

Social bricoleur entrepreneurs – exploring the case of John Hall and his White Rose Boxing Club

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper was to explore the human condition of social bricoleur entrepreneurs and the role they perform in their contexts. The result of a lifetime performing such a role reveals the importance of various forms of bricolage as a fundamental activity for the social enterprise’s survival. This paper extends social bricoleur entrepreneur theory.

Design/methodology/approach – This research adopted an inductive single ethnographic retrospective constructivist case study approach underpinned by a pragmatic philosophy. It used a combination of data collection techniques, such as interviews, observations and documents, and adopted a plurality of approaches extracted from a range of qualitative schools of thought. The data were analysed using qualitative coding, which then led to theorisation.

Findings – The findings present the two main roles of John Hall, a social entrepreneur bricoleur behind an amateur boxing club. His role as a surrogate father to the boxers and as an entrepreneur led to significant contributions to the White Rose Boxing Club in the UK. Both of these roles were motivated by the longstanding objective of the club since the 1940s to create champions (also known as “pugilistic capital”) and to create good citizens within the local community (capturing the generativity of the club). For Hall, a lifetime of time and energy enabled him to hone his ability to perform various forms of bricolage (entrepreneurial, network and social).

Research limitations/implications – This research is limited by its small sample; however, the insights can be used for future work. Studies can take a broader view of the role of social bricoleur entrepreneurs in amateur sports clubs, who strive to achieve social positives while maintaining the economic demands of their social enterprises.

Practical implications – This case can be used as evidence to further current policy efforts to provide social bricoleurs with the financial capital, time and skills that can have a positive impact in local communities. Firstly, financial and human resources can be made available to social bricoleur entrepreneurs who can demonstrate their commitment. Secondly, time can be made available to social bricoleurs who have full-time jobs alongside their enterprises by compensating their employers with an amount reflecting the time they spend on their social enterprises.

Social implications – Local sports organisations are increasingly seen as an antidote to public concern regarding the well-being and development of the next generation. Specifically, in the amateur boxing community, it is widely known that clubs create positive social outcomes, such as improved confidence, self-esteem and health, in the next generation and produce positive outcomes for deprived societies, such as reduced crime and the increased performance of students in school. This study can be used to strengthen the rationale for economically supporting amateur boxing clubs. Hall’s story demonstrates the power of bricolage



in an interesting context. It can be used as an example for other social entrepreneurs and for those interested in the power of sport to transform lives.

Originality/value – This study is novel for two reasons. Firstly, it uses a qualitative approach on a revelatory case, thereby delivering unique meaningful insights into a context that is underutilised in social entrepreneurship – that of research on the impact of amateur sports clubs. Secondly, it sheds light on the human condition of social bricoleur entrepreneurs and the different forms of bricolage they use. This deepens the understanding of the concept of the social bricoleur, reshaping and refining existing understanding.

Keywords United Kingdom, Qualitative research, Bricolage, Social entrepreneur, Social bricoleur

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Social entrepreneurship is increasingly important across the world, a fact that is reflected by the growing body of literature (e.g. Nicholls, 2008; Saebi *et al.*, 2019) and systematic literature reviews on the subject (Saebi *et al.*, 2019; Macke *et al.*, 2018; Lortie and Cox, 2018; Gupta *et al.*, 2020). Research has embraced three key distinctions: social entrepreneurship, social enterprise and social entrepreneurs. The social entrepreneur literature focuses on social entrepreneurs' individual traits (Vidovic, 2023); motivations (Bacq *et al.*, 2016; Macke *et al.*, 2018); networks, along with the extent to which social entrepreneur are trusted within them (Cavazos-Arroyo and Puente-Díaz, 2023); and social capital (Mohiuddin and Yasin, 2023). It divides entrepreneurs into three types: bricoleurs, constructivists and engineers (Zahra *et al.*, 2009).

Social bricoleurs differ from constructivists and engineers as their social mission is local (Zahra *et al.*, 2009). Their local embeddedness provides them with local wisdom and resources. When these are combined with entrepreneurial ability, it allows them to resolve local social problems. More exploration of how the human condition and other emotions influence social bricoleurs is needed (Saebi *et al.*, 2019). Especially the different forms of bricolage – defined as making do and using what is at hand (Lévi-Strauss, 1967; Baker *et al.*, 2003) – such as the social, network and entrepreneurial bricolage (Holt and Littlewood, 2017; Li and Sarpong, 2024). This is also of interest to the general literature of bricolage in management research (Mateus and Sarkar, 2024). However, social bricoleurs can be difficult for researchers to access (Zahra *et al.*, 2009). In the rare cases where researchers do gain access, rich insights are produced, with Sengupta and Lehtimäki (2022) finding that specific interactions in the community are essential to understanding the relationality of social bricoleurs, thereby highlighting the importance of context. The link between local embeddedness and a greater sense of community is part of the historical social logic that suggests that the key to prosperous communities is close-knit face-to-face interactions, ideally through volunteer organisations (Butler, 2020).

By focusing on the social bricoleur rather than the constructivist or engineer, we can better understand their character, specifically what bricoleurs do and how they do it in their local context, rather than the idealist narrative that social entrepreneurs are heroes with moral superiority and potential contributors to addressing societal problems (Barton and Muñoz, 2023). By shedding light on the human condition of social bricoleurs (Saebi *et al.*, 2019), we can develop an understanding of the different forms of bricolage used (Baker *et al.*, 2003; Mateus and Sarkar, 2024; Miner *et al.*, 2001; Visscher *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, this paper focuses on the following theoretical question:

- Q1. Who is the social bricoleur entrepreneur, what do they do and how do they do it in northern England community and sports clubs?

To consider this question, we use a single ethnographic retrospective case study method (following [Giazitzoglu, 2024](#); [Stake, 1995](#)). We adopt a revelatory motivation for the case based on an individual, John Hall, who was the driving force behind a successful social organisation named the White Rose Boxing Club (originally the White Rose Boys' Club; from hereafter referred to as the Club). Many such clubs emerged with the purpose of helping young boys become "good citizens" during the post-war era in the UK, and within these communities, head coaches often take on the role of surrogate father ([Wacquant, 1995](#)).

The social bricoleur is identified through the entrepreneur's 75 years of involvement with the club, which began in the 1940s. The club adopted a business model that originated as a social organisation during the post-war period, which has been championed by Michael Young ([Butler, 2020](#)) and has evolved into today's more contemporary idea of a social enterprise through amateur boxing ([Empire Fighting Chance, 2024](#)). Hall performed two roles: surrogate father (the social element; [Wacquant, 1995](#)) and entrepreneur (the economic element). Our analysis demonstrates each role manifests different forms of bricolage, producing valuable insights of social bricoleur in the sport and community club context.

Our paper makes two contributions to knowledge. Firstly, by taking a longitudinal retrospective case study, we show how bricolage is not only a feature of largely focused on new firms ([Baker et al., 2003](#)), knowledge intensive start-ups ([Miner et al., 2001](#)) or elite managers ([Visscher et al., 2018](#)), but also a feature of an 80-year-old social enterprise. Through demonstrating examples of entrepreneurial, network and social bricolage this study enriches the debate regarding how organisations use the various forms of bricolage ([Mateus and Sarkar, 2024](#)).

Secondly, for the social bricoleur literature ([Di Domenico et al., 2010](#); [Holt and Littlewood, 2017](#); [Li and Sarpong, 2024](#); [Zahra et al., 2009](#)), we demonstrate the human condition of social bricoleurs ([Saebi et al., 2019](#)). We explicate Hall's performance as a social bricoleur in terms of a surrogate father and an entrepreneur. This shows that these two roles enabled Hall to use various forms of bricolage to create social value. In addition, for the general entrepreneurship literature, it provides evidence to suggest that a social entrepreneur's motivation, when highlighted by a social interest – in this case, creating champions – may not change over their lifetime, compared to a typical entrepreneur ([Chang et al., 2023](#)). This adds to a recent study that explored social entrepreneurs in a transitioning economy ([Vidovic, 2023](#)).

This research has practical implications. It strengthens recent research by [Empire Fighting Chance \(2024\)](#) showing how participants at boxing clubs have improved confidence, well-being and health, which leads to better social outcomes, such as reduced self-harm and crime among young people. This is relevant because the UK government is seeking to increase the participation of individuals from lower socioeconomic groups in such activities ([Parliament, 2023](#)). In addition, these activities may support the installation of fundamental values into young people, which they will practice throughout their lifetimes and communities.

This article is structured as follows. The following section introduces the theoretical framework, social bricoleur entrepreneurs and context, amateur boxing clubs and the North of England. Section 3 introduces the methodology. Section 4 presents the findings of the case study, detailing the Club and the two roles Hall performed over his lifetime: surrogate father and entrepreneur. Section 5 includes the discussion and implications for theory and practice, before concluding the article.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Social bricoleur entrepreneurs

Social entrepreneurs are situated within the social entrepreneurship literature and exhibit specific characteristics. The origins of social entrepreneurship are traced to 1983 and are

associated with Micheal Young [1] (Butler, 2020) according to a field overview from Bacq and Janssen (2011). Broadly, social entrepreneurship:

[...] encompasses the activities and processes undertaken to discover, define and exploit opportunities in order to enhance social wealth by creating new ventures or managing new ventures or managing existing organisations in an innovative manner (Zahra et al., 2009: p. 52).

Vidovic (2023) recently identified a social entrepreneur as a person who drives social change, aligning with Borzaga et al. (2020). This endeavour is undertaken by social entrepreneurs, who are synonymous with social service providers, social change makers or social philanthropists (Erpf et al., 2019), driven by pro-social motivations (Mitra et al., 2022) as a response to environmental demands (Williams et al., 2023). Environmental demands are very context-specific but generally relate to local market and government failures (Anokhin et al., 2023). Social entrepreneurs appear in many contexts, including Rwanda (Rwamigabo, 2017), Egypt (Ghalwash et al., 2017), Russia (Blagov and Aray, 2019) and South Africa (Mathibe et al., 2023).

