A sociological perspective of Young Male Academy Footballers' and their experiences of pain and injury.

Cameron Armstrong

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School of Sport

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

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Abstract

Within sport the desire and commitment by athletes to continue to perform when injured is a commonality, especially within professional football. Reasons as to why players continue to perform ranges from their love of the game to earning a new contract. However, the majority of the literature focuses on the elite level of the game with little research being undertaken on the pathway to reach such heights within football; the academy level. This study aims to identify young male academy footballers experiences regarding any pain or injuries they have suffered from a sociological perspective and how it impacts their lives within football. Academy players seem to continue to perform for similar reasons to their elite counterparts with just a smaller financial incentive/lifestyle being at risk or rewarded. The academy level is the opportunity for a prosperous career it appears footballers live through the eyes of the media, yet their bodies and wellbeing undertake a similar strenuous training regime to that of their elite counterparts. In addition, the treatment they receive from the coaches is also similar with an expectancy to play through injury. Semi-structured interviews were employed with 10 male youth academy footballers (ranging from the ages of 17-21 years old) and analysed using sociological concepts surrounding: figurations, power balances and established-outsider groups. Through such methods, the results of this study highlight how academy footballers have an elite mindset regarding their injuries and welfare, with the desire for a footballing career proceeding their health. This mindset is leading young footballers to a potentially damaged future, in terms of their physical welfare, along with the lack of realisation that their career in football is a dangerously short one within the societal world; however, they should not be deterred from such dreams but encouraged to grasp academic or other professional development opportunities.

Contents

ABBREVIATION KEY

- FA – FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION
- PL – PREMIER LEAGUE
- EPPP – ELITE PLAYER PERFORMANCE PLAN

1. Introduction

The aim of this research was to undertake a sociological examination and investigate pain and injury amongst young male academy footballers. Football is a challenging and physically demanding sport, with constant stress on the body involved through various actions (fast changes of pace/direction and physical battles for the ball, to name a couple) (Deehan, Bell and McCaskie, 2007). As a result, football is a sport which is renowned for a high injury rate on the body at both the adult and youth level (Hawkins et al., 2001). This is supported by Maffulli and Pintore (1990) who recognised the risks upon a developing athlete's skeleton through the engagement in highly competitive environments. In addition, the estimated risk of injury for individuals with a career in professional football is 1000 times greater than those who work in high risk occupations (Drawer and Fuller, 2002). Underlining the substantial gamble an athlete is risking on their body for a career in professional football.

Along with the risk to an athlete's body through the desires of a professional career is the sacrifices made 'off the pitch' too. It has been identified how the educational and social scenes of young players' lives are thrown into jeopardy due to the lucrative dream of becoming a professional footballer (Brown and Potrac, 2009). Even though this stardom level occupation is of the utmost challenging to get into – 90% fail to reach the professional heights of the game (Mitchell et al., 2014; Anderson and Miller, 2011). Is this 'dream' blurring a young individual's vision for their future both physically and socially?

Through these dreams amongst youth footballers, the elite and national level of the sport is seen as a beneficiary. Mills et al. (2014) mention how the improvement of gifted individuals at the youth level is of utmost importance for the leading governing bodies in English football (Football Association – FA -and the Premier League - PL). This is shown through the large-scale systems football clubs have in place through the use of academies. Being a part of these systems requires considerable commitment to the footballing life due to the vast investment being implemented into the academy scene (Green, 2009). With these titanic sums of financial investment involved, pressure to succeed becomes second to none. Sagar, Busch and Jowett (2010) describe how youth football at the elite level within England, is characterised by the immensely pressurised environment and need for success. This notion of success and glory could be leading young male individuals to abandon aspects of their lives which are vital for their futures (educational and social skills) (Brown and Potrac, 2009).

With such pressures and the elitist nature that surrounds football, it has proven a widely difficult environment to research, especially if the researcher is unknown (Roderick, 2006b) to the club and the players - the reason as to why there is limited knowledge on such topics from

the footballing world. In addition, the need for a sufficient amount of time for the researcher to carry out their interviews with the players is another factor as to why many players do not participate (Roderick, 2006b). Furthermore, with the idolisation of footballers and professional sports people in general, an accessibility issue arises through their celebrity status and the idol culture that surrounds them (Roderick, 2006b, and Fry, 2014). Even though this is not as evident amongst youth players – they are more-so popular with the team's fans rather than at a national or global scale - the hard to reach and secret culture of professional football stems down into the academy level too. However, there have been past studies that focus on injury data collection (Newton et al., 2017, Light et al., 2018 and McCunn et al., 2018) rather than the sociological impact on the players.

To achieve the aims of this research, the following research questions shall be addressed, in which much has been researched regarding the elite level of football but minimally within the academy level:

- Is playing through pain more important than future welfare to the individual?
- What impact, if any, does the coach and physiotherapists have on a player's judgement on whether to play through pain and injury?
- What impact, if any, does the importance of contracts and positional battles have on a players decision to play through pain and injury?

The primary focus of this study is to examine academy youth footballers real-life experiences with pain and injury; attempting to uncover a previously sparse and underrepresented sociological topic. By interviewing academy youth footballers, it is hoped that this research will provide knowledge and understanding of pain and injury within male academy football, whilst highlighting further issues that relates to the main focus. Whilst there is a large amount of psychological and quantitative research on youth football, there is minimal knowledge surrounding the sociological perspective of academy football; which shall be uncovered in the following chapters of this thesis. Chapter two explores past academic literature surrounding youth academy football, focusing on pain and injury. This chapter intends to critically examine the research of the literature, assessing and comparing the data collected based on the pain and injury of academy youth footballers. However, due to the limited research on such a topic, this literature review also uses accounts and studies on the elite level of the game as well as other professional sports. From this past literature it is identified how the views of the youth players is not evident throughout, with a lack of personal accounts regarding pain and injuries being overruled by the researchers own views on the empirical evidence they have attained – researcher-based opinions from statistical evidence. Chapter three gives an insight into the

theoretical framework undertaken to help analyse and provide a greater understanding as to why youth players continue to behave the way they do when injured or experiencing pain. Specifically, the concepts of figurations and sportsnets, power balances within the academy (primarily between coach and player), established outsider groups and lastly, how theory helped shape the methods of this study. Chapter four provides a detailed exploration into how the research was conducted and provides credibility for such methods. This chapter focuses on the research design, methods, sample size and strategy used, along with how the data shall be analysed. Furthermore, a brief insight into the interview process shall be given, reflecting on how the researcher believed the interviews went and what could be improved. Chapters five to eight present the results and discussions from the collected data, all of which attempt to provide past theory and literature to support the findings and improve the understanding of youth footballers experiences with pain and injury.

Chapter five provides an in-depth look into the participants' views on injury, with the focus being on both minor and major injuries as well as gaining an understanding on how the players believe their academy staff (with a focus on the coach and physiotherapist) view their injuries. In addition, exploring how the figuration the players are associated with impact their views on injury and shape their behaviours. These views on injury then lead onto Chapter six which explores the reasons as to why players continue to play through injury, whether it is their decision or the coach's and lastly, how their appearance can impact on their relationship within the academy. It is argued how the relationship between coach and player and the power involved, can influence an individual's behaviour throughout this chapter. Chapter seven details the surrounding academy environment in relation to: form, loneliness, stigma and banter whilst attempting to underpin such data with concepts such as how loneliness can impact an individual and how the power balances within a figuration can influence an individual's actions. The results then conclude on Chapter eight, with the focus being on the pressures that are present within academy football. From contracts to positions and how these regular battles for resources are experienced and highlighted within this chapter, with the last analysis being on the players' future injury awareness and how/if it affects their behaviour.

Chapter nine finalises this thesis, offering a conclusion which stems from the analysis built upon the entire research project. The aim of the final chapter is to highlight the similarities of the themes discussed whilst also exploring the positives and limitations of the study, providing additional thoughts as to what could be improved for future research on the topic of academy football whilst also offering potential future research studies that could be derived from the data within this study.

2. Review of Literature

Much of the past literature surrounding athletic injury focuses upon the professional level of the game (Roderick, 2006a, Roderick, 2006b, Curry, 1993, Young, 1993, and Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). Some of which are not solely footballing based but due to the need for this study to gain an understanding of athletic injury experiences it was deemed necessary to extract from research regarding the elite level of sport as a whole. In addition, the literature reviewed regarding academy football was predominantly statistical based providing figures and not experiences when relating to injured players (McCunn et al., 2018, Tears, Chesterton and Wijinbergen, 2018, Hawkins et al., 2001, and Schmidt-Olsen et al., 1991). Due to the sparsity of experience and sociological based literature regarding academy footballers, this review has a large mix of sources ranging from the elite level of sport and specifically footballing studies to that of academy-based research which are predominantly of quantitative value.

From the reviewing of the academic literature key themes emerged regarding the importance of the academy set-up within football and its impact on the sport as a whole. Academy football can be identified as being an early stage of both a professional club's and players ambitions for success (Le Gall et al., 2006). The governing bodies within England (the FA and PL) consider the development of homegrown talent - youth players involved within English youth academies - as a pivotal factor within their overseeing of the sport in England (Mills et al., 2014). Large scale investment of time, effort and money, has gone into the production of elite level footballers within England (Green, 2009). Such is the emphasis on the acquiring of youth talent, teams are fighting for the best production line; Manchester City spend roughly two million pounds on scouts/youth related costs in London alone (BT Sport Films, 2018). The Elite Player Performance Plan (EPPP) identifies how boys from the age of eight are being recruited into an increased exposure of football specific training and development. However, within today's game, players as young as three are being scouted and approached/signed to academy programmes (BT Sport Films, 2018). In addition, out of all the youth players in England, a success rate of 0.012% (180 players out of 1.5 million) will become a Premier League professional (BT Sport, 2018). With such a significant drop-out rate, there are still academy teams ranging from Under 9's through to Under 21's, with the need for a full squad – anywhere between 15-30 players depending on age (Football Association, 2012). Even though an academy will develop these teams, they are seen as not there to create a team of players, but individual talents who can make the next step to the elite level of the game (Mills et al., 2012). In order to make that next step, players are often asked to push themselves to the extremes and conquer any hardships that they may face (Mills et al., 2012).

Following this was the identification of the first theme; injuries within academy football. The focal point being how injuries were defined and dealt with, inside the academy setting. This ranged from the point of views of the: players, coaches and medical staff from the literature (McCunn et al., 2018, and Pfirrmann et al., 2016). From learning about the injuries, a second theme came to light, scrutinising the intensity of academy football. The extremes that players are expected to succumb to in order to play unearthed the following theme within the literature; the pressurised environments that youth players are surrounded by during their time as an academy footballer. Ranging from, doing whatever it takes in order to secure a professional contract (Mills et al., 2012), to playing through pain to appear 'tough' (Hammond et al., 2014). From past research these strands of pressure are crucial as to why the fourth and final theme emerged. This theme being that academy footballers prioritise football over education due to the importance of securing that professional contract (Grove, Lavallee and Gordon, 1997). As the aforementioned themes have been briefly introduced, each one shall be individually illustrated providing an understanding about how an academy footballer's injuries can impact their livelihoods and experiences within football.

2.1 Injuries amongst youth male academy footballers

Fuller et al. (2006) identify that if a player misses future footballing activities such as training or matches due to pain; it may be classed as an injury. A broad statement that only impacts the player in one aspect of their lives – playing time. Van Vulpen (1989, in Junge and Dvorak, 2000) mentions three defining factors that determine an injury: a reduced amount of participation within the activity, a requirement of treatment/advice on medical grounds and lastly, whether or not detrimental social or economical effects have occurred. If one of the above characteristics is present, then it may be classed as an injury. These factors have a far greater range of understanding regarding the injury with the basics of missing game time – similar to that of Fuller et al. (2006) – whilst widening the prospects that an injury can affect a player in far greater aspects of life.

Pfirrmann et al. (2016) identified how elite youth footballers are twice as susceptible to injury than to their elite adult equivalents during training – through the in-depth study of 18 research articles which had to match a set criteria: 1) data from the studies had to have been prospectively collected, minimizing any chance of error and ensure that the collected data was of a quality nature, 2) had to be a minimum of 6 months of analysis to ensure a competitive period was recorded, 3) must be outdoor football, and lastly, 4) to ensure that individual injury data was documented and assessed. In addition, the range of injuries per 1000 hours of

playing time – of both training and matches - has been identified from 2.0 – 19.4 injuries amongst elite youth football players, that the players would have suffered during the period of research (minimum of 6 months) (Pfirrmann et al., 2016). The most common type of injury amongst youth footballers in an elite environment was muscular related, with the next type of injury being ligamentous – based on a study within a premier league football academy (Tears, Chesterton and Wijnberger, 2018). Moreover, Deehan, Bell and McCaskie (2007, p.7) identified that 79% of injuries involved the lower limbs of the player. In regard to a specified part of the body, Hawkins and Fuller (1999); Hawkins et al. (2001) and Schmidt-Olsen et al. (1991) all identified the knee complex to be responsible for between 12.7% and 26% of youth footballing injuries. Furthermore, player position was correlated to injury risk, with midfielders having a greater risk of injury to that of their attacking and defending counterparts; this was seen as expected due to the distance covered by a midfielder being the greatest out of all three position groups (Deehan, Bell and McCaskie, 2007). Carling, Le Gall and Orhant (2011) and Ekstrand, Hagglund and Walden (2011) discuss how high occurrences of reinjury are prominent, with youth players failing to fully recover from past injury; this was associated with not having enough rehabilitation time concerning the injury sustained. A possible explanation regarding the susceptibility of injury within the youth game. Cloke et al. (2012) offer a solution to this problem by explaining how accounting for rest in relation to training and competition is crucial in the reduction of reinjury. These injury statistics identify and support Drawer and Fuller's (2002) 'high risk occupation' labelling of a professional football players' career - and that is what youth players are trying to chase?

Even though there is data present regarding sports injury within youth academies, as discussed by: Pfirrmann et al (2016), Hawkins and Fuller (1999), Hawkins et al. (2001) and Schmidt-Olsen et al. (1991), there is currently minimal evidence that illustrates how staff within academies, whose job roles are sports scientists or sports medicine related, collect and use their injury data (McCunn et al., 2018). Richardson, Gilbourne and Littlewood (2004) correlate with that of McCunn et al. (2018) in that the insufficiency of injury data within professional footballing academies of their players is a surprise, due to the importance and stature they have within the sport. Within McCunn et al. (2018) study, they discovered how certain injuries were not documented within the academies – 64% stated that injuries of all types were reported whereas the other 36% only recorded injuries that forced players to miss time of play. In addition, McCunn et al. (2018, p.144) learned that not all coaches would review injury data:

> "When asked if coaching staff formally reviewed injury data there was a contrast in responses to medical staff reviewing the data with 24 (51%) specifying that coaching staff did not formally review the data, and 23 (49%) stating that they did".

Why is it that not all coaches are reviewing the injury data? With half of the medical staff from McCunn et al. (2018, p.146) study stating that the coach does not review injury data, McCunn et al. recognised that this component within the role of a coach should be highlighted as since the coaching staff "…potentially have a significant influence on injury incidence since they typically lead the design and delivery of training sessions" and if not aware of such injuries, the coaches are less likely to adapt their training to help the injured player. However, within the same study – by McCunn et al. (2018) – it was unanimously decided amongst the participants that injury data must be collected within the academy. Even though it appears, that more than a third of injuries were only recorded by staff if it was a result in time loss – a damning verdict on the belief and attitude towards injuries within an elite academy environment (McCunn et al., 2018). These statistics regarding the logging of injury data at the youth level is surprising considering the relevance they may have in the later stages of a youth players career – specifically if they make the professional grade.On the contrary of coaches not reviewing injury data and/or a third of injuries being recorded if it was a result in time loss, is the consideration that maybe it does not lie wholly responsible on the coaches or medical staff. Roderick, Waddington and Parker (2000) identified how "many minor injuries…are not reported" (p. 166), explaining why some injuries may not even be within the data seen by coaches and medical staff. In addition, in Roderick's (2006a) study *'Adding Insult to* Injury', one of his participants explained how:

> "I very much wanted to play all the time and when I got injured I wanted to see if I could get over the injuries without telling the manager or physiotherapist…I tried to cover them up" (p.88)

This need for players to continue to perform over their livelihood is impacting their decisions regarding letting their coaches and medical teams know about their injuries. In addition to this, players are continually putting themselves at risk due to their fear of being stigmatised within the club. The name-calling (such as 'sicknote') and jokes aimed toward an injured player, only push the player further in playing or retuning to play too early when injured (Roderick, 2006a). Their desires to play, are controlling their behaviour regarding their own well-being, as well as taking the decision out of the managers hands in not letting them know they are injured (Roderick, 2006a). However, it must be stated how even when informing staff within the club, players are still not treated fairly, with some staff finding it reasonable to make it harder for the player; "…it's okay to make it difficult so that players don't want to be injured" (Roderick, 2006a, pp.89/90). A further reason as to why players do not inform the staff as they do not want a heavier workload, only enhancing the consensus that playing through pain is the norm (Roderick, 2006a, and Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). This behaviour of players

continually performing through injury, especially at a young age could impact their later lives through conditions such as osteoarthritis (Oiestad et al., 2009). Regarding future injuries within an individual's later life, the works of Gabbe et al. (2010) – within their study on youth Australian football league players – recognized that injuries regarding the hip and groin at the senior level can be a result of related injuries within that individual's youth career. Gabbe et al. (2010) data identified how those who suffered from a past hip or groin injury had a much greater rate of hip/groin injury than those who had not suffered from such injuries. Supporting the original statement brought to light by Oiestad et al. (2009) and demonstrating how early career injuries could impact a player's later career. Furthermore, Hammond et al. (2014) argues that athletes are ignoring pain and its emphasis on the body by describing it as a forecasted outcome. One in which footballers describe and accept as expected factors within their professional career, due to the nature of the game (Roderick, 2006a). With the common theme amongst footballer's being that "playing with injury is part of the job and forms part of what footballers are paid for" (Hammond et al., 2014, p.167). The reasons why players continue to place the body under constant extremes in order to play, are however, various. Roderick (2006a) and Hammond et al. (2014) explain how: the constant pressure and fear of losing their matchday place, losing their bonuses, the importance of playing in significant games and the fear of being stigmatized, are all motivation to play through injury.

2.2 Pressures on youth players: mental, physical and emotional stress of striving to succeed.

> "The pressures are to get a pro-contract, the pressures are to own your own shirt, the pressures are the [senior team] manager calling you over to train with the first team and first impressions count. It's a pressure cooker…can they handle that?" (Mills et al., 2012, p. 1598).

In England, the monumentally pressurised environment engulfs elite youth football (Sagar, Busch and Jowett, 2010). Youth players come face-to-face with the intense daily demands of their: coaches, peers and parents, overloading themselves physically, mentally and emotionally in order to succeed in the eyes of those they aim to make proud (Grossman and Lames, 2015). Due to the intensity of youth football education, negative side effects, albeit unintentional consequences are projected (Grossman and Lames, 2015). These consequences being future injuries derived from ones sustained as a youth (Oiestad et al., 2009) and an increase in players not participating in football anymore due to the stress associated with it (Grossman and Lames, 2015). McArdle (2010) supports the work of Grossman and Lames (2015) by stating – regarding injury – players can become emotionally and psychologically traumatised by a physical issue/s. With these injuries, come pressure at the elite level of the game. Hallen and

Ekstrand (2014) mention how the importance of players remaining healthy and on the field of play is crucial for performance and the economic aspect of a football club. In addition, Newton et al. (2017) identified how youth academy directors were concerned with injuries amongst elite youth players due to the result of them missing playing time – which they assumed - negatively impacts the: technical, physical, mental and tactical development of the individual. This pressure placed on players illustrates why some players choose to continue to play through injury. This can be related to the senior level of the game too.

> "We had a player…he had a fantastic attitude as in, he used to play constantly through injuries and they would get worse and worse" (*stated by a player interviewed within* Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000, p.169).

This notion of injury acceptance could stem from the culture of risk associated with sport (Nixon, 1992) and especially football in general (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). The ability for coaches and managers to reach the athletes within the society (also known as sportsnets; a social network within a sporting environment), enables them to usher their beliefs onto the players (Nixon, 1994, and Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). The ideology from a manager that a player having a "fantastic attitude" because they would continue to perform whilst injured correlates with the sportsnet and the pressures placed onto players. Roderick, Waddington and Parker go even further by describing how "those who are not prepared to play through pain and injury are likely to be stigmatized as not having the 'right attitude'" (p. 169). Young players are expected to learn to adopt this 'right attitude' quickly as it is a trait in which managers want from a player (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). Roderick (2006a, p.83) uncovered from one of his participants within his study the treatment players would receive from their manager, if they were unable to perform due to injury:

> "I think he put players under pressure…If you didn't want to play because you had an injury then you were soft…I suppose it could have been a form of emotional blackmail"

In addition, the pressures from the manager were not the only weight being placed on the players shoulders. In the same study carried out by Roderick (2006a, p.85), a Premier League club's doctor explains how one of the players at their club suffers from injury:

> "He was a nightmare, but he was always being injured and off with one thing or another. We spent a lot of time and a lot of money trying to get him fit…We have had players like that which, you know, the slightest pain, they start complaining and saying they can't play"

In addition, Roderick's (2006a) participant uncovers the pressure associated toward the cost of trying to get the player fit again. It appears that not only do the players appear pressurised by their coaches, but also, their medical staff who highlight the cost of the recovery process (Roderick, 2006a). A point which could highlight as to why players are often inconvenienced when injured (train earlier and leave later than usual); a possible tactic used by physiotherapists at the elite level of the game - in order to get the players back on the pitch - and one in which works, as players would "…rather train than be injured" because if injured they are often "…made to 'work their nuts off'" (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000, p.172). A tactic which arguably works as exemplified by the research of Roderick (2006b, p.254), revealing that "many players…indicated that they played no more than five or six games in a season entirely free from injury" and "there's not one player goes out to play who's 100% fit". This notion of pressure, and the player beholding a *'good attitude'* uncovers why players aim to perform as often as possible, with the constant association that they are a worker more so than an individual, and that if they do not perform well or uphold the values of the sportsnet they are associated with, they face a higher chance of rejection from those key figures within the club (Roderick, 2003, and Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000).

