

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

“Considering elite adolescent academy footballers’ pathways: A socio-cultural examination of elite players’ day-to-day practices, relationships and experiences”.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the MSc by
Research in Sports Science.

In the University of Hull

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December 2022

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Acknowledgments

The first person I want to thank is my wife Rebecca.

Since the beginning of this research project and my masters year at University, she has been the most supportive figure for me. She has motivated me when things got tough, believed in me when times got tough and even gave me the best gift of all of becoming my wife in March 2022. Thank you for everything Becky, without your support I wouldn't have got where I am today without you.

I also want to thank Dr Luke Jones.

As a joint researcher on this thesis, his guidance, support and expertise have given me an insight into post graduate research I thought I wasn't capable of. However the support and knowledge you have shared with me will stay with me for a life time and thanks to you I will always be proud of the person

I have become both academically and in my personal life.

The final acknowledgment goes to the rest of my family.

Having been one of very few who have gone to University and explored the academic world, your support and belief in me since I began this journey in 2017 has made me feel immensely proud to be a part of such a supportive family. I hope I have made you all just as proud in my achievements and academic awards.

Abstract

Background

Within their day-to-day practices, it has been observed that elite academy soccer players experience various forms of symbolic violence (Cushion & Jones, 2006) whilst also accepting traditional workplace norms within an environment that is defined by discipline (Roderick, 2006; Giulianotti, 1999). Against this backdrop, and to potentially avert any limiting outcomes in this population, in this study we examine the experiences of elite academy footballers to lend further empirical weight to this discussion.

Method

The current study collected data from semi-structured interviews using a Foucauldian inspired interview guide (Avner, Denison, & Jones, 2014). In order to remain truthful to the nature of the research project, the method followed the process of creating transcripts from the interview process and analysing them using Foucault's disciplinary analysis (1995).

Results

When considering the findings of the research, theme one showed that subjection to coach observation has led to athletes accepting their routines and normalized practices. Theme two identified intense levels of self-regulation and the acceptance of being a 24 hour athlete. The third theme as it was able to highlight the problematic consequences of such high levels of surveillance with surveillance technologies in the academy setting but also provide an alternative discussion in the form of players beginning their own critical thinking process towards the use of surveillance technologies.

Conclusion

Overall, the findings from this research have shown that adopting a socio-cultural lens can help to understand the complex relationships within academy and also the relationships the players have with their body. This thesis has helped to promote ideas and thought processes that with the intention of helping stimulate coaches to think about why they engage in set practices and the ongoing impact that these chosen practices have on player development.

1.0 Introduction

Within their day-to-day practices, it has been observed that elite academy soccer players experience various forms of symbolic violence (Cushion & Jones, 2006) whilst also accepting traditional workplace norms within an environment that is defined by discipline (Giulianotti, 1999; Roderick, 2006). Research has also identified that within this carefully constructed environment, mechanisms of surveillance are routinely used to expose players to a ‘whole series of eyes’ in the form of team captains, senior players, sports science support staff, and coaches to ensure their compliance with these workplace norms (Avner, Denison, Jones, Boocock, & Hall, 2020; Jones, 2019; Manley, Palmer, & Roderick, 2012). However, more contemporary research has identified these forms of surveillance have met some form of resistance from athletes (Jones, 2019). Despite these technologies being associated with the production of athlete docility and the changing role of the coach (Williams & Manley, 2014) overall, there has been very little dissent, critique, or even curious exploration of the implications regarding the experiences of the young people who occupy these elite sports settings, beyond a few keystone studies (Jones & Denison, 2018; Jones & Toner, 2016; Jones, Marshall, & Denison, 2016; Jones, 2019; Magill, Nelson, Jones, & Potrac, 2017; Taylor, Potrac, Nelson, Jones, & Groom, 2017).

Socio-cultural writings that have considered the elite sports coaching space have also recently identified that never before has so much bioscience driven the coaching process (Denison, Jones, & Mills, 2019). Furthermore, that the mass production of facts and figures has left coaches training methods emphatically underpinned by a reductionist logic (Mills, Denison & Gearity, 2020), leaving them as little more than functionaries (Williams & Manley, 2014). It has been suggested that many limiting implications can occur when basing practices on data gathered through various forms of monitoring technologies such as imposing unnecessary control over the athletic body (Jones & Denison, 2018), as well as an over emphasis on sports science support (Mills et al., 2020). Research from Jones (2019) has also recently identified that football players have begun to question the worthiness of player load monitoring in relation to their professional development. Against this backdrop, and to potentially avert any limiting outcomes in this population, in this study we examine the experiences of elite

academy footballers to lend further empirical weight to this discussion. In doing so we hope to identify any potential taken for granted practices and social interactions that might benefit from review.

2.0 Literature Review

This investigation will be conducted using a post-structuralist lens, predominantly utilising the work of French philosopher Michel Foucault (1977) and his work on disciplinary power from *Discipline and Punish: The birth of the prison*. In this review it is important to firstly outline and discuss Foucault's main ideas surrounding the imposition of disciplinary power and his anatomo-politics. Following this, the review will then focus on literature pertinent to the research topic and discussing the experiences of elite level academy footballers.

2.1 Foucault's anatomo-politics and the production of 'docile bodies'

Foucault's concept of 'Disciplinary power' is a concept that has proved extremely useful for understanding the workings of elite sport settings (Markula & Pringle, 2006; Shogan, 1999). Foucault observed that by subjecting bodies to various forms of control they can be placed into universal classifications in order to be compared, critiqued and analysed (Foucault, 1970; Markula & Pringle, 2006). In order to subject disciplinary power upon a group of bodies, Foucault lists four disciplinary techniques that are used to shape and train the body. These include the art of distribution, control of the activity, the organisation of genesis and the composition of forces (Foucault, 1991). Foucault summarised that disciplinary power works through the regular application of modern disciplinary techniques in order to subject, use, transform and improve the athletic body (Foucault, 1977). The effect of these (disciplinary) techniques has been researched by many modern scholars who have come to the conclusion that despite their effectiveness in augmenting a bodies overall efficacy, skilfulness and ability, they simultaneously diminish the body's forces by rendering it overly compliant and docile (Avner, Denison, Jones, Boocock & Hall, 2020; Denison et al. 2017). Foucault also outlined what he called 'the means of correct training' or instruments of discipline as central to the production of imposition of discipline on an individual body. These instruments are 'hierarchical observation', 'normalising judgement' and their combination in the form of an 'examination' (Foucault, 1977; Jones & Toner, 2016). These instruments of discipline help to further render an individual useful and productive, as a 'docile' body.

Foucault used Bentham's panopticon as a metaphor to explain his conceptualisation of surveillance. Bentham's Panopticon is the architectural figure which is based on an annular building with a tower placed in the centre with windows that open onto inner ring (Foucault, 2008). This inner ring is divided into cells, each of which extend the whole width of the building, which also have window on the inside making the tower visible and a second window allowing light to come into the cell making every person inside visible to the tower (Foucault, 2008). The idea behind this concept is that each individual who is confined within this structure is seen from the front by the supervisor in the tower, and is also isolated from other individuals in other cells, imposing both axial visibility and lateral invisibility (Foucault, 2008).

This element of confinement and isolation lays down Bentham's principle that power should be both visible and unverifiable (Foucault, 2008). As a result, the visible power is the omnipresent figure of the central tower and the unverifiable aspect lies in never knowing whether they are being watch at any one moment (Foucault, 2008). This reinforces the self-regulation of a person's behaviour within this structure to ensure that they are complying and behaving in a correct manner as to not risk being seen to revolt against the rules by the people within the tower structure (Foucault, 2008). As a result, this concept of such a structure can be used as a machine to carry out experiments, alter behaviour and train/correct of an individual.

Applying this to the modern- day concept of imposing power upon a group of bodies, Gane's (2012) work on governmentalities and neoliberalism looks at how Foucault's subsequent interest in the Panopticon centre's on how power is imposed through visual means. Foucault describes the panoptic mechanism as one that arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and recognize immediately, making visibility the main trap (Foucault, 1977; Gane, 2012). By having two forms of visibility within the panoptic structure, the limitless capacity to observe normalizes the behaviours and actions of bodies within the structure as they act as if they are always being observed (Foucault, 1977; Gane, 2012).

By applying the concept of the panopticon to the modern day, unlike an actual physical structure, the idea of a panopticon acts as a concept of power that ensures the efficient and automatic

functioning of power and changes bodies to behave in a self-regulated docile manner due to them being permanently visible to assure the automatic functioning of power from the coaching staff (Jones & Denison, 2017; Jones, 2019a, Jones, 2019b). As a result, athletes begin to conform to the desired cultural norms set by the club or organisation, as a result of being placed in a position of constant surveillance, hindering their ability to develop independently due to their behaviours being regulated to perform in normalized ways (Green, 2002; Manley, Palmer & Roderick, 2012; Ransom, 1997).

Using Foucault's anatomo politics, it has been outlined how docile bodies are constructed through the presence of multiple disciplinary mechanisms (Manley, Palmer & Roderick, 2012). The term anatomo politics is based on Foucault's work during the 1970's on the relationship between power and the human body and how this operates in society by conceiving the "human body as a complex machine" (Lemke, Casper & Moore, 2011, p.36). Within the context of sports coaching and academy football, the term anatomo politics relates to the fixed existence of an athlete to be a productive, efficient and integral part of the academy structure (Rainbow & Rose, 2006). As we go deeper into our review of the literature, it will become clear that the normalized practices within football academies are based on constant analysis of the athletes, or bodies, performances, governance and whether it can be controlled (Rose, 2001). Furthermore, Foucault's ideas help explain how the production of docile athletes in professional sport enables athletes to perform desirable and useful functions, yet their over compliance and level of obedience in regards to their roles and responsibilities within the sports coaching environment can cause them to ignore their own unique capabilities (Jones & Denison, 2018). Foucault's ideas illustrated that by treating athletes through strict means of monitoring and surveillance, coaches can begin to ignore the human element of coaching, and as a result render athletes as passive docile bodies (Jones & Denison, 2018).

By discussing Foucault's anatomo politics, this helps to build a foundation from where the rest of this literature review can help us apply the work of Foucault to the complex world of sports coaching and the contemporary approaches to the production of the athletic human body in sport. In the second half of this review, literature that has embraced the work of Foucault will be used to form an

understanding of how the modern world of sports coaching can be viewed through a socio-cultural lens and how this can help with problematising current coaching practices (including those found at an academy setting). After this, research relating to the specific setting of academy football will be presented in order to articulate our understanding of this very complex environment. This will all be presented in the chapters listed below:

- Embracing the work of Foucault in sports coaching
 - Discipline in professional sport
 - Bioscientific articulation of the sporting body
 - The use of surveillance within professional organised sports teams
 - The implications of docility for an athlete
 - Experiences of academy football players on the use of surveillance technologies
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2.2 Embracing the work of Foucault in sport coaching

As a result of discussing Foucault's concepts of disciplinary power and how modern disciplinary techniques work to exert control upon a group, we can now begin to apply the concepts of power and docility and discuss the docility-utility relationship that exists in the modern coaching setting. Current coaching practices remain emphatically underpinned by a reductionist, objective and technocratic logic which are underpinned by a series of social discourses, described by Foucault as the unwritten rules that guide social practice (Johns & Johns, 2000; Mills, Denison & Gearity, 2020). Foucault also describes discourse as a series of formal and informal rules that produce, control and perpetuate meaning which sets out to marginalize the way people think (Foucault, 1978,1995; Mills, Denison & Gearity, 2020). As a result of these constructed, artificial and manufactured discourses circulating within professional sports coaching, systems of control, discipline and surveillance influence both coaches and players (Mills, Denison & Gearity, 2020).

The above scenario has caused many modern day workplace training practices within professional sports teams to escape appropriate levels of scrutiny, primarily due to the element of

discipline and power being a highly regarded element of professional sports coaching (Jones, 2019; Heikkala, 1993). However, by applying a Foucauldian way of thinking and Foucault's (1995) disciplinary analysis to elite sports coaching, many previously unrecognized and problematic effects of discipline have been identified for both coaches and athletes in the relations of power in sport and the production of docile bodies (Barker-Ruchti & Tinning, 2010; Foucault, 1995; Jones, 2019; Markula & Pringle, 2006; Shogan, 1999). However, instead of listing what these are, it is more important to discuss how we can use Foucault's work on the arrangement of disciplinary power can be used to understand sports coaching as a whole. The concept of power is summarised by Foucault as not just being imposed upon an athlete, rather power seeks to invest an athlete and be transmitted through them in order to affirm athletes within their role as a docile athlete through obedience towards their coaches (Foucault 1977; Foucault, 1979, Smart, 2002).