Irrespective of context, two characteristics of social entrepreneurs are (1) the importance of their social mission (Saebi et al., 2019), which may help deliver social justice and hope during crises (Dodd et al., 2022), and (2) their innate ability to inspire hope and mobilise the efforts of partners, donors, volunteers and employees (Zahra et al., 2009). Research on social entrepreneurs has found that variations of these characteristics typify social entrepreneurs into one of three categories: social bricoleurs, constructivists and engineers. Engineers and constructivists focus on bold social missions and aim to change the system (Teasdale et al., 2023). Constructivists ground themselves in market approaches, whereas engineers, also known as institutional change agents (Nicholls, 2008), focus on existing structural inequalities and seek revolutionary changes through grand narratives (Zahra et al., 2009). However, social bricoleurs are more focused on their local surroundings, they are social entrepreneurs who creatively re-configure existing resources by making do with resources at hand [2].

Originally Lévi-Strauss (1967) introduced the idea of bricoleurs. Bricoleurs use bricolage to help solve problems or identify opportunities in their environment with the tools, skills and repertoires at hand. Bricolage is a philosophy, a regime of action, characterises resourcefulness – creating something from nothing (Baker and Nelson, 2005) – and improvisation – “the deliberate and substantive fusion of the design and execution of a novel production” (Miner et al., 2001: p. 314). The concept has been widely applied across a range of management research describing how bricolage is used by founders, managers, entrepreneurs (Baker et al., 2003; Baker, 2007; Duymedjian and Rüling, 2010; Mateus and Sarkar, 2024; Miner et al., 2001; Visscher et al., 2018). Bricolage comes in many different forms (Holt and Littlewood, 2017), a recent review from Mateus and Sarkar (2024) defines these [3] and calls for further exploration.

Zahra et al. (2009) integrated the bricolage concept into the social entrepreneurship literature, applying the metaphor of the bricoleur contrasting the constructivist and engineer (Lévi-Strauss, 1967) and subsequently developed a rich description of social bricoleurs, who tend to address local needs with local resources. This rich description describes them to perceive solutions to local needs based on the resources at hand, those not easily understood by outsiders. Bricoleurs are described as small-scale, local in scope and often episodic. Two components, social and bricolage, form the social bricoleur.

Social bricoleurs exhibit the social element through local embeddedness and a vision to help their local social needs. This local embeddedness enables them to discover and address small-scale local needs by recombining local resources through innovative measures. Saebi et al. (2019) called for a shift in the prevailing view from social entrepreneurs as “hero

entrepreneurs” (Bacq and Janssen, 2011; Nicholls, 2008) to human characters. In other words, rather than the traditional idea of an entrepreneur causing creative destruction, the focus should be on small, persistent changes leading to creative construction (Dopfer, 2012). Bricoleurs’ vision and drive shape social enterprises (Cunningham *et al.*, 2022), often by exhibiting noble motives for their local concerns and drawing on their wisdom and experience (Bacq and Janssen, 2011). Bricoleurs are compassionate risk takers motivated by previous personal challenges and inspirations (Ghalwash and Ismail, 2022), noble motives (Zahra *et al.*, 2009) and aim to create social value (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010).

The social bricoleur’s bricolage expands on the colloquialism “Jack of all trades” (Visscher *et al.*, 2018) and working with what is at hand (Helleputte and Périlleux, 2025). The three key attributes to the bricoleur are their ability to make do, improvisation and resourcefulness and improvisation. The ability to make do reflects the bricoleur’s ability to create something from nothing, repurposing unwanted resources and to using hidden or untapped local resources (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010). The idea of improvisation requires creative imagination to re-configure resources to counteract environmental limitations (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010). Their resourcefulness can be heavily dependent upon social bricolage (Holt and Littlewood, 2017), which requires persuasion and the participation of stakeholders (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010). They have intimate knowledge of local conditions and the available resources (Zahra *et al.*, 2009), giving them the ability to more accurately detect viable opportunities (Bacq and Janssen, 2011). This local embeddedness provides social bricoleurs with the potential ability to leverage resources within their environments as well as the reciprocal nature of their social relationships (Nowak and Raffaelli, 2022) and ensures that they are not limited to the resources at hand (Bacq and Janssen, 2011). This provides them with the ability to act without specialised and external resources and the capacity to respond quickly to changes while maintaining independence and a degree of self-correction. A strong ethic embedded in local knowledge allows them to build social wealth, which is context-specific and requires clarification. Visscher *et al.* (2018) decoupled the idea of being a bricoleur from it being a low-status activity.

Respective of context, while the conceptualisation of a social bricoleur is promising, there is more research required to better understand the bricoleur’s character, more formally: Who the bricoleurs are? What they do? How they do it? Answering such questions can complement recent distinctions of social bricolage (Holt and Littlewood, 2017; Li and Sarpong, 2024), helping reduce the micro-meso gap in social entrepreneurship research (Saebi *et al.*, 2019) and better understand the bricoleur’s small persistent and positive actions (Li and Sarpong, 2024). In theory, such actions lead to continuous transformations and reconfigurations to overcome environmental limitations (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010). Focusing on this may help decrease ambiguity surrounding the “social” in social entrepreneurship (Macke *et al.*, 2018). Social bricoleurs are often described as exhibiting a high level of empathy, altruism and integrity (Gupta *et al.*, 2020). Although it is more difficult to research bricoleurs due to their actions and embeddedness in local contexts (Zahra *et al.*, 2009), it is not impossible. Sengupta and Lehtimäki (2022) achieved this through an ethnographic study. Their deep immersion in the context allowed them to explore the enactment of interactions and relationality to help them understand more about social bricoleurs.

In focusing attention on this underexplored area of the literature, considering the example of a social bricoleur would be a valuable addition. Especially the contextual embeddedness of social bricoleurs, which is important to consider because what is valuable in one area may not be valuable in another. Therefore, we employ the peculiar context of an amateur boxing club in the north of England.

2.2 *The social environment of the social entrepreneur*

The context of our study is an amateur boxing club in northern England. In the following section, we provide a brief introduction to this context.

2.2.1 Amateur boxing clubs. Amateur boxing clubs are transformative places where aspiring professionals learn their craft and offer them a sanctuary to follow a systematic, codified, and (for some) profitable expression of an all-too-familiar experience of deprivation rooted in racial and class exclusion (Wacquant, 1995). Indeed, Wacquant (1995) vividly explained the mechanisms of a boxing club, highlighting their importance in building the “pugilistic capital” of boxers, which boxers convert into economic capital via prize fighting. Wacquant (1995) likened fighters to entrepreneurs because they take risks and put their bodies on the line (i.e. their pugilistic capital) to achieve occupational success (i.e. economic capital). The boxing gym is where they spend their time crafting their capital to earn a living. Interestingly, such places often attract the compassionate work of social bricoleur entrepreneurs.

A social bricoleur entrepreneur is the head coach of a boxing club who is at its centre and performs multiple roles as boxer, trainer, sparring partner, manager and matchmaker (Wacquant, 1995). Indeed, as head coaches, they often become surrogate fathers to boxers and devote inordinate amounts of time and energy to them, going beyond merely boxing by also resolving love affairs, financial difficulties and other private quandaries (Wacquant, 1995: p. 81).

Because Wacquant’s (1995) depiction of amateur boxing clubs over the last 30 years, increasing attention has been paid to the positive social outcomes of amateur boxing clubs in their local communities. Indeed, Empire Fighting Chance is a UK charity that promotes the use of amateur boxing clubs as an antidote for intensifying social issues (Empire Fighting Chance, 2024). The charity’s annual report presents evidence showing that young people gain a sense of belonging, more confidence, increased well-being and a more positive outlook for the future. Indeed, the social value of these spaces encompasses reduced crime, self-harm and bad behaviour and an overall decrease in social misery.

Despite such charities’ great work, boxing clubs do not receive funding for their endeavours, unlike most other sports clubs, which may receive funding as part of a donating organisation’s community engagement (Shepherd and Patzelt, 2011). Hence, the head coach is not only a surrogate father but also a bricoleur entrepreneur. They must use entrepreneurship to maintain the operations of the boxing club and to support aspiring boxers. Moreover, not simply are financial resources required but so too are the skills of combining human, physical and social capital. A lack of support at the grassroots level has led to a decline in the number of sports clubs over the past two decades (Lindsey and Bloyce, 2023). Reasons for this decline include falling revenues, increased costs and reduced funding due to austerity measures. Many clubs are run by volunteers who vary in their entrepreneurial abilities and resources. The literature lacks examples of how this is achieved to use as a blueprint to help charities such as Empire Fighting Chance (2024) gain much-needed support.

2.2.2 Local context – north of England. Gherhes *et al.* (2020) summarised entrepreneurship and the context in northern England. Northern England used to be a prosperous environment in which civic society and solidarity thrived, but since the deindustrialisation of the 1980s and 1990s, it has experienced decline. Indeed, the deindustrialisation of towns in the north has led to a loss of purpose, widespread unemployment and economic decline, leading to the collapse of local communities. From the perspective of collective identity rooted in a locational perspective, deindustrialised towns and cities in the north of England are characterised by a legacy of low aspirations and of dwelling in the past – a consequence of societal overreliance on a few industries to provide mass employment, leading to a “tall poppy syndrome” and reducing entrepreneurship (based on a study of Doncaster; Gherhes *et al.*, 2020). Wakefield,

in West Yorkshire, not very far from Doncaster, consists of some of the most deprived areas in the UK ([Department for Work and Pensions, 2023](#)). Thus, this region has among the highest demand for social enterprises, but it is also one of the harshest environments for social enterprises to thrive. Understanding how social bricoleur entrepreneurs and their enterprises thrive in such conditions can help us comprehend the bricoleur's character.