With injuries, especially those more serious, youth players were seen as less likely to secure themselves a professional contract (Le Gall, Carling and Reilly, 2009, in, Reilly and Korkusuz). Harwood, Drew and Knight (2010) explain how the possibility of release has a devastating effect on youth players due to the stage of their career they are in (specialising stage – investment of time into a career). With release, this stage of their lives suffers a tremendous setback (Harwood, Drew and Knight, 2010). This is supported by the work of Taylor, Ogilvie and Lavallee (2006, In: Williams) who state how youth players released from their contracts are having their careers involuntarily terminated, which can be seen as a heart-breaking time for individuals – let alone youth players. This sense of insecurity is well documented/illuminated within the study of Harwood, Drew and Knight (2010, p. 12):

> "My son was at XX Academy for three months and his coach comes up to us and says 'I'm really pleased with this squad and I've got no reason at all to change this for a year' and I said to my son 'well you're fine then'. The following week it was 'you, you, you, you, and you are finished'. That was a week after they were told they were gonna be there for a year!".

From the work of Richardson, Gilbourne and Littlewood (2004) this is common within elite youth football as a very small minority of players gain the professional contract they desire. In

addition to the financial matters that place stress on athletes are their: coaches, peers and families (BT Sport Films, 2018).

Hammond et al. (2014, p.166) state how "athletes felt pressure to play when injured from both the manager and fellow teammates". This is followed by:

> "…participants discussed how injured players may be branded as 'weaker than others mentally', 'not tough 'or someone who 'is not going to put their all in' by managers (Hammond et al., 2014, p.166).

This expectancy for athletes to operate fully in competition and training whilst suffering from an injury has become the culture for sport and particularly football; with status given to players who adhere to their environment's rules and expectations (Young, 1993). Those that chose not to succumb to this culture of acceptance are labelled as injured; which brings negativity within the sporting culture (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). Young (1993) recognised how within sport, professional athletes would be praised by significant others for continuing to perform whilst injured; enhancing the injured athlete's reputation. In line with this, is the work of Nixon (1994) who suggests the ideology of 'sportsnets' – a term used to describe the interactional link of members within a sporting social network. Nixon (1992) explains how a culture of risk can be emphasised onto athletes within 'sportsnets' as the athletes are all accessible to one another and those with authority over them (coaches, owners, and physiotherapists). This he labels as a *'conspiratorial alliance'*, in which the authoritative members who control the players, deliberately get the athletes to risk their bodies for the benefit of the authority group (Nixon, 1994). A mostly pressure-free climate for the authority group; however, pressure on certain aspects of the authority group can be singled out as such, owners may want a profitable team so will require their best players in order to win, similar to the coaches perspective in that they want to be successful to avoid pressure from fans and owners, again requiring their best players to achieve positive results, and lastly, physiotherapists will be judged on their ability to keep their best players fit, and so if the loss of several important individuals amount, they may be judged professionally (Waddington, 2000). With this overwhelming sense of entrapment, athletes will acknowledge pain, risk and injuries, whilst disregarding their own sense of welfare (Roderick, Waddington, and Parker, 2000). In addition, the threat of stigmatization within 'sportsnets' can drive a player to continue whilst injured. Players who cannot play due to injury are seen as having little use for their club and can be stigmatized (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). One's perseverance to perform through pain reinforces the outlook others have on them (teammates, coaches, owners) whilst strengthening the sporting culture that it is 'normal' to

play through pain (Roderick, 2006a, and Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). This cultural acceptance that pain is normal and if a player does not play on through injury they should be abused or cast aside is why players continue to perform when injured (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). They are fostering their pain in order to avoid this societal abuse and uphold a sense of pride of themselves (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). This sense of pride requires the individual to not show weakness or succumb to the injury which would then result in them feeling like they have let their teammates down (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). With this instinct to play football, players recognise injuries as inevitable features of their career and one in which has to be accepted (Roderick, 2006a). This is in line with the work of Van Dyne, Ang and Botero (2003) who mention how a notion of professional silence is withholding information of inconveniences, in order to uphold the values of the group. As well as to avoid taunting and 'banter' from their teammates, most commonly questioning the individuals heterosexuality (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000).

Along with the pressures of their sporting culture, is the individuals outside lives. Cook et al. (2014) state how some players may not possess the intense desire to succeed yet try to fulfil their duty to others surrounding them (e.g. parents and peers). Roderick (2012) builds upon this notion identifying that when players are injured, they have a sense of becoming a burden upon their teammates and family; and therefore, continue to perform. These notions of pressure to be able to perform in order to please family and peers, are placing more emphasis on the players to succeed even when they may not want to or be able to due to injury (Cook et al., 2014, and Roderick, 2006a). Along with trying to compete, please and succeed in their team, youth footballers must also account for their educational life (Grossman and Lames, 2015).

With youth football being alongside their educational life, players must balance the two, which can result in overloads of emotional and mental stress (Grossman and Lames, 2015). Grossman and Lames (2015) further describe how youth players: families, coaches, clubs and peers expect a professional football career to be the result of their academy involvement, and how bids for talents further emphasizes this pressure. All of which can result in the increase of physical, mental and emotional stress in which these youth players must battle on a daily basis.

2.3 Summary of literature

Overall, the focal point regarding youth players and injury is the aim to reach the professional level. There are numerous strains placed on the players in order for them to achieve this goal:

physically (playing through injury), mentally (being dropped or released), and emotionally (stress of having to play through injury to please coaches, peers and family) (Grossman and Lames, 2015). These strains are being experienced by a majority of individuals who will never actually make the professional standard (BT Sport Films, 2018). For those token few who do, Holt and Mitchell (2006); Van Yperen (2009) and Holt and Dunn (2004) explain how youth players with high: hopes (ability to operate on the field and off it), resiliency (respond well to adversity), and who receive considerable social support, are in the most favourable position to reach the 'dream' of professional football. However, these factors of individuals are more than tested. The likelihood of players continuing to play through injury is profound due to the stress placed on individuals (e.g. overtraining to succeed and being pushed to the limits by coaches and relatives) (Grossman and Lames, 2015). It is the experiences of these young individuals relating to pain and injury in which this study aims to clarify the need for the players to compete whilst injured and to gain an understanding as to what is more important to these young individuals; their 'dream' or their livelihood?

3. Theoretical Perspective

The aim of this study is to examine and understand pain and injury from the viewpoint of an academy footballer. With this need for understanding, it is important to acknowledge the theoretical framework that will be employed within this study – with this research being from a sociological standpoint the choice to apply figurational sociology relates to Elias' ideology that individuals and society are not of completely separate formations (Roderick, 2003) but in fact a collection of conceptual similarities through: social learning, education and the needs that individual's may require (Elias, 1978) . With this in mind, before the methods of this study are discussed, an overview of what figurational sociology is shall be examined. Firstly, a presentation of figurational sociology shall be discussed and how interdependent relationships fluctuate. Secondly, this shall be followed by examining the impact of power within social relationships and the effects it can have on such relationships. Thirdly, following the discussion of power within social relationships shall be the identification of game models and how power can dictate the outcome of games. Fourthly, an understanding of established and outsider groups will be examined in line with the nature of this research – academy footballers. Lastly, and to conclude this chapter, the importance of the input theory can have on the methodology of research shall be briefly outlined, offering a clear indication as to why theory must be included within the process of research methods.

3.1 Figurations and Interdependencies: An introduction

Figurational sociology – sometimes known as process sociology – has gained prominence within research through the studies of Norbert Elias (Elias: 1987, 1994, Baur and Ernst, 2011, Dunning, 1999, and Goudsblom and Mennell, 1997). Norbert Elias made numerous major contributions to sociological research, in which he developed the basic insights of social processes (Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998); figurations within society being one of them. Elias (2009) [1986] and Baur and Ernst (2011), describe figurations as being a social framework built up of individuals from society who are associated with one another through a set of positions and rules that impact their behaviours. Within each separate figuration, every individual has limitations or opportunities depending on their position (Elias, 2009, [1986]). Elias believed that social scientists should explore and create a wider understanding for people, in relation to the figurations that are created through their own patterned behaviours (Elias, 2007 [1987]). As shown in the works of Harwood, Drew and Knight (2010), academy footballers have the opportunity of progressing to the professional level, yet can be easily released and disregarded, limiting their career prospects. However, because of the ever-changing nature of society and therefore, figurations, an individual's position can change within their figuration, resulting in a restructure of the rules and regulations for the figuration as a whole (Elias, 2006

[1969], 2009 [1983]). Ventura de Morais and Barreto (2011, p.213) recognise this through the interdependencies that are present within a figuration;

> "…interdependence does not concern only a relation between two individuals but also a myriad of relations in which the two individuals are involved and which also have their own interdependencies".

These numerous relations are a dynamic process as those involved are constantly interacting with one another, creating more interdependent relationships within the figuration (Ventura de Morais and Barreto, 2011). With such a complex network - that is always fluctuating - being the outcome, it is understood that no single individual can control such a process due to the various relationships entangled within the figuration amongst a variety of individuals; they can only have a greater or lesser impact on the relationship threads, depending on their position within the figuration (Ventura de Morais and Barreto, 2011).

Furthermore, depending on the individuals position, the importance of such decisions could impact the figuration – as a whole - significantly (if the individual is of importance) or it could only significantly impact a single relationship within the figuration (if the individual is not of considerable importance) (Elias, 2009 [1986]). The degree of impact is dependent on the position of the individual providing the decision (Ventura de Morais and Borreto, 2011). In other terms, the more significant the individual is within the figuration and the resources they can offer (due to their position e.g. an academy coach), the greater impact they can have on the figuration and the interdependencies involved within, compared to someone with little significance and resources (Ernst, 2015) (e.g. academy player). It must be understood that facing adversity and change, individuals within these fluctuating figurations, will gradually change over time too in order to cohabit the society (Ernst, 2015). Goudsblom (1977, p.6) offers a clear summary regarding the changes that can occur within figurations:

> "These figurations are continually in flux, undergoing changes of different orders – some quick and ephemeral, others slower but perhaps more lasting. The long-term developments taking place in human social figurations have been and continue to be largely unplanned and unforeseen".

Fry (2014) shares a similar understanding to that of Goudsblom (1977) and explains how even a single individual's actions will impact those within their figuration due to the link that they share – this is because of the interdependencies involved within a figuration as explained earlier, in that the relationship between two individuals can lead onto new relations between further individuals (Ventura de Morais and Barreto, 2011). And so with one individuals actions being carried out, this leads to the fluctuation within a figuration, in turn impacting the whole

figurational network (Elias, 2006 [1969]). For example, individual A is interdependent with individuals B, C and D, if individual A decided to change their behaviour for their own benefit or out of fear of losing their position within the figuration, they are possibly limiting the chances of individuals B, C and D, of ever attaining such a position, as well as increasing the tension between those relationships threads, impacting the figuration as a whole as a result (Ventura de Morais and Barreto, 2011). It is the above reasoning in which figurational sociology will be useful within this study, as the researcher aims to understand the role in which football and injury, play a part within the academy footballer's lives and how it affects the figuration (academy) they are involved in (Maguire, 2011).

Figurational sociology is underpinned by Elias's claim that people depend on one another through; firstly, nature and secondly, by social learning (education, socialization and generated social needs), existing only in figurations created through such interdependency (Elias, 1978). Van Krieken (1998) identified how Elias argued that an individual's 'second nature' is a socially produced habitus through the interdependencies which are developed. Law and Bloyce (2017, p. 5) explain this clearly with the following:

> "…through the network of interdependencies, we find ourselves involved in, we develop, sub-consciously and consciously, internalized constraints relating to behaviour. This would refer to people acting in certain ways within a figuration…".

An example being, individual A adapts their behaviour in order to fit in with individuals B and C, as well as individual D (who is in a position of importance) who expects them to do so – even though it may not be beneficial for the individual in the long term. Elias (1978) states how, no one individual can be thought of as single or unaccompanied [*Homo clausus*]; people must always be thought of as part of a network of interdependent people [*Homine aperti].* Bloyce (2004) and Goudsblom (1977) support this by stating as soon as an individual is born, they are part of a figuration. From the learning of speech through to how the child begins to act, is all developed within a social interdependency setting (Goudsblom, 1977).

Regarding people's behaviours depending on their social setting, Maguire (1991, p.27) provides a past understanding on this by stating:

> "Human beings do have a natural disposition to learn to regulate themselves, but they also have to learn to regulate themselves according to the social habitus".

Maguire (1991) explains further how this self-control is an internal balance of emotions between impulses and counter-impulses. The individual must ensure their behaviours are suited to their surroundings and not allow themselves to be emotionally controlled. This is

supported by the work of Van Krieken (2017) who identified how individuals have an expectancy to control their emotions in line with their surroundings, disregarding any self-promoting feelings they may have.

3.2 'Second Nature'; Socially Produced Habitus

As briefly mentioned earlier, an individual's 'second nature' stems from their habitus. Van Krieken (1998) explains how Elias argued that habitus is a socially constructed concept that develops through the interdependencies the individuals are involved in. Haugaard (2008) explains further in that, habitus is the focal point as to why individuals replicate the social practices that are the norm within the society in which the individual is bound to. This is examined in more depth by Law and Bloyce (2017) who explain that the behaviour of an individual can be subconsciously and consciously changed in order to fit in with the figuration – all because of the interdependencies they are intertwined with. In acknowledgment to this point, Connolly (2016) explains how Elias uses terminology such as personality structure and social habitus in accordance with the characteristics that those involved within a figuration commonly share. Furthermore, Connolly (2016) identified that Elias investigated how institutions could influence an individual's habitus. Elias (1996) recognised – using an institution he analysed – that the institute was able to influence the behaviour of those attached to it and therefore, adapt the habitus of the individual's. However, it is only over a prolonged period of time, that the social influences that occur can become deeply rooted and explained as 'second nature' (Connolly, 2016). Haugaard (2008, p.190) goes into greater detail of this concept, explaining why 'second nature' is developed;

> "When employees enter a new workplace, they may learn that it is a rule always to 'X' in situation 'Y'. However, as they become habituated, 'X-ing' becomes part of their habitus, and they no longer refer to the rule in their social practices".

They no longer refer to such rule because it has been coded into the norms of the individual's behaviour and has developed into their 'second nature'. It is this development of an individual's 'second nature' and the impact it has on an individual's decision making regarding their livelihood within the world of academy football.

3.3 Power within figurational sociology

Quintaneiro (2005) states how human beings are aligned with one another, with the need for dependency upon those the individual comes into contact with, whilst establishing various connections with others who depend upon them. With this state of dependency among individuals, it can be identified how power has an impact within/on a figuration.

> "…power has to be understood in terms of relationships and networks, so that the power of any individual actor is anchored in the networks around them, and that identity comes to be organized in terms of representation and performance…" (Van Krieken, 2017, p.2)

The statement above summarises power within figurations, identifying that power is not a direct entity for one person to hold, but rather it is dependent upon the individual's position within their figuration (Ernst, 2015 and Fry, 2014).

Elias (1978) outlines power within a figuration further by stating how it is part of the formation of a figuration/human relationship and not an object that can only be manipulated by one individual and not the rest. Bloyce (2004) and Murphy, Sheard and Waddington (2000) supports this further by mentioning how individuals can be in positions of power within their figurations but not totally control the power. The power of an individual within figurations is "anchored in the networks around them" (Van Krieken, 2017, p.2). Fry's (2014, p. 87) discussion from a figurational perspective on power can help explain this; depending on the individual's relationships, their power is either facilitated or deprived – as is the case "between players and their sponsors for example". Building on from this, Dunning and Hughes (2013, p. 67) describe how "…power is 'polymorphous'" and "…that the key to understanding power lies in the interdependency of people". Dunning and Hughes (2013) explain how the term 'polymorphous' simply means it is not bound by one individual or relationship and is diversified throughout a figuration - everyone within a figuration has a form of power to some degree. Leading onto complex relationships and networks in which the owner of power cannot be an individualistic title (Ventura de Morais and Barreto, 2011 and Elias, 1978).

Elias (1978, 2012) offers two analogies regarding power within figurations; firstly, that of the birth of a child and how, from the day of its birth, the baby wields a degree of power over its parents, and not just the other way around. The baby will behold this power for as long as the parents feel a sense of attachment to the baby and caring for it. If the parents were to lose this sense of love for the child, then the child would lose its power. The second analogy being that of the master and slave; it is clearly evident that the master is far more powerful within this relationship and yet they depend on the slave for the continuation of their power. Within these relationships of power and the need for one another, illustrates how power balances are constantly varying (Fry, 2014, and Curry and Dunning, 2015). Furthermore, this can be explained by Elias (1978) in that functions of individuals are given in order to obtain a resource that they lack – much aligned with the parent/baby example in that the baby requires love and the parents provide such resource through their need for the baby. Using the manager of a football team as an example and someone who beholds a certain degree of power over the

players, as, in effect, they are the players gateway to play and so if the manager needs the player to participate in training or a match when they are not fully fit, the player has little power regarding their options if they want to continue playing (Waddington, 2000). This can be associated with the notion of 'risk transfer' involved within the sportsnet figuration (Nixon, 1992). Nixon (cited in Young, 2004), explains how coaches and managers will abuse their power in order to minimalize their own risk of failing; which in turn increases the risk of the player damaging their body further. This is all with the notion of the player doing it for their teammates and benefitting the team (Nixon, 2004). With the players possessing, in this instance, less power than the manager, they often find themselves fulfilling the manager's wishes and increasing their own risk, deterring any notion of safety for themselves. In no aspects are the players in full control of the power, as discussed earlier (Ernst, 2015, and Fry, 2014), as managers or board members could still transfer them away from the club.

As identified above, within figurations the control of power is always fluctuating amongst the individuals involved. The power differential between these individuals or groups, can originate from some holding more power than others due to the need for more resources – because of their position within the figuration (Quintaneiro, 2005). For example, an academy manager needs enough players to fill out their squad, even if they have no intention of promoting all the players to the elite level (Mills et al., 2012). With the nature of power within a relationship being fluctuational, to provide a clearer understanding of power within social relationships, Elias (1978) used a concept known as 'game models'.

3.4 Game Models: an understanding of power differentials within social relationships

Elias (1978) and Bloyce (2004) describes how using games enables others to identify interdependent relationships between people whilst illustrating the evolving power change that occurs within the figurational network. This analysis of power strengthens the view of Elias, of which, power balances similar to the figurations it is encompassed within, are at the very least bi-polar (Law and Bloyce, 2018). This sentiment is further stressed by Dopson and Waddington (1996) who mention how the fluctuation of power is a continuous process.

A way for researchers to understand the concept of 'game models' Elias (1978) provided game scenarios ranging from a very basic ideology in which there are just two competitors, to a more complex one involving teams. Elias (1978) and Dopson and Waddington (1996) explains in greater detail that an increase in the number of competitors within a game, the more complicated its networks become; with the increase in numbers, the power balances between individual competitors reduce drastically, resulting in a more unpredictable outcome and one of which is less likely to be dominated by a lone competitor. It is clear that with more webs of

the ‘game’ being developed due to an increase in competitor numbers, the more challenging it is for one lone individual to control the flow of the ‘game’, resulting in unintended outcomes (Elias, 1978 and Dopson and Waddington, 1996). Building upon the unpredictability of ‘games’, all the competitors actions will have consequences – often being stranger to what was intended by the individual; resulting in sequences of play in which interdependent competitors are unable to associate all platforms of interdependency within the figuration (game) (Roderick, 2003).

On the otherhand, when less competition (players) is involved, it is clear that there will be greater chances for a single individual to control the flow of the game (Bloyce, 2004). Dopson and Waddington (1996) and Dunning and Hughes (2013) identified that the dominant competitor, to an extent, will be able to minimize the actions performed by their opponent (weaker competitor), in turn, allowing themselves to attain a greater control of the game. In addition, the dominant competitor controls the game through having greater control over a larger range of forces amongst the figuration, restricting their opponent whilst also, being able to perform in a respectively secure environment (Goudsblom, 1977). However, this is not to say the weaker competitor is totally overwhelmed:

> “The weaker player, however, does have some degree of control over the stronger player, as the stronger player must take into account the moves of the weaker player” (Law and Bloyce, 2018).

In addition to Law and Bloyce’s (2018) comments, Elias (1978) mentions how even the most superior of opponents will require their inferior opponents so the game can continue. Even though the dominant competitor can restrict the weaker one to most moves, they will never be fully powerful – relating back to Ernst (2015) and Fry (2014), in how power is not an object held by a single competitor.

