club. The methodological concern over case study approaches was negated by the triangulation of data, in particular, by the keeping of a case journal. The gender divide within the interviews was expected and the female voice provided by the women who served on the administrative committee offered unique insight into the very male dominated aspect to football administration.

## 6.5 Implications for Theory

This study has repeatedly stressed that there was a gap within the existing literature on the topic of identity formation and maintenance, as well as empirical evidence, despite a great deal of theoretical material already being available. To take an interdisciplinary approach to identity theory meant acknowledging the multiple theoretical frames that dominated the discussion. This study extends the theory on what constitutes identity, through the exploration of family and social influences at an organisational level.

This research brought together the contribution of cultural, historical and sociological interpretations of identity to the context of a sport organisation. To only use an organisational identity approach would have failed to fully explore how identity was constructed and maintained. The management-down dissemination of identity presented within organisational discourse would not have been appropriate for an organisation such as St Mary's. While more traditional organisational approaches could have been employed they would have failed to capture the personal voices of the interviewees, or the nuanced layers of their multiple identities.

The third contribution was in the discussion of identity theory within the field of Australian football studies. The importance of Australian football in terms of its place within local sporting iconography and popular culture was clear. It was a surprise to find that historical, social or cultural theorists had not explored identity creation within the context of a football club. As a researcher in the topic of identity the rhetorical question: 'who are they?' becomes so pertinent to the constructions of local and national identity. This area of identity construction within a non-elite football club context has, to date, been ignored. It was also an opportunity to present a football narrative that was outside the mainstream football communities of south-eastern Australia.

This study proposed that organisational identity could be challenged over time but the very nature of these challenges acts to reinforce the identity. In doing so it presents organisational identity as fluid with the multiple meanings ascribed to the collective understanding of identity. As the multiple narratives showed, it is not possible to identify a single identity; rather, it is more useful to identify the multiple identities that people ascribe to an organisation. The collective identity is built around shared understandings and interpretations of the fundamental features of the organisation. In the case of St Mary's these were of family, the clubhouse, maleness and women. The process of identifying with these key elements was based on a sense of sameness and belonging to the group, as well as being constructed through inclusion and exclusion at certain times by particular sections of the club. The key identity threats highlighted how multiple narratives exist to maintain the cohesion of the group identity. Through these layers of individual interpretations a collective identity is established, reinforced through performance and ritual and maintained through intergenerational contact between family groups.

This study contributed to the sports literature by presenting identity construction of a sporting club outside of the elite or national level. The literature review also brought together the social and cultural influences on the construction of organisational identity. This study augmented the existing Australian football literature by using social, cultural and organisational theories within an examination of football club identity, which was located outside the dominant football communities. The evidence of multiple identities constructed through individual interpretations of key events highlights the layers of identity found within an organisation.

## 6.6 Implications for the Practice of Clubs (Sport)

The implications for sporting clubs have been identified in several key ways, which included a sense of shared identity organisational identity formed through the strands of multiple identities, clear representations of the past, identified goals and core values. These implications came out of both the theory and results. They reflected the way questions of identity could be answered and used by clubs.

The notion of identities came about as a result of what was presented as the core identity of St Mary's. Much of the organisational identity of St Mary's was based on the assumed knowledge held by key individuals. This was because of the longevity of certain members and the stability of those family groups. An unambiguous sense of the distinct parts of what made a club like St Mary's unique could give new members a sense of familiarity but also could help in times of change and during periods of potential identity threats.

The second implication for practice within a sport club was the importance placed on having a clear knowledge of the past. It was evident from the interviews that those who identified strongly with the club had a very clear working knowledge of how the club started, what it stood for and who were important people within the club's history. An interviewee even mentioned maybe more information could be provided to new recruits on the topic. Much of the information being passed on to newcomers was done casually through the observation of photographs and premiership banners. The theory presented identity as a process reaffirmed over time. Thus, the history of the club could be

presented at the beginning of every season or specifically to newcomers. The osmosis style of identity confirmation could be sped up with some formalised programs.