3. Methodology

3.1 Overview

Who is the social bricoleur, how do they perform their role(s) and what outcomes do they achieve in the context of northern England community and sports clubs? The answer is in relation to the case ([Stake, 1995](#)) of the Club, specifically focusing on Hall. Following the research approach of [Giazitzoglu \(2024\)](#), the first author was part of the club between 2016 and 2023, acting as boxer, coach and administrator. The researcher's father, who was also once part of the club, introduced the researcher to Hall and he became close to Hall during this period. This involvement has provided the researcher with access to a social bricoleur that is often closed to scholars ([Zahra et al., 2009](#)). The case study methodology has been identified as the most dominant form of study in social enterprise research ([Saebi et al., 2019](#); [Macke et al., 2018](#); [Lortie and Cox, 2018](#); [Gupta et al., 2020](#)).

3.2 Philosophy

Qualitative research is a choreographed synthesis of ideas from a plurality of philosophical schools of thought. Through a pragmatic philosophy, underpinned by a constructivist approach ([Stake, 1995](#)), defined as a doctrine of meaning, a theory of truth, and rests on the argument that the meaning of an event cannot be given in advance of experience ([Denzin and Lincoln, 2018](#): p. 314). Evidence in this case was taken from archival documents, as documented experience, participant observation, as experience, and interviews, as reported experience.

For the observations, we follow [Giazitzoglu's \(2024\)](#) ethnographic approach in the co-construction of meanings with a researcher's situation. The data presented in this study are reflective of the lived experience of the researcher and the social bricoleur in action. Assertions are supported by *verbatim* quotes and archival documents to accurately represent reality as it was experienced.

The interviews were undertaken using a conversational approach ([Kvale, 1996](#): p. 5), and the interviewees served as informants about the situation studied ([Platt, 2012](#): p. 11). Indeed, such conversations are situated within a historical construction of time ([Palmer, 1969](#)), meaning that the researcher interprets the interviews and presents statements about the situation to the reader for reinterpretation; the reader then decides whether such presentations are true or false.

Moreover, in theorisation, we follow the assumption of [Sandberg and Alvesson \(2021\)](#), who posited that phenomena are social constructions (even when approached in an objectivist manner), with corporate culture as an example. In theory, this is as much a reflection of the researcher's choice as a reflection of reality. [Wacquant \(1995\)](#) eloquently described how the boxing world belongs to the "wilful Spartan" and willingly remains alien to the sophisticated language used by academics. The only reason this context is accessible in its rawest form is through the experience of the researcher. The primary goal of the study is to inform theory in management research ([Locke, 2000](#)), and we aim to produce a theory that contains purpose, a phenomenon, conceptual order, intellectual insights, relevance criteria, empirical support and boundary conditions (for a more detailed explanation, see [Sandberg and Alvesson, 2021](#)).

3.3 Single case study context

The boundary of the case is delineated into multiple levels of analysis, including the individual, group, organisational and local environments as well as the sporting community associated with England Boxing.

The selected case is the Club, an organisation founded shortly after WW2. Due to the age of the organisation, it makes the study suitable to answer the call for more research on the post-venture phase of social enterprises (Saebi *et al.*, 2019). Indeed, the original purpose of the boxing club is captured in the mission statement (included in the Appendix). In sum, the club provides young people the opportunity to learn to box while learning principles and receiving guidance on how to behave correctly in the community, to keep and transfer to other areas of their lives. The temporal boundary of the case is from its conception to the present day, allowing for an elongated period of time to present meaningful analysis (Langley, 1999).

The social bricoleur we concentrate on is Hall, an individual who devoted his time and energy to the club and ensured its continuity. This led to a holistic case study (Stake, 1995), which is required to better understand the human condition of social bricoleurs (Zahra *et al.*, 2009; Saebi *et al.*, 2019). We consider Hall's lifetime experience as a social entrepreneur acting in the interest of the Club (formerly known as the *White Rose Boys Club*) as a social enterprise to be a significant case founded upon bricolage that offers the opportunity for revelatory findings.

Given the ethnographic nature of the case study, formal techniques were not always possible or appropriate because they would have risked the integrity of the case – that is, the possibility of producing a desirable rather than real narrative. In addition, given the longitudinal focus over a 75-year lifetime and the participant–observer role of the researcher, estimations were made because the exact numbers of data points (due to the high volume) were difficult to precisely count.

3.4 Data collection

The data collection included weekly participant observation over almost seven years, with the researcher spending thousands of hours immersed in the context while performing multiple roles as boxer, coach and an administrative volunteer helping Hall manage the club. In return, Hall agreed to formal interviews. The researcher worked closely with the stakeholders of the club between 2016 and 2023, but predominantly with Hall, as he was the key informant of the situation. In addition, Hall and his family provided access to personal documents spanning between 1955 and his death in 2023. This helped to triangulate the findings and accurately portray Hall's story.

Participant observation. Direct observation provides the benefits of illustrating actions in real time and contextualising the case (Giazitzoglu, 2024; Stake, 1995). The researcher was involved in more than 1,664 h of observations through active participation in the boxing club's activities. This included boxing for the club; the researcher represented Yorkshire, entered three national championships (one of which he won) and retired with a record of five wins and five losses from 10 fights. As a coach, he attended training courses at the England Boxing Association and also shows with boxers. As an administrator, he helped organise shows, training sessions, finances, grant applications and interactions with local press and Yorkshire Boxing administrators. The observational approach was key to understanding the nature of the role, observing Hall perform his role as a social bricoleur entrepreneur and holding regular discussions with Hall, who explained how and why he did things.

Interviews to provide the life story of Hall. At the centre of this single case study is a series of interviews that are best explained from a life-story perspective. This perspective presents

the interviewee's interpretation of their own life (Atkinson and Sampson, 2019). The interviews themselves varied in topics and provided a structure to begin to understand his involvement with the club (Brannen, 2013). The questions were not leading, and the meaning of the participants' words emerged over time. It is important to recognise such interviews as a partial recount of the actual experience, which deepened over time. These were supported by other forms of data (observation, secondary data) to provide more context and produce a clearer picture (Brannen, 2013). In addition, as much insight was derived from informal interviews with Hall, where the researcher probed his rationale for making certain decisions and emotionally engaged to more deeply understand the meaning of his narrative (Brannen, 2013). Ultimately, through these ways a coherent life story can be produced by the research analysts.

Other interviews with other boxing coaches were conducted, although many coaches were reluctant to participate in academic research for publication and were very time constrained. This was also experienced by Giazitzoglu (2024), with potential participants present for sporting reasons rather than aiming to create a positive social outcome. Such participants have not tended to participate in academic research and are not easily convinced of the value of such investigations. However, given their familiarity with the researcher, some agreed to participate but did not want to conduct recorded interviews, while others were unwilling to participate.

Archival documentation. Another form of data collection included viewing the entrepreneur and club's collection of items, from newspapers, books and social media posts to regulatory information, such as licences, health and safety rules, bank statements and administrative procedure documentation. This helped contextualise the case and facilitate an understanding of the challenges the club faced and the impact it delivered.

3.5 Data analysis

Figure 1 illustrates the data process.

The first step was to enter the site as a researcher and begin immersion in the context, which involved getting to know the practice of amateur boxing, the club and its activities as

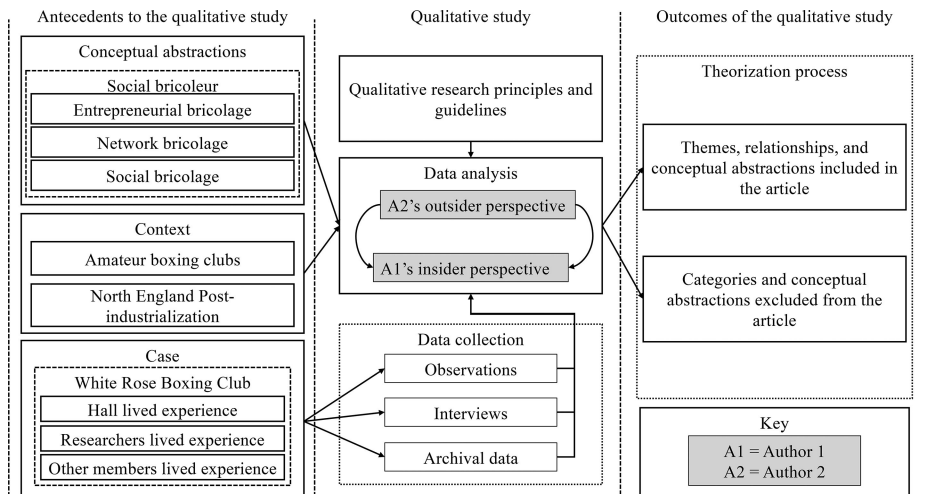


Figure 1. Data analysis process of the ethnographic case study

well as the stakeholders. During this stage, the Club was identified as a social enterprise, with Hall the head trainer. Hall's past could be seen from a picture in the club of him boxing as a young boy that dated back to 1952.

The second step was to analyse the data and continue to collect it in a more scientific way. This began in 2018, when a project was initiated with a local university to research the social enterprise and Hall's role as a coach and entrepreneur.

The third step involved stepping back from the club to begin the data analysis. This involved coding during a period of reflexivity during the researcher's disengagement from the context. At this point, weekly calls were conducted with Hall to discuss the social enterprise, among other things. During the coding and analysis process, the first and second authors adopted insider and outsider roles, respectively (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). This involved engaging in discussions about the value of the study, the nature and detail of the findings and why the empirical data advanced the literature. Iterations with the data and the literature also helped to answer these questions. Due to the degree of reflexivity involved by the researchers, to adopt a detached perspective, a cooling-off period from the club was utilised between 2021 and 2023. Subsequently, the researcher conducted weekly calls with Hall until his passing in April 2023 to discuss aspects of the club and his life history.