In relation to this study, the involvement of ‘two-tier game-models’ should be discussed. Elias (1978) describes how groups in which every individual is involved with one another can develop into a ‘two-tier’ group. The difference between the normal ‘game-models’ concept and this one is the introduction of second-tier individuals. The second-tier group would consist of – staying relevant to this study – physiotherapists and strength and conditioning coaches with the first-tier being the academy players and managers (Elias, 1978). Elias (1978) explains further by stating how, without a first-tier, there is no need for a second-tier group. This is because the second-tiers function is directly involved with that of the first-tier. For example, there would be no academy physiotherapists if there were no academy players or managers for them to treat or report to. The need for the first-tier group amongst the second tier-groups

is determinant on whether or not a second-tier game model is established (Elias, 1978). As an example – which resembles a possible similar scenario to this study – the vocal input given by the physiotherapists to the coaches, regarding the academy players, is of direct relevance of the evaluation and possible impact on the performance of the first-tier group (academy players). Specifically, physiotherapists aiming to ensure a player is able to sustain a full 90 minutes rather than rehabilitate the individual back to full health; impacts the player who has to perform when injured and impacts the manager through not having a fit player (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). As detailed above, a complex figuration due to the various impacts that can be a result of decisions being made from first and second tier individuals.

With this complexity in mind, Law and Bloyce (2018) consider how these 'game-models' are, in reality, an analogy and that the elaborate and complicated relationships that are involved in figurational interdependencies relating to power are not accounted for. Yet, these power balances exist within figurations and when the shift of power is so dominant in one individual's favour, a monopolization of power could occur; this is when the distribution of resources needed by some in the figuration is predominantly possessed by a group or individual (Quintaneiro, 2005). At this point within the figuration, it can be considered that the development of established and outsider groups have been created (Quinteneiro, 2005).

3.5 Established and Outsiders

Elias and Scotson (1994a, p. xvi) illustrated that established groups identified themselves by being people "endowed with a kind of group charisma, with a specific virtue shared by all its members and lacked by the others". Those 'others' being the outsider group/s who were viewed as "inferior" to the established (Elias and Scotson, 1994a, p. xvi). Furthermore, the established group often believe themselves to be far superior to that of the outsiders due to the supposed position of power and strength they held; "…a universal human theme" within figurations, and one in which the term 'aristocracy' can be identified as a prime example (Elias and Scotson, 1994b, p.xi). Within regard to this study, similar to the works of Law and Bloyce (2017) - on elite level football managers and players - the managers are expected to be recognised as the established and the academy footballers expected to be the outsiders – until completion of the data collection this will be unknown and based on past literature. The reasons the managers are identified as the established are because they possess the desired resources (their power) for the outsiders. Once again relating to Elias (1978), the outsider group lacks the resources to achieve what they may want to, and so turn to the established for such resources, however, the established require a function provided by the outsiders, creating the established-outsiders dynamic, in which if the outsiders provide their function then they will be rewarded with the resources from the established. Within football, the

managers are the gateway for the players to make it to the first team level as they can provide the players with potential to: huge economical profits, substantial professional development and the chance for players to make their dreams a reality. With this, the managers want to promote those who adhere to their directions. Law and Bloyce (2017) identified how managers (at the first team level) were dubious of players who would not perform for them whilst suffering from an injury, and place greater pressure on those who they wanted to play for them due to results being needed required. This shifting of power placed on those players deemed more important than others by the managers (established group), shapes the aims of those players and changes the demand placed on them too – with greater focus on winning - , with the established requiring greater action from the outsider groups in order to succeed and attain the desired results (Dunning and Hughes, 2013). Contrary to this, managers did not want those players who did not want to perform for them or assimilate their methods of conduct within their team (Law and Bloyce, 2017). Once again, the concept of a shift in balance between the established and outsider groups, as those deemed uncooperative were deemed unnecessary and unwanted by the established groups as their demands are not being met (Dunning and Hughes, 2013). Using Law and Bloyce (2017) study as an example and a similarity to the expectations of this study, it is evident how the managers are the established force within football and the players the outsiders. Furthermore, it is perceived using Dunning and Hughes (2013) work, how the established group can control the majority of the power within the established-outsider relationship: due to the aims and demands of both groups, the established withholding resources available to the outsiders and lastly, the established using 'gossip' as a tool for control. Dependent on the normative behaviours of the established-outsider figuration, determines the nature of the 'gossip (Elias and Scotson, 1994b). The established group can create a perceived negative image of the outsiders after any incident that illustrates what the established do not see as the positive image, they have of themselves (Elias and Scotson, 1994b). Collaborating this with the works of Law and Bloyce (2017) who identified key factors, regarding the association of the established-outsider concept of theory and football relationships between manager and player; the threat that the established group can control the livelihood of the outsider group through the resources they possess – by terminating a player's contract (Waddington, 2000) - underpins the power ratio within this section of theory and correlates to what this study aims to identify.

Within this study, the aim will be to identify if players (outsiders) continue to perform whilst injured, and if so why, whilst also assessing if it is to obtain the resources that the coach (established) can offer them. Overall, the concept of established and outsider groups further

illustrates the power flux that occurs within figurations and more in-depth relationships within such figurations (Dopson and Waddington, 1996, and Ventura de Morais and Barreto, 2011).

3.6 Theory for Methods

After discussing and examining figurational sociology and providing examples of how it could be pictured within this study, the need to briefly discuss the importance of theory relating to the methods of this study is felt needed. Bloyce and Murphy (2008) explain how the importance of theory within one's research could shape the outcome of the study's results; a theory with inadequate evidence supporting it, allows itself to possess the risk of becoming hollow speculation. On the other hand, if empirical research is insufficiently primed through the use of theory, it can be seen as becoming nothing more than fact collecting (Bloyce and Murphy, 2008). The decision to predominantly use figurational sociology rather than a differing theoretical perspective such as symbolic interactionism was because of the previous readings of football and how the figuration, as a whole, impacts the individuals desire to play through pain (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). Which continued to be a proven existence throughout this research's' results. In addition, the researcher felt that symbolic interactionism does not consider the wider social imagery that figurational sociology accounts for in that individuals act in a certain way – not down to their relationships with other individuals or groups – but rather interactions which may have little meaning with regards to the surroundings they are encapsulated by (Aksan, Kisac, Aydin, and Demirbuken, 2009). This is not to say symbolic interactionism was not used within this study - as explained later in the methods section – the researcher accounted for the participants body language and movements when carrying out the interviews in order to know when to probe further or move on. The minimal use of symbolic interactionism throughout this study is why there is little discussion of it and the researcher felt that if this theoretical perspective was not as suited to this research compared to figurational sociology due to the environment being studied.

The need for theory is evident within research to ascertain appropriate data, however, the theory must be relevant to that it is supporting. Baur and Ernst (2011) identified from their research on Norbert Elias that he believed methods within research should assist theory and not the other way around. In addition, Elias (2007[1987]) goes even further by stating how researchers often chose to suit their methods in order to avoid problematic scenarios within their study such as not asking questions that should be asked during their data collection process. Fundamentally missing out on data that could prove crucial to the study. Since this study shall be using semi-structured interviews to collect data (discussed in *Methods* section), the researcher felt the need to input theoretical thinking behind their questions. Through the examination of the literature and theory surrounding academy and professional football, the

researcher gained an understanding of the figuration to be expected and how to develop the interview guide to produce the best results possible for the study. For example, introducing questions within the interview guide surrounding the nature of the coaching or medical staffs procedures and views if a player was suffering from an injury and how this made the player feel is evident that a figuration within football is being considered and how the relationship between player and significant individual (coach/physiotherapist) is impacted through injury. In addition, these questions were based around how powerful individuals within the figuration (predominantly coaches) viewed the injury and how this made the players feel. Furthermore, emphasising the use of theory within the interview guide to produce the best possible results (Elias, 2007[1987]). Green (2000) identified semi-structured interviews as an effective method of obtaining data on a particular figuration from the individuals involved within the network. Moreover, Roderick (2003) stated how a tool such as semi-structured interviews can prove to be helpful for allowing the researcher to unlock aspects of the individuals consciousness regarding the figurations they are involved with. A crucial element needed for this study, as the world of football is one of a closed nature (Kelly, 2008, and Law and Bloyce, 2017).

4. Methods

This chapter will discuss and critically evaluate the research methodology used within this study. In undertaking an examination of professional youth academy male footballers and their experiences with pain and injury, it was decided that the use of semi-structured interviews would be the appropriate method for data collection. Furthermore, the aim of this chapter is to, firstly, examine the rationale for the methods used; secondly, to discuss the sampling strategy that was chosen and lastly, provide an understanding of the data analysis procedure.

4.1 Research Approach

Since this research relates to the study of society, a research method that is suitable for such adversities is required. Qualitative research is such a method; it allows for the use of past theoretical principles to aid the researcher in discovering new social concepts (Flick, 2018).

> "…qualitative research is defined as a research process that uses inductive data analysis to learn about the meaning that participants hold about a problem or issue by identifying patterns or themes" (Lewis, 2015, p. 473).

Within this study, the issue being studied is male academy footballers experiences with pain and injury, and so the lead researchers aim, through the use of qualitative methods was to uncover the sociological aspects of male academy footballers lives that currently has limited knowledge. Building on Lewis (2015) definition of qualitative research, McLeod (2015) supports the notion of learning about the participants issues through providing them with a platform for speech. Greene (1994, p.541) previously identified the same concept as McLeod (2015), understanding how qualitative research "can effectively give voice to the normally silenced and poignantly illuminate what is typically masked". The hopeful illuminations mentioned by Greene (1994), are the focal point in which qualitative research can highlight to a wider audience (McLeod, 2015) and then provide a basis for change. With qualitative research focusing on words over quantity of numerical data (Bryman, 2008), it is vital that the researcher does not hide within their research but takes a lead within the study, through observing (of participants) or gaining personal accounts (through interviews with participants) over the course of the data collection process (Flick, 2008, and McLeod, 2015). Sandelowski (2004) explains further how the conducting of qualitative research – through the understanding of individuals views – helps discover how the social world is produced; in this case the thoughts regarding pain and injury of academy footballers. With this in mind, it could be argued that within the methods of research, a theoretical association should be identified. Elias argued that the methods of a study should aid that of the theoretical understanding of the researcher (Baur and Ernst, 2011).

As previously mentioned above, qualitative research aims to give understanding to a social world that is not normally heard (Greene, 1994). In regard to a theoretical approach within the methods, Elias (2007) understood that a social scientist's aim is to gain an understanding of a social world and all the individuals within it. In addition, Elias (2007) felt too often that researchers would make the theory serve the methods in order to make lighter work for themselves; such as not asking questions that should be asked during the data collection stage. With this is mind, this research study considered the notion of being able to ask questions if areas of research arose within the participants answers, thus the reason semi-structured interviews were adopted – which shall be discussed later in this chapter.

4.2 Research Design

Sport itself, is a social phenomenon that possess a vast array of external possibilities in regard to the individuals that are associated with it; all of which impact the individual in the sense of if one characteristic changes, so does another (Gratton and Jones, 2009, and Jones, 2014). This study adopted a case study approach within the social phenomena of sport, that is the pain and injury (*contemporary issue*) experiences of male academy footballers from one professional football academy (*case study*) . Yin (2003, p.13) defines a case study as:

> "…an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomena and context are not clearly evident".

Aczel (2016) portrays that the purpose of a case study is for the researcher to examine and analyse the statements of the participants involved. Furthermore, Aczel (2016) notes that the researcher immerses themselves within the phenomena as much as possible in order to gain a full understanding of the phenomena being investigated – in the case of this study, the researcher carried out the interviews on the academy site within a room in which the players were accustomed too and the researcher was not. This is to distinguish the case study approach from previous and other experimentation - where the environment is manipulated and controlled by the researcher - with the hope to provide as much of a real-life context as possible for the participants (Gog, 2016). Risk (2013) and Vaus (2001) explains how a case study adopts that of individual participant data collection methods (semi-structured interviews) due to the large number of external factors at play within the phenomena, especially when the context of the research has a critical role; in this case, separating the participant from their social figuration in order to understand their true sense of emotion regarding pain and injury. This allows the researcher to generate clear examinations of individual participants and then potentially provide a general understanding of the social

figuration (male academy football) to which the participant belongs. Therefore, adopting a case study approach is suitable for the examination of pain and injury experiences amongst male academy footballers, by entailing a detailed account of real-life evidence of male academy footballers. However, it must be stated how the findings from a case study approach can be deemed too general and not represent the whole foundations of the phenomena being studied (Bryman, 2012) ; in this case, the participants involved may share similar views but that does not mean the entire male academy footballing population holds the same perspective. With this in mind and even though it is not entirely possible to certify that the findings of this study correlate with that of other male academy footballers, it is contemplated that the sample used within this research provides great detail and variety which will result in an evident and illuminating response to be presented. Despite the possibilities of the findings being general within a case study, it is argued that this was the best approach to undertaking this study as it was also employed by others within in-depth research of professional football (Law, 2018, and Roderick, 2003).

4.3 Sample Size and Selection

Within this study, the researcher used two types of sampling methods to identify the participants: purposive sampling and criterion sampling. In order to attain the participants and carry out both purposive and criterion sampling a gatekeeper was needed. An individual that can allow or decline admittance within a research setting through the position they behold can be referred to as a gatekeeper (Berg, 2004). Furthermore, the gatekeeper can have a prominent influence on the success of the research; due to them being the deciding factor on giving permission for the research field to be accessed (McFayden and Rankin, 2016). Within this study, the gatekeeper process was a two-stage formality. Initially, the gatekeeper used was that of the lead researchers supervisor, who used to be a professional footballer player and had a contact within the *study academy*. This contact (a coach in the *study academy*) then acted as the lead gatekeeper of the research study as they enabled the lead researcher the opportunity for access to the participants. In order to gain these participants, myself and my supervisor visited the academy before undertaking the data collection stage, in order to meet with the lead gatekeeper at the academy and provide the academy footballers and staff an understanding of what the research study was about and aimed to achieve. This then led to those who were interested in volunteering for the research study (which shall be discussed later); becoming the sample used within the study. It must be noted that at the beginning of this research study, a hope of 15-20 participants were explained but due to the nature of the academy footballing world and time constraints players have, a sample size of 10 was recruited. It is assumed however, that this has by no means impacted the research in a

negative way, as the descriptive nature of the data collected seemed proficient at the time of the interviews. In addition, with the world of football being a difficult one to enter if the person entering is deemed an 'outsider' (Kelly and Waddington, 2006) having a gatekeeper in my supervisor enabled this study to be carried out.

The first sampling method to be discussed is purposive sampling. The choosing of participants who will provide a relevant, detailed and informed account regarding that of the research question is viewed as purposive sampling (Creswell, 2007, and Sandelowski, 2000). In addition, the choice for a purposive sampling method was due to the openness accustomed with it regarding the data collection procedure (Flick, 2008). Rubin and Rubin (1995) examined how purposive sampling allows the flexibility to ask further questions when needed during the interview process, which correlates with the lead researchers decision to do semi-structured interviews. The undertaking of purposive sampling is one which is not new to qualitative sociological studies but widely recognised and implemented (Hickey and Roderick, 2017).

Secondly, criterion sampling was used because as previously mentioned, the need for professional academy male footballers underpinned this study's success. The determination of select individuals who met the criteria necessary to participate helped attain the sample (Jones, Brown and Holloway, 2012). Participants were required to be a male professional academy footballer who was currently contracted to an academy at the time of the research study ranging from the ages of 17 – 23; this age range was identified as suitable as the *study academy* provides teams up to the u'23's (oldest academy selection before first team), with the researcher aiming to utilise the resources available to them as much as possible. The sample was targeted due to the need for an in-depth account of academy football within the social sciences regarding pain and injury. A total of 10 participants were interviewed with these interviews being carried out on the 14th/15th March; some participants had very brief encounters with first team football but were not full-time first team professionals. The table (Table 1.0) below indicates the participants: age, time at the studied academy, and if any first team appearances were made prior to the research study – even though this is deemed irrelevant due to them being predominantly still involved within the academy set-up at the time of the interview.

Table 4.1 – Academy Sample information

Participant	**Age (Years/ at the time of the interview)**	**Time at Study Academy (Years and Months/ at the time of the interview)**	**First Team Appearances (*if applicable)***
1	19	2 years 8 months	N/A
2	20	1 year 7 months	N/A
3	17	1 year 8 months	N/A
4	19	2 years 8 months	N/A
5	(unknown however, involved in u18's)	2 months	N/A
6	17	1 year 8 months	N/A
7	21	1 year 7 months	N/A
8	19	2 years 8 months	N/A
9	19	(unknown)	11
10	19	2 years 7 months	N/A

4.4 Data Collection

Interviews have held an important position in qualitative research for many years (Bryman, 2007). Over the duration of this time, interviews have developed into the most prevalent form of data collection method within qualitative research (Holloway and Wheeler, 2010; Brinkmann, 2013, and Rapley, 2001). A reason for this could be the need for rich data (Bryman, 2007); which is answered for and given through the interviewing of individuals to gain an understanding of their experiences and the emotions attached to these experiences (Tong, Sainsbury and Craig, 2007). This led to the lead researcher in undertaking a semi-structured approach due to ability to further probe the participants when it felt necessary in the hope to gain greater quality of data in the topics that were of interest. Brinkmann (2013, p.21) supports this:

> "…semi-structured interviews can make better use of the knowledge-producing potentials of dialogues by allowing much more leeway for following up on whatever angles are deemed important by the interviewee".

Which in this research, hoped to be pain and injury of the participants. Jones, Brown and Holloway (2012) argue further that semi-structured interviews allow for this evolvement of the

interview and data richness due to the freedom the interviewer has to ask follow-up questions regarding the “angles” stated by Brinkmann (2013).

Throughout the data collection and interview process, the format of the questions was shaped around expected categories (Potrac and Jones, 2009) – which were built through an understanding of past literature and studies related to similar research topics. This would be dependent on the answers given by the participant and allow the researcher flexibility to ensure the path of the interview was one in which was worthwhile for the research, without restricting the participants answers from possible new topics (Wright, 2007, and Brinkmann, 2013). The implementation of probing questions was included which allowed the researcher to encourage the participant on building on points of interest. A pivotal inclusion within the data collection process due to the closed and personal experiences that the participants were sharing and discussing.

With the personal data in mind, all interviews were carried out on a one-to-one, face-to-face arrangement; allowing the researcher to visually identify any body language expressed by the participant which in turn could be signs to use probing questions (Maccoby and Maccoby, 1954). Throughout the course of the interviews, if the participant was unsure of a question (and did not already ask for it to be repeated), the lead researcher would reiterate the question again. In addition, through face-to-face interviews, the lead researcher was able to grasp an understanding of minimalistic movements; in correlation to the questions or answers being given to/from (e.g. the participants eye contact and fidgetiness: foot tapping, hand movement, leg movement). Building further, all interviews were held within a reasonably quiet, and private room at a location the participants were used to and felt comfortable with. This was hugely decisive in order to create as comfortable an atmosphere for the participant as possible, with the hope it would ease their minds into providing a rich amount of sensitive data knowing that their answers given would be of protection from their peers and mentors - a common issue when studying the world of football due to the cautious nature footballers have regarding ‘outsiders’ because of the publicity of the sport (Roderick, 2014). With the nature of the interviews being approximately 30-60 minutes, due to the in-depth detail hoped for, the lead researcher accepted any proposed dates and times the academy and players willing to participate could do – similar to that of Roderick (2006c), who identified how the substantial time needed for the interviews often meant the lead researcher must adapt to their participants needs. Furthermore, Hammersley (2013) recognised that in carrying out interviews in a setting in which the participant is more natural in and the interviewer is the outsider, provides a greater chance that the participant will be minimally affected by the interviewers presence and, provide greater understanding regarding the topics of interest due

to the privacy that the interview is situated in. The participant is able to uncover the realities of their emotions without having to appear on a front that they may display whilst with their teammates (Hammersley, 2013, and Goffman, 1959).

4.5 Brief Reflection of the Interview process

The interviews carried out within this research were rewarding, providing the researcher with a generous amount of rich data. Before the interviews began, the researcher introduced themselves to the participant being interviewed, attempting to build a rapport between interviewer and participant; to make the participant feel comfortable with the interviewer and less stressed about the interview. A simple question as to how the players felt before the interview and their daily activities seemed to prove constructive; which in turn, the researcher felt contributed toward the valuable data that was collected from the interview process. The freedom provided through the use of semi-structured interviews (Brinkmann, 2013) proved insurmountably beneficial. In addition, the interviewer was able to uncover knowledge through the use of follow-up questions which was not given on the initial pre-set interview questions. However, even with the large and resourceful data collected, the researcher felt as if further avenues could have been explored on few occasions within the interviews and were missed possibly down to human error with the interview process being carried out within a short period of time and constant interviewing - which was best for the *study academy* due to the daily schedule the participants had to succumb to regarding their footballing careers. This is seen as more of an expected nuisance rather than a concern for the research, because as stated previously, the data collected was prosperous.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

This research study was given ethical approval by the York St John University Cross School Research Ethics Committee. The identification of two pivotal considerations within this study were that of anonymity and confidentiality. It must be stated a sub-consideration was illustrated too in the sense of consent during the data collection process; which shall briefly be discussed. Informed consent is the exemplifying of the participants involvement within the study at their own free will (Green and Thorogood, 2004, Berg, 2001, and Flick, 2008). It provides the participants with an understanding of the study they are voluntarily involving themselves in, whilst informing them they can withdraw from the study (Holloway and Wheeler, 2010, Berg, 2001, and Wiles, 2012). It is believed by the British Psychological Society (2009) to be a key principle in professional guidelines for the social sciences and a focal point for ethically sound research practice.