The third part of the practical implications would be to get clubs to identify their shared goals. While winning premierships was incredibly important, the social inclusion provided by St Mary's was also a key part of the club's identity. To identify which parts the club wanted to emphasise would help direct the best way forward for the club. The 'good people' phenomenon could be articulated more clearly within a written document. The complexity of the relationships based on family suggested a tacit dissemination of knowledge that was only available to certain members within the club. By broadening the processes of identification it would allow more members to feel included within this overall identity. The implication that only older members understood the 'true' nature of identity at St Mary's suggested that there was an opportunity for this collective identity to explained more clearly to new or younger members.

This study contributed to the practice of sport clubs by identifying the layers of identity construction within a single sporting club. The overall cohesiveness of any club could be improved by implementing historical-awareness programs that allow a dissemination of knowledge to occur. To channel this process of identification, St Mary's could aim to provide new recruits with a more complete picture of values and expectations held within the club.

## 6.7 Future Research Questions

There were further research questions that this study raised both in terms of theoretical and practical applications. Further research questions concern the role of social and cultural influences on the processes of organisational identity. It would be of interest to explore other not-for-profit community organisations to investigate how identity was constructed and maintained. There is an opportunity to explore how social and cultural influences affected the processes of identity construction within another sporting code. There are also opportunities to explore the organisational identity of a sport club within the context of community development.

In terms of practical application, this result raised further questions about how organisational identity could be constructed within a newly developed sporting team. In terms of the recently established Gold Coast and Western Sydney teams within the AFL, there would be opportunity to explore how social and cultural relationships with community and stakeholders affected the type of organisational identity constructed. An area of further research would be in exploring the relationships between supporters, players and administration (or management) structures within a club and how these impact on identity construction. The ability of sporting clubs to respond to challenges and a change to their identity is also an area for further research. The impact of mythologising either success, like at St Mary's, or of club failures is another area for further identity research.

There was a clear gap within the current theory in regards to how family relationships influence identity construction within organisations. It would be of interest to explore how family is used in other sporting codes. In particular, non-Western family structures could provide an excellent source of cross-cultural discourse.

The relationship between women and sporting identity is an area of further organisational identity research. In particular, more research could be done on a comparative case study between a male dominated sport like football and a female dominated sport like netball. The differences in the organisational identity of the two clubs would be of considerable interest. Another area for future research is the changing role of women within male-dominated sporting codes. A feminist analysis of the role of women as active participants, players and administrators could potentially be a rich avenue for feminist deconstructions of dominant sporting identities. Similarly, there is also room to explore how organisational identity is formed within clubs that do not have a clear gendered dominance (hockey or basketball). The organisational identity of how these clubs build, construct and respond to identity changes without the dominance of gendered divides would be worth considering.

## 6.8 Contribution of the Study

To contextualise this study within a broader social and political context was an important part of the research frame. Representations of identity impacted on not only how

organisations were represented but also on sporting identity, football identity, Australian identity and Indigenous identity. The contribution of this study was to engage historical, social and cultural theories within the organisational identity dialogue. There had been an absence in historical and sport theory with regard to how sporting clubs operated within the community. There was a lack of critical engagement with identity theory to include individual contributions to a collective identity.

The challenges of using interdisciplinary approaches were justified by the personal responses that came through in the results. The shared experiences allowed insight into why sport organisations matter within a local community and therefore why that identity matters within larger theoretical discussions. The organisational identity was presented as being multiple and constructed through shared and individual narratives within the results.

From the results and discussion it was evident that for cohesive organisational identity to be maintained it had to be able to adapt to both internal and external challenges. The strength of St Mary's' organisational identity was in its ability to concurrently interpret those changes as being part of the enduring nature of the organisation. The ability to adapt was its central strength. From the results and discussion of St Mary's, it was clear that having multiple sources for identity construction allowed for a more fluid understanding of the collective identity. These included the strong foundations of family, male friendships, the importance of women and having a physically located clubhouse. As identity was being constructed through a number of different paths, it allowed the club's organisational identity to be strengthened, even in times of difficulty. The multiple identities meant that individuals were able to position the key identity threats within a positive context through the multiple narratives of the shared identity.