It is worth reiterating that a limiting issue associated with athlete docility lies in process of the docile body being subjected, used, transformed and improved (Foucault, 1979, p. 136). This process often occurs because of subjection to meticulous control and surveillance, furthermore, this procured docility often leaves (especially impressionable/young athletes) in a position where they are unable to think or act for themselves. Foucault also noted that the perpetuation of docility requires high levels of hierarchical surveillance and normalizing judgement (Green, 2002). Foucault's disciplinary analysis helps understand the workings of sports coaching, as it helps understand how what Foucault called 'disciplinary power' acts to shape a group of people (something ever present in sports settings). Foucault helps understand how in the field of sports coaching, athletes can be subject to control from coaches and how over a period of time, this control comes less explicitly from the coaching staff and becomes more self-regulated by the athletes.

Further into this review of the literature, I will discuss in more detail and within a more specific setting, how Foucault's cache of concepts can help explain the day to day experiences of professional academy footballers and more precisely, explain how coaches can also be rendered docile through a lack of reflective engagement in their practices. However, at this stage I will now begin to explain how

Foucault's concepts can explain how a 'disciplinary logic' (Denison, Mills, & Konoval, 2017) dominates the production of elite athletic performers in sports settings.

2.3 Discipline in professional sport

Foucault's work has been used across disciplines to help understand that disciplinary techniques have been deployed to modernize society. Within sport they are clearly used to initiate control upon a group of bodies (Mills & Denison, 2013). Jones (2019) highlighted this that by using Foucault's (1995) disciplinary analysis as he noted that most forms of coaching knowledge have remained very much unquestioned and undisturbed. What is more scholars have identified that this status quo can lead to detrimental outcomes for both athletes and coaches (Mills & Gearity, 2016). Below a few examples of the relationship between cemented practices and attitudes and limiting arrangements for athletes are explored

One coaching method that remains embedded within professional sport is the use of surveillance technologies such as GPS data. The regular application of precision technology allows coaches to 'push' disciplinary power through controlling the activity and monitoring athlete output within a network of relations between player and coach (Jones, 2019). From a Foucauldian standpoint, this arrangement of disciplinary power, via a strict timetabling and monitoring process, utilises Foucault's instruments of discipline in the form of hierarchical observation which permits the athletes themselves to regulate their own performance as well as others around them (Jones, 2019). Jones and Denison (2018) have also highlighted that strict athlete monitoring can reduce an athlete to a machine like object. This body as a machine logic not only identifies how specific disciplinary behaviour's within sport can render an athlete docile and incapable of thinking for themselves, but the strong focus on an athletes physical output becomes legitimized as a result of a strongly constructed discourse underpinning this method of practice (Jones & Denison, 2018). As mentioned, modern day coaching is heavily influenced by disciplinary practices born from prevailing social discourses. Correspondingly, Denison, Mills and Jones (2013) have highlighted the importance of viewing coaching as a political process in order for coaches to avoid treating athletes in such objective and instrumental ways. By viewing coaching in this alternative way, a coach can potentially reduce the onset of rendering a group

of athletes docile which can cause performance related problems (Denison, Mills & Jones, 2013). Further research by Williams and Manley (2014) supports this claim as they suggest that surveillance technologies can eventually lead to becoming an oppressive mechanism of control over a group of athletes. Groom, Cushion and Nelson (2011) also highlight that as well as surveillance technologies creating an unnecessarily controlling environment, they can also be wrongly used as a punishment tool to single out athletes who go against normalised expectations (Jones & Toner, 2016). Overall, the operational role of a coach has been increasingly restricted due to the ever present forms of surveillance technologies (Jones & Toner, 2016).

When discussing the use of disciplinary behaviours in sport it is also important to consider the use of symbolic violence. In order for power to be imposed and for it to work, it requires the complicity of all involved by having athletes succumb to the values and ideal set by the coaching staff (Cushion & Jones, 2006; Kim, 2004). In return, athletes will receive more positive experiences as a result of abiding by the rules of the game (Cushion & Jones, 2006; Kim, 2004). It is this shared understanding of what to value, what to avoid and what to desire that has underpinned an entire coaching culture saturated by symbols of domination that permit such interactions of discipline and punishment to take place if ideals are not met or abided by (Cushion & Jones, 2006; Kim, 2004). This form of governance has promoted the idea of an 'imaginary freedom' amongst athletes (Mills, Denison & Gearity, 2020; Rose et al. 2006). Symbolic violence in sport links to the idea that although modern socio-cultural processes perceive an element of freedom, they have also legitimized and normalised the element of control over various groups of people due to the governed group of people being disciplined and limited by various laws (Mills, Denison & Gearity, 2020; Rose et al. 2006). More specific examples will be discussed in the second section of this review, however it is worth mentioning that it is social arrangement that perpetuates the dominant logic of discipline seen within professional sport (Denison, Mills, & Konoval, 2017).

The brief examples above have revealed how using Foucault also shows how helpful a socio-cultural lens can be at identifying how prevalent disciplinary behaviours have become in modern day sporting institutes. This established tradition provides a legitimate platform from which to discuss how

coaches have now begun to take this element of control further by basing their overall coaching practices on a bioscientific approach.

2.4 Bioscientific articulation of the sporting body

At present, there is a belief within professional coaching that permits a systematic, coach driven, bioscientific approach to structuring training programmes (Mills, Denison & Gearity, 2020). However, despite the best intentions from most strength and conditioning coaches to utilise a bioscientific approach in order to make marginal gains, research shows that there are many more disengaged and injured athletes participating in professional football (Mills, Denison & Gearity, 2020). Jones and Toner (2016) stated that the use of monitoring has become an accepted component of the coaching process as it allows coaches to build activity profiles of their athletes. This assembled profile allows coaches to develop individualised portfolios that build the foundations for future athlete learning and performance enhancement (Jones & Toner, 2016). As well as this, data gathered can also be used in order to inform tactical strategizing, performance preparation and form the basis of training interventions and coaching practices which has led to a significant change in the coaching process (Jones & Denison, 2018). Jones and Denison (2018) also summarised that due to the powerful nature of such a scientific/data driven discourse, its often common to find professional coaches operating under the assumption that the use of numerous forms of data only yields positive effects, and as a result, problematically, very few practitioners question the process of using a bioscientific approach/logic to the production of the athletic body. The idea of data collection being an accepted part of the coaching process comes from the 'body as a machine' metaphor. Rosser (2001) states that as a result of bioscientific textbooks describing the muscular system as a series of levers and pulleys, it only seems right to liken movement in human body to being robotic in nature. Yet, we know that movement is fluid despite the historic documentation of the human body being articulated as a genetic, physiological and psychological vessel in contrast to its social, cultural, and philosophical entity (Andrews, 2008; Mills, Denison & Gearity, 2020). As a result, what appears to be perceived by any coach as 'true' is actually artificial and what appears as manufactured and natural is said to be robotic (Andrews, 2008).

One function of bioscience when it is applied this way is the reduction of the human body by isolating, fragmenting and controlling microscopic elements of the body (Mills, Denison & Gearity, 2020). However, despite this being a key part to understanding each microscopic element in isolation, socio-cultural scholars have argued that the sporting body does not work in this way and needs to be understood as whole entity in the real world setting (Mills, Denison & Gearity, 2020). The effect this has on today's modern articulation of the sporting body, is that a bioscientific approach overlooks the intuitive qualities of the sporting body as well as itself, the whole self (Atkinson, 2008; Hoberman, 1992; Hockey & Allen Collinson, 2007; Hughson, 2009; Kirk, 2002; Pronger, 1995; Ravn & Høffding, 2017; Shilling, 2003). As a result, the reality of the restrictions and microscopic elements of a bioscientific approach, is that they become dangerous towards not only our health, but our ability as humans to function when it comes to producing extraordinary and exemplary sporting bodies (Mills, Denison & Gearity, 2020).

It is true that in today's high-performance sports coaching settings, the modern capitalist conception of the sporting body permits the use of bioscience as it is the sporting body that can be subjected, used, transformed and improved to produce profit (Andrews, 2008). However, it is also bioscience that helps us as socio-cultural researchers to see that despite the body's inherent complexity being made more visible through the reductive nature of bioscience, we can begin to ask if bioscience is looking into the body, who is looking out and beyond at the working environment? (Mills, Denison & Gearity, 2020). There is no doubt that in reality, bioscience is able to provide numerous facts, numbers and equations that have helped us produce irrefutable laws of practice, however, because there is also a human element to sports coaching, the problem lies not in the production of these laws and facts, but the transition of the biosciences into practice (Mills, Denison & Gearity, 2020). Overall, it is clear that in the modern day, coaches and athletes have never had so much bioscientific technology available to them to help them improve. However, rarely do practitioners, besides bio-scientists, ever question how bioscience aims to help athletes improve (Mills, Denison & Gearity, 2020). After exploring the complexities of the bioscientific articulation of the sporting body and linking this to

generic disciplinary behaviours within professional sport, it is now important to look specifically at how power and surveillance is present within organised and professional team sports.

2.5 The use of surveillance to sustain a ‘disciplinary arrangement’ within professional organised sport

Certain scholars have argued that in the modern day, the United Kingdom and many other contemporary capitalist nations are now understood to be surveillance societies where surveillance is the key to organisation (Jones, 2019; Lyon, 2007; Murakami-Wood & Webster, 2009). As a result of how much this approach towards surveillance has been normalised, it is important to critically examine and question the stable application of surveillance within society (Haggerty & Ericson, 2000; Jones, 2019).

Research shows how prevalent surveillance technologies are within sport in order to assist performance and reduce the chance of injuries making them seem like a universally positive phenomenon. However, a closer examination of these surveillance processes reveals a more problematic situation (Carling, Wright, Nelson & Reilly, 2008; Collins, Carson & Cruikshank, 2015; Jones & Denison, 2018). Jones and Toner (2016) found that within professional sport, there is still a positive attitude towards a surveillance based performance analysis creating a one-sided perspective that favours this method of practice. Due to the acceptance of this method of practice, surveillance technologies are now being used as a disciplinary tool which has therefore prevented further exploration into the detrimental effects that surveillance technologies can have upon the developmental experiences of athletes (Jones & Toner, 2016). By having data facilitate the imposition of disciplinary power within an organised sports setting, this can further be used to coerce players and legitimize punishment for the purpose normalisation and sustaining hierarchies of power within the sports settings (Jones, 2019).

Almost all professional sports teams now operate within a ‘data rich environment’ as a result of the accessibility and affordability of surveillance technologies (Carling et al. 2014; Miah, 2014). Surveillance technologies are now also an accepted and integrated component of the coaching process, allowing the coaches to build an activity profile which forms a foundation to accelerate future learning,

monitor the output of their athletes and provide feedback after training sessions and competitions (Carling et al. 2014; Nelson & Groom, 2012; Toner & Jones, 2016). As a result of coaches now being able to instantaneously track and observe fluctuations in their athletes technical performance and bodily outputs, more information is now available than ever before (Jones & Toner, 2016). This scenario permits surveillance technologies to act as ‘instruments of discipline’ as they survey intentionally choreographed coaching spaces to ensure the working of disciplinary power upon the group of athletes – provoked by the technologies of discipline at work in the arrangement (Foucault, 1977; Jones & Toner, 2016; Lang, 2010). This creates a series of ethical issues in regards to the increased application of surveillance technologies, as by leaving these technologies to operate unquestioningly, they begin to expand the disciplinary power of the medical gaze that further emphasises the athletic body as a legitimate surveillance target (Ball, 2005; Rich & Miah, 2009). By allowing these technologies to operate in this way, they begin to further legitimise the bio-political governance of the sporting body and impose further amounts of disciplinary power upon working athletes (Warren, Palmer & Whelan, 2014).

Within elite sport, hierarchical observation is a key component of enforcing disciplinary norms and practices within a team setting (Avner et al. 2020). By recruiting team captains and senior players, coaches can impose disciplinary power by distributing roles, responsibilities and privileges to ensure that the players become a whole series of eyes that monitor athlete behaviour and ensure compliance and conformity of all involved (Avner et al. 2020; Mills & Denison, 2018). By initiating control from one body to another, athletes are placed within a network of relations to establish supervision from more than one body at a time (Jones, 2019). By imposing power in this way, coaches are then able to focus on other elements of the coaching process as athletes begin to self regulate their own actions. Furthermore, the process of the examination initiates further control within a team setting, as each athlete becomes a case that can be judged, measured and compared to others (Jones, 2019; Jones, Marshall & Denison, 2016). By doing this, athletes are further encouraged to conform and act in a normalized fashion as they believe they are being compared to each other at all times (Jones, Marshall & Denison, 2016).