Confidentiality is the purposeful course taken - by the lead researcher - to actively eradicate any forms of identification that arise within the study (Berg, 2001). Furthermore, it is the underpinning of the participants privacy and aligns with the principles of freedom (Oliver, 2003, and Gregory, 2003) promised to the participants within the participant information sheets. With the amount of rich data provided within qualitative research, the criticality of confidentiality is of the upmost importance, due to the possibilities of a source of rich data or person who's mentioned within the study being identified by other people who may know them. With this in mind, the confidentiality of the participants and anyone/association mentioned within the data collection process, has guaranteed confidentiality (Flick, 2008) through the use of anonymisation.

Berg (2001, p. 57) defines anonymity as follows, "anonymity means that the subjects remain nameless". Anonymisation is the primary technique used by researchers to protect their participants and any association/people also mentioned (Wiles, 2012, and Grossoehme, 2014). This is achieved through the use of pseudonyms; which has been applied to any "participants, organisations and locations" (Wiles, 2012, p. 50) labelled throughout the study. Anonymity is a central feature of ethical practice because of its safeguarding impact (Wiles, 2012). Within this study, anonymity was a key focus because the participants were all at the beginning of a hopefully long career in a closed social world. With this in mind, participants were concerned with the information they shared being anonymised, with some discussing the matter with the lead researcher upon the completion of their interview, ensuring they would be fully anonymised throughout the process; as once again, the participants did not want the data given to impact their future prospects within their careers. At the start of every face-to-face interview, the participants were informed they/or anyone they mentioned would be anonymised when it came to the write-up of the results/discussion of the study. In addition, every player was fully reassured that no piece of named information would be released as this could severely impact their long-term careers and encroach the participants privacy.

4.7 Data Analysis

The data analysis method used within this study was that of thematic analysis. However, in order for thematic analysis to occur, the audio-recorded interviews needed to be transcribed verbatim. Davidson (2009) identifies the transcription process as a key feature within qualitative research. Furthermore, the accounts that are provided from transcription are that representing the society that the research is focused upon and the morals within such society (Baker, 1997). Not only are the transcripts used to help develop and shape the theoretical position of the researcher (Du Bois, 1991) but also, used as evidence for the researcher's claims from an analytical perspective regarding the research (Duranti, 2007).

Patton (2014) argues that the analysis of data can sufficiently only be completed through human production; even though it can be a time-consuming effort. One of the first stages of thematic analysis is the identification of emergent themes from the data that correspond to the works of past literature and the researchers estimations from such literature (Bryman, 2007, and Quick and Hall, 2015). These correlations with that of past work allows for the researcher to compare and contrast the findings of this study with that of past ones (Quick and Hall, 2015); creating new visuals on the chosen field of study (Burns and Grove, 2011) – in this case, pain and injury amongst male academy footballers. Once the identification of themes has occurred, the researcher then deciphers and develops them into codes (Burns and Groves, 2011, and Bryman, 2007). Flick (2008) argues that thematic analysis and the method of analysing codes and categorizing data, is one of prominence regarding data taken from an interview. The undertaking of thematic analysis by the researcher involved the manual reading and highlighting of relevant points of data within all the transcripts collected. The assessment of every answer given to every question was considered with those being deemed relevant coded and categorised by the researcher. Even though this was a time-worthy account, the choice behind thematic analysis being used was because the researcher had previously undertaken this method at past educational level and had not used data software packages such as NVivo before. NVivo is well renowned within qualitative research and considered to be of sophisticated software analysis (Jones, Brown and Holloway, 2012) and so, the debate of learning a new software package to then code the data on such software, over manual thematic analysis was considered but ultimately, manual thematic analysis was chosen due to time constraints of learning a new software to produce similar results from the manual effort.

Overall, the themes that became apparent from the data analysis process, illustrate and illuminate the factors impacting and experienced by male academy footballers regarding pain and injury. In order to reach these themes, and as discussed above, was through what Braun and Clarke (2006) label 'theoretical' thematic analysis. This form of data analysis provides the researcher with a less detailed record of the data; however, it produces a greater analysis of certain aspects of the data because of the specific nature of it. For example, during the coding process of the data, significant points of interest were highlighted and grouped into categories. An example being, if comments such as cuts and bruises were mentioned by the participants, this would be categorised as a minor injury if the participant believed it so – this would be theoretical thematic analysis due to the specified code in which the researcher can then relate to the theoretical sociology such as cuts and bruises being minor due to the players habitus; which has developed from the figuration they are involved in and the importance of opinion

from people of power within such figuration. The researcher would get the participants to declare whether or not they felt their injuries were of a minor or major concern during the interview - as ultimately it was their injury. Furthermore, these categories were then deduced into overarching key themes. With respect to this, the following key themes emerged which shall be further scrutinised as the next few chapters of this paper: Injury outlook, playing/appearing injured, the academy environment, and lastly, the pressures of football. This paper will now go onto discussing these key themes in greater detail, firstly investigating the participants perspectives on injury.

5. Results & Discussion

This chapter will undertake the examination and discussion of the themed general dimensions that were established when interviewing male professional academy footballers. These general dimensions identified are subcategorised even further as the exponential amount of data gathered covered numerous topics related to the study and shall be discussed as such in further subheadings under an umbrella dimension title. Within this section the focus shall be directed towards the personal accounts of the academy participants involved and their understanding of injury. With respect to this, the following key themes emerged which shall be further scrutinised as the next few chapters of this paper: Injury Outlook, Playing/Appearing Injured, the Academy Environment, and lastly, the Pressures of Football. This paper will now go onto discussing these key themes in greater detail, firstly investigating the hopeful futures that the participants foresaw for themselves.

5. Injury Outlook

5.1 Minor Injuries; A Player's Perspective

With an understanding of injury being the purpose of this study, a factor associated with injury – pain – needs to be defined. Howe (2016) explains how pain is the identification of an injury which results in a traumatic emotional experience from suffering damage to the physical body. The participants introductory question relating to the study was to provide their own sense and understanding of this injury issue. The general consensus amongst the players were that pain is "something that hurts", as summed up by Participant 2, along with the feeling of it being "uncomfortable to…continue" (Participant 1). Participant 6 supports this further by stating how their understanding of pain is "until you can't play". A clear identification that the participants involved within this study are already relating to the footballing 'norms' of continuing to play until they physically are unable to do so (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). All of which relate to the physical embodiment of pain; tissue damage that occurs which could result in being acute or chronic pain in the future (Howe, 2016) .However, some participants did discuss how pain can be more than just physical. Participant 10 describes how pain is "something you feel obviously…it can be physical or emotional". Building further on this, Participant 8 illustrated the idea of emotional pain as

> "within football without, like not being able to play…watching others play, knowing that you can't, do it for, however long…however long my injury is".

This correlates with that of Roderick and Schumacker's study (2017, p. 169) in which it was described how "It is terrible when you sit in the stand and watch other players playing in your

position". Considering the prepared sacrifices youth players are willing to make regarding their lifestyles and education (Platts and Smith, 2009) and their dream-chasing attitude (BT Sport Films, 2018), it is understandable as to why, when they miss out on games, players do not enjoy it.

The participants predominantly based their evaluation of minor injuries not on what they were specifically (e.g. a cut on the head, or a dead leg) but more so on the length of time they would be ruled out for. Some expressed how minor injuries can be played through (Participant 1), others expressed how they would be out for up to a month (Participant 8). Regarding the view of Participant 1, they stated "…every game you know you're never go in or come out of a game fine". This acceptance of injury, no matter what injury it is, is damaging to one-self and expresses the culture of risk that is associated with football (Roderick, 2006a, and Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). Participant's 2 and 6 build further on this and explain how "that's just football I wouldn't really look much into it" (Participant 2; regarding a teammate being ruled out with a minor injury) and "[it's] part of football so it's a contact sport" (Participant 6). A clear representation that the overall perception of risk identified by Roderick (2006a) and Roderick, Waddington and Parker (2000) exists within the study academy and at the academy level. One in which has been evident within the elite game from previous studies (Law and Bloyce, 2017) and now recognised within this study, at the elite developmental stage of youth footballers. A culture of risk that has been created and derives from the sportsnets – a web of interactions, particularly within a sporting environment, between members of a social network that can directly or indirectly link one another - as identified by Nixon (1994) in how athletes are exposed to messages of belief (from their coach/es) that pain and injury is normal and should be accustomed too (Young, 1993). Furthermore, reinforcing their 'norms' onto the players of accepting such risk culture behaviour, through their position of power over the players (Nixon, 1992, Nixon, 1994, and Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000).

In addition, Participant 8 expressed how they had suffered from minor injuries; "I've been out for a month or so…you just can't wait to get back really". Even with their injury at hand, players crave to return to play as shown by Participant 8 - this could be associated with the figurations that the player themselves are involved in, as removing football from their lifestyle, removes them from a large part of their figuration and in turn the society that encapsulates them. Moreover, players do not want to be removed from this 'society' any longer than they have to, especially when individuals of power (coach/es) can offer them resources to help with their future career (e.g. game time, contracts, first team call ups). And so, the supposed need for players to continue to perform and rush back from minor injuries, is to avoid scenarios where they miss out on such resources due to prolonged periods on the side-line. In addition,

one participant explained how they had "…a few niggles as such…and then patella tendonitis that was probably over the last 3 years" (Participant 9). In no capacity did Participant 9 state that their ongoing patella tendonitis stopped them from playing over the course of the 3 years. This shows how even though the participant was suffering for 3 years, because it was viewed as a minor injury they continued to perform. Once again, through the social construct for players to normalize pain and injury (Roderick, Waddington, and Parker, 2000, and Hammond et al., 2014) – through the sportsnet that they are associated with, and the biased social messages that are reinforced from the coaches (the fostering of pain) (Nixon, 1992, and Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000) - it is evident with Participant 8, that minor injuries are deemed not serious enough to spend time away from the game and that the societal beliefs instilled into the players seems to overpower their welfare.

5.2 Major Injuries; A Player's Perspective

With regards to major injuries, the participants held slightly different views to that of minor injuries in defining what they would class as a major injury. Some participants would associate the timeframe they were ruled out for as an indicator whereas others seemed to be more concerned with what the injury was. For example, Participant 1 states

> "I've had injuries where I've been out for 3 months…it's not been a major[,] major injury but I did something to my ankle ligaments…still to this day don't know what…"

Then probed further regarding major injury, Participant 1 continued

> "…I think major injuries I'd class as a break[,] as an injury that really does rule you out for a season…I think maybe the fact that I don't actually know what I did to my ankle[,] maybe that makes it in my head not a major one"

Clear evidence that due to the fact Participant 1 was unable to clarify what the injury was, they did not class it as major. This is in comparison to other data collected from the participants who classify major injuries purely on timeframe and games missed during a season. Participant 4 specifically highlights their major injuries, "broke my cheekbone" and "I tore…meniscus", stating further, "that's my major ones I'd say, they're the ones that kept me…out for more than, more than 4 games". This adoption of classifying injuries as major, purely on timeframe, can be associated with the acceptance of players never playing a match fully fit (Law and Bloyce, 2017). Furthermore, validifying the societal norms that the players share/are exposed to within the sportsnets (Nixon, 1994). The overview that major injuries are based on timeframe rather than being injury specific, from the players, gives insight into how the

messages within the figurational sportsnet is not one of the injury but more so, how long the player will be removed from the 'playing' figuration - players in the squad who can still train/play matches and have a purpose for the club (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). With this in mind, if a player is forced to miss a match or numerous matches because of injury, then it strays away from their usual behaviour of performing when injured (Curry, 1993) and with the realisation of being forced to sit out through injury could result in the player identifying the injury as major. Furthermore, since many minor injuries are not reported (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000), if a player misses a match/or matches, they will have reported the injury to the coach or physio and so could base their injury on this. Both participant's views on major injury illustrate that it is solely down to the individual to determine how they classify the injury. "…different players have different pain thresholds" (Participant 1), is a clear and concise understanding of how the participants regarded injury and identifies that even though the players are associated within a footballing figuration, each player is individual - as it takes a collection of these individuals to create the figurations normative behaviours (Baur and Ernst, 2011). However, these figurations within sport are often in the form of a sportsnet; the established group (coach/es, physio's or owner's) empowering set characteristics/beliefs onto the outsider group (players) – through the resources they can offer them (e.g. contract and game time) (Elias, 1978) - which develop into the figurational 'norms' (Nixon, 1994, and Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000).

With these major injuries comes the pain that they produce. Relating to the earlier points on pain, major injuries seemed to be a large contributor to both physical and emotional pain. Firstly, the physical pain brought about by major injuries is that of the nature of the injury. As illuminated by Participants' 4 and 7, both of which described their pain for their major injuries – Participant 4: torn meniscus; Participant 7: slipped disc – as "…I couldn't straighten[,] couldn't move it without immense pain" (Participant 4) and

> "I slipped a disc and and in a lot of pain…since then I've, I've not quite been, normal in the way I move…off the pitch[,] on the pitch…so I kind of adapt the way that I, move and play because of pain…it's the[,] the fear of it happening again" (Participant 7).

For both injuries, which clearly impacted the players physical capabilities, pain is a prominent factor. However, as stated by Participant 7, they continued to play on even with such a serious injury, they just adjusted the way they physically moved in order to feel less pain and out of fear of reinjury. A sentiment recognised within Law and Bloyce's (2017, p.393/394) study on football managers' behaviours toward injured players, in which it was uncovered that there was an expectancy for players to continue to perform through injury (reinforcing the sportsnets normative behaviour conduct) – however, there was a recognition that not all

injuries can be continued with – "You know there are injuries you can't do it with…the ones you can I expect my players to play". This managerial perspective recognises that even if a player is not 100% healthy, the expectation on them to play does not differ from if they were fully fit. This expectancy could stem from the severe pressures which are faced by the coaches within the footballing world: need for wins and trophies, therefore, the stress placed on players deemed important by the coaches to play is significant – as coaches do not want players who will not conform to their expected normative behaviours (Law and Bloyce, 2017). Moving onto the second factor of pain; the emotional aspect, with long term injuries such as (e.g. torn meniscus, slipped discs, ruptured anterior cruciate ligaments, ruptured Achilles etc.) comes the impact of emotional trauma. Participant 10 identified this in regard to their ruptured Achilles injury

> "…I've obviously been through some physical pain because I'm injured at the moment[,] I've ruptured my Achilles tendon…on top of that I guess theres a mental pain that comes with that[,] because you can't play and you can't train[,] you can't do what you usual, what you love and what you wanna do so, theres a pain that comes with that in the mental side".

This notion of missing out on what they love to do correlated amongst most of the participants. The emotional and mental stress associated with major injuries evidently impacted the players welfare. The time missed on the training ground and matchday pitches clearly impact the mental state of the players – since academy footballers are interdependent with their teammates and coaches, by missing time with them and their figuration, the players behaviour will require adaptation to less interdependent relations occurring due to their injury and time away from the game. The notion of "you can't do…what you love" (Participant 10) is a clear indicator that emotional pain can affect one's self as much as the physical pain itself. This notion of emotional and mental pain of having to miss time on the pitch is one which correlates with that of Roderick's (2006b, p.252) participant's in that "Oh, I don't like watching matches. I hate it." – this was in respect to the players relational tensions that arise within the figuration, knowing that they are missing game time and someone else is playing instead of them (Roderick, 2006b). In addition, a representation that the power balances between the injured player and the replacement player have changed and fluctuated in the favour of the healthy player as they now possess a position of greater power – since they are the one performing for the club and the spectators. In turn, a clear indicator that the mental effect an injury can have on the players leads to them despising their injury and time off, possibly even pushing them away from football. A point in which one participant even went as far to say as "…knowing you're out for 9 months…could put you off" (Participant 6), when discussing the

mentality of long-term injuries. Even with the chance to earn an opportunity to make it professional, the mental impact that comes with major injuries is a serious one and one in which, as stated by Participant 6, is believed to make some players reconsider their profession.

Similar to earlier points made regarding minor injuries, the participants provided the belief that "you're never gonna have a career where you don't get injured" (Participant 9) whilst discussing major injuries too. Law and Bloyce (2017, p. 394) uncovered this issue within their study, and how football players are very rarely healthy throughout a footballing campaign; "Managers from all levels suggested it was almost impossible for players to be 100% fit throughout the season", further scrutinising the attitude within football of playing injured. An attitude in which most of the participants shared, in that they accepted major injuries in football and were resigned to the fact that it will naturally occur within the game (Roderick, 2006a, and Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). This ideology provides support that within youth players, the expectancy to perform when injured has become a part of their habitus and is second nature to them as explained by Participant 10, who states how "…injuries are a part of football". It seems that the strength of the figuration's acceptance of injuries within youth football – that has derived from the biased communication from the 'established' groups towards the 'outsiders' within the sportsnet (Nixon, 1992 and 1994) – has created this habitus for the players to be accepting of injuries and the continuation of playing whilst injured. This exemplifies the work of Roderick (2006b, p.255), who states "As a career risk factor, the threat of injury underpins the fragile and uncertain nature of playing careers". This statement further correlates with that of Participant 5 from this study who stated how

> "…with injuries, just unpredictable really and that's where it gets a bit scary because you could go out one game and you never know how long you could get injured for, or you could and just be fine".

The realisation from Participant 5 that their career could end in a heartbeat is one they describe as "scary" and "unpredictable"; much aligned with Roderick (2006b, p.255) description of a footballing career as a "fragile" one. Whilst it is recognised that injuries can occur sporadically and are a natural occurrence within football, how they are portrayed by the player can be determined by factors such as: the coaches and physiotherapists importance of game time and the stigma associated with injuries (Kortaba, 1983). The following shall focus primarily on the views of the coaches and physios views on injuries, and what steps the academy took in dealing with injuries.

5.3 The Perceived Perspectives of Academy staff on injury

Whilst injured, it is recognised by Hammond et al. (2014) that the athlete/s feel pressurised by their coaches to continue to perform. This is a shared consensus with that of the participants of this study. A variety of views were provided by the participants regarding how the coaches had communicated (or not) with them whilst they were injured. Ranging from verbal pressure, to totally ignoring the players. Participant 1 explains how "I think coaching staff more than anyone they push ya to try and get back, even if you're not ready". This was similar to that of Participant 4 who stated how "…some, coaches are, very old school…some that go[,] [']ah if you got a dislocated finger…put it back in[']", and went even further to say how some would tell players to;

> "f***ing deal with it, get on with it, it hurts, but you gotta push through it, if you, if you love the game, you will get through it".

A representation of how Nixon's (1992) sportnets can coerce people into a culture of risk, especially when the athlete is contactable by the coach/coaches, who generally have a sense of power over the athlete within the environment they are associated with. Furthermore, with the coaches (within the coach-player relationship) being the 'established' group, they can exert their power over the players ('outsiders'), in order to get them to perform (Law and Bloyce, 2017). With the resources available (team selection, contract offers and key roles such as captaincy) that the coach can offer, through their position of power over the players (Elias, 1978); the enticement to play, can get the players to perform when needed – as the coach is able to withhold such resources, meaning the players must provide a function for the coach in order to obtain such rewards (Elias, 1978). It must be stated how Participant 4 went even further and explained how this type of communication "…is sometimes very motivational but sometimes it can do more harm than good…don't get me wrong I still think they're great coaches". These ideologies from Participant's 1 and 4 illustrate how the conforming of players occurs in order to avoid being identified as a weak individual or weak link within the team (Roderick, 2006a). These views of the body being transferred from coach to player is underpinning of the work of Messner (1992), in that, males – due to the social identity of masculinity - start to identify themselves as more of a tool than a human being when pain is involved, which can be correlated to the above comments made by Participant 4. Roderick, Waddington and Parker (2000, p.169) interviewed a player who shared similar thoughts regarding coaches and their feelings if a player continued to play through injury; "They think it's fantastic. Brilliant. He's out there dying for the club". This corresponded with that of Participant 1 who stated how

> "…some of the coaching staff[,] I think sometimes they, would almost pressure you into training earlier than you're ready to train because they want you to be ready…".

Demonstrating how it can be a football first nature within the academy set-up, as well as that of the elite level of the game. Along with the pressurised situations players faced, a different type of emotional stress could be placed on the player by the coach. Participant 2 explained how whilst injured, the coaches tend to be less apparent within the footballer's lives:

> "…I think…you're actual coaches don't tend to speak to you as much cos you're not out on the pitch[,] you don't see them as much, you'll only see them here and there and then, the only question they'll really talk about is if[,] if you're gonna be back soon or not"

When asked 'why do they do that?' Participant 2 responded with:

> "…sometimes obviously they care[,] they wanna know when you're coming back but I think sometimes it's too, try and get in your head…".

A situation that has been present at the top tier of football (On the Line, 1996, p.170, in: Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000):

> "Bill Shankly, regarded by many people as one of the greatest ever football managers, refused to speak directly to players who were unavailable for selection as a result of injury".