## 6.9 Concluding Statement

As an outsider it remained difficult to answer the question: who are they? In the search to understand the organisational identity of St Mary's there had to be an acknowledgement of what the club meant to its members. The construction, maintenance and enduring quality of identity at the St Mary's Football Club was bound within an understanding that football mattered in the lives of the supporters, players, club members, officials and

administrative officers. It was very personal and deeply connected to the organisation as a whole.

The opportunity to use football as a lens through which to discuss what was valuable to an organisation in terms of what constructed and maintained their own sense of self has further applications beyond the field of sport or even organisational theory. National identity remains highly politicised and very volatile. Continued reflection and discussion about what identity means to local communities is only going to continue to become more important. Sport offered an opportunity for inclusion to those who had been politically and socially marginalised.

This study found that the topic of identity was much larger than first anticipated. In acknowledging that, it was evident that while identity was highly theorised, it was difficult to articulate clearly what it meant within the social and cultural context. Organisational identities matter because they play an important role within local communities. As a case, St Mary's showed that club identity had multiple layers and was constructed through a range of different relationships. The sense of group identity was based on how individuals responded to these networks that included relationships based on family, on a sense of location, on friendships and on gender roles. The key themes highlighted how identity construction was both highly personal and public at the same time. This argument positioned identity construction as a process built through a range of different relationships and based on the interaction between public and private spheres. The performed element of identities created within a clubhouse environment represented a key aspect of identity construction. This was all supported by theoretical assumptions made within the social and cultural theories.

At the same time, it must be acknowledged that interviewees discussed how the club had endured through change and upheaval. The club's own ability to deal with challenges both on- and off-field was used as an example of the strength of the organisation. The multiple identities only reinforced the strength of the club. The ability to incorporate these challenges into the collective St Mary's' identity was a remarkable feature of the club. The overall collective identity of St Mary's was a process of identification with the fundamental elements of the club. These elements were layered with different associated meanings, based on both inclusion and exclusion. The multiple narratives found within

the discussion of change and identity threats suggested that multiple identities existed within St Mary's. As an organisation, St Mary's was able to use these multiple narratives to form a cohesive club identity that defined itself through success both on- and off-field.

The organisational identity of St Mary's was based on the flexible dichotomy that constructed belonging through a sense of collective sameness and yet identified outsiders by their perceived differences. The loyalty to the shared identity has been based on biological and metaphorical constructions of family. The gendered relationship between men and women was played out both on- and off-field through the changing roles of women as athletes and administrators. The ability of St Mary's as an organisation to be able to respond to change so effectively was because, at all levels, its members were able to build their collective identities on an unchanging core set of assumptions: family, friendship and success.

# List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| AFL | Australian Football League |
| AFLNT | Australian Football League Northern Territory |
| ATO | Australian Tax Office |
| CLP | Country Liberal Party |
| FC | Football Club |
| FFC | Fremantle Football Club |
| NT | Northern Territory |
| NTFL | Northern Territory Football League |
| QAFL | Queensland Australian Football League |
| QLD | Queensland |
| SANFL | South Australian Football League |
| VFL | Victorian Football League |
| VIC | Victoria |
| WAFL | Western Australian Football League |

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(Image One) 1952 / 1953 St Mary's Football Club team photograph (used with permission from a personal collection).

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# Appendix A: Interview Schedule

1. Administrator 1 Male 21/10/09 (Admin)
2. Administrator 2 Male 01/02/10 (Football operations)
3. Administrator 3 Male 08/12/09 (Football operations)
4. Administrator 4 Male 14/12/09 (Admin)
5. Administrator 5 Male 21/10/09 (Admin) (Former but still active)
6. Administrator 6 Male 28/10/09 (Admin)

7. AFLNT Administrator Male 13/12/09 (AFLNT Admin)

8. Administrator 7 Female 10/12/09 (Admin)
9. Administrator 8 Female 04/03/10 (Admin)
10. Administrator 9 Female 07/12/09 (Admin and female player)
11. Administrator 10 Female 23/10/09 (Admin)
12. Administrator 11 Female 04/02/10 (Admin)