Jones and Denison (2018) give a sociocultural perspective surrounding the application of surveillance technologies within team sports settings, and their analysis gives a valuable insight to how disciplinary power is imposed, the implications behind this, and how we as socio cultural researchers can begin to change this process and make it a more facilitative process linked to positive changes rather than being littered with issues being left unchallenged. Since the introduction of GPS surveillance in professional team sports, there has been a constant evolution of how a coach operates (Jones & Denison, 2018). The greater emphasis on the collection, judgement and application of data has begun an ongoing discussion through a sociocultural lens on how GPS data and video analysis can have potentially limiting implications when it comes to designing coaching practices (Jones & Denison, 2018). The main issue associated with the use of data to inform coaching practices relates to athlete docility as athletes can be easily coerced to accept unhealthy expectations associated with their sporting roles (Jones & Denison, 2018). As well as this, linking back to the process of the examination, by having athletes being compared to each other, this can cause problems when it comes to the mis-use of surveillance technologies. For example, professional sports coaches have been identified as using data to threaten athletes with deselection, expose athletes to unhealthy training volumes and question athlete's commitment levels during their recovery from long- or short-term injury (Jones & Denison, 2018). This method of control begins to force athletes to comply with potentially problematic behaviours from coaches and as a result, multiple scholars have begun to recommend how these technologies can be applied in a facilitative fashion. Jones (2019) has been able to apply Foucault's disciplinary analysis to devise several strategies that coaches are able to employ in order to use surveillance technologies in a more facilitative manner. By increasing the transparency in regards to how data is used and avoiding the comparison of players against each other, this can work towards reducing unnecessary levels of disciplinary power by softening the impact of GPS data and surveillance data as instruments of discipline (Jones, 2019; Jones & Denison, 2018).

2.6 Implications of docility for an athlete

When discussing the concepts of disciplinary power and Foucault's (1977) anatomo politics, it is important to consider not only the presence and lineage of embedded practices within modern day coaching (for example the heavy use of surveillance technologies). It is also important and possible to go the next step and use Foucault's cache of concepts to understand how these embedded practices and attitudes can have a negative/limiting impact upon an athlete's experience and development. As this next section will explore, rendering athletes 'docile', can cause many performance related problems during their career as well as causing problems that last after their career and into their retirement (Jones & Denison, 2017). Below, literature on both of these topics will be explored and discussed to explore and problematise the effect of athletes who have become 'docile bodies' (Markula & Pringle, 2006).

We know that the sporting environment is a site for the production of docile bodies through the strict organisation of the training space as well as training athletes to become economically efficient and obedient (Bale, 2004; Denison, 2007). However, the effect that this has on athlete development, as Markula and Pringle (2006) explained, is that sporting bodies become passive and manipulated as a result of being subject to forms of control, judgement and normalisation (Denison, 2007; Foucault, 1979). As a result, athletes/players become compliant and efficient sporting bodies, who are restricted in their flexibility, freedom and ability to think for themselves (Denison, 2007; Foucault, 1979). Furthermore, Shogan's (1999) analysis of athlete confession also demonstrated that through conversations of tactical awareness, and athletes being open about their level of understanding of their sport, coaches have begun to control how an athlete can approach a certain tactical scenario in order to initiate further forms of control in an event. This level of control not only has the negative impact of rendering the athlete docile to whatever the coach says, but evidence in the form of an athlete confession in a study by Denison (2007), shows that athletes can feel as if their athletic identity has been stripped from them and that they have no idea why or who they are running for as a result of the constant control they are placed under.

Work by Denison and Mills (2014) also shows that another implication that docility can have on athletes is the reality that a docile athlete might very well become an underperforming athlete. As a

Foucauldian researcher it is important to consider how all practices developed come from specific relations of power (Denison & Mills, 2014). We have to take into consideration the effect that power has on athlete development, as many of the taken for granted practices that exist are problematic and are very likely to transform an athlete into a docile body (Barker-Ruchti & Tinning, 2010; Denison & Mills, 2014). As a coach begins to monitor and control the sporting environment, this can easily begin to function like a machine set up to eliminate imprecise distributions and develop training sessions into an execution of a plan rather than allowing athletes to fully engage themselves within a training session (Denison & Mills, 2014; Foucault, 1995). Foucault (1995) argued that discipline is an art of rank, that aims to distribute bodies into a network of relations which can make athletes docile by imposing a system of homogeneity (being the same). Coaches must consider how their training spaces are constructed as a means to supervise, rank and reward as this begins to make it difficult for athletes who are used to holding a certain 'rank' within a team to produce breakout performances throughout their career (Denison & Mills, 2014; Foucault, 1995). The unseen effect of this practice is that not only do athletes underperform, but their overall ability or potential can be stripped from them.

Furthermore, the scheduling of training regimes begins to have an effect on developing an athlete into a 24 hour athlete who knows precisely what they should be doing at all times to intensify their use of time (Denison & Mills, 2014). Bale (2003) found that athletes will 'fit their life into a groove' and likened this to 'being like a zombie' (Bale, 2003, p. 89). As a result, athletes become very disciplined at fulfilling the good athlete role who constantly checks if they have followed the correct procedures leading up to an event (Denison & Mills, 2014). This presents a danger that through this process, athletes can become overwhelmed with the idea if they are ready to compete as a result of checking if they did everything 'correct' prior to the event (Bale, 2003; Denison & Mills, 2014).

Gearity and Mills (2012) also present findings to suggest that athlete docility can also effect the team environment as well as the individual. In the paper, 'Discipline and Punish in the weight room' there are accounts that show how the use of Foucault's (1995) technologies of discipline were effective at creating a 'training machine' (Gearity & Mills, 2012). This began to affect the athletes, not only in their acceptance of pain when training, but their lack of self-awareness and enforcing the coaches

commands on other athletes within the team (Gearity & Mills, 2012). The findings of this paper showed that the coach was becoming aware on how their coaching practices were exercising power and knowledge and producing docile athletes (Gearity & Mills, 2012). Foucault's (1995) idea of panopticism and its ability to assure the automatic functioning of power can explain why this is an effect of docility amongst working athletes. Gearity & Mills (2012) recall how the coaches body within this paper was certainly visible, however, each athlete was unsure if they were actually being watched. As a result, this caused athletes to self-regulate their own actions to the cultural norms set which meant that the players no longer had to be overseen by the coach to ensure compliance (Gearity & Mills, 2012). As a result, the athletes were not only compliant towards the coach, but they also regulated their actions amongst other athletes both in and outside of training sessions.

2.6.1 Longer-term implications of docility

The implications of docility extends beyond an athletes career as the long term effects of being within a heavily disciplined environment can induce severe withdrawal effects once an athlete retires. Work by Jones and Denison (2017) has explored the implications of discipline and docility as they look into the challenges of retirement from professional association football in the UK. Alongside this research, several studies have considered how the transition from being a competitive athlete and a retired athlete can still have significant implications on an athletes' well-being for the rest of their lives. Foucault's analysis of discipline has been utilised to problematise elite sport in a variety of ways including the various impact that coaching practices and the use of surveillance technologies have on player development, however, in an environment where the exercise of discipline is widely accepted, it offers a platform for problematising the environment as a whole and how the removal from this environment through retirement can have a detrimental affect on retirees (Heikkala, 1993; Jones & Denison, 2017; Shogan, 1999). Institutional spaces such as football clubs run on the reliance of discipline operating at a level which is able to organise individuals into a social order which produces docile and practiced bodies which can be subjected, used, transformed and improved (Jones & Denison, 2017). However, the removal from this environment eliminates the possibility of a retired athlete

sustaining a football identity and can bring a sense of both shock and relief through the removal of a spaced governed by localised disciplinary power (Foucault, 1991; Jones & Denison, 2017).

Football as a profession, despite its overall uncertainty as a long term career, allows athletes to exist within a constant space where their lives are governed through an established aim and focus through the absorption of discipline and regulated practices (Jones & Denison, 2017; Roderick, 2006). This protective bubble-like space presents a real challenge upon retirement, as an abrupt exit from this regulated space can make retired athletes feel like they have been wrapped in cotton wool for their entire career (Jones & Denison, 2017; McGillivray et al. 2005). By using Foucault's analytical tools, we can begin to explain how the disciplinary lifestyle and the disciplinary practices within the space of working football can affect an athlete upon retirement.

The 'art of distributions' is a good way to explain how disciplinary power is focused upon a body during their career. Jones and Denison (2017) state that in regards to how players are organised within certain regulated spaces, they are first of all "required to arrive at the same designated space at the same time every day" (Jones & Denison, 2017, p. 930), then expected to "train within the clubs training facilities in accordance with their rank within the club" (Jones & Denison, 2017, p. 930), following instructions from superiors such as coaches or senior players and also being expected to engage in extra work away from training in order to improve their status within the team. Foucaults (1991) notion of 'control of activity' is also helpful in understanding how through the intentional design of activities within this space, timetabled training sessions were used to facilitate and control the players ability to improve (Jones & Denison, 2017, p. 930). This meticulous control within the working football world meant that upon retirement, the removal of a structured life caused a significant struggle to begin within the retired athletes life (Jones & Denison, 2017). As a result of being rendered docile within this environment, certain players who participated within the study stated that they 'no longer felt protected by the structural disciplinary lifestyle, (Jones & Denison, 2017).

As a result, athlete docility not only remains a problem for working athletes, but the effects of docility remain present within the retirement phase of an athlete's life. Upon the removal of disciplinary techniques common to football, this can cause a retired athlete to feel disorientated as a result of

previously relying upon the powerful effects that these had during their working lives. As a result of not having the constant prescription of activities such as the regulated and timetabled session mentioned above, there is often an element of loss and misdirection as retired athletes begin their new roles within society (Jones & Denison, 2017). The removal of surveillance and supervision found within professional football environments upon retirement also leads to further disorientation, as by no longer having certain architectural arrangements in place to coerce discipline, certain players within this study described their removal from this environment as ‘powerful’. As a retired player, they perform their day-to-day practices in a space that is no longer controlled or occupied by individuals of a higher rank who would examine and normalise the behaviours of other players (Jones & Denison, 2017).

Jones and Denison (2017) go on to conclude that by removing the disciplinary techniques and instruments associated within professional football, this is central to the emotional challenge within a retired players life. The removal of hierarchical observation and normalising judgement, as well as their combination of the examination, significantly contributes to the disorientation faced by a player upon their retirement (Jones & Denison, 2017).

2.7 Experiences of academy football players

Now the connection between Foucault’s ideas and the realm of sports coaching has been established, the second section of this literature review will now specifically explore literature that frames the context of the current research study or an elite academy football setting. As well as this, we will try to gain an understanding of how players view their day-to-day experiences and try and form a solid base for our data collection and data analysis process later on in the project.

Within academy football settings, it is important to understand that learning within this environment takes place in a social context and a community of practice comprised of a set of relations between people, activities and the outside world (Christensen, Laursen & Sorensen, 2011). However, from a social theory perspective we as researchers seek to identify how academy footballers learn through participation within these social practices and how there is not just a focus on how to ‘get there’ but to also ‘stay there’ within elite football (Christensen, Laursen & Sorensen, 2011). The fundamental

role of football academies is to develop players that will work their way up to the first team, or at least, generate profit through the sale of players who are seen as marketable assets (Manley, Palmer & Roderick, 2012; Stratton et al. 2004). Not only does this highlight the modern capitalist conception of the sporting body we discussed earlier, but it shows that such institutions within professional and commercialised sport are defined by the exploitation of athletes and the reproduction of dominant capitalist social relations (Andrews, 2008; Brohm, 1978; Manley, Palmer & Roderick, 2012; Thorpe, 2004; Van Rheenen, 2012).

Research by Manley, Palmer and Roderick (2012) shows that youth players within football academies are occupationally tied by the highly rationalised daily training regimes and socially bound by curfews and time tabled arrangements. This comes as a result of youth football environments becoming more systemic and standardised institutions which permit the use of surveillance technologies in order to enforce and demonstrate compliance within an enclosed and formally structured space (Gearing, 1999; Manley, Palmer & Roderick, 2012; Parker, 1996). This compliance is further enforced by the fact that there is such a heavy focus on becoming a professional athlete which shows how symbolic violence has now become an embedded practice within football academies (Christensen & Sorensen, 2009; McGillivray, 2006; Parker, 1996; Parker, 2000; Platts & Smith, 2009). Players are made to believe that succeeding as a professional should be above their academic development and by having the ambition to succeed reinforced on a daily basis by the coaching staff, they are constantly threatened by the prospect of losing recognition amongst their team mates and loss of their contract if they begin to demonstrate behaviours that are outside the set norms such as indicating an interesting in their academic ability (Christensen & Sorensen, 2009; McGillivray, 2006; Parker, 2000; Platts & Smith, 2009). As a result, this begins to influence academy players in other aspects of their day to day experiences within the academy setting, as players are further encouraged to conform to characteristics that dominate their institution of professional sport (Roderick, 2006). Such characteristics are labelled as a 'professional attitude' and a failure to comply may lead to further rejection or exclusion from the cultural milieu (Manley, Palmer & Roderick, 2012). The use of surveillance technologies within the academy environment has become so normalised and part of academy football culture, that players are

reluctant to criticise their use and have accepted their use as a normalised practice (Toner & Jones, 2016).