Roderick, Waddington and Parker (2000, p.170) went even further with their results with a statement being "injured players aren't worth spit…you are no use to us if you are injured". This act of pressurisation and silence from the coaches towards injured players could be regarded as a showing of dominance and power within the coach-player relationship. The act identified by Participant 1 – of coaches pressurising players into returning from injury early – demonstrates their superior control over the players; through the resources they can possess to offer the players, and so the players conform to their wishes (Goudsblom, 1977). However, the player is not totally powerless in this situation as no individual is ever completely powerless (Murphy, Sheard and Waddington, 2000), as explained by Participant 1 regarding coaches who believe the player is fit but the player themselves know that is not the case,

> "…they can't see what's wrong with you…especially my ankle[,] like I could walk about on it absolutely fine but as soon as it went anything above a walk it would give me pain…I got pulled aside in a few meetings sometimes by coaching staff saying ['']look ya know nothings wrong with ya['']…and it was quite hard to hear cos I'm sat there ya know wanting to be out training, wanting to be ok and a few weeks after that meeting I tried to rush out and told the physios that I'm fine and strapped really heavily and tried to run on it, I've come in after 10 minutes cos I can't do it".

Participant 1 initially ("a few weeks") asserting their power of their function and use for the coach in order to ensure their fitness and disregarding the norms expected of them within the sportsnet they are associated with. However, Participant 1 still forced themselves back earlier than they should have due to the pressures placed on them by the coach; representing the power struggle between the player-coach relationship and how the coach's ability to pressurise the player has restricted their actions and resulted in them trying to come back to early (Dopson and Waddington, 1996). Even though the player attempted to withstand the 'norms' of the sportsnet they are entrapped in, evidently the power and resources beheld by the coach (established) reinforced the values of the sportsnet into the player (outsider) in trying to play through their injury. Similar to this and to try and gain an understanding of the apparent 'silent' treatment, as explained by Participant 2; this could be the removal of resources from the coach to the players, limiting the players ability to succeed within the relationship and therefore, their environment (Dopson and Waddington, 1996, and Elias, 1978) – as the coach offers the players paramount resources such as: contracts, team selection, captaincy and possible first team selections. In addition, the pressurised climate that a coach works in, impacts their decisions on players, as they want those who are willing to conform to the behaviours they desire (Law and Bloyce, 2017). Once again, if players do not conform to such behaviours, resources such as: contracts, game time or first team opportunities can be removed as a threat to the players. Between Participant 2's explanations and Roderick, Waddington and Parker (2000), clear similarities can be drawn. Some coaches, at both the academy and elite level, completely ignore players who are not able to carry out their jobs. Giving more reason to believe players are viewed as machinery more so than people (Messner, 1992). However, Participant 2, did shed some belief that the coaches do care whilst you are injured but are playing more on the emotional aspect of the players commitment to football. However, some participants provide a counter argument to that of the verbally pressurising or 'ignoring' coach. Verbal assurance seems to provide a major uplift for academy players when injured and it is recognised that some coaches offer this to those injured players rather than ignore them all together like that of Bill Shankly (On the Line, 1996). Participant 6 summarises how the "coaches tell you to stay positive…". Participants 7 and 10 go into greater detail, explaining how

> "…I was trying to play in the first team[,] they were trying to reassure me and say [']you'll come back[,] you'll do this[,] you'll do that[']…trying to, keep[,] keep my confidence and belief that I could[,] can come back from it" (Participant 7).

This can be followed by the similar thoughts of Participant 10, who singled out a particular coach;

> "he's helped me a lot[,] he's done a lot…that's helped me and he's made me feel like I haven't been forgotten in the football league".

Two clear representations that some coaches are not all about the football and do care about the 'bodies' involved (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000); contradictory to past studies beliefs and the general consensus of how coaches view the players, these two cases illustrate that not all coaches prioritise football over the players welfare but vice versa – albeit a rare commodity within the footballing world it seems. However, these differing angles could stem from the perspective of differing players in positions of importance or lack of importance. Participant 2 may have experienced the 'silent' treatment more so than Participant's 7 and 10 because they felt they needed to "…find the right club that will suit me…", an apparent indication that the relations within their current figuration are not what they had hoped for and clearly contrasting to the relationships expressed by Participant's 7 and 10 in their above experiences with injuries. Building on from this, a possible specific reason for Participant 2's differential treatment compared to that of Participant's 7 and 10 could be there direct relationship with the established groups within the figuration. As identified from Participant 7, there perspective is that the figuration they are currently involved in is not right for them, relating to an apparent fluctuation within their relationship in their figuration. Furthermore, Participant 2 explained how "…football is very corrupt" and it is more about "…who you know and who likes you…" rather than being based on talent. This can align with the notions of the established-outsider relationship - within the following or disregarding of the expected behaviours within the sportsnet impacting the outsiders prospects of succeeding within the figuration. As detailed by Participant 2, their feelings regarding the current figuration is one of negativity with little promise for the future – a clear divide in the relationship networks. Roderick, Waddington and Parker (2000) identified how managers would (at the elite level) scout players with a "…good attitude" (p. 169) – which could be demonstrated through players "…being prepared to play with pain or when injured" (p. 169). In addition, this characteristic was regarded highly and players with such an attitude would be recognised as a "…good professional…" (p. 169). Following the basis that, those individuals who would adopt the norms of the sportsnet they were involved in and develop a habitus of playing through pain and injury; being rewarded – by the established group - through being kept at the club as a result. Whereas, players who did not share such behavioural traits and who do not conform to the behaviours expected of them by the coach would be of no use to the club (Roderick, Waddington, and Parker, 2000).

Coaches are not the only staff involved within the academy set-up who have a first-hand look at injuries. Physiotherapists look after and are at the forefront of injuries within football,

attempting to help/speed up the recovery process of the players. The general consensus amongst the participants, was that of positivity regarding the physiotherapists within the study academy. “I think the medical staff were always very professional about injuries because that’s their job” (Participant 1). This concise and clear insight provides a summation of the physiotherapist’s role within the academy. The matter at hand for the physiotherapist’s is the injuries that they are confronted with and nothing more. Furthermore, Participant 2 explains how “…we’re always prepared to play” and builds even further by stating how “…they’re always there to help”; whether this was strap work on past injuries or massage/rubs on muscular injuries. Participant 4 also mentions how the physiotherapists, “they’re not doing it for themselves[,] they’re doing it for you”. The general satisfaction within the study academy was of the upmost positivity, especially considering one of the participant’s past experiences in which “there was only ever one physio but some day you would never like see her” (Participant 5). On the contrary to the positivity within the academy environment, is the physiotherapists at the elite level. It is not regarded as obscene to make an injured player’s life harder when injured; an inconveniencing rehabilitation schedule is common – as elite players do not have to be present at the club all day when healthy – and so it deters players from going through rehabilitation procedures, and rather continue through injuries (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000, and Roderick, 2006a). Whereas, at the academy level having that access to the injury rehabilitation process and staff, gave the participants greater belief that they would return without further issues, as explained by Participant 1, “…the structure they give you here at the club is very very good…it progresses and it eases you back in…”. A clear difference in approach between the academy and elite levels of the game, with a possible reason for this being the pressures faced by the physiotherapists. The participants recognised that due to being at the academy level there was “…no pressure on injuries” in relation to the physiotherapists rehabilitation process/time schedule (Participant 9). This is in complete contrast to that of the elite level in which within Roderick, Waddington and Parker’s (2000, p.173) paper, it was stated, “You…manage the level of injury irritation to play ninety minutes of football” - clearly indicating the football first nature at the elite level. However, the academy rehabilitation process is not all positive.

Similar to that within Roderick (2006a, p.85) study in which it was stated how “He was a nightmare…always injured…We spent a lot of time and a lot of money trying to get him fit…”, specific pressures within the elite game – time and financial – are both present within the academy level too. Participant 6 explains how,

> "I think it was good…other players…younger players, especially [,] do not get the…like the MRI scans as quick as they should do I think…I got it quickly, luckily and then they sorted it out".

This was probed further as to 'why that may be'; "Well it cost…it quite costly to[,] to do it" (Participant 6). Even though Participant 6 received the treatment quickly, they still understood and uncovered how that is not always the case depending on who you are – in this case, the younger players. This scenario occurred with Participant 3 who felt "…they could have taken me for a scan, which they didn't", and when asked 'how this made them feel?', Participant 3 explained how it was "…rubbish, cos some players got scan…" - seemingly placing blame toward the physiotherapist for not offering them the opportunity to have scans on the injury. These above quotes underline that some factors are still in consideration from the elite level of the game into the academy situation, especially when those matters are financially based. Furthermore, this could represent how key players can take priority over others, as they are of greater importance to the 'established' groups (coaches/physiotherapists). This is because the individual who can control the game scenario has greater power than those who cannot control such games; since the 'established' has pressures to succeed within the footballing network (Law and Bloyce, 2017), they will provide the 'outsider' individuals the resources for such treatment. With those individuals who are not powerful enough to control such games, seemingly missing out on such treatments. Another example of how the 'established' group can assert their dominance over the 'outsider' group – in rewarding them with rehabilitation methods - yet relying on individuals within the 'outsider' group to perform for them when it matters, due to not being in total control of the power (Elias, 1978). In addition, those individuals (such as Participant 6) who received the treatment and seemingly possess greater power over the younger players, may be identified as being more inclined to reach the first-team level and so are provided with the resources by the 'established' group first; as they are seen as more valuable to the club, coinciding with Mills et al. (2012) explanation how academies are in place to promote individuals rather than teams. However, the overall assessment from the participants within this study were that of praise towards the physiotherapists and the academy, when dealing with injuries and felt sufficient care was taken in order to restore them to full fitness.

After discussing the injury outlook of minor and major views of the players and staff within the academy, it is evident that interdependencies within the academy are pivotal in determining how the player themselves feels about an injury (Roderick, 2006a). It is assessed that the participants assessment of injury was more so regarding timeframe rather than the injury itself. If they experienced a prolonged time period – generally a matter of months – away from

the game, it would be deemed a major injury. Anything they felt they could play on with, was a minor injury. A matter in which shall now be the topic of discussion for the following chapter.

6. Playing/Appearing Injured

6.1 Playing with Minor Injuries

"…playing with injury is part of the job and forms part of what footballers are paid for" (Hammond et al., 2014, p. 167). Even though this quote is from a study exploring professional footballers at the elite level, it corresponds with that of the academy level too. All of the participants within this study admitted to playing through a minor injury whether that was in a game or training at some point in their career so far.

> "…that idea of[,] alright I could get, could get through the game with a niggle and be fine then ermm I'm always gonna try and give it a go…" (Participant 7)

This expectancy of injuries - as identified earlier within this study - seemingly provides reason as to the participants all commonly expressed how they would sustain pain for football. In particular, for matches more so than training; Participant 1 provided a visualisation of their feelings toward training and matches when carrying a minor injury;

> "…I would put up with more pain for a game than a training session only because I can miss a training session and let it rest in anticipation for it to be ok for a game, ya know at the end of the day I'm kinda always wanting to be right for a game, rather than trying to be right for a training session and miss a game, and I think that happens quite a lot with any player".

Hammond et al. (2014) discuss how the importance of playing - for the athlete – overwhelms the idea that they are in pain, as clearly shown with the quote from Participant 1. In addition, this expression toward minor injury only serves further to the works of Young (1993) in the recognition that there is a culture of acceptance of injury. Another example that came to the front was that of Participant 10 who expressed their thoughts regarding full fitness in relation to a game;

> "just thoughts like [']am I gonna be able to complete this game[']['][,]['][']am I going to be able to, you know[,] last the full 90 minutes[']".

A worried aspect of the academy players thoughts whilst injured is not so much the injury itself but whether or not they could continue to perform and fulfil their duty as a footballer for the "full 90 minutes" (Participant 10). This was discussed with Participant 9 too, who explained how their injuries would be "manageable" and would "…have treatment which allow[s] me

to[,] to play through it…". Further strengthening the argument of Young (1993) and the case of tolerance amongst injuries. This normality of players continuing to play through minor injuries and normalize themselves with pain (Curry, 1993), is deemed to uphold the values of those who attain a higher position of power (e.g. coaches) (Roderick, Waddington, and Parker, 2000); beholding characteristics that are valuable to those in power, is seen as profitable for the individual (player/s). In this case, a way in which the academy players believe that playing through minor injuries in matches will earn them the recognition from their coaches (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000) to potentially earn the resources that their coaches can offer to them (contracts, game time and key roles such as captaincy). Even though as identified by Participant 6;

> "theres times where I've been very tight…maybe shouldn't have played but I wanted to play and maybe it, it hasn't helped in the long run".

Participant 6 recognised that continuing to perform would have no physical benefits in the long term, and yet continued to play. This example identifies how players have adopted the behaviour of others within their figuration due to the interdependent relationships they are involved in within the team (Law and Bloyce, 2017) and how within this environment, the expectancy is to play when injured (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000) – creating a habitus for the players in which playing through injury is deemed as second nature to them, and anything other than that is regarded as offensive to the figuration as the core behaviours are not being upheld (Durkheim, 2001). It is these situations which could be damaging to the individuals later in life, especially when major injuries are considered too.

6.2 Playing with Major Injuries

From the interviews of this study, only a few of the participants expressed how they had continued training or playing with a major injury. Participant 1 explains how their view of a major injury was that of

> "…you've rolled your ankle and it's starting to flare up[,] I think then that becomes a pain where you know you can't continue almost…and even more serious stuff like…tear a muscle…or a break".

The requirements of tearing a muscle or breaking a bone are the most clear and defined ones from Participant 1. Clear damage to the physical self; damage in which could hinder the individual in the future too, especially if the individual attempted to continue to play on with such an injury. This was the case for Participant's: 6, 7, and 9, who all describe how their injuries prolonged due to continuous performance. Firstly, Participant 6 explains how they

would be "…fine on the anti-gravity treadmill and then I'd go outside and then it would just hurt again…it was just a delayed process". This case relates to that of Roderick's (2006a) and Roderick, Waddington and Parker's (2000) notion that players will allow themselves to test their pain in order to resemble the professional attitude that is required of them. Participant 6 kept on trying to prove they were healthy when in actual fact, they kept delaying the process because of their wish to recover too soon. This was similar to the cases of both Participants 7 and 9 who continued to perform because they felt their injuries were controllable. Participant 7, in relation to their slipped disc injury, explains how

> "…at the start I wasn't too worried and then, it didn't really go, couple weeks and it was still in pain…I started to panic a bit[,] thinking with ermm it connects to a lot of other things".

Even with the recognition that it was their back and how it is associated with the rest of the physical self, Participant 7 put football first. Fuller and Hawkins (1997) argue that this case is present within society and football because the players are not put at the forefront of physical welfare and safety. This correlates with the interdependencies that the player has established with other players and coaches, always learning that the need to perform through injury is what is expected of them (Roderick, 2006a), becomes the 'norm'. Anything other than the 'norm' within the figuration is seen to disrespect the individual's interdependent relationships – due to the disregarding of the collective group's attitude (Durkheim, 2001). If one individual does not uphold the values of the figuration as a whole, the relationship threads they have in their interdependent relations will suffer from an increase in tension due to the 'abnormal' behaviour by the individual in the eyes of the figuration (Durkheim, 2001, and Ventura de Morais and Barreto, 2011). The continued allowance of a player to perform whilst suffering from an injury – such as a slipped disc in Participant 7's case – is one in which could cause future problems (Fuller and Hawkins, 1997). It must be stated how Participant 7 understood the possibility of future problems that could arise with the continuation of playing and that they "…should have realistically said ['']no I'm looking after my body['][,] but I didn't". A possibility that players do recognise these issues, however, is this of any use if they are to ignore it due to the society that surrounds them and the views held by the networks that are incorporated within these societies (Nixon, 1992, Van Dyne, Ang and Botero, 2003, and Roderick, 2006a). Furthermore, the strength of the figurations 'norms' placed onto Participant 7 seem to outweigh their own welfare; players believe it is right to continue when injured due to the sportsnet they are involved with and the messages being passed to them by individuals of power (coaches) (Nixon, 1992) and so their second nature has developed into continuing when injured. In addition, the ability for the coach to wield their power and promote their

messages to the player is through the use of resources (contracts, game-time etc.), and since players are fighting for their dream to play at the professional level (BT Sport Films, 2018) they will uphold the values of the coach in order to benefit from such resources, whilst also being afraid of being released from their contracts too – as the coach can enforce such power plays (Waddington, 2000).

Along with the issues regarding their networks views that entrap these players, are the credit that is associated toward them for continuing to perform. Participant 9 explains how their back pains were "manageable" and "…I was probably one of them ones who didn't say the full extent of it…". This is coherent with that of the works of Roderick (2006a) in which he uncovered how players would not disclose crucial information with that of their coaches or physiotherapists in order to perform. In addition, Participant 9 explained further how "…I think they all gave me credit for[,] playing cos everyone knew I, I felt my back…". When pressed further on players giving credit to one another for playing injured, Participant 9 continued with "…everyone wants you to give your all for the team…you expect that from each other". Once again, a clear relation to that of Curry (1993) and Durkheim (2001), in which players will disassociate themselves from pain because it is seen as 'normal'. However, the clear statement that Participant 9 received 'credit' for performing whilst injured, parallels that of Young (1993) who encompassed how players could be promoted within the squads societal ranks for risking themselves for the team. This is supported by Roderick (2006a) who stated how the less information provided, the less chance that that individual would be discredited within their social network – in this case the academy environment – ensuring that the figurations behaviours are upheld and the 'norms' of the figuration do not change. Similar to that of Participant 7, Participant 9 offered some promise in the way of future welfare; "…like I wish I'd er maybe said something before…", however, this was then counteracted immediately with the following statement being "…then I don't in a way cos I'd never have achieved what I done, so it's a bit of a, 50/50". Even though the realisation of future problems is one of great risk, the credit and achievement of short-term rewards seems to outweigh these possibilities of a damaged future wellbeing. As evident with the cases of Participant's 7 and 9, the players decision making is clear in whether or not they play or sometimes even express to their staff if they are injured; all because it is deemed that the resources in which those in power (coaches) behold, are viewed as more important than their own health (Hammond et al., 2014, and Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). Highlighting how the societal belief within academy football revolves around the potential rewards with which the coaches can bestow upon the players. Furthermore, it is clear that academy football has similar issues to that of the elite level, however less focus is placed on such matters due to the minimal research/exposure it

heralds compared to the global scrutiny of the elite level. The evident need for players to be educated about playing through injuries and ensuring they inform medical staff is currently being belittled by the empowerment of chasing their dream (BT Sport Films, 2018). The constant desire for players to earn contracts or playing time - due to their figuration's beliefs – is affecting their judgment on their own health (as identified with Participant's 7 and 9 earlier), resulting in an injury acceptance attitude (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000).

6.3 The Decision to Play: A Coach's or Player's

Hammond et al., (2011) identified this further with the notion that players behaviour patterns would change in order to avoid missing prolonged periods of game time through having surgery and would wait for such treatments until the off-season. This suggestion co-aligns with evidence that has risen from this study. Participant 2 provided a statement that could serve as a summary for a few of the participants in how they think when injured;

> "…if I've felt injured and decided [']look I'm not going to the physio[,] I can stay out[,] do whatever I, do training if I want[']".

With this comment the researcher aimed to understand further as to why players would conceal injuries and why they would abuse their bodies through their choice to play. Participants 1 and 10 gave great insight into this matter. Participant 1 explained how

> "…ya know it's a 50/50 chance whether I probably could play…and I've decided to play, and not tell the coach only because I'm scared that the coach will pull you out because of the injury".

This resembles the work of Roderick (2006a) who uncovered how players would not inform their coach or physiotherapist of injuries due to their desire to play. As shown with Participant 1, their fear of being removed from the line-up because of injury, has given them a reason to continue to risk their welfare in order to get game time. From a theoretical understanding this 'fear' of not telling the coach in order to play and not lose their position in the team can be associated with the power balances at play within the social network of the academy. Participant 1 recognises that their position in the team is dependant upon the coach – the individual able to grant/refuse resources due to position of power – and so refuses to tell the coach about their injury; removing the possibility of the coach not playing them and them missing out on such resources. A clear indication how the coaches superior control over the players can impact the decision making of the players and allows the coaches to dominate the societal group (Goudsblom, 1977). A wider sociological issue in the world of football, and one in which is not only evident at the elite level of the game but the academy level too (Roderick,

2006a, and Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). Furthermore, Participant 10 provided an insight into their decisions on injuries in that when asked about informing the coach of minor injuries they admitted; "I never have personally" (Participant 10). Probed further on the matter, they gave greater detail;

> "Just because for me that, that's sort of like an excuse…if that makes sense cos I don't want them to think 'ah you know this guy' he's using that as an excuse if he does something wrong and when I know even if it's a minor injury…I could still get through it" (Participant 10).

This correlates with the works of Roderick, Waddington and Parker (2000, p.160) once again, who mentions how "many minor injuries…are not reported". Again, this can be associated to the wider networks within football (Roderick, 2006a) and the stigma that comes with being injured (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000) – which shall be discussed later. However, the term 'excuse' from Participant 10 can be focused on in the sense they believed that coaches will label injuries as a 'get-out clause' for players if mistakes are made. This comment can align – in part – with Roderick (2006a, p.79) who explains how "…players who are injured must not only look the part, but they must also play the part". This can be linked to Participant 10's statement because the expression of one's injuries as an 'excuse' means from the players perspective they have to perform through it. Whereas, with Roderick's (2006a) terminology and expression how injured players must 'act' injured too, may be an appearance, player's must possess in order to escape this 'excuse' mind frame and perspective they believe the coach withholds of them. On the contrary, to Participant 1 and 10's mindsets on injuries being a players decision to play on with, was that of Participant 4 who explained how "I could say what I want but I probably won't play". This can be supported by that of Participant 6 who mentioned how on gameday's especially, "…physio's make a decision…100% it's the physio's". Both simple and clear indications how some players felt that, no matter what the circumstance, the physiotherapists would have the final determination on a players injury and return to play. Within this study, there was also findings of some players who felt a mixture of feelings regarding their own decision to play in the sense of they felt they had a say in their own injury but with the physiotherapists guidance. Participant 7 was the best example of this, explaining how

> "I think it should be the player ultimately that decides [']I'm fit enough['], but I think it should be…I think the physio staff should, first of all say you're fit enough…".