Regarding the reasoning being inductive, deductive or abductive, the various data sources relied on conceptual frameworks from Wacquant (1995) regarding boxing, bricolage (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010; Holt and Littlewood, 2017) and the social entrepreneurship literature regarding social bricoleurs (Zahra *et al.*, 2009; Saebi *et al.*, 2019). The evidence was coded using Saldaña (2016)'s coding techniques. Without immersion in the club, it would have been hugely difficult to attain these insights. Our analytical strategy was used to frame the materials presented in the findings that were used for the theorisation, as presented in the discussion.

4. Findings

The research question posed in the literature review was to better understand who the bricoleur is, what they do and how they do it? According to theory, social bricoleurs are social entrepreneurs who address local needs, often small-scale episodic enterprises, descriptively fitting community and sports clubs in northern England. In the face of increasing environmental constraints, we observed the Club and focused on the bricoleur, Hall.

Initially, several themes emerged through an ethnographic observation stemming from the observer's initial hunch about Hall and his bricolage activities. Hall was unaware of his resemblance to the social bricoleur. Throughout several years observing and interacting with Hall and other coaches, combined with more archival documents and interviews, our analysis culminated in two roles Hall performed during his episode at the Club.

In the first role, we borrow Wacquant (1995)'s idea of the role of surrogate Father and present three key related themes: serving as an example, role of matchmaker/protector and using the ears more than the mouth. The themes illustrate how the bricoleur can address local needs through their vision, drive and compassionate risk-taking (Bacq and Janssen, 2011). These themes resonate with network bricolage (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010; Holt and Littlewood, 2017) and entrepreneurial bricolage (Baker, 2007; Baker *et al.*, 2003; Holt and Littlewood, 2017). The second role, the role of the entrepreneur drew from the literature, we present three key context-specific related themes: prudence, volunteer recruitment and salesman. We identify links between these themes and the various forms of bricolage in the literature (entrepreneurial, network and social; Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010). Prior to describing more about Hall, we first introduce the club following.

4.1 History of the Club

To situate Hall's work as a bricoleur, we first introduce an overview of the Club, a timeline of the boxing club is shown in [Figure 2](#). The foundation of the Club (formerly the White Rose Boys Club) was described by Hall, who explained:

It began just after the Second World War; some ex-military guys got together with an interest in boxing and the youth. One guy, Albert Raynor, was the Royal Air Force flyweight champion, and that was the first place – the Wakefield Drill Hall, an army base [...]. The aim was to keep people off the streets.

This started as a bricolage endeavour as [Di Domenico et al. \(2010\)](#) described – how social enterprises make do with the resources at hand, starting small gradually transforming.

Throughout the club's life, it has undergone several transformations, including different premises and affiliations through the help of many different volunteers. As expected, making use of the resources at hand and gradually overcoming the environment's limitations ([Di Domenico et al., 2010](#)). The purpose of the club has remained unchanged throughout its 80-year history; it is similar to that of [Empire Fighting Chance \(2024\)](#) and arguably an embodiment of what Michael Young meant as citizenship and solidarity in close-knit communities ([Butler, 2020](#)). The purpose directly addresses local needs with local resources, which is key to the bricolage approach to social enterprise ([Zahra et al., 2009](#)).

Over the first few decades, the club connected and collaborated with many organisations, schools, public services and religious organisations, which made it a space where individuals from the same community could come together and be connected by association. Highlighting the key role of stakeholders and the creation of social value ([Di Domenico et al., 2010](#)) and network bricolage ([Mateus and Sarkar, 2024](#)). The club has organised amateur boxing shows throughout its existence, which have provided further opportunities to create a sense of community by connecting amateur boxers, their families and the friends to shared experiences in which the community comes together. Although the club has moved premises several times throughout its history, it has remained open most days each week and is a space for parents, boxers and coaches to come together and socialise.

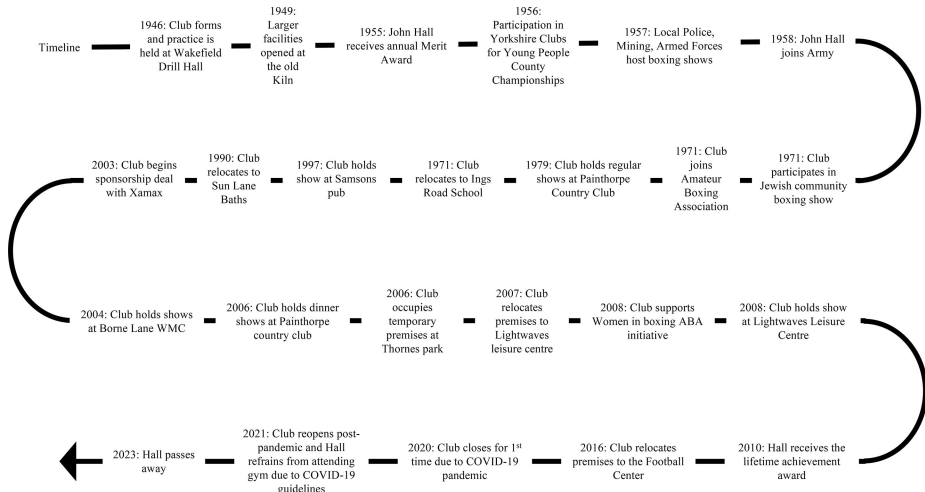


Figure 2. A timeline of the White Rose Boxing Club

Source: Created by authors

Currently, the club continues to embody the bricolage way of thinking. It has seven active boxing coaches, continues to operate at its most recent premises, possesses a minibus to help transport boxers on trips, runs at least two shows a year and conducts school initiatives to help bring young children into boxing. In addition, since Hall's passing in 2023, the new coaches have focused on building a social media following to increase the reach of the club to new audiences. It currently has more than 3100 followers on Instagram. It holds training five days per week, at which, on average, more than 30 participants take part.

4.2 *Hall as the social bricoleur*

The club has managed to survive with the help of countless volunteers, but one person's involvement has been the most profound. By identifying Hall as the bricoleur, we first introduce an overview of Hall's lifetime involvement in the club. Hall's involvement resonates with the idea that the social bricoleur has knowledge of the local needs and resources which are not obvious to outsiders (Zahra *et al.*, 2009). As well as the aim to fulfil local social needs (Bacq and Janssen, 2011). Here we describe Hall's involvement in the club to help describe his character.

Hall's involvement in the club first began when he saw an advert in the local newspaper to announce that a boy's club was opening at the Kiln Malt in 1949, and he explained how he originally went to it with the idea of building a canoe, not realising how much this would eventually shape his life. This early impression manifested his emotional attachment to the Club, which grew over the years. Hall recalled his first memory of the Club: "It was busy – a lot of young guys were there. [...] I used to get the bus with the notorious Paul Sykes [4]." In 1955, as a young lad, Hall received the Annual Merit Award from the local mayor. To receive such an award was a great honour, although Hall never spoke about this; to gloat is not part of the northern English fabric that Hall and the Club embody. However, such a recognition awarded by such a prominent figure must have helped Hall in his application to join the army.

Hall served in the army for a couple of years, and after he returned to the Club, he remained there throughout his adulthood. It was during this time that he grew into the role of head coach, and as will be demonstrated throughout the findings, he adopted the role of what Wacquant (1995) described as the surrogate father. Part of Hall's legacy was realised in 2010, when he received a lifetime achievement award for his services to amateur boxing. This award had required one coach to provide reasons why Hall deserved this accolade, he said: "He had a huge impact on my life as a young man, teaching me discipline, respect and self-belief." Another retired professional boxer, who had used Hall's gym during his career, described the legacy Hall had left as follows:

John has left a solid foundation for the future. To take over the reins of the club is a dream, as it has an 80-year history in the community, so everyone knows the White Rose Boxing Club in the amateur community and in the local community.

The remainder of the analysis explores Hall's role as surrogate father by capturing the extent of his social impact and entrepreneurial abilities, linking with various forms of bricolage.

4.3 *Role of surrogate father*

The social bricoleur performs small persistent changes which address local needs (Bacq and Janssen, 2011; Nicholls, 2008). We reflected on Hall's core characteristics and framed them accordingly. In the context of amateur boxing, Wacquant (1995) first introduced the idea of the head trainer performing a role of surrogate father. We highlighted three of the most important themes of the surrogate father which are serving as an example, being a matchmaker and protector and having the ability to use one's ears more than one's mouth. Each of these themes

are important to help fulfil social needs in deprived areas. We show how these three themes manifest the behaviour of Hall which satisfied local needs, i.e. young people gaining experience in sport and building their self-esteem. Hall's role was not easy, as the evidence shows there is a high number of boxers, who come and go from the Club.

4.3.1 *Serving as an example.* The first theme emerged from Hall's reputation as a highly respected and admired character. Hall's values were manifested in his use of language, and this was something he practiced throughout his life. Figure 3 shows a letter he wrote to the club's members in 2006 explaining how he expected everyone to behave properly by not using "bad" language and to avoid "yobbish" behaviour. Evidence of this was noted throughout the researchers' time at the gym.

Hall was known for never using profane language, and he was extremely cautious about the language he used. The researcher asked why this was important, to which he responded by saying:

There was once a good trainer, [...] and he was a policeman; he always used to be effing and blinding with the young lads, and I used to always say, '[x]. you should not be talking like that,' and he used to say, 'Why not John, what's the harm?' This was until one time when he was on patrol, as police officers did in those days, in the local town, and one of those lads from the gym saw him in his uniform and thought it was ok to approach him, effing and blinding, and the coach responded, 'What do you think you are doing talking to a police officer like that? You're lucky. If I hadn't had known you from the gym, you would be arrested.' Well, the kid did not know what he had done wrong, because he'd never seen him in his uniform and never thought it was not ok to behave in that way, but why would he?