Work by Cushion and Jones (2006) highlighted how within professional youth soccer settings, players are now beginning to show very little resistance to the behaviours of their coaches. As previously discussed, power works in a way that a dominant group shares a set of practical beliefs with the group it is trying to exert power on (Krais, 1995). Through prolonged exposure, actions of the dominant group are seen as legitimate and this is seen in ‘the case of Albion Football Club’ where coaches begin to defend their harsh and aggressive behaviours as being in the players best interests (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Cushion & Jones, 2006). This was then further legitimised as the players began to defend the actions of their coaches by seeing them as motivational tools (Cushion & Jones, 2006). Overall, the way symbolic violence has begun to influence professional football academies is by keeping players in their place as they misrecognize their role as unquestioning of any form of authority (Hunter, 2004). This is through the perception that in order to become a professional, the coaches act as gatekeepers to this reality, which further reinforces players to conform to social norms and contribute to an already existing structure within football academies (Cushion & Jones, 2006). Therefore, not only is there a heavy focus on compliance within football academies, but the idea that resistance should remain at a minimum in order to achieve a future goal further demonstrates the destructive nature within the academy setting.

However, by exploring more pertinent research there are findings to suggest that despite the structural components within the football academy environment, the use of GPS and surveillance technologies is beginning to face some criticism from the players themselves. Research project by Jones (2019) specifically looked at academy players experiences of GPS surveillance technologies, and the findings of this project give a well-rounded, modern day assessment of how these forms of technology are working within such a prestigious environment. It has been established that the academy environment is a heavily documented, one of heavy surveillance, demonstrates symbolic violence and demonstrates multiple forms of disciplinary power (Carter, 2006; Cushion & Jones, 2006; Giulianotti, 1999; Jones, 2019; Jones, 2013; Jones & Denison, 2016). As well as this, the heavy reliance and use of

unnecessarily disciplinary coaching practices has been discovered to have a significantly detrimental affect upon a players physical, mental and emotional development (Giulianotti, 1999; Jones, 2019; Jones & Denison, 2017). As well as this, it's also known from Foucault's (1995) disciplinary analysis, that coaching practices that are left unquestioned or impose unnecessarily high levels of disciplinary power, can begin to cause potentially dangerous outcomes for players in relation to their mental, physical and emotional health (Giulianotti, 1999; Jones, 2019; Mill & Gearity, 2016). The findings of this research showed that players have begun to question the worthiness of GPS data by stating that data cannot show ones true ability to act as a technically capable player within the academy (Jones, 2019).

This subtle act of resistance from the players themselves, gives us a first class example of how the relational nature of power allows athletes to express a 'point of resistance' within the capillary like network of power within the academy (Jones, 2019; Markula & Pringle, 2006). Relating this back to Foucault, he states that after power is invested upon a body, it finds itself exposed to counter attack in that same body (Foucault, 1980; Jones, 2019). This shows us then that despite what scholars have written about the traditional cultural norms within a football academy environment, academy players are now also starting to show some resistance and beginning to value their body as their own entity. However, these findings have to be balanced against research which also shows that there are also populations of academy footballers that are showing less decent to the use of surveillance technologies (Roderick, 2006; Toner & Jones, 2016). As a result, the lack of resistance permits the further application of these technologies in order to gather more in depth data within the academy football setting (Roderick, 2006; Toner & Jones, 2016). Although, what we have also found is that there are now coaching methods that are being developed in order to combat this war or resistance and docile compliance in order to create a more facilitative environment for player development.

Despite it being within the context of elite rugby, research by Avner et al. (2020) on the 'Beat the Game' approach offers a Foucauldian exploration of coaching in a more ethical manner. Despite the nature of rugby union being heavily bound to the imposition of disciplinary power, they have begun to promote a problem based learning method for athletes (Avner et al, 2020). By using realistic scenarios, as well as questioning the athletes within the training environment, this has been found to positively

contribute to the development of athletes forming critical thinking and analytical skills (Avner et al. 2020; Hubball & Robertson, 2004; Jones & Toner, 2006; Ojala & Thorpe. 2015).

2.8 Research questions

Overall, research has indicated that the professional football academy setting being a complex setting influenced by a range of relationships and social discourses. For example research has revealed traditional norms of player compliance in the pursuit of becoming a professional football, as well as kernels of resistance to the monitoring (Jones, 2019). In order to build on this knowledge the current research study seeks to paint a broader picture of academy players' experiences of their day to day lives. Precisely, this study seeks to explore how residence within an academy context leads to how these young men experience their bodies, and also to explore the levels of perceived autonomy within such a heavily disciplined environments. In order to achieve this – the current study asks the following research questions

- What do the players perceive the beneficial outcomes to be as a result of monitoring technologies being a common method of practice in their training routines?
- Are academy footballers of today starting to engage in a thought process that leads them to think about the possible removal of such technologies from their training environment?
- Do elite academy footballers understand the impact of being an athlete 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and can we recommend alternative provisions to tackle the negative implications of this phenomena?

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Philosophy

This study was undertaken whilst adhering to a post-structuralist paradigmatic philosophy. Within the post-structural paradigm, researchers are focused on the relations between knowledge and power (Devetak, 2009). Within the book *Discipline and Punish: the birth of the prison* (1995), the French post-structuralist philosopher Michel Foucault argued that power and knowledge are mutually supportive of and directly affect each other. Adopting a poststructuralist position (in this case utilising a Foucauldian lens) allows the researcher to discover how this relationship between power and knowledge can explain wider social aspects of the modern world (Devetak, 2009), including that of contemporary high-performance sport settings. The current study adopts a post-structuralist lens, as it looks to expose the significance of power-knowledge relations and to reveal how these relations construct origins and give meanings to representations and social practices that guide and impact today's world (Devetak, 2009; Markula & Pringle, 2006), including the football academy context and the experience of athletes therein.

Foucault's understanding of power is a useful tool for qualitative researchers within the elite sport setting (Markula & Pringle, 2006; Shogan, 1999). As mentioned within the literature review of this study, by subjecting bodies to various forms of control, this can have an extreme effect on the overall efficacy, skilfulness and ability of the sporting body whilst also diminishing the body into being docile and over compliant (Avner, Denison, Jones, Boocock & Hall, 2020; Denison et al. 2017; Foucault, 1970; Foucault, 1977). The use of surveillance is also a key tool to consider when discussing the work of Foucault, as he uses the term 'panopticism' to describe how the concept of power can cause bodies to feel permanently visible and assures the self-regulation of a bodies behaviour so that they act in a normalized way (Foucault, 1977; Jones & Denison, 2017; Jones, 2019a; Jones, 2019b). Foucault's anatomo politics also highlight how within modern day sport, most of what is understood in terms of discipline and power, has underpinned a series of social discourses that help guide social practices such as sports coaching (Foucault, 1970; Johns & Johns, 2000; Mills, Denison & Gearity, 2020). By having these social discourses, these act as systems of control and set out to marginalize the way in which we

think as practitioners and researchers (Mills, Denison & Gearity, 2020; Foucault, 1978, 1995). Using Foucault's (1995) disciplinary analysis to elite sport, qualitative researchers are able to identify and problematise the negative effects that athlete docility and social discourses can have on athlete development (Barker-Ruchti & Tinning, 2010; Foucault, 1995; Jones, 2019; Markula & Pringle, 2006; Shogan, 1999;). Foucault's work also helps qualitative researchers to assess and analyse the way knowledge is connected to power by focusing on certain texts (Markula & Pringle, 2006).

In this opening section, the main tenets of post-structuralism and Foucault's main theoretical ideas have been outlined. When utilising a post-structuralist Foucauldian lens, a qualitative approach is typical and makes sense because qualitative research aims to assess and examine the experiences of people within a specific social setting, as well as assessing and understanding the relations of power within a specific context (Hennink, Hutter, & Baily, 2020). The current post-structural study lends itself to a qualitative approach because of post-structuralism's multiple ontology and its subjective epistemology (Markula & Silk, 2011). At this juncture, before the specifics of the chosen research design are outlined, it is important to discuss the characteristics and merits of adopting a qualitative approach to social science research in sport to legitimise its application.

3.2 Qualitative research: its purpose and the various processes

Qualitative research aims to assess and examine peoples experiences rather than analysing quantitative data (Hennik, Hutter & Bailey, 2020). Quantitative research is more concerned with measurable quantities that are used to determine whether a relationship exists between a research question and a certain variable (Gratton & Jones, 2014). Qualitative research on the other hand, looks to capture data that is rich in meanings or qualities that are not quantifiable, such as feelings and experiences, and makes use of specific data collection methods like interviews to generate this data (Gratton & Jones, 2014; Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020). Good qualitative research is determined by making sure that the data can be understood from the participants point of view (Tracy, 2019). This can help situate the researcher in a more immersive context in order to interpret the data as effectively as possible and to present findings that go beyond the surface and explore the contextual meanings of behaviours (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Tracy, 2019). When undertaking a qualitative study, by

embracing and understanding the contextual influences surrounding a research issue, the researcher (s) can use their experience and background to influence the research process and shape the research results (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020; Markula & Silk, 2011). However, most qualitative researchers are aware of this and are careful to use a process of reflection. This reflection allows them to understand what their role in the research process is, and how this will help them understand how they will construct their projects, why they might act in a certain way, and how they will conduct their projects (Markula & Silk, 2011).

The main purpose of qualitative research is highlighted by Markula and Silk (2011) as offering critique, providing social change and following a process in order to derive results from research. Social critique refers to a set of behaviours that are identified as a problem beforehand, which are then critiqued by the research team which allows the researcher to identify suggestions of social change within the specific setting. A previous understanding of the research topic allows the researcher to make a more meaningful suggestion (Markula & Silk, 2011).

When conducting qualitative research it is not necessary to follow a rigid pre-set order of tasks. Qualitative methods are more than just a set of data gathering techniques, by analysing social action within a specific field setting, researchers can begin to take a broader view upon the research setting and view people as a whole, rather than as a set of variables (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2015). This allows researchers to then use theory as a way of framing the topic of interest which is then used to connect the topic with larger social and cultural norms (Markula & Silk, 2011). However, it's important to consider that recently, the act of reducing peoples' experiences to statistic equations has caused researcher to lose sight of the social side of human life (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2015). Rather, by engaging in a qualitative methodology, if it suits the study, researchers can select their qualitative method to suit the needs of the specific research question (Gratton & Jones, 2014) and their preferences with regard to their paradigmatic ontology and epistemology.

Given that the current project considers the day-to-day experiences of academy footballers, the research project aims to examine a wide variety of social cultures, processes and behaviours. The research team also have a depth of experience within the academy football setting through previous

experiences as a player as well as through previous research investigations. This fact makes a qualitative approach the most logical research approach as it is the most likely to procure as much meaningful data as possible to address the wider social issues surrounding academy football.

3.3 Data collection

The current study collect data from semi-structured interviews using a Foucauldian inspired interview guide (Avner, Denison, & Jones, 2014). This theoretically informed guide encouraged participants to discuss how they experienced certain practices within their social setting (specifically how the choreography of the elite football academy setting influences the developmental experiences of academy footballers, Jones, 2019b). By allowing the interview to move in the direction of concentrating on the individual within a specific socio-cultural context, this allowed the researcher to gather data that reflected the workings of power within that specific space, what is more, through the data analysis phase, to offer informed suggestions for positive change (Jones, 2019b).

3.3.1 Use of interviews within qualitative research

The process of conducting an interview is one of the most common methods of collecting data within the discipline of qualitative research (Culver, Gilbert & Trudell, 2003; Gratton & Jones, 2014). They are guided question-answer conversations with a set purpose of allowing participants to provide accounts for their actions and opinions (Kvale, 1996; Tracy, 2019). They are significantly valuable for also providing information on issues that are difficult to be observed and quantified such as perspectives on past experiences or rare occasions/scenarios (Tracy, 2019). By allowing participants to discuss their experiences in their own words, this creates a detailed response as well as a relationship between the researcher and participant (Fry, 2004). As a result, when deciding to use an interview based approach, researchers must be able to define their research purpose so that once the research question has been developed, the use of an interview actually helps address the research problem, rather than just conducting an interview for the sake of satisfying the assumption that qualitative research must include interviewing (Markula & Silk, 2011).

With the current society we live in being described as an ‘interview society’, the use of an interview has become a ‘means of contemporary story telling’ that provides opportunities for researchers to explore complex phenomena via a journey of mutual discovery, reflection and explanation which may have previously been hidden or unseen (Tracy, 2019). As well as this, where a project may have a low population, a quantitative approach may be inappropriate, which further permits the use of an interview in order to gather information which is complex and difficult to measure in a quantifiable way (Veal, 1997). With there being substantial literature regarding qualitative interviews, there had been a myriad of terms for researchers to use in order to organise and class different interview techniques (Markula & Silk, 2011). However, the chosen method for this project is a Foucauldian inspired semi-structured interview (Avner, Jones & Denison, 2014) and as a result, there needs to be a clear understanding into what a semi structured interview looks like and how they are developed.