13. Player 1 Male 26/10/09 (Senior player)
14. Player 2 Male 20/10/09 (Senior player)
15. Player 3 Male 05/12/09 (Senior + reserves player)
16. Player 4 Male 16/10/09 (Senior player)
17. Player 5 Male 22/10/09 (Senior player)
18. Player 6 Male 31/10/09 (Senior player)
19. Player 7 Male 07/12/09 (Senior player)
20. Player 8 Male 14/12/09 (Senior player)
21. Player 9 Male 22/01/09 (Senior + reserves player)

22. Player 10 Female 04/02/10 (Female player)

23. Supporter 1 Male 17/11/09 (Supporter and former player)
24. Supporter 2 Male 13/12/09 (supporter and former player)
25. Supporter 3 Male 26/10/09 (supporter and former administrator)

26. Supporter 4 Female 19/11/09 (supporter and partner of former player)
27. Supporter 5 Female /02/10 (supporter and partner of current player)
28. Supporter 6 Female 30/10/09 (supporter and partner of former player)

# Appendix B: La Trobe University Ethics Approval

**To** Susannah Ritchie, *School of Management*

**From** Chiara Condotta – *Secretary, Faculty Human Ethics Committee*

**CC** Russell Hoye, *School of Management*

**Subject F-Final Approval. Ethics Application 26/09PG**

**"***An exploration of regional football club identity: a case study of the St. Marys Football Club, Darwin"*

**Date** 21/07/2009

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Dear Susannah and Russell,

The Faculty Human Ethics Committee (FHEC) has assessed your application as complying with the National Health and Medical Research Council's *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* and with University guidelines on *Ethics Approval for Research with Human Subjects*.

**The FHEC Committee has granted approval for the period 01/07/2009 to31/03/2010.**

Please note that the FHEC is a sub-committee of the University's Human Ethics Committee (UHEC). The decision to approve your project will need to be ratified by the UHEC at its next meeting. Consequently, approval for your project may be withdrawn or conditions of approval altered. However, your project may commence prior to ratification. You will be notified if the approval status is altered.

The following special conditions apply to your project: **Nil**

**The following standard conditions apply to your project:**

Complaints**.** If any complaints are received or ethical issues arise during the course of the project, researchers should advise the Secretary of the FHEC by mail or email: FLM_ERGS@latrobe.edu.au

Limit of Approval**.** Approval is limited strictly to the research proposal as submitted in your application, while taking into account the conditions and approval dates advised by the FHEC.

Variation to Project**.** As a consequence of the previous condition, any subsequent variations or modifications you may wish to make to your project must be notified formally to the FHEC. Please submit to the FHEC secretary an *Application for Approval of Modification to Research Project* form (download from the UHEC website https://www.latrobe.edu.au/rgso/ethics/HEC-application.htm). If the FHEC considers that the proposed changes are significant, you may be required to submit a new *Application Form*.

Progress Reports**.** You are required to submit a *Progress Report* annually (if your project continues for more than 12 months) and/or at the conclusion of your project. The completed form (download from UHEC website https://www.latrobe.edu.au/rgso/ethics/HEC-application.htm) is to be returned to the Secretary of the FHEC. Failure to submit a Progress Report will mean that approval for this project will lapse. An audit may be conducted by the FHEC at any time.