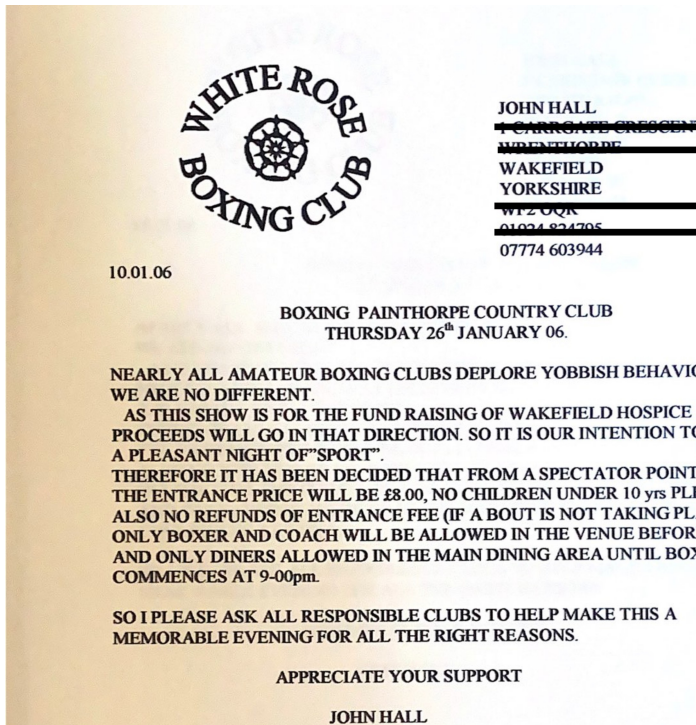


Figure 3. Document written by Hall about the use of language at boxing shows

The use of language of this type is normalised in northern English communities, but some consider this to be not very civil, and to really be a good citizen, one should not swear.

This use of language was also prominent in the boxing programs. Hall's message to the public was firstly, appreciative of the sponsors and secondly, admirable of the boxers. Whereas the program of Hall's predecessors focused on the Community Service Fund and did not acknowledge the courage it takes to step into the boxing ring. Both programs are included in [Figure 4](#).

In addition to not swearing, he did not appreciate lying. Hall stated:

You see, the problem with liars and telling packs of lies is that they tell that many lies; they forget what the truth looks like, you see, because they believe their own lies and cannot separate them from the truth.

It was observed that Hall had a remarkable ability to make one feel guilty if one was not honest with him.

Another example Hall set was the amount of time he consistently spent at the gym. Another coach mentioned, "He couldn't bear not being at the gym". Even Hall's daughter recalled, "My dad used to come home, get changed and say, 'See you later; I'm going to the gym', and that was every night of the week." Being at the gym all the time was Hall's way of being present. This commitment was there from early on, as he reflected on his childhood he said "and I used to go 3 or 4 times a week for that... All the time, up until me going in the Army when I was 18." The boxing club required Hall to travel all over the country and internationally, resulting in him forming lifelong ties associated with boxing. Hall made many contacts during these trips, which were essential for him to perform the role of matchmaker and network bricolage ([Di Domenico et al., 2010](#)). As [Wacquant \(1995\)](#) described, boxing coaches often spend large amounts of time and energy on their boxers and perform multiple roles as boxer, trainer, sparring partner, manager and matchmaker. For Hall, the learning he assimilated over his lifetime resulted in enhanced local knowledge ([Zahra et al., 2009](#)).

Moreover, Hall always made sure the boxers had somewhere to train, a coach explained:

The Sun Lane Baths were knocked down a few years ago, but this did not deter John. He arranged for the boxing club to continue in the Lightwaves Leisure Centre. But there was a period in which Lightwaves wasn't quite ready and the old Sun Lane Baths had been closed down, even still, John arranged for the boys to continue their training in the grounds at Thornes Park.

This refusal to accept limits imposed by a lack of resources demonstrates entrepreneurial bricolage ([Holt and Littlewood, 2017](#)).

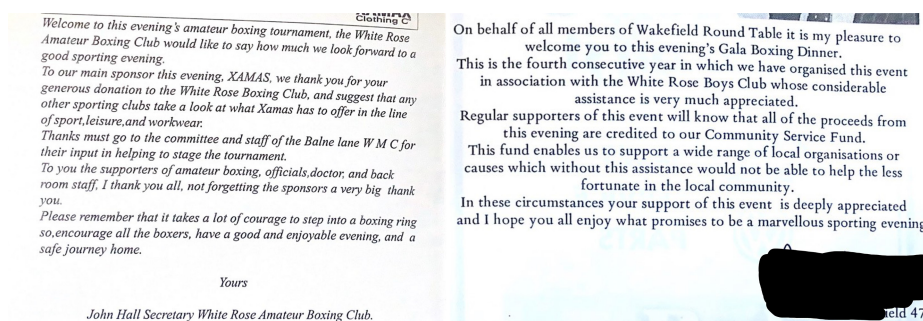


Figure 4. Contrasting Hall's language (left-hand side) with that of his predecessor's (right-hand side)

4.3.2 *Matchmaking and protection.* The second theme emerged as we recognised the skill and experience of Hall required for matchmaking. Matchmaking, in the wider boxing community, is built on trust and not “overmatching” (a mismatch in the skill level of) boxers. Hall explained that he had learned very early on that “one of the guys [...] would put them [his boxer] in with a guy who was a novice [an opponent from another club], and as a result, he got a very bad name for himself [for doing that].” He continued by explaining how matchmaking had changed over the years:

You used to send [by post] a list of boxers with their weights and experience to as many clubs as you were in contact with, but you know, with growing lads, it was hard. Then, when the telephones came out, we used to phone each other. The matchmaker had their phone bill paid by the club, which was a privilege back then.

Today, matchmaking is much easier with mobile phones and social media. For Hall, matchmaking was a way to gain an advantage by going to tournaments to scout potential opponents and collect knowledge on them. For example, at the 91st Championship of the Amateur Boxing Association in Horbury, Hall scribbled on the programme next to the list of bouts, “Good jab [a type of punch]” or “Great smack [punch power] but never moves [movement being essential to the art of not getting hit].” When asked whether his lad would like to box any of the other lads, Hall would have a tactical advantage from such knowledge collection exercises, which were also a way to protect his boxers from harm. In one situation, a promising young boxer was asked to fight a southern boxer. Unbeknown to the young boxer, he was grotesquely outmatched, and Hall would not let him box despite the protests of other trainers, who wanted the young boxer “to gain experience”. Hall explained:

It is not worth the risk. The opponent has boxed internationally; he [the opponent] should not even be in the tournament, but that is how they [some boxing clubs] work. They want an easy match for their lad. Well, it is not happening.

The art of matchmaking can have an effect on young boxers. If they are overmatched, it can discourage them, as one retired amateur boxer recalled: “I remember walking to the ring thinking, ‘Why am I doing this? I do not want to do this. I am only doing this because my brother is doing this.’ Anyway, I got beat, but I knew it was not for me before, in any case.” Hall had a way of finding out if a boxer wanted to box, as explained in the following section.

Matchmaking for the individual is a very specific skill not easily understood by outsiders (Zahra *et al.*, 2009) and requires entrepreneurial (Holt and Littlewood, 2017) and network bricolage (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010) through both the nurturing and maintenance of relationships with other boxing clubs and identifying the best opportunities “matches” for the boxers. This is an example of how social bricoleurs use entrepreneurial and network bricolage to create social value (building amateur boxers who belonged to the local community).

4.3.3 *Using the ears more than the mouth.* The third theme emerged from Hall’s disposition. Inside the gym, Hall’s approach was to get to know everyone in the gym. This involved forming bonds with the amateur boxers, on whom he had a profound impact. He used heuristics to find out how keen a person was on boxing. He explained, “You can always tell. Take George, for example: for the first 15 fights, every time I would say, ‘I have got you a fight on Friday’, and he would say, ‘Great.’ Now I tell him, and he responds, ‘Who is it against? What experience has he got? What weight is it at?’ That is when you know they are losing interest”.

Hall’s attentiveness was well received by the boxers. This is captured in Figure 5, which presents a letter written by a young man that describes how boxing has had a positive impact on him (left-hand side) as well as a letter written by Hall to send the young man to the Queen’s annual garden party (right-hand side). In addition, Hall would find jobs for his

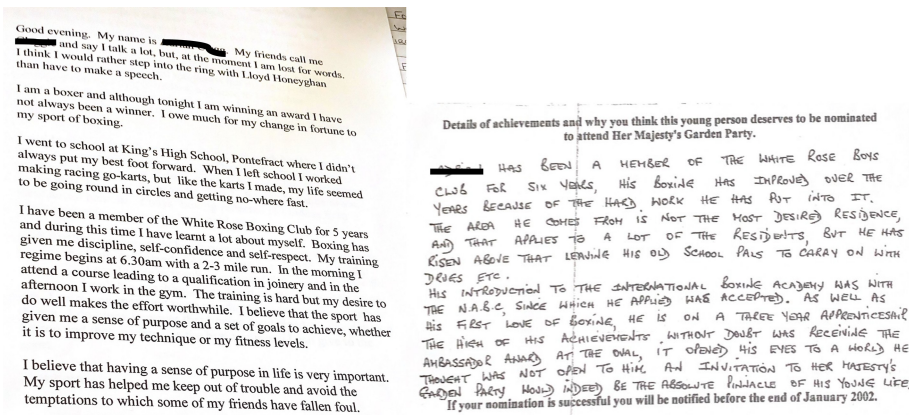


Figure 5. Letters written by a boxer and Hall explaining the positive impact amateur boxing has had on the boxer's life

boxers, if needed, through his local contacts. He also helped coaches by organising school sessions to help them earn cash as well as gain some money for the club. In the [Appendix](#) there are more examples of this.