A quite contradictory statement in that even though Participant 7 believes that the player should listen to the physiotherapists assessment of the injury, it is "ultimately" the player's

decision to play if they want to. Suggesting a notion of power play between player and physiotherapist, in which, it is evident that the player may believe themselves to be of greater power than that of the physiotherapist, however, should consider the advice given by them. This power balance between player and physiotherapist could stem from the player's views on resources that are offered by the coach, and so they sometimes disregard the views of the physiotherapist in order to attain such resources and align with the 'norms' of the collective figuration. A theme that is an underlying issue within the footballing world because of the many factors (power resources that the coach can reward) associated with the sport: game-time, contracts, positions, stigma and big-game/big-player importance for the team.

With regards to playing through pain for important games or the expectancy on an important player to continue to perform if injured, Participant 6 provided an insight into a moment in their career;

> "…there was a time…a youth cup match and ermm, I was coming back from injury and I thought[,] i[,] I don't reckon I'm gonna make this date…I was kinda forcing it, and…playing through the pain…".

Highlighting the term "forcing it", is paramount within this account of Participant 6's injury, because they expressed how a single match was deemed more important than their own physical welfare and potential long-term career and health; yet they chose to continue. This correlates with the works of Roderick (2006a) and Hammond et al. (2014) who explained how within the professional level of the game, players would use important games as a motivator to overcome and play through their injuries. An association between the two worlds of football – elite and academy levels – and how they are not too dissimilar. Furthermore, the need for a team's important players to perform was deemed as another element with regards to playing through injury. It was identified how pivotal these players who could "win you the game" (Participant 7), are in relation to football. Participant 5 explains further how "it would depend on…who the player is, how[,] how big the player is in the team"; assessing that they feel the need for these players to continue is more important than the individual's own health. Especially if such a player has a greater chance of controlling the game; if the individual is considered to be an important player, their power over others on the field of play will be greater than those they are playing against and so can control the game more (Elias, 1978). Even though with an increased number of individuals being involved within the game, the more complex it is and the less predictable it will be, if the player wields a greater amount of power over the rest of the players they can still to an extent control the game (Elias, 1978) – it is these players that Participant 5 is referring to when describing "…how big the player is…". Furthermore, it is an outlook that requires players to put the team before their own health; a

representation of the figuration that the players are involved in and that the individuals lives are being sub-consciously adapted to fit their environment (Goudsblom, 1977). Such environment being that of the sportsnet they are interwoven within and the constant influx of normalization regarding pain and the need to perform through it, rather than assessing the situation and realising the need to support their own welfare and not play through injury (Nixon, 1994, and Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). This was expressed in more depth by Participant 1 who stated how "…say you were playing in the champions league final the[,] the next day and you don't wanna clamp your best player…". Even though Participant 1 is not relating to the academy level of the game, their perception of important games acting as a defence for a team's best player/s correlates with that of Participant 5, in that the need for important player's is crucial in a team's success.

6.4 Appearing Injured or Tough

The scrutiny of certain players and their positions stemmed even further than just being expected to play if you are an important player but also, depending on your position could impact the way you are expected to appear in front of staff and teammates. Participant 7 emphasized this, explaining how "…you don't wanna show a sign of weakness, particularly that's my mindset, I don't want to ermm being a defender". They continued on with;

> "…like I said being a defender it's something you definitely don't wanna show, a weakness to your opponent…it's them building that general ermm, that perception people build of you…you wanna be seen as a big kind of strong, bust, centre back…in sport you wanna, you want to win I guess and…not gonna win being weak".

This "perception" that players should control their pain and not allow any signs of "weakness" to be shown can jeopardize one's health. Allowing their self-image to control their livelihood can cause damaging affects especially if it leads to more serious injuries through the continuation of playing. In addition, this adopted behaviour by Participant 7 because of their position group represents that of the expected behaviours they believe should be upheld by defenders. As a whole, the footballing figuration wants to continue to perform when injured for resources that can be offered or fear of them being removed by people of power (coaches) (Waddington, 2000 and Law and Bloyce, 2017). Furthermore, with Participant 7's comments that specifically defenders should appear as "strong" and remove weakness from their game, shows that within the footballing figuration, there can be preferred positional beliefs too. Participant 7's habitus will have been shaped by the footballing figuration but also, by their positional importance within the team and the interdependent relationships they have with other defenders (Law and Bloyce, 2017); since the perception of defenders as explained by

Participant 7 is one of toughness, throughout their time as being a defender the positional belief would be to appear “big kind of strong” (Participant 7), and so Participant 7 would be encompassed by interdependent relationships all believing the same culture of how to be a defender. And so, not only is the reinforcing of a culture of risk being employed within the figuration by people of power (Nixon, 1993), but also the creating of and adopting of set behaviours associated with positional groups also appears relevant as to why players feel the need to continue to perform whilst injured and not show signs of weakness. Moreover, the mindset shown by Participant 7 is similar to the works of Cook et al. (2014), Gucciardi, Gordon and Dimmock (2009) and Jones, Hanton and Connaughton (2002) on mental toughness. Gucciardi, Gordon and Dimmock (2009) explain how success in sport is linked with mental toughness and the ability to succeed whilst being under extreme pressures (e.g. injury) (Cook et al., 2014, and Jones, Hanton and Connaughton, 2002). In addition, Cook et al. (2014) directly associate with the words of Participant 7, on the matters that, due to the physicality that can be involved within football, the criticality of maintaining a ‘tough’ persona is of primary concern to the individual – especially when injured. Furthermore, the similarities between Participant 7’s desire to ‘win-tough’ and the understanding of Gucciardi, Gordon and Dimmock (2009) that to succeed in sport, the individual/s must behold a large degree of mental toughness, illustrates the issues within the elite game and how it is now affecting the development pathway to the elite level too. It must be stated though that Participant 7 did understand the danger of the ‘tough-self’ and expressed how “…I should make them [a] bit more aware (physiotherapists)…then again I think coming back to the weakness thing[,] I don’t wanna show”. A quote that almost shows the battle within the individual in that for the greater good of their health they recognise they need to inform the physiotherapists of their injuries, but their desire to win and avoid the possibility of being stigmatised – for not being ‘tough’ - is considered more important. In line with this desire to be ‘tough’ due to the threat of stigmatisation, Participant 1 commented that “I think that’s just the game[,] like everyone wants you to[,] to be tough and to be hard”, this was followed by “I think cos if you’re soft…you won’t get anywhere in the game” – another relation to the figuration’s behaviour being implemented within this young player as they are accepting that it is “…just the game”, representing how their habitus has been developed into accepting that toughness is needed to succeed. A similar sentiment expressed earlier by Participant 7, in that the requirement to conform to the figurations behavioural norms – in this case toughness – is paramount in achieving success. If the adoption of such behaviours does not occur, the player’s chances of success are reduced as potential resources from the established group are withheld due to a lack of conformity (Law and Bloyce, 2017). Once again, verdicts that can be associated with the mental toughness points from Cook et al. (2014) and Jones, Hanton and Connaughton (2002),

in that to succeed in sport, toughness is a required trait. In addition, Hammond et al. (2014, p.166), identified that "injured players may be branded as 'weaker than others mentally', 'not tough'…by managers". Since the coaches at academy level are the one's who can promote your name further up within the football club (because of the power of their position), the need to impress them is of predominant importance to the academy players and so, the players will adopt the behaviour seen as ideal by the coach in order to fit into the figuration (Law and Bloyce, 2017) and reap the rewards that are possibly earned from the coach.

In contrast to the views of Participant's 7 and 1, was that of Participant's 4 and 2. Firstly, Participant 4, explained how they were not "hesitant to ask questions" about their injury and "how I can stop that happening in the future", even though they "haven't told…no coaches about it, I've only told physio staff"; the importance to Participant 4 of learning about their injuries and what they can do to prevent them from "…happening in the future" is one of promise. They are not sharing the wider views of this craving for toughness but more-so longevity. Secondly, and a more damning verdict of players wanting to appear tough, was that of Participant 2 who believed how

> "…some people are just stupid I think, they would ermm would try and act like a soldier but sometimes the smart thing is to just take the time off".

The comparison of an academy footballer and a soldier is not one that should occur and one that should bring the realisation of academy footballers sense of pain to the forefront; one that also bears resemblance to the societal belief within football that in order to attain the resources desired, players must act in the appropriate way designed and biasedly controlled by individuals of power (Nixon, 1994, and Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). With the threat being - that if the desired behaviour is not followed - the possibility of disregard by the coaches who do not want players who are not willing to conform (Law and Bloyce, 2017). The need for player welfare management is a serious one, and one in which some players need educating on for their own future welfare and possible longevity within the game, as the desire to appear 'tough' to succeed should not be a prominent factor within football. A desire to succeed, with the individual's future welfare accounted for, should be centre stage.

7. The Academy Environment: Form, Loneliness, Stigma and Banter

7.1 The Impact of an Injury on Form

"It's a momentum killer, an injury is a momentum killer" (Participant 1).

When discussing how form can be impacted by an injury, a clear distinction was made between the resulting effects of being in good form or bad form at the time of the injury. As

expressed by Participant 1 above, an injury can have devastating effects on the individual who suffers with it. Knowing how much game time means to the player/s (their pathway to remaining in the starting eleven) (Roderick, 2006b, and Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000); for an injury to occur and be classed as an "momentum killer", illustrates their emotions towards such circumstances. Participant 1 explains further:

> "I just think it really f**ks up your season…it kills everything…you're trying to get through this season, get games, goals, assists[,] whatever you need, and it just kills ya".

Crucial factors identified for academy players needs to make it to the first team level; being challenged by the introduction of an injury. The majority of the participants shared a similar view on injuries impacting their good spells of form, in that it never reaped any positives - it only slowed them down. Participant 5 provides an example of the physical challenges that an injury can have on a players form; "…getting injured you may not be the same for a while[,] it could hinder your performance a bit". Heights that were reached may not be able to be reached again, which leads onto Participant 2's aspects on the mentality of being injured whilst in good form.

> "I think it knocks you right back cos your confidence, first of all[,] you go from confidence so high to then knowing you're not going to be playing for maybe a long time".

This disappointment of losing the confidence one had, to feeling like you may be ruled out for a long spell on the side-lines, is damaging young players. This was reignited by Participant 6 who mentions how "…you get back[,] you might not be able to get into the team", after losing your place due to injury whilst in a good spell of form; a relation to a shift in power balances and tension amongst players within the figuration as someone has to replace the injured player, and so, earns a more powerful role with varying levels of opportunities (Elias, 2009) (able to play and earn contracts) within the figuration than that of the injured individual. This is synonymous with that of Participant 10 who stated how being injured in a good spell of form is like going "…back to square one…it's just a mental barrier…you have to overcome…". A barrier in which, as discussed earlier, (some) players often try to get through themselves in order to remain involved within the club on a matchday and one that can be further supported by the works of Roderick's (2006b, p.252) study in which one of the participants explained how they "…don't like watching matches" because of an injury. This ideology of an injury being a mental barrier - when in a good spell of form - and one in which players try to push through (due to their habitus), expresses how the figurations belief/s are once again overwhelming the welfare of the individuals. A further quote from Participant 1 who summarises how an injury can

impact the good spell of form on a player; “the worst thing that can happen to your progression is an injury”, with the belief that an injury will “…screw up my whole momentum…”. Creating an issue in which does not allow Participant 1 to be able to give 100% in what they aim to achieve, acting as a hinderance to the individual (Piccoli, Reisel, and De Witte, 2019).

However, when discussing how an injury can affect a player when they are in bad form, the general consensus was that the injury could be a chance to recuperate and come back stronger. Participant 7 stated how

> “…in all honesty…you feel like kind of[,] you might have thought that injury…has been a reason why you’ve been in bad form…and you think [‘]ah I’ve almost got a break[,] I can come back from this injury refreshed[’]”.

This was parallel to that of Participant 6; “if you’re in bad form…you can think [‘]ahh I’m gonna comeback from this and…I’m gonna wanna improve[’]”. Both participants clearly using their injury as a means for a stronger return to the game and a chance to develop a positive mindset due to their previous bad form. This outlook that they will return to the game stronger represents how an individual will control their emotions so it is in line with the figuration’s social habitus (Maguire, 1991) – with the habitus being players able to deal with pressure (the injury) or to act in the desired way of the established group (coach – bounce back from injury and handle adversity when faced with it) (Mills et al., 2012). However, this was not the case for Participant 10 who discussed how being in bad form and then getting injured was

> “s**t hell[,] that’s probably even worse…because you will probably think [‘]wow…when I was playing I wasn’t playing well, now I’m injured I’m gonna be setback even further[’]”.

This could be associated with the potential threat of losing the chance to earn the resources that the coach has to offer the player (such as contracts, position in the team, and opportunity to play big games) (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000) or developing a sense of isolation from their teammates in that, being the only individual not playing well and then to be injured compared to your teammates who could be performing well and 100% healthy, gives a sense of the injured player being a “…one of a kind…” (Fry, p.151) in a negative light. This notion of injury during a bad spell of form only appears to enhance the difficulties faced by the players, as expressed by Participant 10, and that when this occurs the apparent result is a feeling of isolation from their figuration along with the ideology that their development is hindered further within their footballing life, which in turn impacts their future prospects within the game.

7.2 Injuries in academy football; a lonely life.

Isolation within academy football was a prominent thought amongst the participants regarding injuries; a notion which Roderick (2012) identified within their study of the elite counterparts. The societal impact that is associated with the solitary recovery process for young players is difficult. The common theme amongst the participants was the difficulty in having to watch their teammates go out to train whereas they would have to go to the physiotherapist (Participant 8). Participant 4 expressed how when injured

> "you feel like you've got nothing to do, you feel useless…you feel ['ah is this even gonna work[']…it's hard to turn…any negatives into a positive…".

This can be supported by Participant 2 who mentioned how "…a lot of people get depressed from their injuries…"; because of their loss of a role amongst their teammates and not being able to perform their job. Almost losing a sense of purpose and with it, a partial fluctuation in power will change within the figuration. With regards to the loss of purpose a player may feel, this can be associated with a sense of isolation for the player. When hindered by an injury and a lack of time with their teammates it is difficult to see the positives a player may experience. It is this feeling of having no positive emotions or affects for an individual in which the concept of isolation becomes a very real prospect (Elias, 2001). Since the player is unable to perform their role, they may develop feelings of loneliness and a belief of being left out (Law, 2018). The signs of isolation amongst injured players only deepened with Participant 5 expressing how when they could not train due to injury,

> "…you just sort of stray away from the lads and then you're not really a part of it, you don't feel like you're a part of it…".

This issue was not only that of not being involved with their teammates but the academy as a whole. Participant 7 explained in depth how,

> "when you're playing you…you get analysis with the coaches…they're talking to you and when you're off the pitch[,] then they're talking to you about what the game was like…when you're injured…you don't have anyone talking to you really[,] it[,] it sounds harsh and brutal…you're not friends with them outside…and when you're not playing football[,] you haven't really got as much to talk about…you become nearly invisible…especially with a long term injury[,] you become[,] yeah[,] quite invisible".

A sentiment shared by Participant 10 who stated how injured players were similar to the expression, "…out of sight[,] out of mind…". This ideology that football is the foundation of what these young players build their relationships on - with their teammates and coaches –

and if removed, are forgotten about, illustrating the fluctuation of relationships within their figuration. Building on the theoretical standpoint, with the key concept being football within the academy figuration, if football is removed from a player's life due to injury – for the amount of time necessary for rehabilitation – that players place within the figuration will change dramatically. The relationships within such figuration – as expressed by Participant 10 – will fluctuate and the potential tension of the injured individuals relationships will be affected (Ventura de Morais and Barreto, 2011); this could occur since the individual can no longer perform their function within the figuration, they may develop a sense of detachment from the figuration (Law, 2018) and a belief that they do not belong due to them being hindered by injury. In addition, their outlook on the figuration will be one of loneliness and so they will believe themselves to being 'cut off' from the group; even though individuals can never be completely 'cut off' from their relationships (Elias, 2001) with their teammates.

A notion which could seriously impact the players welfare; as Participant 4 explains,

> "I just remember being, quite, lonely, and, quite sad and quite angry, and, feeling all these different emotions and not being able to kind of put them into anything…".

A statement that reinvigorates the need for football, for players, and if removed, can result in a change of character and a sense of lost identity. Hammond et al. (2014) identified that players would avoid scenarios - such as described from the participants within this study - by ignoring their injuries. The fear of being isolated and the boredom associated with injuries was a greater concern to them than their physical welfare. However, not all the participants felt this sense of isolation. Participant 9 argues, in contrast to the majority, that "…it's not like you're injured[,] and people forget about you". Even though Participant 9 was the only one to state this sentiment without any input of boredom, loneliness or emotional distress in their answer/s.

In addition, Participant 5 offered a different insight into using their loneliness as inspiration for a return to play. The solitary lifestyle of being injured provided them with "…encouragement to try and get back onto the pitch cos…you feel like you're missing out…". This sense of hope, through the player witnessing their teammates continue with the norm, provided them with reason to recover and a possible return – even though this return may be too soon than necessary. Furthermore, this mindset identified by Participant 5 could explain how some players rush back early from injuries or continue to play on through them; as the feeling of 'missing out' is of greater concern to the player than their injury. However, it must be stated Participant 5 also expressed how with this desire for a fast recovery they would not want to "…rush your injury at the same time, so I think that's where it can be frustrating". Even though

frustration is recognised, Participant 5's main focus is on the recovery process in order to return to the team. Another counteraction to loneliness was provided by Participant 1 – even though it would not be a positive for the academy as a whole, but more so the individual/s injured. Participant 1 expressed how being injured with a teammate can repel loneliness as you have the chance to recover together. A view that Participant 1 believed would "…help them both in their recovery cos they got someone to do it with" – *when discussing two teammates long-term injuries.* This notion that doing it together is better than alone, correlates with that of another one of Participant 1's comments in that,

> "…when you're the only one injured…you're almost topic of conversation…whereas when, like the boys now they're all injured together[,] so they go physio together[,] they go gym together, like you don't really get that stick[,] whereas[,] if you're the only one injured in the changing room…it's a bit tough[,] but it's just that mental strength you've got to have…".

A sense of belonging is greater than having the solitary process alone as clearly recognised above. This notion of the injured players banding together represents how the fluctuation within a figuration can occur and how relationships are always dynamic (Ventura de Morais and Barreto, 2011). Furthermore, this notion of "stick" being aimed at the player – if alone – and requiring a "mental strength" to cope with that, alongside your injury is a lot for a player to handle, both emotionally and physically. With the negative results as illustrated by Participant 4 in an earlier quote. In addition, a quote from a coach in Mills et al. (2012, p. 1598) study on academy footballers, stated how players were required "…to have the skin of a rhino". A matter in which shall be discussed in the following chapters through the incorporation of stigma and banter within academy football.

7.3 Stigma: A one-time injury or injury prone footballer

"…being a sick note." (Roderick, 2006a, p.86); commonly used within the sporting world or otherwise known as 'injury prone' and associated with players who frequently are injured. The term 'injury prone' is a risk for players, if they are labelled with it due to the negative affects it could have on them in the forms of banter and the views of their teammates (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). Participant 1 recognised that "…you pick up a reputation for…milking every injury", one in which seems unescapable within the footballing world (Roderick, 2006a, and Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). The nature of the term 'injury prone' seems to have no boundaries on injury type; it remains a constant if a player succumbs to numerous injuries within a short period of time or a season. Participant 2 identified being injury prone as

> "if you're injured for, with a lot of niggly injuries[,] a manager might look and say 'oh you've had a lot of injuries this year'[,] they'll class you as injury prone, even if it['']s small injuries where you're out for four or five days".

A clear label being given to the injured individual, even though the injuries they have, may not have been serious ones. Furthermore, with the normalization of pain accepted within an athlete's world (Young, 1993, and Curry, 1993), and especially footballing athlete's, if a player does not habituate the behaviours of their coach or figuration, they are running the risk of being viewed as sceptical by individuals in positions of power (Law and Bloyce, 2017). So, the term 'injury prone' could be identified as warning to future figurations of the individuals seemingly habituated behaviour that has been given to them by their figuration; even though, like Participant 2 describes, the injuries sustained may only be small ones. Moreover, Participant 7 expressed their frustration with how some players can "…tend to drag things out" because they "…keep on having a minor injury, and you think, you can play, I've played through". A view that clearly symbolises how such labels can be reinforced within sportsnets that the players are associated with through the constant bias behaviour towards the expectancy of continuing to perform when injured – which has stemmed from the positions of power within the figuration such as coaches (Nixon, 1992), who have then been able to constantly mediate such behaviour through their position (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). Participant 7 went further, providing reason for their extensive account on 'injury prone' players stating how

> "I've seen a few people that have…liked the physio room quite a lot and they…haven't necessarily enjoyed the football side as much[,] and if the football side isn't going as well for you, you look to something else…some people like to, then turn to excuses".

Not only is Participant 7 criticising those who are 'injury prone', they are accusing them of accepting the label of it due to their misfortune or bad form when playing, and actually adopting the role of an injured player.