**Your progress report is due by 12/02/2010 and your FINAL report is due by 30/04/2010.**

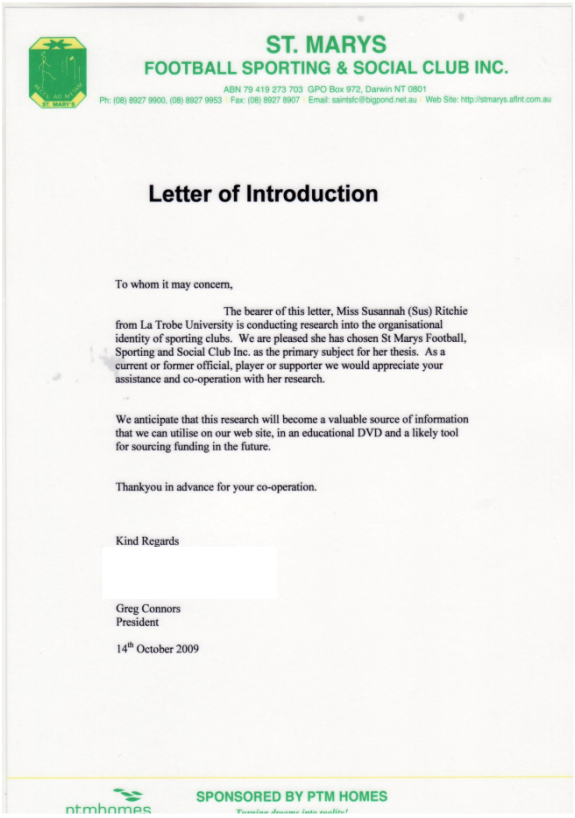
If you have any queries, or require any further clarification, please contact me at the Faculty of Law and Management on 9479 1603, or by e-mail: FLM_ERGS@latrobe.edu.au

Yours sincerely,

Chiara Condotta
Secretary, Faculty Human Ethics Committee

for Professor Zahirul Hoque Chair, FHEC

# Appendix C: Letter of Introduction from the St Mary's Football Club



ST. MARYS
FOOTBALL SPORTING & SOCIAL CLUB INC.

ABN 79 419 273 703 GPO Box 972, Darwin NT 0801
Ph: (08) 8927 9900, (08) 8927 9953 | Fax: (08) 8927 8907 | Email: saintsfc@bigpond.net.au | Web Site: http://stmarys.aflnt.com.au

## Letter of Introduction

To whom it may concern,

The bearer of this letter, Miss Susannah (Sus) Ritchie from La Trobe University is conducting research into the organisational identity of sporting clubs. We are pleased she has chosen St Marys Football, Sporting and Social Club Inc. as the primary subject for her thesis. As a current or former official, player or supporter we would appreciate your assistance and co-operation with her research.

We anticipate that this research will become a valuable source of information that we can utilise on our web site, in an educational DVD and a likely tool for sourcing funding in the future.

Thankyou in advance for your co-operation.

Kind Regards

Greg Connors
President

14th October 2009

# Appendix D: Interview Schema

| | Initial questions | Follow up questions |
|---|---|---|
| **Background questions** | • How long have you been associated with St Mary's?<br>• In what capacity have you been associated with the club?<br>• In your own words what the club means to you?<br>• What do you remember the club being like when you first became involved? | • Do you think understanding club history is important to a sense of identity?<br>• Do you know why the club was established?<br>• Do you know who the first captain was?<br>• Do you know what the club motto is? |
| **Identity questions** | • Using three words how would you describe the club to someone who did not know anything about<br>• If you could define St Mary's – what words would you use?<br>• What are the three most significant parts about St Mary's?<br>• What aspects (if any) have changed within the club?<br>• What words would you use to describe the club?<br>• What do you remember most about St Mary's?<br>• Do you think the club is successful?<br>• In your own words why has St Mary's been so successful?<br>• What aspects of the club do you think have contributed to that success?<br>• What aspects mean the most to you now? | • What parts to the clubs identity, do you believe, have remained constant?<br>• Do you think this is common knowledge within the club?<br>• Do you think players, administrators, coaches, and supporters all share a sense of St Mary's identity?<br>• What do you think St Mary's means to those who have lived in Darwin for a long time?<br>• Can you remember any myths, legends, stories about the club – colourful characters? How do they impact on the clubs identity?<br>• What do you believe has made St Mary's so successful?<br>• Do you think people remember different aspects about the club? |
| **Additional follow-up information** | • What role do you imagine St Mary's playing in the NTFL in twenty years time?<br>• Are you familiar with the Clubs history? | • Do you think the club is open to change / new ideas / development?<br>• Do you remember parts of the clubs history as being continued over time?<br>• What aspects of the clubs identity have continued across playing groups, seasons and administration? |