These are just some of many examples. Over the years, the club hosted many amateur boxers, further building its network intergenerationally. Hall was known to multiple generations of the same family, as one participant recalled: "My dad used to box for the club. I used to box for the club. I brought my son, and he used to attend the club, but he never boxed for them." Thus, demonstrating how embedded Hall was in the local community.

4.4 The role of the entrepreneur

There are many good amateur coaches who play the role of surrogate father; however, most arguably lack entrepreneurial ability. Hall yielded his entrepreneurial ability according to three key themes: prudence, volunteer recruitment and salesmanship. These themes resonate with the ideas of entrepreneurial, network and social bricolage.

4.4.1 Prudence. The first theme emerged from Hall's approach to running the Club. Ensuring that the club was a success by staying connected and competing in various tournaments required a lot of time and energy. Furthermore, Hall never took money from the club; his reason was that "once you start taking money from the club, it stops working; it cannot sustain it because you have all the equipment, the rent, the tournament fees, everything." However, Hall recognised this changing over the years; in his words, "It has certainly got more administration than it used to have. There are a lot of activities to do, and to do them right is pretty much a full-time job." It is true that, in some respects, such administrative demands have made the job harder for amateur boxing coaches. Nevertheless, Hall's passion for the club kept him involved, and he was determined to preserve the initial values of the club through a carefully supervised environment that required the volunteers to be effective. This is a good example of how Hall's entrepreneurial bricolage ([Baker et al., 2003](#); [Baker, 2007](#); [Holt and Littlewood, 2017](#)). The club had many hidden expenses which were not obvious to outsiders ([Zahra et al., 2009](#)), which he managed by creatively generating revenue for the club, ensuring it survived and thrived.

Hall was prudent; the greatest example of this was during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the club had to close due to social restrictions. Hall was under pressure from the landlord to pay the rent, but he resisted. He engaged in continuous backwards-and-forwards emails, calling on the researcher to write emails arguing the point and communicating by telephone with the landlord to explain how the club could not simply afford it. This went against the grain as many businesses in the UK during the COVID-19 pandemic were not able to hold this stance and as a result closed their businesses permanently. Indeed, together, Hall and the researcher secured a grant from England Boxing, but the landlord did not receive this money; rather, the boxers benefitted from it. This resonates with the literature which describes the social bricoleur who is resourceful and able to bootstrap (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010).

The club was not open due to pandemic restrictions, as the health and safety regulations in operation restricted access, which was dependent on the space available in the gym. Although many of the boxers found this frustrating, even if the club could open, there was no chance of organising shows for which the club would make enough revenue to cover its expenses. Typically, boxing gyms are above stores or in basements and are often small, run-down spaces. Normally, during nightly sessions, there would be 30–40 children, each paying a small, affordable subsidy because the coaches did not take any money from the club. Already making do with what is at hand (Lévi-Strauss, 1967). With the pandemic restrictions, the club was only able to have 12 children inside, leaving a sustained deficit. Therefore, Hall simply refused to pay the rent and kept the small grant from Yorkshire Boxing for the club, and the landlord seemed to reluctantly accept this situation.

4.4.2 Volunteer recruitment. The second theme emerged when we realised Hall was had effective persuasive techniques. Such techniques are discussed in the literature as selling the purpose of an organisation. In this regard, Hall excelled at leveraging the social capital that he had acquired over his lifetime to put on boxing shows. He knew people from all aspects of life; whenever someone needed their roof fixed or to see a vet or a landscape gardener, Hall knew the right person. Hall kept the programmes from his shows, some of which are shown in Figure 6.

During his time at the club, Hall undertook the responsibility of running countless boxing shows. To put this into context, a show would have (on a very good night in a good venue) 1,000 or more spectators and, on average, 16 boxing bouts, which required matchmaking, officials, doctors, security, promotional activities, ticket sales, venues, food and beverages, intermittent entertainment (usually a DJ) and a master of ceremonies, to name but a few things that required organisation. Hall's calculation of the shows expenses and revenue are included in Appendix. Hall did this without paying anyone, for the most part; as he became less and less active, his aim to not take any money out of the club became increasingly

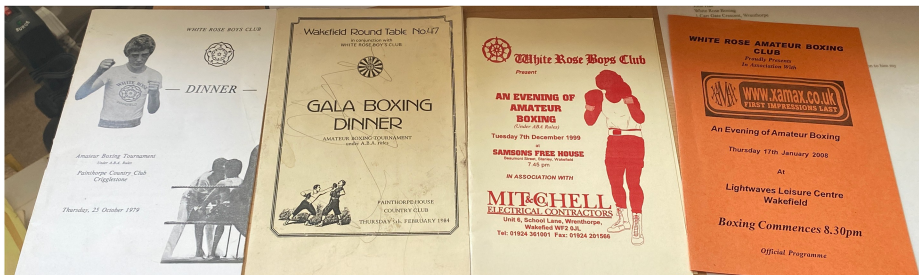


Figure 6. Image of some of the boxing shows John organised ranging from 1979 to 2008

difficult, and others had to start performing his roles, such as matchmaking. Generally, people who volunteered felt as if they received something worthy. In the words of one White Rose coach, "He was able to get you to do something, and you left feeling satisfied after having done something for free. It felt like you were leaving with something." This resonates with the importance of persuasion required for social bricolage (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010).

To maintain morale and a sense of solidarity and community, Hall held regular committee meetings to discuss the Club's business (see the photograph in Appendix). In addition to social relationships in the gym, Hall also kept local businesses interested in the club so that they would sponsor events and buy tickets for the shows. For example, Xamax, a local family business, has been sponsoring shows for more than 30 years. Other sponsors were regular, as Table 1 shows 50 sponsors at different times from 1996 to 2008.

The many boxing programmes that Hall saved over the years show all the different local firms that sponsored events. The reach of Hall's influence can also be seen from the tributes that emerged after his death, such as that of the England Boxing Association, as shown in Figure 7.

From a business perspective, this was typical of the social bricoleur. It required resourcefulness and this was shrewd; it minimised costs for the club, ensured that the people involved really had the right intentions and allowed the money raised to be spent on equipment, rent, tournament fees and many other things essential to keep the club running.

4.4.3 Salesmanship. The third theme emerged when we recognised how important raising money from the shows were for the club. Beyond selling the club's purpose, Hall was able to sell tickets to the shows and collect sponsorship deals from local companies. In the following, he recalls his first show, highlighting his foresight, determination and vision to resist and change the way in which the club operated at the time:

[Discussing an old coach] His priority was raising money for [a local official's] charity so, you know, it put him in a good light with the [local official]. It was my first time getting involved. [The coach] said to me, 'How many tickets can you sell?' I said, 'I don't know yet, but I shall be doing my damned dearest.' He said, 'Oh, well, all this goes to [the local official's] charities,' and I said, 'Oh, well, that's not my plan at all.' So he said, 'What do you mean?' I said, 'I have come to raise money for the White Rose Boxing Club, not the [local official's] charities,' and he was shocked and said, 'It's a good thing to raise money for the [local official] because [they] will look after us.' Oh yeah [sarcastically]; after all these years, I know how much [the local official] looks after us. [...] There is not much he can do to help, even though I'm pestering him all the time. But anyway, that show came and went [...] But then I started getting together everything I needed, such as another venue – I used a working men's club on Bourne Lane – and I went to see the committee, who agreed to host the show. I organised it and sold all the tickets and made, after paying all the expenses, over £400, and it went on from there. (Hall).

This is characteristic of the entrepreneurial bricolage, the refusal to accept existing conditions and working towards their intrinsic social purposes (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010). There are many photographic records of Hall interacting with authority figures, including the then mayor in 1955 (see Appendix). Hall's persistence was evident from the four decades of boxing shows he helped organise, making sure that the money went into the boxing club. Again, aligning his skills and values, he continued by saying:

The committee just didn't try. The fact that we sort of set out to sell tickets and, as I say, I made a £400 profit; they could not make £10 between them. [...] I made £400 profit, after all expenses, [...] and that was because I worked hard at it, and they just didn't. [...] It's like anything else; the more doors you knock on, the more of whatever you're selling: the more likelihood you sell more by knocking on more doors.

Table 1. List of sponsors Hall gained during a few of the shows he organised

Local company name	Program year									
	94	96	97	98	00	02	03	04	08	
3D Kitchens Westgate Wakefield										X
Allen Penney							X	X		
Auto Tyre Services										X
Automotive Machinery Services				X						
Avery Berkel						X				
Barrass and Mc Guinness Jeffrey Downing			X							
Brooklyn Builders							X			
C Hewitt							X			
C Precious Transport							X	X		
C. P. Engineering services (Chris previous)		X			X					X
Charlie Walker					X		X			
Complete Access										X
D and S Premier Mortgages (Steve Wray)					X					
Dave Calvert D B C Engineering	X		X	X						
Dave Kenning Roof Services	X		X							
David Firth	X	X	X	X			X			
Fitted Furniture (Terry J Harkin)					X					
Gents Outfitters (Gerry Wentworth)		X	X		X					
Granstand Investments										X
HandyMan D.I.Y., Morley (B. Kettlewell)				X						
Howley Transport		X			X					
John McGowan Auto Tyre Services Wakefield	X									
Jon Strudwick		X		X	X					
Ken Hill RMD Scaffolding	X		X							
Lee Parkinson									X	
M and L Samsons Builders										X
Malcolm Maynard Robinson and Birdsall	X	X	X	X	X					
New Wheel									X	
Nortonhorpe Mills Scissett	X									
Oldroyd Floorings	X									
Paul Bateson Enterprises										X
Peter Fagg – Carpenters, Ossett				X						
Professional Print and Communications	X									
RMD Construction (Ken Hill)		X		X						
Select Construction										X
System Fit LTD Shopfitting services	X			X						
Terry Harnell	X									
Terry Mc Cardle			X							
The Bronte Normanton									X	
The Carpet Barn	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
The Fitness Factory						X				
The Kirklands Hotel							X			
The Rescuers									X	
The Wheatsheaf & British Oak	X									
Tom Mullen							X	X		
Wrenthorpe Post Office (Bradford Road)									X	
Wrenthorpe WMC										X
Writebooks CPR									X	
Xamax Clothing						X	X	X	X	X
YarmCloud (Joe Hurley)	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	

Tribute: John Hall (White Rose)

April 6, 2023 | by Matt Halfpenny

SHARE



479

England Boxing has been saddened to learn of the passing of White Rose Boxing Club's John Hall.