3.3.2 Semi structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are one of the most flexible and organic methods of interviewing (Tracy, 2019). By being less structured, this stimulates a discussion rather than having the interview being dictating by a set order of questions (Tracy, 2019). This form of discussion allows the researcher to adopt a flexible approach to the data collection process which not only allows them to reflect and adapt, but also allows the participants to do the same and provide a rich source of data (Gillham, 2000; Gratton & Jones, 2010; Law, 2019). The quality of the data relies purely on the role the interviewer plays and the types of questions they ask (Markula & Silk, 2011). With qualitative research being more open to contextual influences and not limited by claims of objectivity, semi-structured interviews permit the researcher to be an active participant within the interview in order to probe further information from the participants or even discuss certain issues of interest that may arise during the interview (Markula & Silk, 2011). This was particularly useful given the ‘insider status’ of the primary researcher, who, given his prior knowledge of football culture was able to manage and steer the interview in novel and interesting ways.

The research team are experienced at conducting social science research within the professional football setting. Subsequently, the primary researcher was in a position where he could draw upon the

team's experience to facilitate and sustain a lively interview discussion with each participant (Jones & Denison, 2017). This 'insider status' is an important factor in the data collection phase of the project, as the research team were able to create an environment within the interview that cultivated space for the participants to fully relax and use their own mutually understood terminology of the sport. This allowed them to reveal their experiences within the academy environment and extract rich data (Jones & Denison, 2017). When conducting a semi-structured interview there are two types of probes that can be used which are clarification probes and elaboration probes (Gratton & Jones, 2014). Clarification probes allow the researcher to clarify any points that may have been misunderstood, whilst elaborative probes are used to elicit a more in-depth response about a particular point of interest (Gratton & Jones, 2014).

With semi-structured interviews, despite their open-ended nature, it is key that an interview guide is established so that questions meet the purpose of the research (Markula & Silk, 2011). As mentioned, the current study employed a Foucauldian inspired interview guide (Avner et al., 2014). This guide, see appendix A (7.1), consisted of a standard set of questions informed by Foucault's (1995) anatomo-politics from *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* and allowed the researcher to prompt discussion as well as being able to adapt and alter the sequence of questions or probes in order to extract as much information as possible from each participant (Gratton & Jones, 2014; Markula & Silk, 2011; Patton 2002). One specific question from the interview guide that has been formed by Foucault's concepts was the following, "So when it comes to a typical training session, talk me through, briefly, from start to finish, what happens?". This question was developed to see if the participant's, especially the players, could recall their day to day training routines at the academy. As players in football academies are tied to highly rationalised training regimes, this question aimed to collect data that may support this claim and provide primary evidence of whether the players could recall training as a timetabled arrangement that was the same every day (Manley, Palmer & Roderick, 2012). Developing an interview guide of this nature, also allows the participants' responses to then be used in the form of isolating specific moments which can prompt a discussion to analyse and establish the effects these isolated moments had relating to the research question (Avner, Jones & Denison, 2014).

One example of a prompted or probed discussion from the interview guide, see appendix A (7.1), was after a question asking about the use of surveillance technologies at training, “Do you think they’ve helped you to improve and notice what you need to work on?”. The question was developed in the anticipation that all players would respond by saying yes, as a result, further probes for this question were developed such as, “do you feel fitter”, “do you feel the value of training in such a high amount” and “what relationship do you have with your body as a professional player”. These probes, along with an explanation of what these questions might mean, will help the interview process dive deeper into the original question to see if the players really do feel the perceived benefit of surveillance technologies in training, or whether they have just become a routine part of their training week.

3.3.3 Use of online interviews

Its important to mention that during the conception of this research project, the Covid-19 pandemic was causing a lot of operational issues, such as having to work remotely from the University and avoiding contact with members of the public and respecting the isolation bubbles created by football clubs to maintain the health and safety of the players. As a result of this, the method mentioned above could still remain the same, however, interviews had to be done online rather than in person. Interviews were then recorded via zoom and transcribed from this recording.

Covid-19 has changed the way research is conducted in multiple academic fields (Thunberg & Arnell, 2022). In this section, a discussion will be had to explain the benefits and drawbacks from this decision during the data collection process.

In person interviews have been carried out within qualitative research because they are seen as the ‘gold standard’ which allow the researcher to analyse both verbal and non verbal communication by the participant (McCoyd & Kerson, 2006). However, due to the pandemic changing how people lived their lives, a new digital age was born where a previously unconsidered method had now become an essential method of data collection due to social contact being considered to endanger both the interviewer and interviewee (Nind, Coverdale & Meckin, 2021). One of the perceived benefits of online interviewing is that it gives the researcher the opportunity to include people that live further away from the research setting (Thunberg & Arnell, 2022). As well as this, it’s important to note that despite the

government guidance not allowing the public to travel unless it was permitted, having online interviews also helps to cut travel costs for both the researcher and participants (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013). The benefits that this can have to future research projects is that it can facilitate the inclusion of more participants despite geographical distance, in turn, giving researchers a larger sample size (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013). This benefit applies to our research project though due to multiple members of the research team living in various different parts of the UK in relation to the location of both the University and the Football Club we will be working with. By having the option to conduct our semi structured interviews online, it meant that the research project wasn't in jeopardy of failing due to a small sample size which would lead to a lack of data collection.

Online interviews have also been argued to facilitate a greater emotional connection between the participant and researcher (Weller, 2017). This is due to the increased ease a participant feels during this setting as there is less pressure than there is during an in-person interview (Weller, 2017). By having a greater physical distance between the researcher and the participant, the online setting offers an additional layer of privacy and freedom due to the participant being in control of being able to terminate and end the interview at any time (Adams-Hutchenson & Longhurst, 2017; Fielding & Fielding, 2012; Jenner & Myers, 2019). Online interviews also give the participant an additional level of security should the research focus on sensitive topics, giving the participant the option of having their camera off if they wish (Alkhateeb, 2018; Deakin & Wakefield, 2013; Thunberg & Arnell, 2022). With this research project having the potential to cause distress to some participants, having this option available for the participants allows them to protect their privacy should they wish to do so (Alkhateeb, 2018; Deakin & Wakefield, 2013; Thunberg & Arnell, 2022).

The consideration the research team need to take into account however, is that if the participant does decide to protect their privacy it could impact the data analysis stage of the project. By having the camera off during the interview, visual cues and non verbal communication are unable to be analysed (Thunberg & Arnell, 2022). Furthermore, its also important to consider findings by McCarrick, Davis-McCabe and Hirst-Winthrop (2016), who found that building a relationship between the researcher and the participant took longer during an online interview. As a result, it is recommended that

communication with the participants is started before the interview to reduce any discomfort for the participant or jeopardy of the interview failing to take place (McCarrick et al. 2016; Thunberg & Arnell, 2022).

To summarise, despite research showing the perceived benefits and drawbacks of conducting interviews online, its important to remember the backdrop that this research project is being conducted in. A global pandemic was the driving factor behind the choice to conduct online interviews. There is a good argument to suggest that researchers need to conduct interviews in person to read the visual and non verbal cues, and that not all groups of participants are deemed suitable for online interviews, however it was a decision taken out of necessity not choice (Hay-Gibson, 2009; Sedgwick & Spiers, 2009; Seitz, 2015). As well as this, by having the interviews take place online, it does give the research team more flexibility on when these interviews can be conducted online.

3.4 Sampling

When developing a sampling strategy, research has shown that one of the best methods within qualitative research is purposeful sampling. This method of sampling looks at researchers purposefully selecting data that fits the parameters of the projects research question, goals and purpose (Tracy, 2019). By having a sample that is selected by the researcher, this provides a sample representative of the research population (Lavrakas, 2008). Linking this to the project at hand, by adopting this method, the research team selected academy players from an accessible academy setting.

The main advantage of purposeful sampling is that it can be extremely time and cost efficient when compared to other sampling methods and is also appropriate when the researcher is selecting from a small sample size (Lavrakas, 2008). This limited sample size may be due to the setting or context the research is taking place within, so it may also be the only sampling method that is available and appropriate enough to use (Black, 2010; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012).

However, it is important to note that for studies such as the one proposed in this thesis, the recruitment phase can be very challenging due to the nature of the data being collected potentially exploring very sensitive topics and experiences (Law, 2019). There is also the consideration that when

carrying out qualitative research with male participants, it's important to consider the fact that male participants find it hard to be able to share their own personal experiences with other males (Cheng, 1999; Oliffe & Mroz, 2005; Law, 2019; Lee & Ownes, 2002). As well as this, by gaining access to professional academy footballers, it's important to hold an 'insider status', as mentioned earlier in the methodology, as without one the research team may have struggled to gain the trust and acceptance of the players and coaches concerned (Law, 2019; Parker, 2016). Having 'insider status' allows any researcher to engage with the participants during the interview to not only build trust but to also utilise knowledge of the sport within these conversations (Smith & McGannon, 2018). As a team of academic writers with coaching backgrounds, the interviews that were conducted felt relaxed and facilitated the establishment of trust and knowledge of football right from the start (Smith & McGannon, 2018). By using terminology that the participants understood and using our knowledge of coaching from both an academic and practical perspective, we were able to facilitate an in depth conversation with the participants. We could position ourselves as critical friends aiming for a maintained level of engagement during the conversation rather than spending time on trying to explain academic language in such a time restrained process (Smith and McGannon, 2018). By planning our interview process around our insider status, we formulated questions that managed the use of particular vocabulary to ensure the data gathered was detailed, rich and mainly answering the main research questions (Roderick, 2006).

3.4.1 Sampling criteria

As a result of carrying out a process of purposive sampling, this study utilised a Foucauldian inspired semi-structured interview to collect data from 5 academy players aged 18 years old and 1 professional academy coach. Each player has been in the academy set up for at least one season, with most having previously come up through the younger age groups meaning they have a very good understanding of their day-to-day experiences at the club. The coach also had a substantial playing career before beginning his coaching journey and subsequently working with younger age groups before working at their current club. As a result, this population of participants can help give a very authentic account of how the academy in question operates on a day-to-day basis, both from the perspective of a player and a coach.

3.4.2 Ethical considerations

Prior to the study taking place, a rigorous process was conducted to gain ethical approval for this study to take place. After an application was submitted to the Faculty of Health Sciences and Faculty of Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee, we gained ethical approval evidenced by our ethical approval number: FHS300.

During this application we ensured that a risk assessment was completed to consider the impact this research could have on the participants. This was then followed up by ensuring that any participants that wished to participate completed a consent form and were also provided with a participant information sheet. This information was provided to inform the participants of the nature of the research and where they could expect to see the research published. Participants were also given the option to withdraw from the process and were also informed what procedure to follow should they wish to withdraw from the project. As part of the sampling criteria, another document that we produced as part of the ethics application was the recruitment materials for potential participants. This helped us to work with the football club on finding the participants that would best inform the research project.

The final part of the ethics application was ensuring that we produced a participant debrief sheet and also providing a transcription confidentiality agreement to ensure that all data collected was stored securely and that participants were debriefed on the purpose of the interview and why we valued their input to the project. During the data collection phase it was important that not only did the participants receive a briefing sheet before the interview, but a debriefing sheet was sent to them immediately after the interview was finished.

It is also important to mention that due to the players being 18 years old, we didn't recruit the players as participants directly. We liaised with the academy staff and allowed them to be our main contact as that way, they could ensure the players were looked after from a safeguarding point of view, and that they could carry out their due diligence to ensure that our project was approved by the ethics committee and was not placing their players at any immediate risk. With this in mind however, the research team may have had to adopt a convenience sampling strategy of recruiting anyone who is

simply accessible at the time rather than selecting our proposed method of purposive sampling should the football club have been selective on who we could work with (Bryman, 2012; Law, 2019).

3.5 Data Analysis

Research from this paradigm is clearly focused upon understanding the meanings of an individual, in this case the elite academy footballers, within a specific space in which power operates and works upon the individuals. In order to remain truthful to the nature of this research project it is important to explain and articulate how the data analysis process will work within the theoretical lens of this study. As a result, the process used in the data analysis phase of this research project followed the process of creating transcripts from the interview process and analysing them using Foucault's disciplinary analysis (1995). This method was chosen due to findings within pertinent literature by Markula and Silk (2011) who discussed the intricacies of post structuralist research and how findings are analysed.