With regards to where the origin of stigma and the 'injury prone' player derives from, Participant 1 believed that "…it just comes from…the way football used to be played" and how it was "…a lot rougher than it is now[,] and I think a lot of the coaches and staff now, come from that background". In addition, Participant 1 believed that due to the changing of society

> "…and as the games modernising[,] I think players[,] not are softer[,] but I think take better care of themselves and I feel like that…might be tough for more old school coaching styles to accept".

Even though there is still a clear issue with stigma within football and the fear of being labelled 'injury prone' amongst the players, as Participant 1 identifies, this could be because of the "old school coaching styles" that are still present within the game. The above comments made by Participant 1, is a clear representation as to how figurations are in a continual flux (Ventura de Morais and Barreto, 2011), identifying that the game is "modernising" away from the "old school" methods, with the relationships between coaches and players differing from the past; yet, some coaches social learning and behaviour is so ingrained within them (their habitus) they still expect players to perform when injured. Furthermore, as expressed by Participant 7, the term 'injury prone' and the stigma associated within football is still present. A possibility for this, is the ever-present input of banter within academy football.

7.4 "It's just banter in it…" (Participant 1); The Presence of Banter within Academy Football.

Banter within academy football was prominent amongst all the participants within this study. All 10 participants recognised that banter occurred "in basically everything really" (Participant 10) and believed "it's just a football thing…changing room banter" (Participant 9). Within the the works of Roderick (2006a), he uncovers how injured players were commonly targeted with jokes and 'banter', with regards to their injuries. This ideology that banter is natural within the world of football is a dominant societal issue. This is because the banter aimed toward players regarding their injuries has led to an increase in players concealing their injuries in order to avoid such embarrassment and harassment (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000); some of which can be "…proper ruthless…it can cause fights…" (Participant 2). In addition, Participant 2 expands on banter, saying

> "…there[']s a strong, a really thin line between banter and bullying in football terms, a lot of things that would happen…that would go down as banter here[,] would probably be[,] be[,] get called bullying going to school…I probably one of the biggest, like I give a lot of banter but I can take it as well whereas[,] some people give banter but can't take it".

The allowance for banter to reach an extent to which - outside of its normal social comforts (football) - it would be classed as bullying by Participant 2, is paramount in the creation of players concealing injuries and can be associated with the young males trying to prove their masculinity through playing with pain (Young, 1993). The term "…milking it…" (Participant 1) was apparent; a term used to describe someone overexaggerating an issue, and the clear statements that the banter involved within the academy was different to that outside of it, shows a transparent issue. A few discussion points did arise within the participants answers

regarding banter in a negative light: banter toward injuries, how banter impacts new players, and bantering a player's form.

Firstly, the issue of banter regarding injuries was at the forefront, and has been a commonality in the past (Dodier, 1985, Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000 and Roderick, 2006a). The theme surrounding this banter, was that an individual is unable to perform or take part due to their injury. An insight from Participant 4 was provided,

> "some people…have a bit of banter about it like…[']ah you can't really come…because it's gonna be hard because you're in crutches or in a brace[']…it's just like little things that you think you don't really need to say…".

The exclusion from activities by their own teammates is present within this quote, at a time where inclusion is desired by the injured individual. A causation as to why athletes – and as shown in this study, footballers – continue to perform whilst injured (Young, 1993). Participant 4 expressed how "…some people are f***ing a***holes, really horrible people", with regards to the above. Representing how banter, can cause friction within a squad and relates back to the earlier point of Participant 2 in how banter within football could be identified as bullying elsewhere. Furthermore, Participant 1 builds on the notions of Participant 4, stating how their teammates would occasionally banter by disregarding the injury completely;

> "…[']you're fine[,] you're fine, blah blah blah['] and I think some boys maybe took it a bit too far and actually convinced themselves you were[,] but at the end of the day if you're injured[,] you're injured and I think a lot of players know that".

This belief that players would persuade themselves that the individual was feigning injury correlates with the work of Dodier (1985), who identified how players would joke about an individual's injury because they were unsure of such injury in the first place and are able to voice their suspicions through banter. On the otherhand, Participant 1 believed that this was only a handful of teammates, because as shown with the quote, the belief is that the majority of their teammates know they are truly injured.

The second focus on banter was how it impacted newer players into the academy. Participant 10 explained how

> "if you're not from here I'd say it can, [be] tough to adjust to because, the level of…jokes and banter can be quite harsh…but once you are used to it[,] you know it's funny".

This sentiment was shared by Participant's 2 and 5, who stated; "someone new can come in…and say ['][well they think it's personal['][,] where nothings ever personal" (Participant 2) and

> "…it was just me adjusting to it…even the words that they used, but I think it just like toughens you up as a person" (Participant 5).

The notion that banter needs to become accustomed too for new players, signals this ideology proposed by Participant 5 in that players need to 'toughen up' so they can fit in. Once again, identifying how players need to conform to the figurations behaviours – of adapting to the environment that surrounded them (Law and Bloyce, 2017) – or face the risk of being isolated. Hammond et al. (2014) shared a similar notion with regards to how injured players could be labelled as weak or not resilient enough - however, this was from the viewpoint of their manager/s. The focus being, that players must adapt to this persona of being tough, in order to acclimatise to their society that surrounds them is apparent. Once again, relating to the sportsnets that the player is involved in and the constant expectation that pain should be normalized (Nixon, 1994). The consequence of not accepting this network of banter, is loneliness. Participant 2 explained how "…if you can't take it[,] you're not gonna get involved in any of the banter…and everyone will just leave you alone". For this reason, it appears players succumb to the banter, because as explained in the previous chapter, no individual wants to be alone. Furthermore, with the environment in which academy footballers are brought together in that they are of all different backgrounds, the need to get on with people is paramount, otherwise it could develop into a lonely life (Fry, 2014).

Lastly, on how banter can impact the players negatively, was the influence it could have on an individual's form/performance. The expressed feelings that teammates had toward another player's performance could be portrayed through the bantering of the poor performance – "…getting into another player, for how they've performed[,] they'd say it wasn't the best…" (Participant 6). The following statement from Participant 6 though seemed as if they were trying to ensure the interviewer understood it was only a joke; "…they know we're joking[,] but they know that they didn't have the best of games…we'd try and flip it into a…positive". This play on the individual's emotions and using banter as a tool to encourage their teammates poses as a further issue within academy football. Participant 5 provided a scenario of a player having a bad game and how banter could impact the individual;

> "…sometimes you might take it well and another won't take it well so, I feel, if you had a bad game and you keep on thinking about that game[,] it's only gonna make things worse".

Considering how player's are constantly fighting for: contracts, positions, and even a spot within the academy and first team (Mills et al., 2012), banter can impact these chances; a potential power play by the individuals who are 'bantering' the out-of-form player as they are trying to increase their chance of earning the resources available to them from the coach whilst decreasing the chances of their teammates. This bantering for greater power, could stem from Elias (1978) sociological work on how individuals within an interdependent relationship will commonly measure one another's strength. With the underpinning tension and conflict that is developed from these interdependent relationships (Baur and Ernst, 2011), those who have greater strength within the relationship – so in this case, the individual providing the banter – can influence the figuration as a whole and develop a greater position of strength for themselves (Elias, 1978); which grants them an improved chance of attaining the resources on offer by the established group (coaches).

In contrast to the three negatives discussed, some of the participants claimed that banter "can be a real positive thing" (Participant 7). Firstly, banter was identified to "…make it easier for you" (Participant 10) whilst injured because "…you know[,] have some banter with you[,] then it's[,] it's gonna be…funny[,] it's gonna be easier" (Participant 10). This was supported by Participant 7 who mentioned how

> "…everyone's laughing and joking and you can take part, and that is ermm, a real positive[,] you forget about your injury for a bit[,] you feel like part of the team again…".

The togetherness that banter clearly brought to Participant 7 has abandoned – for them – the signs of loneliness and boredom that stems from injury. They were able to become involved with their teammates through the positivity of banter. This view opposes the past quotes on banter and the negative nature that banter, more often than not, beholds within a football academy (Roderick, 2006a). Moreover, the ability of banter to include the injured individual within the figuration – in the case of Participant 7 – shows how the behaviour of the group and the individuals within the group were not focused on improving their own position within the figuration but rather create a more enjoyable atmosphere as a whole. Ensuring that injured players are not isolated from the collective group but more so involved. In addition - regarding banter within the academy social network - Participant 10 believed that "…everyone needs it[,] I think we thrive of[f] it to be fair…", and proceeded further,

> "…it's just good to be in this sort of environment where it's not always so serious and you can…joke with your teammates…".

This sentiment that banter is a release for the players, even though they have the pressures of being an academy footballer (Sagar, Busch and Jowett, 2010, and Mills et al., 2012).

8. The Pressures of Football and the Future

8.1 Fighting for contracts: "…you're not gonna have 10 centre backs in the team…" (Participant 7)

In the scenario of an injured player, it is often that the individual focused on wider aspects rather than the injury itself; one of which being their future chances of gaining a contract (Roderick, 2012). In addition, Mills et al. (2012) identified that gaining a professional contract was a pressure that is placed upon academy players; with very few of them being able to achieve this monumental feat (Richardson, Gilbourne and Littlewood, 2004). A reason for this lies within the coach-player relationship and the power balances that are involved. As discussed throughout, the coach (through their position) has the ability to offer or withdraw contracts from players (Waddington, 2000), placing a pressure on the players to continue through injury, showing the coach that they will conform to their norms because of the resources the coach can offer them. Resources that will help the individual/s achieve the task of gaining a professional contract is one in which a minute number of youth player ever achieve (BT Sport Films, 2018). Participant 5 recognised this dream, stating "…your main aim is to get a professional contract[,] you wanna be able to play as much as possible and prove yourself". Participant 2 supports this notion of playing for a contract, mentioning how "…you're always playing for a contract, so realistically if you're not playing[,] you're not gonna get a new contract". Moreover, if the reason for a lack of game time is an injury, the struggle to gain a new contract could be even greater; "…other clubs might see you as[,] ya know[,] injury prone if you been out a lot and they might not take ya" (Participant 1). This notion illustrated by Participant 1 can be aligned with the works of Hammond et al. (2014, p.174) who state "…the importance to players of financial incentives for playing when injured" can be a clear and logical reason - coupled with Participant 1's quote - as to why players continue to perform whilst injured. Furthermore, the lure of the dream to play football (BT Sport Films, 2018) is one too great it appears for the players to pass up on due to the financial matters involved and because "…a lot of people wanna play football" (Participant 2).

With regard to the pressures placed on academy players to perform, a couple of the participants felt a sense of safety because of their contracts. Participant 8 stated how "I haven't really thought about it like[,] at this stage but, I know that I've got a contract till 2021"; with this sense of security, the idea of pressure has not been present within the players mind. In addition, this sense of security through having a contract could be identified as the player

being in a position of power within the figuration as they know they have the resource (contract) there, which they will have attained from the established group (coaches). Almost as a representation of power amongst other members of the figuration, as they have attained a resource which is highly desired by the outsider group in general. Another experience shared by Participant 1 explained how "I wasn't to worried at the time because I still had another year and a bit on my contract…", however, when explaining that if an injury had occurred in the last year of their contract they "…would have thought f**k[,] I'm getting released" and "…I would have been absolutely shi**ing myself if I was gonna get released or not…". This sense of panic can derive from the possibility that release is often referred to career termination (Taylor, Ogilvie and Lavallee, 2016). Furthermore, when an injury is involved, the severity of the injury can determine contract offers – higher severity, results in less chance of a contract and vice versa (Le Gall, Carling and Reilly, 2009). On the otherhand, not all players felt this way; Participant 9 expressed how

> "I've missed what like pfft probably like 10 games now, but I don't really think that's gonna affect my future…cos your still in contact with the players[,] you're still in contact with the manager".

Participant 9 felt a differing sense of security in that, because they did not have this sense of loneliness during their 10-game period, they believed that their contract situation was not under any pressure or disillusionment. However, this is not always the case, as shown in the works of Harwood, Drew and Knight (2010, p.46), in which one of their participants explained how their son was told by their coach "I'm really pleased with this squad and I've got no reason at all to change this for a year", this sentiment then changed in the space of a week with the coach then stating "you, you, you, you and you are finished". Furthermore, an exemplary representation of how the coach can use their position of power over the player/s and demonstrate their power through acts such as releasing a player or players from their contracts (Waddington, 2000). This struggle goes further, because you are competing with your teammates to earn those contracts in regard to positions in the team. Participant 6 recognised this, mentioning how "…you're not gonna have 10 centre backs in the team…I'm in the 23's[,] we've probably got 4…", this enhanced competition amongst individual position groups further intensifies the desire to gain a contract. Players are no longer trying to just earn a contract to remain in the academy environment but need one to remain in the squad.

8.2 Positional Battles

Losing one's place in the team is recognised as a reason as to why footballers conceal their injuries from their social network (Kotarba, 1983). The possibility of losing their starting place

within the squad and the chance of not being able to regain their position in the team was a fear amongst most participants.

> "Missing games is massive to be honest…it depends how many you miss I suppose…like I said[,] you're in the team and you're doing well that place is yours but…if you're injured and then another player comes in, and he's doing well[,] all of a sudden you might not be able to get back into the team" (Participant 6).

The identification that the importance of not missing games and the impact it could have on the individual's career is of paramount concern to the player. Furthermore, Participant 7 stated how – when injured and missing games due to a team-mate playing instead of them - "I'm just thinking[,] player in my position…he's improving…I'm stuck here…I'm going backwards". This correlates with the works of Roderick and Schumacker (2017) and Roderick (2006b), in which players would pray that they did not be ruled out through injury and have to watch someone else play in their position, being able to improve their game. This recognition of having to "own your own shirt" (Mills et al., 2012, p. 1598), is a clear thought within the minds of the participants within this study as summarised by Participants 6 and 7. This threat of losing their position in the team even led Participant 7 to continue with injuries;

> "…I played through a few niggles…because you kind of think if I'm not gonna play this week[,] someone could come in[,] take your place…they could play well and you're out of the team for the rest of the season…".

This matter became even more important for Participant 7 because the possibility of a loan was being offered and one in which they "…wasn't sure if another opportunity like that was gonna come…". Again, a valid association with that of Roderick, Waddington and Parker (2000) who mention how players would not want to be dropped and miss important games within the season because of their fear of then possibly not making it back in the squad. This could be related to the positions of power at play between players in which, if a player misses a game and is replaced by someone else, that individual will be regarded as having less of a purpose/power than the individual who can play in the eyes of the established group who behold the resources such as contracts and loan deals (coach); as a result, injured players who's habitus is already adapted to continuing through injury, will only further encourage them to play and keep their position of power in-tact. With the comments of Participant 7 in mind, this is clear because, missed games could result in missed career opportunities.

Participant 4 believed that these missed opportunities could impact position groups greater than others too. They believed that being a goalkeeper provided less chance of playing due to their only being space for one goalkeeper in the starting line up; "…you can have four

defenders[,] you can have two strikers, or more, you can only have one goalkeeper" (Participant 4). This ideology that the pressure is greater on a certain position was only shared by Participant 4, as the rest of the participants shared similar beliefs to that of past studies (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000 and Mills et al., 2012) in how all players – non position dependant – feel the pressures of having to retain their shirt. This pressure of having to keep your position in the team – position dependant or not – could relate to the notion of individuals wanting to acquire powerful resources which are on offer to them. As Mills et al. (2012) explain, players want to be called up to the first team and get a professional contract – all resources held by the established and powerful group (coaches) (Waddington, 2000) – and so, the pressure placed on players to keep their position in the team aligns with their chances of earning such resources. In order to keep their place in the team, players must play well but also, follow the 'norms' of the coach and figuration to remain in their plans for the team (Law and Bloyce, 2017); with these 'norms' being commonly associated with playing through pain (Young, 1993, Curry, 1993, and Roderick, 2006a). If these 'norms' are not developed into a second nature of the player/s, they face a greater chance of being cast aside by a coach who themselves succumbs to the pressures of the footballing world (results, fans, owners) (Law and Bloyce, 2017).

8.3 Future Injury Awareness; "hindsight's a nice thing…" (Participant 4)

Towards the end of the interviews, the participants were asked to discuss how their injuries had made them more aware for their future welfare. With the notion of injuries being an underpinning fragility in player's careers (Roderick, 2006b), their opinions on their future health should be critical. The participants' expressed their concerns regarding injuries identifying how the nature of the game could result in a prolonged absence from the game or even career termination; the termination of one's career would stem from how they would react to the coach's wishes for them to perform – because of the coach's own pressures within the football network such as results – if the player does not conform to the norms expected by the coach (play through injury) then the chances of them being released increases (Law and Bloyce, 2017). Participant 5 mentioned how

> "…I'll always try and be careful and not going for like mad challenges or risking yourself…it can easily happen[,] it's unpredictable…you playing one match and not expecting it to happens and then you're out for 6 to 8 weeks…".

A sentiment shared by Participant 7 who, when discussing a previous back injury, expressed how "you never know when it's gonna be your last game or training session…" because they were "…a bit naïve with that to be honest…". This was in relation to the continued

performance whilst suffering from a serious back injury – a disc bulge. The recognition that their career could be severely hindered within a matter of moments because of "…mad challenges…" (Participant 5) has allowed for Participants 5 and 7 to realise their welfare is of upmost importance. Participant 4 similarly recognised these notions with regards to past injuries and how they could impact their future, claiming they now "…don't take my health for granted…" and that they "…try to do everything right and everything to the best of your ability…" in preparing their past injury issues for training or matches. However, Participant 4 then did regress these comments with the following statement of how

> "when I'm older though[,] you know like 40's, late 40's and whatever[,] it's gonna get sore, and it's gonna hurt…because that's the way knees are, but, throughout my career as long as I look after myself as long as I keep control of my knee…it will look after me".

This expectancy that their body is going to gradually decline anyhow is not promising signs for them now; especially when it appears that the focus of keeping themselves healthy in the short term is for more financial reward rather than longevity is a worry. Participant 4 seems to be focused on how to attain resources that will "…look after me", more so than actually recovering from their past injuries; with the aim being to ensure their injuries do not inhibit them throughout their career rather than their life.

9. Conclusion

This study has offered an in-depth contribution into the sociological experiences of male academy footballers with regards to pain and injury and how such factors can impact on their welfare and relationships within their societal network. Through the examination of the players experiences of pain and injury, key findings and thoughts from the players have been presented and analysed; resulting in some valuable concluding points. The first being the argument that academy footballers are not too dissimilar to that of their elite counterparts when it comes to the view on pain and injury and the reasons as to why they behave in the way they do regarding such matters. Conforming to societal norms regarding injury is a major factor within this argument and how over time the individual's habitus has led the player's to believe that playing through injury is expected of them. Secondly, and in relation to the first point, is that academy players will experience pressures encouraging they play through pain and injury from people in positions of power. These pressures range from resources that can be offered by the coach (e.g. contracts or starting position in the team) to being stigmatised (by teammates and/or coaches) or the coaches opinions on the injury; all impact the decision making of the player due to the power balances within the social networks they are involved in. Lastly, the conclusion that an individual's dream is greater than their health and how football is the only option further illustrates the desires of the players and that this wider societal issue in the belief that they will all make the professional level impacts their health. The expectancy to again, conform their behaviours to those in positions of power or how their figuration's norms are based, in order to remain within academy football and give them the best chance of succeeding.

Evident throughout the results of this study was the significance of player conformity. The apparent willingness for academy players to continue to put themselves at risk through playing with injury has developed from their figurations behaviour. The sportsnet that entraps the academy players is supporting harmful views (Nixon, 1994) in relation to the individual's welfare, which in turn, create a risk ideology within the figuration (Nixon, 1993). As a result of this, young players are developing a habitus of pain and injury acceptance; with the characteristics that both factors are of normality within their career. A sentiment which is instilled in their adult-elite counterparts of the game; the terminology of having a 'good attitude' at the professional level refers to the pain and injury acceptance characteristic which managers favour in players (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). The expectancy for adult professional's to participate when injured is regarded as a professional attitude and glorified within the footballing world (Young, 1993, and Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000) and an attitude which is now evident within the academy environment too. If academy players want

to remain involved within the game, it is an attitude which must be adopted and one that seems impossible to escape (Roderick, 2014). In line with this notion of the academy and elite levels of the game not being too dissimilar, is the involvement of pressures placed on the players in order to get them to perform. The results of this thesis clearly illustrate how a players position or their thoughts on contracts is pivotal in them deciding whether or not they believe themselves to be fit enough to play or not. It appeared that the closer it was to the end of their contract the more game time was needed in order to earn a new contract with the academy team they belonged to or a new club; with the opportunity of a new contract being given by the coaches, the need to impress individuals of power is of paramount concern. In addition, the positional battles within the squad placed further pressures on players wanting to compete due to the fear of losing their place in the team and being removed by the coach. Again, similarities between the academy level of the game and the professional one arises from such matters. Roderick, Waddington and Parker (2000) recognised that players would continue to perform whilst injured for new contracts, fear of losing their position in the team, to play in important games or for their own self-pride. The latter argument evident within the results of this study with some participants expressing how they would not want to miss games through injury because of the weakness and stigma involved. Players felt a sense of requirement to play and not appear weak to their teammates, coaches or even opposition. The apparent need for players to appear healthy due to their figurations beliefs (Kortaba, 1983) - is one that is shared with the professional level of the game - and if not, is deemed to insult the collective group (Durkheim, 2001). Another collective belief that appeared throughout this study was the clear recognition that all the participants put football first before their own welfare and future. The dream of playing football empowered the participants to seemingly continue through injury and conform their behaviours in order to succeed. The desire and commitment to reach the professional level is one of admiration but also a severe threat to the livelihood of the individuals due to the conforming nature of the figurations they are involved in. A nature which is expected within the world of football and one of which players must succumb to if they are to succeed (Roderick, 2006a). It was apparent that the participants had not considered life without football or contemplated their future options. Their expectancy to reach the professional level is not one which should be diminished but the requirement to ensure that the young individuals involved have an option beyond football is an imposing need; as footballing achievements are seemingly not as important as believed outside of the footballing figuration (Roderick and Schumacker, 2017).