He served as coach and secretary of the Wakefield-based club for 'many, many years'.

A statement on the club's Instagram account read: "We want to express our deepest thanks to John for his services at White Rose for all these years, as well as for Yorkshire.

"We are glad we could make John proud with our boxers' recent accomplishments and that he was well enough to attend our last home show.

"Rest in paradise, John – love and respect to you always."

White Rose has confirmed that its next show on 27th May will be contested in John's memory.

England Boxing would like to pass on its sincerest condolences to John's friends and family at this said time.

Figure 7. An extract from [England Boxing \(2023\)](#) paying tribute to Hall's life

Hall was very proud of his amateur boxing shows, especially those at the Light Waves Leisure Centre, which he often described as "the Wembley Stadium of amateur boxing". As the bricoleur Hall demonstrated he was able to re-configure existing resources to generate money for the boxing club to keep it going without relying on external resources ([Zahra et al., 2009](#)).

5. Discussion and theorisation

Our research set out to answer the question:

RQ. Who is the social bricoleur, how do they perform their role(s) and what outcomes do they achieve in northern England's community and sports clubs?

To answer the question, we adopted a constructivist case study approach ([Stake, 1995](#)) focusing on Hall, the social bricoleur, at the Club. Our analysis produced the following insights. Hall performed two main roles at the club and described these roles through the second-order themes discussed in the findings are those of most relevance (see [Figure 1](#)) to the case and the theory, with our findings illustrating how a social bricoleur entrepreneur performs their role based on the context. Both roles linked to multiple forms of bricolage

(entrepreneurial, network, social) showing how social value is created through bricolage. Firstly, social bricolage in his form of persuasion to recruit volunteers (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010). Secondly, network bricolage leveraging value across multiple networks: his salesmanship selling tickets to individuals and sponsors to local businesses; his continuous nurturing contacts in the boxing community to keep strongties with reliable clubs; and internally nurturing the boxers maintain the principle of not overmatching them to ensure a good show or gain favour in the boxing community. Third, entrepreneurial bricolage through his prudence, stubbornness and unsatiable commitment to the club; we illustrate this in Figure 8.

His first role, as a surrogate father to Club benefactors, was critical and coheres with Wacquant's (1995) description of a boxing club. For Hall, as a bricoleur entrepreneur, his general mission was to "end up with champions", or what Wacquant referred to as pugilistic capital. However, the club also embodied a deeper, less obvious social mission, especially to outsiders (Zahra *et al.*, 2009). One of the key insights here is the key moment Hall decided to get involved in organising and promoting shows, he made sure the proceeds went to the club rather than the Community Service Fund, the charity his predecessors raised money for instead of the club. His message on his programs reflects his vision and contrasts to his predecessors.

Hall's second role, as an entrepreneur, was critical to the Club's economic prosperity. Such skills have been passed on to the next generation as a blueprint for how to raise money for the Club. Hall's prudence is a great example, but it may be difficult for today's coaches to follow due to the ongoing cost of living crisis and time poverty. Hall was very adept at using social and network bricolage persuading people to help out, receive local sponsorships and sell tickets. All of which were essential to the club.

This research advances the social entrepreneurship literature by cohering with recent ethnographic works on social bricoleur entrepreneurs (Sengupta and Lehtimäki, 2022). For the social bricoleur literature (Holt and Littlewood, 2017; Li and Sarpong, 2024; Zahra *et al.*, 2009), this case study shows that without the Hall's use of bricolage the sustainability of the club would be very unlikely. It advances towards the conclusion that some individual skills

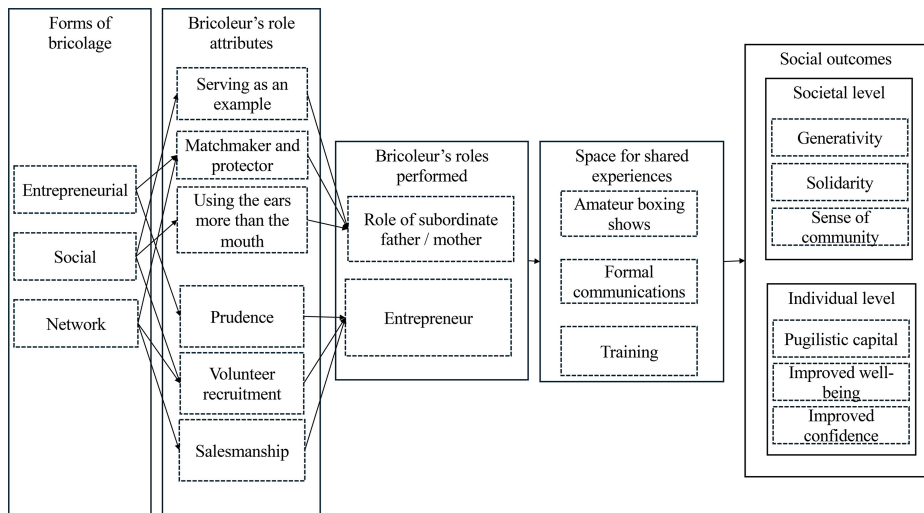


Figure 8. Theorisation of the social bricoleur's activities in the amateur boxing context

are most likely generalisable across contexts – such as the role of negotiating and relating to local people. In a more nuanced advancement, this study responds to the call that:

[...] social entrepreneurs and their ventures need to be studied in more detail – exploring the milieu within which these entrepreneurs exist and how they function, and why their ventures succeed or fail can enrich theory building in social ventures (Zahra et al., 2009).

Hall demonstrated how learning two roles over a lifetime helped to balance tensions in the social enterprise. Through Hall's case, we provide a long view of the use of bricolage by the social entrepreneur to blend the social and economic characteristics. Specifically, his role as surrogate father and his approach to guiding young boxers public behaviour is carried through his approach to salesmanship, which always kept the beneficiaries of the Club in view above the concerns of local officials and landlords. In the literature, it is known that social entrepreneurs tend to focus on long-term capacity rather than short-term financial gains (Bacq and Janssen, 2011), but Hall succeeded in achieving both.

The novelty here is through adopting the social bricoleur lens in the community and sports club in the north of England. Despite the widespread prevalence of community and sports clubs in the creation of social value, the social bricoleur lens has seldom been applied to this context. Through the bricolage perspective, our study demonstrates how Hall created social value by combining social and economic endeavours. This context informs theory by showcasing multiple forms of bricolage (network – nurturing multiple networks; social – persuasion, entrepreneurial – resourcefulness and bootstrapping) simultaneously. Reshaping understanding that merely possessing local knowledge of local resources is sufficient (Zahra et al., 2009), instead we build on the idea of local currency (Zapata Campos et al., 2023) by claiming it also requires creative ways to combine local resources. Therefore, our theoretical lens adds depth to the use of bricolage complementing other related lenses such as the idea of “formally-driven bricolage” (Helleputte and Périlleux, 2025).

Surprisingly, the data presented showed the bricoleur's ability improved over time, as Hall described “it went on from there” from his initial success. Hall, with his knowledge of the local environment, was able to use what was at hand (the tools, skills and repertoire of things) to perform multiple forms of bricolage (entrepreneurial, network and social) to create social value. Thereby, we tweak the understanding that bricoleurs are typically episodic (Zahra et al., 2009), Hall's episode at the Club spanned more than 70 years, demonstrating a social entrepreneur's continuous motivation (Bacq et al., 2016). Moreover, this research strengthens the argument that social entrepreneurs require social capital (Mohiuddin and Yasin, 2023) and a high degree of network centrality, whereby they need to have a large degree of trust in the networks they inhabit (Cavazos-Arroyo and Puente-Diaz, 2023).

Social enterprise research shows that some forms of social entrepreneurship are more obvious than others – more visible acts of social entrepreneurship include Jamie Oliver's reform scheme (Hollows and Jones, 2010), whereas Hall's activities over his lifetime were more subtle. Indeed, our findings show the importance of locally embedded individuals who utilise their passion outside of their everyday jobs or primary economic activities. Indeed, this shows that social action is manageable outside one's economic purpose – in Hall's case, a full-time job. Hall regularly acted entrepreneurially and was able to identify opportunities throughout his lifetime at the Club, showing that age is not necessarily a significant factor in entrepreneurial behaviour (Daniel and Andersson, 2021). This ultimately expands and reinforces Michael Young's notion that the contributions made within a close-knit community lead to prosperity, thereby enriching the existing definitions provided in literature reviews (Saebi et al., 2019; Macke et al., 2018; Lortie and Cox, 2018; Gupta et al., 2020).

Indeed, Hall's activities at the club undeniably helped build pugilistic capital (Wacquant, 1995), which was his primary objective, but he underplayed the notion that the club helped improve the confidence, well-being and health of thousands of children, as is the case for organisations of a similar nature in the UK, such as *Empire Fighting Chance* (2024). Promoting the social mission of boxing clubs is now the focus of emerging charities, such as *Empire Fighting Chance* (2024). The recent work of *Empire Fighting Chance* (2024) shows how boxing clubs not only raise the pugilistic capital of the next generation of Olympic and professional athletes but also help improve the confidence, health and mental well-being of young people. This creates positive externalities, such as reduced crime, self-harm and social misery. Hall's example is a testament to what Michael Young explained as the devolution of governments via voluntary organisations.