As a qualitative research team, it is our job to analyse the data continuously, hence why the interview process will utilise follow up questions and such an extensive analysis process once the interviews have been transcribed (Markula & Silk, 2011). When it comes to the data analysis process, it is also important that our process is made clear to explain how we will analyse the data and also what theoretical framework we will use to articulate the themes and topics identified in the interview transcripts (Markula & Silk, 2011). Therefore the chosen data analysis method will also follow Markula and Silk's (2011) recommendations on how to analyse data within a post structural research project: Identification of themes; Analysis of the themes; Connection with theory and previous literature (Markula & Silk, 2011).

By using a Foucauldian post-structuralist approach, we can work within this theoretical framework to reject universal truths and critique problematic outcomes identified within the data, which in this case, will be any themes that arise to do with accepted or problematic coaching practices within the day to day experiences of the professional academy players (Avner, Markula & Denison, 2017; Markula & Silk, 2011). Because of these recognised strengths, the data analysis process of this research

project will follow a Foucauldian post-structuralist approach in conjunction with a Foucauldian inspired interview guide (Avner, Denison, & Jones, 2014).

One example of applying this post structural analysis method to the data was during the identification of themes process. Before looking at the data, key areas of literature formed some loose themes to look for within the data. By creating themes that linked to the literature and theories discussed in the literature review, this helped us to find primary data within the transcripts to form key discussion points during the analysis of the data. We wanted to identify any disciplinary behaviours demonstrated in the world of professional sport, identify the implications of docility upon professional athletes and identify whether the professional academy environment used power and surveillance to keep their athletes or training environment organised. Once the data had been analysed and connected to the theory, we were able to identify three key themes that were present in the data which then began the process of applying Foucault's concepts of discipline to critique the problematic outcomes within the data within the results section of this thesis.

4.0 Results and discussion

Its important to note before we present the findings, we disclose the finer details of the interviews that were conducted. We had planned for the interviews to last an hour each, however due to the nature of the participants answers, some took significantly less than an hour to complete and others would run up to just under the hour mark. The shortest interview was 35 minutes and 28 seconds in duration and the longest interview was 55 minutes and 55 seconds in duration. This gives us a range of 20 minutes and 27 seconds and an average interview length of 48 minutes and 21 seconds.

Pseudonym	Professional playing experience	Age	Occupation
Gary	18-20 years	42	Coach
Anthony	2 years	18	Under 23 player
Charlie	9 years	18	Under 23 player
Max	2 years	18	Under 23 player
Ethan	2 years	18	Under 23 player
Thomas	4 years	18	Under 23 player

Despite the cagey nature at the beginning of the interview process, as the conversations progressed, the participants started to feel more comfortable which produced some interesting findings when discussing the day-to-day experiences of academy footballers. In response to the main research questions, three clear themes were identified from the interview data.

In the first theme, 'It's what I signed up for', the players responses indicated that their exposure to such strict routines resulted in them being overly compliant and rarely questioning the routines and practices they are subjected to. In the second theme, 'Self-regulation and the 24/7 academy player', it was found that a significant aspect of their compliance with their daily routines, was an intense level of self-regulation. The third theme, 'tensions with technology', showed that there were mixed attitudes towards the use of sports science technologies, in particular wearables and surveillance based

performance analysis technologies. In this theme it became apparent that some players indicated that the level of observation experienced was vital to their development. Importantly however, as this theme will proceed to demonstrate, a couple of players were starting to form a critical thinking process in relation to the perceived worthiness of the use of monitoring technologies in their daily practices. In what follows, a Foucauldian lens will be applied to analyse these three separate but interconnected themes to demonstrate how Foucault's thoughts regarding anatomo-political power can act as a useful heuristic to explore the day-to-day experiences of these academy players.

4.1 'It's what I signed up for'

4.1.1 'Docile footballing bodies' in an academy setting

It was clear from the data that the day-to-day experiences of the interviewed academy footballers have become so regulated and controlled that what the players do has become a habit and part of their daily routines. All the interviewed participants were aware of what is expected of them and, importantly for this first theme, the transcripts revealed that there is very little dissent or objection to what they are asked to do on a day to day basis. For example, this initial quote from Ethan demonstrates the compliance of the players.

Interviewer: So in terms of like your day to day life at the academy, just sort of talk me through what a typical training session might look like, what time do you get there, what do you do, what time do you start and finish?

Ethan: On a day to day basis, I'd get in at half 9, um, we'd have time to go pre activation, stretch, foam roll, get on the hurdles and just completely warm your body up before going on the pitch...warm up and normally go into a passing drill, a possession drill and then mini games to finish off and then we'd have about, an hour lunch, um, we'd go for the canteen and straight after one group would be in the gym.

Other examples from the data showed that when the players started to speak more openly about their experiences, there was not only an overall acceptance to the routines they are subjected to, but there was a justification towards it due to the professional standards of the academy demanding such

behaviours from the players. This is supported by specific literature within academy football that observed elite academy soccer players and showed that many of them accept the traditional workplace norms due to their environment being defined by disciplinary practices and symbolic violence to ensure players demonstrate compliance to these norms imposed upon them (Avner, Denison, Jones, Boocock & Hall, 2020; Jones, 2019; Manley, Palmer & Roderick, 2012). When asked about their responses to tasks they were expected to complete – the players responded,

***Anthony:** “we just do it”, “there’s no complaints from me, it’s what I signed up for..., Yeah that’s definitely a habit now, definitely”*

***Charlie:** “it becomes quite the norm - you know because I’ve been there for so long, it just feels normal everyday doing the same thing”*

***Max:** “with their level of qualifications and stuff like that, you just got to trust them as well, that’s what they’re good at...it allows me to just think about the now rather than the later...I like to think I do it because I love it, you know what I mean, like I don’t do it because I’ve got to do it to get paid...Like if you took the money out of it I’d still play”*

***Ethan:** “I’m always that busy person around the academy I’ll always do extra, I’ll always be the first one on the pitch and the last one off the pitch”*

***Thomas:** “As you get to 23’s, you just know what you need, you’re used to having it, it’s just second nature, you just get used to it”*

The above examples indicate that within the academy setting, there is a constant need to be seen as productive athlete who not only does what is expected of them, but they’re also made to think that it is beneficial to go the extra step by carrying this on outside of the academy setting. When exploring the data further, it’s interesting to see that the athletes were able to give a similar rendition to their daily routines by recalling what time they arrive to the order of activities from start to finish at training. This supports findings by Cushion and Jones (2006) who stated that in order for power to work it requires the complicity of all involved, for example, having athletes conform to the values and rules set by the coaching staff.

These initial quotes also suggest that in this academy context, Foucault's concept of discipline and anatomo-political power has worked in a way that has led the athletes to acknowledge and accept their role within the academy (Foucault, 1977; Foucault, 1979, Smart, 2022). When Foucault talks about discipline and surveillance, Jeremy Bentham's panopticon metaphor helps us to understand how athletes working within a structured environment such as an academy, can be supervised from a central power such as the coaching staff (Foucault, 2008). The element of confinement within this setting allows power to remain omnipresent and also unverifiable so that the athletes never know whether they are being watched at any one moment (Foucault, 2008).

In theme two I move on to explore how this scenario demonstrates the idea of players promoting their own self regulation due to the perceived rewards from expressing normalized and desired behaviours. However, at this stage it suffices to say that the presence of the coaching staff alongside the players' daily routines has diminished the players' abilities to think for themselves (Foucault, 1995). In one example, when Anthony says that they will "train whatever the coaches have planned" as well as Ethan saying how they will just "go into a passing drill, a possession drill and then mini games to finish off". The tone of these two responses showed that the players only have a vague idea of what is happening and they are happy to just arrive and take part in any practice the coaches have planned for them to do. Crucially, Anthony's indication that he complies to the coaches' plans shows how intense control sustains the working of discipline and acts to produce what Foucault would call 'docile footballing bodies' (Jones & Denison, 2017) in this setting.

One could argue that the participants' responses also demonstrate that, because of the relations at power in their football arrangement, they are not only conditioned to perform in an efficient and desirable manner but more importantly, due to the docility their arrangement normalizes, rarely think for themselves or question what they are asked to do. From the data we can see that not only are the players happy and familiar with their daily routines, but the intensely disciplinary arrangement of the football academy has rendered these athletes docile and precludes them from questioning their day-to-day routine. For example, when asked about the day to day practices its clear to see that Anthony's response of "we just do it", "there's no complaints from me, it's what I signed up for", and Charlie's

response of “It just feels normal everyday doing the same thing”, indicate docile adherence to the normalised expectation of the academy. Moreover, by arriving at the same designed space every day and following instructions from superiors (such as coaches), not only do the athletes at the academy internalise the need to perform to their rank in the squad, but also feel that they are required and expected to engage in extra work away from the training space to improve their status within the team (Foucault 1977; Foucault, 1979; Jones & Denison, 2017; Smart, 2022). This is supported by Ethan’s response when he said that “I’m always that busy person around the academy I’ll always do extra, I’ll always be the first one on the pitch and the last one off the pitch”. This obedience and complicity shows that no matter what, the athletes deem this as the right way to behave and, to a certain extent, forfeit any autonomy to think for themselves (Foucault, 1979).

Mirroring previous socio-cultural studies on high performance sport settings, the data from the current study could also be read as demonstrating that the docile compliance of the participants makes them vulnerable to a scenario that may lead to a detrimental impact on their athletic development as they become passive (Bale, 2004; Denison, 2007; Foucault, 1979; Markula & Pringle, 2006). For example, when Max was discussing his development and his future at the club, he stated that he’ll “just think about the now rather than the later”. This quote was particularly interesting and relevant to this argument because it shows that despite his ability to conform to a routine and be compliant within training sessions, he is clearly, at this stage of his career, not in a position where he can think for himself or have the flexibility to do so in regards to his future at the club. What is more, Foucauldian informed research has shown that individuals who disregard their future wellbeing at the expense of immediate training and performance output are vulnerable to limiting outcomes (Barker-Ruchti & Tinning, 2010; Johns & Johns, 2000) as well as manipulation from those within their immediate space, such as the demanding coach.

Thus far, what the first theme has re-iterated is a well-established finding, that is, that within professional sports settings, athletes are often rendered docile by the imposition of disciplinary power which is kept in place by hierarchical surveillance and normalizing judgement from a central power (Foucault, 1979). Interestingly however, the data also further indicated that the coaches at the academy

acted to endorse such behaviours and choreograph such disciplinary practices (Green, 2002). For example, when speaking to the academy coach, he revealed that the coaches,

Have a meeting most mornings to see what we're gunna do, determine what we're gunna do in the session, talk about what timings we'll do, how many bouts we'll do, it's very very meticulous when you try to sort the training out because the sport science, as you say, do play a massive role.

This response indicates that the coaches meticulous planning was conducted in a space away from the players. This is significant. By planning sessions away from the players, before orchestrating and observing tightly controlled practices, coaches are able to remain in control over the athletes, further reinforcing the panoptic structure of the academy. This is enabled by allowing a central figure (a coach or coaching staff) to impose axial visibility on all players within the academy setting (Foucault, 2008). Within elite sport the presence of hierarchical observation is also a key component of enforcing disciplinary practices within a team setting (Avner et al. 2020). By planning sessions as a collective of senior coaching staff away from the players, who are then distributed throughout the space to carry out specific roles within the academy setting, this allows coaching staff to monitor athlete behaviour and ensure compliance and conformity from all the players within the training session (Avner et al. 2020; Mills & Dension, 2018). Initiating systematic observation in this way allows coaches, over a prolonged period of time, to concentrate their focus on other elements of the session as the athlete becomes accepting of the routine and normalised practices and in turn regulates their own behaviour accordingly (Jones, 2019). As we discuss in theme two and theme three later on in this discussion, it is clear to see that self-regulation is just one of the many consequential outcomes of the practices endorsed within this academy setting. We will go on to discuss and explore how this leads to athletes comparing themselves to others, which in turn has further detrimental effects of their welfare through the idea of becoming a 24 hour athlete.

4.2 The 24/7 player: self-regulation in academy football settings

The first theme discussed above, while not uniquely revelatory, has validated a main finding from socio-cultural research into football academy settings – namely that a Foucauldian reading suggests that players are rendered docile by tightly controlled arrangements typified by the presence of discipline (Giulianotti, 1999; Jones, 2019; Manley, Palmer & Roderick, 2012). The second theme outlines how the culture of the football academy is organised so that its attendees are made to be ‘useful’ winners and shepherded to intensify the use of **all** of their **time** (Barker-Ruchti & Tinning, 2010; Denison, Mills & Konoval, 2017; Denison, 2007, Denison & Mills, 2014). Precisely, the second theme outlined below progresses and points to a significant implication of the discussion outlined in theme one. Theme two reveals certain specific ways in which ‘docile footballing bodies’ behave and how these behaviours/responses reveal how power imposes itself (Foucault, 1978) in the setting under study. Specifically, this theme explores and problematises how being a ‘docile footballing body’ in this space leads to players internalising the notion that they should be 24-7 ‘around the clock’ athlete.

