

Despite a zero tolerance approach by the National Union of Students, British Universities and Colleges Sport, and higher education institutions initiation ceremonies still take place as a means of welcoming new members to sporting teams (Lafferty et al. 2016, *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*). With the majority of research focused on North American and Canadian sport relatively little is known about initiation activities in a United Kingdom context, or why athletes engage in such behaviours. Waldron and Kowalski (2009, *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 80, 291-302) have suggested that engagement could be explained by over conformity to two elements of the sport ethic model (Hughes and Coakley, 1991, *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 8, 307-325), namely making sacrifices and striving for distinction. Therefore, the aim of the present research was to examine the nature of initiation activities in male university sport players and explore whether emergent themes mapped to the sport ethic model. Following institutional ethical approval information advertising the study was sent to sporting societies at several higher education institutions. Athletes who met the inclusion criteria of having participated in an initiation ceremony were invited to contact the research team. This random purposeful sampling approach (Patton, 2002, *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (3rd Ed.). California: Sage) resulted in a participant sample of 19 male athletes (mean age: 20.4 ± 1.5 years) representing a range of sports. After giving informed consent each athlete participated in a semi-structured interview lasting between 35 -50 min. All interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analysed through a two phase procedure of data organization and interpretation following established thematic analysis guidelines (Braun and Clarke, 2006, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101).

Results were captured within two dimensions, the initiation and outcomes representing 6 and 2 themes respectively. Within these dimensions emerging themes of the group structure and hierarchy, shared experiences, coercion, initiation challenges, health risk behaviours through alcohol consumption, and feelings of being a team member mapped to the four areas of the sport ethic model in contrast to the work of Waldron and Kowalski (2009). These findings suggest that there are both similarities and differences in initiation activity engagement of UK student athletes compared to the United States. Furthermore, the highlighted differences in over conformity to the sport ethic model suggest that intervention development to deter participation in initiation activities should be context and culturally specific.