Furthermore, our research expands on the idea of who such an entrepreneur is in a developed context rather than a transitional context (Vidovic, 2023). While Vidovic (2023) focused on social entrepreneurs in the transitional context of Croatia and Sengupta and Lehtimäki (2022) focused on India, our case is in the developed context of the UK. It highlights how the roles performed by a social bricoleur entrepreneur strengthen throughout their lifetime; this may be difficult to achieve in a transitioning economy due to the instability of social structures and constantly changing needs of society in such a context.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Theoretical contributions

This research makes two contributions: firstly, to the growing literature on social entrepreneurship (Saebi *et al.*, 2019) and, secondly, and the bricoleur literature (Mateus and Sarkar, 2024).

The earlier studies of bricolage, largely focused on new firms (Baker *et al.*, 2003), knowledge intensive start-ups (Miner *et al.*, 2001) or elite managers (Visscher *et al.*, 2018). Our case study shows that bricolage is prevalent and a way of thinking for an 80-year-old organisation, which has continued to survive because of bricolage despite increasing difficult environmental conditions. Our insights add value to this literature by (a) demonstrating multiple forms of bricolage used simultaneously by the social bricoleur to create social value (b) it continues to be a way of being in an organisation continuously fighting for resources from the environment.

For the social bricoleur literature (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010; Holt and Littlewood, 2017; Li and Sarpong, 2024; Zahra *et al.*, 2009), our study adds value by producing insights of a long-term social bricoleur embodying multiple forms of bricolage further differentiating from the initial conception of the lone heroic social entrepreneur (reflecting the wider idea of the entrepreneur; Saebi *et al.*, 2019). Our novel context expands the literature's understanding of the social bricoleur's character, what they do and how they do it, helping better understand how social value is formed.

6.2 Practitioner implications

Our research generates policy maker and practitioner recommendations. Two actions can be taken by policymakers from this research. The first is not only to provide such entrepreneurs with more financial and human capital to sustain their activities, such as in the form of grants to pay England Boxing fees, registration fees, tournament fees and medical fees, but also to use educational programs to encourage Hall's example of the skills and motivation required to combine financial, human, social and, in this case, pugilistic capital to achieve positive social outcomes. Indeed, this aligns with the direction of the UK's government's approach to social entrepreneurship in increasing austerity, especially in the context of sport (Parliament, 2023).

The second action is to recommend that governments offer partial compensation to organisations to allow their employees to use some of their time to help social causes by

volunteering. Furthermore, this retrospective case study shows how social entrepreneurship can be sustained in old age, showing that as the population ages, older people, who are more likely to start a social enterprise (Hoogendoorn *et al.*, 2022; Moskvina and Dolzhikova, 2018), may seek support from the UK government.

For practitioners, this case illustrates the realities of many non-profit organisations that help develop the next generation. Indeed, in Hall's words, to do it right is pretty much a full-time job highlights that such development is a time-consuming administrative task that should be factored in by policymakers. Aspiring next-generation social entrepreneurs may adopt Hall's approach as a genuine, emergent and incremental process.

6.3 Limitations and future research directions

This research has several limitations. Firstly, it is a single-case study and therefore not statistically generalisable, although it is analytically generalisable. Secondly, Hall may have been an outlier of the typical social entrepreneur; he was fortunate to live to his eighties while still being involved in the club. Not every social entrepreneur will be so lucky; therefore, this revelatory case study may not apply to some social entrepreneurs. However, being involved in the club for so long may have contributed to his healthy ageing. Thirdly, the UK context is unique, and it would be interesting to determine whether social entrepreneurs are active in grassroots sports across different countries.

There are several future research paths opened from this research. For future research on bricolage, the promise of the phenomenon of social enterprise to reveal more insights into the different forms of bricolage. For example, from the forms of bricolage identified in Hall, through the use of a different research instrument (a survey) it would be interesting to survey social enterprises from other domains to see if the content, form and level of bricolage strategies used varies across domains and organisations.

For the social bricoleur research, our study produces insights which shows the roles and forms of bricolage which are employed. Using a different research instrument, it would be interesting to assess how common these strategies are across community and sport clubs, and whether these skills grow with experience or whether some are more naturally predisposed to bricolage than others.

Furthermore, given the changing nature of the social environment, one of the questions which emerge is, was the way Hall run the Club suitable for the changing times and increasingly difficult environmental conditions. In the context of resource scarcity (including time poverty of volunteers), it is important to consider whether these forms of bricolage will remain effective or whether other forms of bricolage, such as distributed bricolage (Sarkar and Mateus, 2024) will emerge in light of the new technologies, i.e. social media.

Through a retrospective ethnographic case study, we were able to elucidate how Hall's bricolage was acted out and contribute to the social entrepreneurship literature. This enriches the conversation surrounding the social bricoleur producing fresh insights from the community and sports context in social entrepreneurship, and we encourage future research endeavours in this domain to find out more social bricoleurs in this context by adding more qualitative cases to this promising domain of research.

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Notes

- [1.] Michael Young, whose gravestone is inscribed with the words *social visionary and innovator* (Butler, 2020: p. 225). His legacy emphasises the importance of supporting close-knit ties with the community in a working-class environment following the Second World War (WW2).
- [2.] We attribute credit to the anonymous reviewer who was able to accurately describe the social bricoleur in a single sentence.
- [3.] The kinds of bricolage (Mateus and Sarkar, 2024) defined were: Individual/internal bricolage; Collective bricolage; intrapreneurial bricolage; parallel bricolage; selective bricolage; Social bricolage; Network or external bricolage; Institutional bricolage; Organizational bricolage; Ideational bricolage; Market bricolage; Spatial bricolage.
- [4.] For more information on one of the benefactors of the Club who badly misplaced his pugilistic capital and went on to become one of the UKs most violent prisoners, see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Sykes_\(boxer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Sykes_(boxer))

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Further reading

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Appendix. Evidence of themes presented in main document [please contact corresponding author for further information]

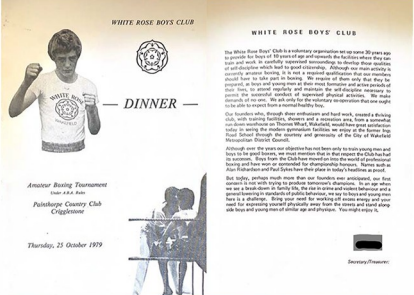
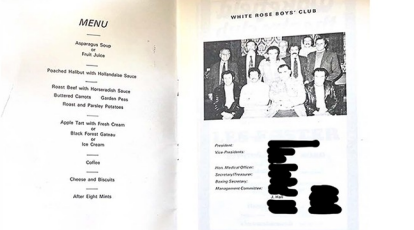



Evidence	Context/Caption	Theme
 <p>WHITE ROSE BOYS CLUB DINNER Amateur Boxing Tournament Laurie A. Ann Paisley City Club Thursday, 25 October 1979</p>	<p>The clubs mission statement, figure 8 public program of the White Rose Boxing Club which outlines the clubs purpose back in 1978.</p>	<p>History of the White Rose Boxing Club</p>
 <p>MENU Supper Soup ... WHITE ROSE BOYS CLUB</p>	<p>Connectors to various institutions (Police force, Jewish community, and regeneration project). Figures: Left: A program from 1957 of a boxing tournament organized by the metropolitan police. Middle-left: the ABA rulebook sponsored by the metropolitan police. Middle-right: a program of a boxing show organized by the Jewish community. Right: a ticket to a White Rose boxing show sponsored by the cauliflower regeneration project.</p>	<p>Local connections</p>
 <p>ABA RULES OF BOXING WHITE ROSE BOYS CLUB Presents An Evening Of Boxing Friday 20th Sep 1978 Doors Open 7.00pm ADMIT ONE</p>	<p>Connection to local authority figure. Figures: Left: Letter from the Mayor back in 1955. Right: Write up of Hall receiving medals from the Mayor in 1955.</p>	<p>John Hat's role in the club</p>
 <p>BOBOXING-BEETING IS THE SECTOR AT CITY HALL</p>	<p>John Hat's Locally embeddedness over his lifespan. Figures: Left: Hat representing the White Rose Boxing Club in the boxing ring. Middle: Hat at a show with the Master of Ceremonies. Right: Hat in the gym.</p>	<p>John Hat's role in the club</p>
 <p>Robin Hood & Thorpe A.B.C. Monday, 2nd May, 1955 AMATEUR BOXING TOURNAMENT W. P. DUNN M.C. - Mrs. Ann (Laurie) City Police M.C. - Mrs. Ann</p>	<p>Hat's appearance for the White Rose Boxing Club. Figure: An early program from 1955 featuring Hat on the second bout at 9st.</p>	<p>John Hat's role in the club</p>

Figure A1. 1st dimension historic context

Evidence	Code/Caption	Theme
	<p>Figure: a personal note of Hall's calculating expenses and revenue of shows.</p>	<p>Prudence</p>
	<p>Figure: personal photo of Hall and his helpers, and their wives, who were part of the committee for the White Horse Bowling Club.</p> <p>Figure: a collection of public programs of the shows Hall organized.</p>	<p>Volunteer recruitment</p> <p>Salesmanship</p>
	<p>Figure: A public advertisement by Fred Hurley & Sons sponsoring the Bowling Event in Panontract.</p>	<p>Old sponsors</p>
	<p>Figure: Hall's personal notes to the sponsors in the public program.</p>	<p>Old program</p>
	<p>Figure: A picture of the plaque Hall received from London-Derry council.</p>	<p>Connections to other places</p>

Figure A3. 3rd Dimension Role of the Entrepreneur

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