4.2.1 The 24-hour athlete

There was a very specific theme that was identified when talking about the overall compliance within the day-to-day experiences of the academy footballers. As a result of collecting data from both players and coaches it became clear that players were conditioned to, and accepted the notion of, being a 24/7 athlete. Data indicated that as a result of wanting to impress the coaches at the football club in order to secure and improve upon their playing status, the players, in another symptom of docility, adhered to the notion of becoming the ‘24 hour athlete’.

4.2.2 Coach expectations

Importantly, an interview with the coach also demonstrated how they believed that athletes ‘need’ to be a ‘24 hour athlete’ “to reach the pinnacle” of professional sport. For example, when discussing the notion of the ‘24-7 athlete’ Gary responded,

Gary: I think to reach the pinnacle I think you need to be (a 24-7 athlete), um, and again, that’s our job to help them become that...they don’t finish school one day and go, or 99% of them

don't finish school one day and go, right im gunna be a footballer and a 24 hour athlete, they don't, we'd like them to...

...so yes, do I think it should be there and needs to be there as they progress, yep, do I think they all are (24-7 athletes), ...and I think that's our job as coaches and the people around them, not just as coaches, the people, the support staff, the network around the academy is to help them get there.

... I think as you say if you want the rounded person in football, they have to be committed to achieve anything in a professional life..., listen, you have to committed to what you do, um, you name it, to be a professional person you have to be committed.

As a Foucauldian researcher it's important to consider how the taken for granted behaviours and practices discussed in the responses from the participants in this study can impact the coach-athlete relationship and consequently the experience of the player. Within this second theme it is important to consider how normalised practices within the space, (such as the scheduling of tightly controlled training regimes) can perpetuate the idea that an athlete needs to be a 24 hour athlete (Denison & Mills, 2014). The above quote from the coach Gary reveals that despite coaches wanting their players to progress and "reach the pinnacle" this quote also articulates how he believes it is his job to make the athletes he works with achieve this mindset within a network of relations between coaching staff and the ensconced athlete (Foucault, 1995). Foucault (1995) argued that discipline works in this way to distribute bodies within this network and impose levels of discipline that aims to make athletes work in the same way. By setting expectations through consistent language (implicit in Gary's statement), and constructing training spaces and regimes in a way that allows the coaching staff to supervise and reward athletes based on their performance, coaches can mould pliable athletes to fit their life into a groove that will fulfil the good athlete role (a compliant athlete who follows the correct procedures at all times).

4.2.3 Players' responses

The data from the study also indicated that the players internalised the notion that they should ceaselessly be fulfilling the lifestyle of a 24 hour athlete. For example, Thomas stated that he knows that he always has work to do on his body, "I've got a few things to work on, my frame and stuff like that, it's just a bit of a workout, I go mostly...on my days off to be fair". Other specific quotes from the data re-iterate how players are continuously conscious that their body is a work in progress, and show how the participants internalised what they should be doing at all times in order to intensify the use of their time (Denison & Mills, 2014), accepting the bodily objectification so typical to a high performance sport setting (Mills, Denison, & Gearity, 2020). For example, mirroring the experience of professional female players in a recent study (see Jones, Avner, Mills, & Magill, 2022), Charlie mentioned,

Really whatever you do, say you're going to eat a chocolate bar you'd have second thoughts really because you know it's not right, alternatively, you feel good when you've had a protein shake off your own back in your own time because you know it's helping you.

What is more, Ethan even expressed how he was told he needs to be a 24 hour athlete,

I speak to my sports scientist and he says you've got to be a 24/7 athlete, and yeah I think 'I've started eating properly, given my sport scientists food diaries and stuff like that to show him what I'm eating and if I'm not eating something right', then I'll start...protein shakes, proper protein shakes and creatine for like muscle gain and stuff so yeah, I'd class myself as quite a professional character which is like helping me go up in the ranks.

Overall, the data provided so far supports the idea that when power is imposed on a group of people, over a prolonged period of time, this control comes less from the coaching staff and becomes more self-regulated by the athletes themselves (Foucault, 1995; Jones & Denison, 2017). Further responses from the participants also indicated that self-regulation is a phenomena that goes further than just extra training outside the structured academy space. Athletes within this study revealed that as they regulated their nutrition, diet and training routines, they have become more aware of their bodies in response to such regulation and routine.

When we explore the notion of a 24-hour athlete, we understand that this comes from increased forms of surveillance and disciplinary practices imposed being imposed on athletes over a prolonged period of time. However, when we discovered responses to do with self-regulation of a players diet it is important to also understand that the surveillance of such data such within sport is done from a position of care. It is done to assist performance, reduce injuries and give the impression of it being a positive phenomenon to player development (Carling, Wright, Nelson & Reilly, 2008; Collins, Carson & Cruikshank, 2015; Jones & Denison, 2018). Despite the clear benefits reported from such levels of attention, there is nevertheless a real danger that over a prolonged period of time, athletes like Thomas can become overwhelmed with the idea of checking if they have done everything right prior to an event or even during training sessions and matches themselves (Denison & Mills, 2014). It is clear that becoming a '24-7 athlete' means just that, the athlete cannot escape the need to ceaselessly consider the 'state' of their body both before during and after performance.

When athletic bodies are viewed as genetic and physiological vessel's in contract to a social, cultural and philosophical entity's this can have detrimental consequences (Andrews, 2008). What might be viewed from a coach's perspective as 'true' and 'correct' within the regulated academy setting, could more appropriately be considered an artificial interpretation to be viewed as normal (Mills, Denison & Gearity, 2020). The consequences of this are that by treating the body as a machine, the athletic body becomes isolated, fragmented and controlled. This may be beneficial in terms of performance and outcomes measured within a laboratory setting, however, the developing sporting body is coached in the real world and prominent Foucauldian researchers have argued that the body should not simply be understood and reduced to a combination of isolated elements (Mills, Denison & Gearity, 2020). Today's modern and bioscientific articulation of the body then not only overlooks the body's intuitive qualities as suggested by many scholars (e.g., Atkinson, 2008; Hoberman, 1992; Hockey & Allen Collinson, 2007; Hughson, 2009; Kirk, 2002; Miller, 1995; Pronger, 1995; Ravn & Høffding, 2017; Shilling, 2003), it overlooks its self: its whole self, and does not take into account the multifarious various possible subjectivities. A specific quote from Charlie indicates this as he states that not only does he monitor his diet but also his recovery by listening to his body,

Um, well nutrition is a big one, they always tell you to like write down what you've been eating outside, so like keep your diets and stuff, that's like instructed by ourselves...if you're aching in some particular places then your recovery's key, so you're doing things you need to do to make certain problems in your body right off your own back.

Thomas also responded in a similar fashion by saying the following,

We wrote a food diary out for our sport scientist and he went through, individually what he thinks was good, what he wants us to improve, what our body fats were like and if we should be eating more, or eating less so, we especially get stuff for when we're off, so in the off season we'll get, not plans, but advice and stuff like on nutrition and hydration and stuff like that.

In a more insightful recollection, Ethan even told us about a comment that was made to him by one of the sport scientists at a training session,

Yesterday I was getting changed and the SS said that I was looking well and my body was looking good, so comments like that make me want to do it even more, like um, something I'm doing is right, whether that's taking my creatine at the right time or taking my shakes/eating or doing well in the gym, I know I'm doing something right.

By utilising surveillance methods such as food diary's, sports scientists are aided in the process of tracking the well-being of each player, which has now become an accepted and integrated component of the coaching process (Carling et al. 2014; Jones & Toner, 2016; Nelson & Groom, 2012). However, as we can see from Charlie's response, the language he uses indicates that despite this being an accepted component of the coaching process, this example indicates how the context has conditioned learned behaviours such as player led dietary monitoring. Thomas' response showed that there was a significant input from the sport scientist before the off season to keep him on track. This form of governance has promoted the feeling of imaginary freedom amongst the players (Mills, Denison & Gearity, 2020; Rose et al. 2006). Through methods of discipline and symbolic violence, an element of freedom has been presented to the players by being able to write a food diary, however, through the process of tracking things such as body fats and being set certain targets towards nutrition and hydration, this element of

freedom is ultimately lost through the element of control over the athletes gained back by the sport scientists setting rules and targets over the off season (Mills, Denison & Gearity, 2020; Rose et al. 2006). As a result of such intimate input from the sport science team, players have begun to show that they are self-regulating, to match the norms and targets set by the sport science team (Gearity & Mills, 2012).

This leads us to ask the question presented by Mills, Denison and Gearity (2020) who ask if the systematically structured understanding of training and the body is as relevant or as appropriate as we think? When we break down the sporting body into maximum workloads, strength based and scientifically compartmentalized categories, the reductive nature of the bioscientific articulation of the body becomes a reality that bioscience breaks the rules of sports coaching discourses (Mills, Denison & Gearity, 2020). As a result of it being such an integral part of the modern day coaching process, the heavy focus on scheduled training regimes and the bioscientific understanding of the body permits training regimes to render athletes docile to the point where they have had an effect on developing an athlete into a 24 hour athlete who knows precisely what they should be doing at all times to intensify their use of time (Denison & Mills, 2014). Athletes want to fulfil the good athlete role who follows and checks if they have followed the correct procedures both inside and outside of the professional sports setting (Denison & Mills, 2014). By having athletes behave in this way, their choice, or lack of choice, to engage in extra training and tracking their diets to please the sports science team only reinforces and perpetuates that their body is a machine in order to conform to high-performance sports coaching cultures within the modern capitalist conception of the sporting body (Mills, Denison & Gearity, 2020).

The idea of being a 24 hour athlete also extends to more than just self-regulation of their behaviours. By using Foucault's lens we can articulate that a player resides within a network of relations where the effects of disciplinary power are routinely present. It is therefore unsurprising that an athlete regulates their own actions in these settings (Jones, 2019). What is more, the relations of power, if undisturbed, can have effects that multiply. For example, consider Ethan's, quote when he said, "comments like that make me want to do it even more" when talking about transforming his body in line with the outlined demands. As well as these effects, to a man, the athletes all expressed how they

have individual profiles that everyone can view and contrast and compare. For example, in this quote from Charlie he said that “we compare our profiles to everyone else’s because there a big tally of everyone’s names and then the certain numbers for the certain things you’re doing”. This shows that being a 24 hour athlete also initiates the process of what Foucault called the ‘examination’ – the combination of hierarchical observation and normalising judgement. Not only are players wanting to comply to cultural norms set by coaches, but the players submit themselves to become cases that can be judged, measured and compared to others within the academy setting (Jones, 2019; Jones, Marshall & Denison, 2016; Jones et al., 2022). By doing this, athletes are further disciplined to conform, act in a normalized fashion and do more away from the academy setting as they believe they are being compared to each other at all times (Jones, Marshall & Denison, 2016).

4.3 Tensions with technology

In the third theme it was clear to see from the data that within the day-to-day experiences of the interviewed academy footballers, their level of exposure and experiences with surveillance technologies had become something they were comfortable with. Amongst the population of athletes within the research, they were all aware of what these technologies were and when asked, were all happy with the level of exposure they have to the data, stating in various ways that this was vital to their professional development and that it was normal for them to experience such a heavy input from surveillance technologies in training. Quotes from the data show the various responses from the players,

***Anthony:** “There’s obviously many different aspects to improve as a player, I think they help us a lot in terms of what they do because you can just have the ability, but without the running, the eating correctly and also the gym, it can only go so far, so they help you get that extra step you know, which is helpful” ...*

... “I don’t think you know I would have come this far (without them)”

***Max:** “I think nowadays I think it is yeah, with everyone else doing it as well yeah, I think it does improve us to be fair because, like, if you don’t know how much distance you’ve covered you probably feel like you don’t need to run as much”.*

Ethan: *“Oh, without SS and coaches and stuff like that, I would not have improved, you know, its massive um, without physios you’re not gonna get better from injury, without SS you’re not gonna do what you wanna do. I want to get bigger this year and to be stronger on the ball, without SS telling me what to do I wouldn’t know, my SS has given me stuff to do to get better. Without analysis, I don’t know if I’m getting better or worse”*

Thomas: *“I think just seeing that progress when we got the reports, showed us we was going in the right direction really”.*

The above examples indicate that due to the athletes level of exposure to the use of sport science support, they have internalised the notion that without them they would not have improved. However, contrary to this positive orientation to the sport science support, within the data, a sub-theme developed where players stated that during training, there was seemingly no place to hide due to the constant presence of surveillance through a range of technologies. We have already addressed that professional athletes accept these practices and routines as part of the workplace due to the environment being defined by disciplinary norms (Avner, Denison, Jones, Boocock, & Hall, 2020; Jones, 2019; Manley, Palmer, & Roderick, 2012). However, further research shows that with youth footballing environments becoming more systematic and standardised environments, this further permits the use of surveillance technologies to enforce and ensure compliance by athletes within this structured space (Gearing, 1999; Manley, Palmer, & Roderick, 2012; Parker, 1996.). The responses within the data that support this sub-theme are as follows.