The conformity of players has been an ever-present throughout this study and one which seems apparent in the risk behaviour players adopt within the academy environment. The

academy figuration in which players are a part of, seemingly impacts the individual's decision making regarding their injuries, as it has developed their behaviour into accepting pain and injury as part of their habitus. The individuals exposure to a risk culture (Nixon, 1993) within the figuration stems from the views of their coaches – powerful individuals within the group (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). This entrapment of the footballers has then proven to control the players behaviours regarding pain and injury with many participants in this study continuing to play through injury because it was deemed necessary by them or just natural to the footballing world. It has developed into their second nature overtime. A sentiment which proves crucial at the professional level of football with managers looking for players who are willing to make such a sacrifice on their bodies (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). Furthermore, it appears that the resources the coach can offer the players from their position of power (e.g. contracts and game time) which can impact their future chances of making it to the first team level also has an impact on the individuals decision to play through pain and injury. The importance of such resources can restrict or improve the opportunities of the players within the figuration depending on their behaviour. It appears that players will only be granted such resources if they succumb to the requirements of the coach; which is to often play through pain. In addition, if players have already been rewarded with such resources (e.g. a position in the starting eleven), they do not want to risk losing them by behaving outside of the collective group's norms. Once again, a similarity with the behaviour of footballers at the elite level of the game (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). In addition, the notion that footballers play only a few games a season 100% healthy (Roderick, 2006b) is apparent within the academy level too. The similar behaviour patterns between the academy and elite level of the game are of great concern due to the damage it could cause these young individuals later in life. Within the academy footballing world there is an apparent conformity issue due to the figurations involved and the similarities shared with the elite level of the game. This is then paired with the desire for individuals to reach the celebrity status within football and so the demand for resources becomes a paramount concern for the players over their own welfare or future prospects. Throughout this argument, it has been highlighted how academy footballers are putting football first because of their environments that surrounds them and those in power are offering them the belief that they can all make it. From this research, the hope is that players understand that their dreams are important however, the consideration of one's self must also be accounted for because of their future after football. The conformity issues within academy football is believed to be a deep-rooted issue within the footballing world and one in which is pried on more-so by the majority of coaches who use reward such as professional contracts and game time as a bargaining chip for players to perform whilst suffering from pain and injury.

Within this study, the similarities between academy level footballers and professional footballers, regarding pain and injury, is apparent. As discussed, this is believed to be because of the large-scale figuration that footballers – as a whole – are immersed within and the acceptance of pain and injury evident within such figurations (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). Building on from this, it is believed by the researcher, that this is the reason as to why no major differences were discovered between academy players and professional footballers from the studied participants.

The minor differences between the academy players to that of first team professionals mainly surrounded around differing scheduled times of similar acts (e.g. training separately and matchdays). And so, academy players could not grasp a sense of understanding of their first team idols until they were called up to the first team squad. Furthermore, none of the participants expressed how they spent time with the first team players and this was evident from when the researcher visited the academy to carry out their research as it was visibly seen the first team is kept exclusive from the academy environment. With this notion of exclusivity in mind, Participant 6 discussed how "…I've achieved nothing as in…there's not much to achieve until you've…played first team…". This ideology that academy players have not accomplished anything until they have made the breakthrough into the first team squad and built a rapport with first team professionals is one of upmost ambition and elite mentality. Furthermore, the only difference being ascertained from the data, is one of playing at a harder level with intensified similarities (e.g. fighting for contracts and positions is deemed more important). Following on with this ideology of exclusivity of being a footballer, is the apparent celebrity status that could develop from being associated with a highly recognised sport. However, none of the participants within the research explained they had felt this sense of status outside of football. This could be related to the mindset of Participant 6 and their comment on "…you need to make first team football…" to have achieved anything.

To conclude, from this research the similarities between academy players and their elite counterparts regarding pain and injury is evident with the only difference being the level they are playing the game. This difference has not filtered into the players views on pain and injury as this has stemmed from a wider figurational perspective within the footballing figuration as a whole – reaching those young individuals within the academy who are potentially most at risk due to the little guarantee of reaching the professional level within the sport but experiencing the same behaviour regarding pain and injury from their peers and coaches. As explained by Participant 6, academy players have "….achieved nothing…until you've…played first team…", yet have a greater chance of losing their place within the academy all together due to the lack

of contract security and need for them as individuals (Richardson, Gilbourne and Littlewood, 2004; BT Sport, 2018, and Harwood, Drew and Knight, 2010).

9.1 Limitations and Future Recommendations

Within this study and throughout the research process, few limitations became evident and it is important to expand on such difficulties. Firstly, the acquiring of participants for such a study is viewed as a limitation due to the closed nature of the footballing world and with the hope of attaining 15-20 participants, the research study prevailed with 10. This could be identified as a limitation because potentially doubling the number of participants would have likely resulted in a greater amount of data which could only benefit the research. In addition, a variety of more accounts could have been collected, discovering further backgrounds and possible new avenues which have not been able to be collected; however, there is no guarantee that this would have occurred, more so hoped. In relation with this is that the participants were all based within one academy. This could be recognised as a limitation due to similar environment shared by all participants compared to if there was more than one academy involved. However, once again due to the nature of football, the attainment of more than one academy was not achievable and the researcher feels this has not impacted the study in a prominent way. In line with the participant numbers acquired, was the lack of availability and time in which the participants had during the course of the interviews. The constraints of an academy schedule impacted an 'outsiders' research study, as some participants within the study could only be interviewed after a previously busy schedule beforehand. A further reason as to why the researcher did not probe within the interviews as much as possible as the participants had time schedules to keep to and/or were fatigued from previously busy schedules. Nonetheless, the researcher understood such circumstances and is more than grateful toward the *study academy* for allowing them to carry out such a research process within their social network.

For future research, possible recommendations could be to highlight and analyse academy coaching staff's views on pain and injury within the academy set-up. How it ranges from impacting their decision making on players to how they believe player's feel regarding pain and injury could be accounted for in such a study and one of which is very minimal within sociological studies at this present time. In addition, since coach's are deemed as the established group and more powerful within the academy football figuration, being able to provide the players with the platform to make the step to the professional level or to hinder an individual's dreams, seems like an appropriate perspective to attempt to gain an understanding of and one of which could prove beneficial within future research studies.

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Appendix A
Ethical Approval Letter

York St John University,
Lord Mayors Walk,
York,
YO31 7EX

30th November, 2018

York St John University Cross School Research Ethics Committee
(Health Sciences, Sport, Psychological and Social Sciences and Business)

Dear Cameron,

Title of study: A sociological perspective of Young Male Academy Footballers' and their experiences of pain and injury.
Ethics reference: Armstrong_30112018
Date of submission: 05/11/2018

I am pleased to inform you that the above application for ethical review has been reviewed by the Cross School Research Ethics Committee and I can confirm a favourable ethical opinion on the basis of the information provided in the following documents:

Document	Date
Application for ethical approval form	30/11/2018
Responses to feedback form	30/11/2018

Please notify the committee if you intend to make any amendments to the original research as submitted at date of this approval, including changes to recruitment methodology or accompanying documentation. All changes must receive ethical approval prior to commencing your study.

Yours sincerely,

Nathalie Noret

Appendix B
Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet
Name of school: School of Sport

Title of study: A sociological perspective of Young Male Academy Footballers' and their experiences of pain and injury.

Introduction
You have been invited to take part in a research project examining young male academy footballers and their experiences with pain and injury. This study aims to identify academy footballers' views on pain and injury and to examine their footballing injuries and relationships that have been put under pressure due to the environments that surrounds them. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. If there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information, please contact me (Cameron Armstrong, postgraduate student in the School of Sport, York St John University) or my supervisor (Graeme Law) using the contact details on the following page.

What is the purpose of this investigation?
The purpose of this investigation is to understand how academy footballers' feel and their experiences regarding pain and injury whilst examining their professional and family relationships throughout their academy careers. In carrying out this research, I am trying to understand and raise awareness of the sociological perspectives of pain and injury in academy football.

What will you do in the project?
As a participant, you will be required to attend a scheduled interview which will be within a safe and controlled environment. The interview will be recorded for investigation purposes only and your name will not be used AT ALL throughout the investigation. The interview will roughly last 30-60 minutes.

In order to collect data regarding academy footballers' perspectives on pain and injury you will be asked to participate in a one-to-one interview that will discuss the following topics: a brief background of your footballing career, the injuries you have sustained within your current and past academies, your views on injury and pain, the pressures of being an academy footballer and lastly, your summary of pain and injury whilst playing academy football. The interviews shall take place for the most convenient time for the participant due to the schedule that an academy footballer must live by (e.g. training times and matches).

Do you have to take part?
No. It is solely up-to you if you wish to be a part of this study, however your co-operation and contribution to the study would be greatly appreciated. If you do not wish to take part, you will not be treated any differently to those who do. If you do decide to take part within this research, you may later withdraw from this study without reason and without any penalty occurring.

Why have you been invited to take part?
You have been invited to take part in this study because you are a current academy footballer.

What are the potential risks to you in taking part?
This investigation has minimal risks associated with it as all answers given during the interviews will be presented anonymously and your participation shall be confidential throughout the entire research study (from interviews to final documentation of the study). You do have the right to withdraw from the study at any point with no reason being needed. If withdrawal from this study is necessary, you can inform of your wish to do so and any answers given by you throughout the study shall be removed from the research project and the data collected. In addition, you may request any information given by yourself is removed from the study at any point until the data has started to be analysed (February 2019).

What happens to the information in the project?
The information provided throughout all interviews shall be audio recorded for transcribing purposes, but all answers shall remain confidential throughout the research study. All participants shall be protected with the use of pseudonyms, as well as any other people or clubs mentioned during the interview/s. The anonymity and confidentiality of all people and/or clubs will be present during the entire research project. All data collected whilst conducting this investigation will be stored securely on a password protected folder on a USB device as well as a password protected OneDrive account; with the information that is collected whilst conducting this research project will be stored for a minimum of 6 months. In addition, the data in this study will be analysed by the lead researcher (Cameron Armstrong) and supervisor (Dr Graeme Law), along with the possibility of the final documentation becoming an academic publication. All participants shall remain anonymous throughout.

Thank you for reading this information – please ask any questions if you are unsure about what is written here.

What happens next?
If you are happy to take part in this project, you will be asked to sign a consent form in order to confirm this.

It is possible that the results of this research project will subsequently be published. If this is the case, appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that all participants remain anonymous.

If you do not want to be involved in the project, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for reading the information above.

This investigation was granted ethical approval by the Ethics Panel in the School of Sport at York St John University.

Researcher contact details:

Cameron Armstrong	**Graeme Law**
School of Sport,	School of Sport,
York St John University,	York St John University,
Lord Mayors Walk,	Lord Mayors Walk,

York,

YO31 7EX.

Email: Cameron.armstrong@yorksj.ac.uk

York,

YO31 7EX.

Email: g.law@yorksj.ac.uk

If you have any questions/concerns, during or after the investigation, or wish to contact an independent person to whom any questions may be directed or further information may be sought, please contact:

Nat Noret

Chair of the Cross-School Research Ethics Committee for Health Sciences, Sport, Psychological and Social Sciences and Business,

York St John University,

Lord Mayors Walk,

York,

YO31 7EX.

Email: n.noret@yorksj.ac.uk

Appendix C

Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

Name of school: School of Sport

Name of researcher: Cameron Armstrong

Title of study: A sociological perspective of Young Male Academy Footballers' and their experiences of pain and injury.

Please read and complete this form carefully. If you are willing to participate in this study, please circle the appropriate responses and sign and date the declaration at the end. If there is anything that you do not understand and you would like more information, please ask.

- I have had the research satisfactorily explained to me in verbal and / or written form by the researcher. **YES / NO**
- I understand that the research will involve: A audio recorded interview which will be in a controlled and safe environment, lasting roughly between 30 – 60 minutes. **YES / NO**
- I understand that I may withdraw from this study at any time without having to give an explanation. This will not affect my future care or treatment. *(In order to withdraw, I must let the research know by email that I no longer wish to be a part of the investigation. This is the same for answers I have already provided if I no longer want to be involved post-interview.* **YES / NO**
- I understand that all information about me will be treated in strict confidence and that I or anyone I mention will not be named in any written work arising from this study. **YES / NO**
- I understand that any audiotape material of me will be used solely for research purposes and will be destroyed on completion of your research. **YES / NO**
- I understand that you will be discussing the progress of your research with your supervisor at York St John University. **YES / NO**
- I consent to being a participant in the project. **YES / NO**

Print Name:	Date:
Signature of Participant:	

Appendix D

Gatekeeper Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet for Gatekeepers

Name of school: School of Sport, York St John University

Title of study: A sociological perspective of Young Male Academy Footballers' and their experiences of pain and injury.

Introduction
I would like to invite your academy to take part in a research project examining 'A sociological perspective of Young Male Academy Footballers' and their experiences of pain and injury'. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important that you understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. If there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information, please contact me (Cameron Armstrong, postgraduate student in the School of Sport, York St John University) or my supervisor (Dr Graeme Law, School of Sport, York St John University) using the contact details on the following page.

What is the purpose of this investigation?
The purpose of this investigation is to understand how academy footballers' feel and their experiences regarding pain and injury whilst examining their professional and family relationships throughout their academy careers. In carrying out this research, I am trying to understand and raise awareness of the sociological perspectives of pain and injury in academy football.

What will you do in the project?
Part of this study involves interviews with academy footballers in order to gain their perspectives and experiences of pain and injury. Participants will be asked to take part in one audio-recorded interview, which will ask about: injury and pain, the pressures associated with injury and academy football, as well as their generic footballing livelihood. The investigation will take place at your academy within a private room (for the confidentiality of the participants) on the following dates and times: [provide details of the dates and times of the project].

Do you have to take part?
No. It is up to you to decide whether or not you would like your academy to take part in this study, but your contribution would be greatly appreciated. You will not be treated any differently, whether you choose to take part, or decide not to do so. If participants from your academy decide to take part, they may later withdraw from the study without giving a reason and without penalty.

Why have you been invited to take part?

Your academy has been invited to take part in this project because it is home to young male academy footballers who are the required participant within this study.

What are the potential risks to you in taking part?
Participants will have the right to withdraw from this project at any point, without giving a reason, by informing me (the researcher) via email that they wish to do so. Participants will be able to request that the information they have provided is removed from the study at any point until the data has started to be analysed. This means that they will be able to request that their data be removed from the investigation until four weeks (Friday 12th April) after the date that they took part in the study. There is minimal risk associated with this study as all forms of data are only accessible by the researcher and their supervisor in a password protected location. In addition, all names/places shall be pseudoanonymised for confidentiality purposes throughout the entirety of this study.

What happens to the information in the project?
All interviews will be audio recorded for transcribing purposes, but all answers will remain confidential. Pseudonyms will be used for any people and organisations that are mentioned in order to maintain anonymity. All data collected whilst conducting this investigation will be stored securely on the password protected OneDrive storage system and password protected personal USB device which are used for the storage of research data at York St John University, in line with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation. The information collected whilst conducting this project will be stored for a minimum of 6 months.

Thank you for reading this information – please ask any questions if you are unsure about what is written in this form.

What happens next?
If you are happy for your academy players to take part in this project, you will be asked to sign a consent form/letter in order to confirm this.

It is possible that the results of this research project will subsequently be published. If this is the case, appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that all participants and organisations remain anonymous.

If you do not want to be involved in the project, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for reading the information above.

Researcher contact details:

Cameron Armstrong

School of Sport,

York St John University,

Lord Mayor's Walk,

York,

Dr Graeme Law

School of Sport,

York St John University,

Lord Mayor's Walk,

York,

YO31 7EX.

Email: Cameron.armstrong@yorksj.ac.uk

YO31 7EX.

Email: g.law@yorksj.ac.uk

If you have any questions/concerns, during or after the investigation, or wish to contact an independent person to whom any questions may be directed or further information may be sought, please contact:

Nat Noret

Chair of the Cross-School Research Ethics Committee for Health Sciences, Sport, Psychological and Social Sciences and Business,

York St John University,

Lord Mayors Walk,

York,

YO31 7EX.

Email: n.noret@yorksj.ac.uk

Appendix E

Gatekeeper Consent Form

Cameron Armstrong

Masters by Research

York St. John University

School of Sport

Lord Mayor's Walk

York

YO31 7EX

Cameron.armstrong@yorksj.ac.uk

Dear Academy Manager,

As part of my postgraduate dissertation module, I am completing a research project examining 'A sociological perspective of Young Male Academy Footballers' and their experiences of pain and injury'. I request your permission to use your academy players to complete my research study.

What does the study involve?

The study will involve face-to-face audio recorded interviews with your academy players. The players will be asked about topics regarding their views on: injury and pain, the pressures associated with injury and academy football, as well as their generic footballing livelihood. All of the interviews shall take place within your academy; however, I must state these interviews will be between researcher and participant only and therefore shall be in a safe environment within the academy. Other than allowing the researcher within your academy and access to the players, no more is asked of you as the gatekeeper. I have included further information about the study in the accompanying Participant Information Sheet.

What happens with the study findings?

Only myself and my research study supervisor will have access to the information from this investigation. All information will be stored in line with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Pseudonyms will also be used to protect the anonymity of all participants, people and organisations who take part in the study.

Who can I contact if I have any questions?

My details are at the top of the page. Alternatively, you can contact my supervisor:

Dr Graeme Law,

g.law@yorksj.ac.uk.

If you have any concerns, queries or complaints regarding the research project please contact Nathalie Noret (Chair of the Cross-School Research Ethics Committee for Health Sciences, Sport, Psychological and Social Sciences and Business at York St John University) on 01904 876311 or n.noret@yorksj.ac.uk.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

Yours sincerely,

Cameron Armstrong

Masters by Research, York St John University.

Please sign below if you are happy for me to complete my research in your academy.

I have read and understand the above information and **do give my consent** to this study taking place.

Print Name: …… Date: ……

Signature: ……

Appendix F

Interview Schedule

Masters Interview Guide

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to do this interview and be involved within this study, before we begin is it OK if I am to record this interview?

Background

Firstly, how long have you been playing football for?

How long have you been at *study academy* for?

Have you been at any other academies? If so, what were they like compared to this one?

Could you tell me more as to why you started playing football and what your aspirations are for your career?

Main Focus

Pain and Injury

What is your understanding of pain?

Can you explain any minor injuries you have had during your career?

Why would you class those injuries as minor?

Have you ever played through minor injuries? If so, why?

What are your feelings towards a teammate if they are ruled out with a minor injury?

Training and Matches w/Minor Injuries

Moving on to training and matches, what is your views on the training schedule within *study academy?*

OK, and what thoughts do you have in the build-up to training if you know you are carrying a minor injury? Or struggling for full fitness?

What about for a game?

For both training and matches, do you inform the coach of any minor injuries? Why do you do that OR why do you not?

(possible question) What is your view on injuries that cannot be physically seen? MAY TIE IN WITH Q'S ABOVE.

Major Injuries

We are now going to move onto major injuries, can you go into any details of major injuries you have suffered throughout your career?

What were your thoughts at the time of the injury?

What were your thoughts on how the coach dealt with your injury?

What about the medical staff, how did they manage your injury?

Back to *study academy* approach to major injuries, how do you think your teammates viewed your injury?

How have you viewed your teammates major injuries in the past?

What is your perception on injuries overall and the recovery time that should be accounted for them?

Pressures

When injured, what have been your thoughts regarding your future career?

How has the academy helped with your injuries? What is the injury protocol?

What impact does an injury have on you if you are in a good spell of form?

Does missing games impact your future prospects? If so, how?

What about if you are not playing so well? How does it impact you then?

Do you feel you have a say if you want to play when suffering from an injury?

What is your opinion on the surrounding academy environment when you are suffering from an injury? Do your teammates, coaches or family influence behaviour? If so, how?

By being an academy footballer, what is the daily routine you follow inside the academy like?

Is there a social environment within the academy amongst the players? *(probe for details)*

What are your thoughts on education outside of the academy?

What are your feelings towards football and the prospect of a long-term career in it?

What are your feelings about outside of football when you are not at the academy or playing football?

Back to the academy setting, how much responsibility do you feel senior players and coaches have within a team? Do you think they are under pressure?

What about the physio's involvement/responsibility with the squad?

Do you think they are under pressure? If so, from who?

What is it like, playing for *study academy*? Do you feel any pressure by being associated with the club?

Other aspects

What are your thoughts on the atmosphere within a changing room if you have won a game?

What about when you have lost?

Can you explain how it feels being in the changing room when injured?

How do you think that affects the injured player?

Can you define the term 'banter' and is it involved within academy football?

How do you feel 'banter' impacts on players?

Conclusion

Lastly, how do you feel about your career as an academy footballer?
And, do you feel longevity within your position as a footballer and the injuries involved?