Anthony: *“Yeah always, yeah whenever you step onto the pitch they say you always have to have a GPS vest whether its just, no footballs involved or like just running or training, always have to have a GPS vest on.”*

“Yeah because if you try, like, try to just float through a session and just not work hard in a session, they would literally be able to tell straight away, it gives you a little extra motivation to continue working hard”

Max: "I look at my stats and think, well next week I'm going to beat that and even when I get the percentage of passes completed stat I say I'm going to get that up as well in the next game. The data lets you know that there is always something that's got to be better".

Charlie: "Having the data makes you more like switched on and gives you more attention to detail on them little stats so like you're giving more attention to keeping the ball, whatever whether that's one or two touch passing or just pinging it to get every pass right, um, cause like you say the stats don't lie".

The above examples support the idea that within this professional environment, the normalised presence and application of surveillance technologies ensures that monitored players ascribe to the narrative that said monitoring is for their benefit. This has even extended to athletes believing that whilst they are training there is no place to hide as Anthony said 'they would literally be able to tell straight away' if he tried to float through a session or forget his device.

When we look to Foucault and his work on the production of docile bodies, it's interesting to explore Jeremy Bentham's panopticon as Foucault did to conceptualise surveillance. Within a panoptic structure each individual is confined so they are visible from a central power as well as isolated from other individuals within the structure (Foucault, 2008). By having power work both visibly and in an unverifiable way, in this case with the players wearing the GPS devices, players never know if they are being watched but do behave in a way that complies with the set 'rules' that govern their behaviour (Foucault, 2008). By having no hiding place within their training space and having coaches being able to 'tell straight away' if they forget their surveillance device, this reinforces the idea that visibility, in the form of players forgetting their equipment, is the main mechanism for coaches to recognize immediately if a player goes against the grain or if they have forgotten their equipment (Foucault, 1977; Gane, 2012). As a result, by having players respond like Anthony did saying, "whenever you step onto the pitch they say you always have to have a GPS vest". The use of the word 'they' implies that the players don't actually know who is watching them. By using the word 'they' this implies that the central power figure within the panoptic environment of the training ground is the whole coaching staff and shows that the players have become familiar with their routines and are starting to normalize their

behaviours due to the limitless capacity to be observed in this setting and have started to act as if they are always being observed (Foucault 1977; Gane, 2012).

So far the data indicates that the players are cognisant that there is ‘no hiding place’ but also that they accept the use of surveillance technologies on a day-to-day basis as it was acknowledged as universally beneficial to their development. In Anthony’s response, he stated that not only does GPS and surveillance data help him ‘get that extra step’, but also in a more revelatory was his mindset of saying, ‘without the running, the eating correctly and also the gym, it can only go so far’ reveals a ‘double layer’ of relations of power. Here Foucault’s ideas surrounding the instruments of discipline helps understand not only how a surveillance device is accepted as mechanism for improvement, but secondarily yet perhaps more powerfully, the culture of the disciplinary arrangement also stirs the player so that they happily regulate their own performance (Jones, 2019; Jones & Denison, 2018). In believing the narrative that the GPS can give them that ‘extra step’, a strong focus on their physical output becomes legitimated (Jones & Denison, 2018) and therefore almost impossible to contradict or oppose (Jones, 2019).

Due to the data rich contexts of sport enabled by surveillance technologies, coaches and sport science teams are able to build profiles of their athletes which in turn are used to build the foundations for future training sessions (Jones & Toner, 2016). However one problematic outcome from this can be seen in the data. For example, a data rich environment leads to a never ending and unsatisfiable process of required improvement as Max says ‘the data lets you know that there’s always something that’s got to be better’. This thought process, shows how there has been a significant change in the coaching process (Williams & Manley, 2014). Players like Max are no longer treated as a whole person, but rather, treated as a rationalised and datafied body that the coach has to de-code and improve the function of. An understandable argument is that by operating in such a data rich environment, football clubs are able to use data, to accelerate future learning and provide feedback to players after training sessions and matches (Carling et al. 2014; Miah, 2014; Nelson & Groom, 2012; Toner & Jones, 2016). While this is of course one of the intended outcomes, an unintended outcome is that this leads to the process of what Foucault called ‘the examination’ routinely taking place. The data indicated that athletes are made

into individual cases and then use this case data to compare themselves to each other in a range of ways...

Charlie: "put in our whatsapp chat, like as a full squad and the coaches so, data from training that day, and you can then compare it to people in your positions and just see like, if you're doing more".

Charlie: "Yeah so on the games we have individual profiles and you can compare them to everyone else's because there is big tally of everyone's names and then the certain numbers for the certain things you're doing, um, but then after training they're just in one big tally and you can compare yourself then really".

Thomas: "I think when we used to get our reports, I used to want to do more drives and be more powerful and do more load, even in the gym as well, if one of the lads is lifting more than me, I'll push for it and I wanna try and wanna be, just...not a challenge, but I just want to be better in myself, so they're bettering themselves".

Even when speaking to the coaching staff, they indicated how they also operate in this data rich environment and practice using the data to analyse a players performance and begin to examine the workload and effort of the players involved. Gary went on to describe how they use data in training and how it is utilised by the coaching staff.

Gary: "We'll put the data on from the day, so again, they'll all take it in the same way, some of them will look and go, wow I worked hard today, I was the hardest worker, I did the most high intensity sprints or covered the most high intensity distance whatever it may be, some wont, again, its understanding that they're all different...that's shared within the group, theres no hiding place, theres no secrets".

By having players behave in this way towards the data, it shows how the academy environment is defined not only by ubiquitous surveillance but practices that perpetuate the 'correct means of training' and knock on effects of discipline (Carter, 2006; Cushion & Jones, 2006; Giulianotti, 1999; Jones, 2019; Jones, 2013; Jones & Denison, 2016,). Research shows that by having disciplinary arrangements in

place, there is significant danger of detrimental impact upon players' physical, mental and emotional development (Jones, et al., 2016). Moreover, the lack of resistance from the players interviewed only permits the further application of these technologies in the future as 'everyone else is doing it anyway' and they 'wouldn't have come this far without them' (Roderick, 2006; Toner & Jones, 2016).

The initial data analysis presented in this third theme highlights that despite players believing that surveillance technologies are beneficial towards their professional development, simultaneously, the docile responses of players also points to a scenario where the ground is fertile for the regularly identified problematic outcomes associated with intense monitoring of elite athletes (see section 2.5 of literature review). However, as we will see in the second part of this theme, the data does not exclusively point to limiting outcomes associated with these pressures. For example, as the second half of this third theme reveals, some of the players interviewed were starting to indicate that they were showing signs of a critical thinking process towards sport science support that includes surveillance technologies and questioning the extent to which they were beneficial to their development as players.

4.3.1 The start of something new?

It is important to recognise that despite the overwhelming support and justification from the players surrounding the use of surveillance technologies, on a day-to-day basis, there were responses that opened a tangential discussion. During the data collection phase of this thesis, some players decided to give their own views and started to expand on the perceived (un) worthiness of surveillance technologies and if they actually made a beneficial impact on their development. This is not wholly unexpected in the modern day setting as more pertinent research by Jones (2019) found that components such as GPS and other surveillance technologies are starting to face some criticism. The responses from the data below come from various parts of the semi-structured interview's and arose when the opportunity arose to expand on the topic of surveillance technologies in the academy setting.

Ethan: "I'd definitely like to get to know about it, if I was like not gunna be playing football, I'd definitely have a look into that and um go for my coaching/sport science and learn sport science as I quite like it, I quite like the role of ours at the academy"

Thomas: “Yeah, I think, like you say, we maybe do take them for granted a bit because it’s just, we’re used to them now and we use them every day and don’t really think about it, we just put them on and get on with it but I think it is important that you take a step back and have a look at it a bit more closely,

“Yeah that’s something one of our sport scientists says a lot, if you’re getting something like some treatment, do you know why it’s happening and if you don’t know why, why aren’t you asking (italics added), so it’s something they’re big on to be fair”.

The above responses evidence that there is a subtle form of resistance/blossoming questioning from the players towards surveillance technologies and sport science support. By stating they have not only an ‘interest in sports science’ but that they also ‘take them for granted’, it would be interesting to explore how this ‘point of resistance’ within such a heavily documented environment would affect the capillary like network of power within an academy environment (Markula & Pringle, 2006; Jones, 2019). When power is invested upon a body, Foucault states that it can find itself in a counter attack state where the players start to value their own body as their own entity (Foucault, 1980; Jones, 2019). When we look at the data presented above, despite it being a very finite amount of material to analyse, it’s important to consider Thomas’ response where he states that “we use them every day and don’t really think about it”...“I think it’s important you take a step back and have a look at it.”. This response indicated that maybe Thomas is starting to think about how the statistics he is receiving and whether they are actually helping him improve.

Jones (2019) presented that as players begin to question GPS technologies, the worthiness of the data becomes a conflicted point of discussion, as from a players perspective, the data might not align with a players’ tacit appreciation of his own abilities. By seeing Thomas respond in this way, it shows that he may even be starting a questioning process where he may begin to ask coaches more questions surrounding his performance data. He even stated in a separate quote, “do you know why it is happening?, and if you don’t know why, why aren’t you asking”. An alternative approach to academy sport is something that has been explored by Avner et al. (2020), who have used a Foucauldian framework, to explain how, in an effort to fuel the budding questioning mindset evidenced by Thomas,

certain coaching practices have been promoted that encourage a problem based learning environment for athletes. By questioning athletes and having athletes reciprocate this process with the coaches, it has been found to have a positive impact on athletes analytical skills and critical thinking skills which are crucial in high performance settings (Avner et al. 2020; Hubball & Robertson, 2004; Jones & Turner, 2006; Ojala & Thorpe, 2015).

Ultimately though, if the application of surveillance technologies is not routinely thought about by the coaches, this can impose a risk of docile players suffering from mental, physical and emotional health problems and have an even bigger impact on their professional development (Foucault, 1995; Giulianotti, 1999; Jones, 2019; Jones & Denison, 2017; Mills & Gearity, 2016). The only failure of this sub-theme is that there is not a rich enough pool of data to draw any more conclusions from, and the worrying aspect of this is that there is potentially not enough players thinking in the same fashion as Charlie, Ethan and Thomas. As a result, with little dissent coming from players within the research, and having a finite number of players thinking in a critical way towards the application of surveillance technologies, this will only permit the (likely unregulated) use of these technologies within the academy football setting (Roderick, 2006; Toner & Jones, 2016). It is important therefore, that future research can look into further into players' ongoing relationships with sports science support that includes surveillance technologies (Jones, Konoval, & Toner, 2022).

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 Summary of main findings

Overall, the findings from this research have shown that adopting a socio-cultural lens can help to understand there are a vast amount of the experiences within the day-to-day life of an academy footballer in new and interesting ways. By engaging with Foucauldian theory and understanding the complex relationships within academy football between players, coaching staff and also the relationships the players have with their body, this thesis has helped to promote ideas and thought processes that with the intention of helping stimulate coaches to think about why they engage in set practices and the ongoing impact that these chosen practices have on player development.

When considering the main findings of the research, theme one showed that over prolonged periods of time, the subjection to coach observation has led to athletes becoming accepting of their routines and normalized practices. By sticking to the same routine every day, they have started to regulate their own behaviour to the point where self-regulation is a consequential outcome of such high levels of monitoring and observation endorsed within the academy setting.

Theme two was key at identifying that not only are players wanting to conform to cultural norms set by coaches, but the intense levels of self-regulation and the acceptance of being a 24 hour athlete allows athletes to become cases that are judged, measured and compared. By having coaches also set expectations through consistent language and constant supervision, the structured academy space to works by rewarding athletes who fulfil the good athlete role which presents a problem around athlete docility. The overall impression is that the players want to regulate their lives to be a professional athlete, but the reality is that they are coerced by their context to act in this way in order to be productive bodies.

Tensions with technology was an important third theme as it was able to highlight the problematic consequences of such high levels of surveillance with surveillance technologies in the academy setting but also provide an alternative discussion in the form of players beginning their own critical thinking process towards the use of surveillance technologies. The key finding from this theme

was that it is still crucial to reflect and problematize the accepted practices surrounding surveillance technologies due to a vast majority of the athletes within this study believing that these technologies are crucial to their professional development. However, by identifying individual cases of reflection from the athlete population, it's important to highlight that this process is starting to gain traction from the athlete perspective, although it's important that this is also highlighted to coaches as so they can take part in this critical thinking process towards the application of surveillance technologies also.

To conclude this study, it's important that a workable intervention is put in place within the academy environment to combat these taken for granted practices and ways of life identified within the study. Using a Foucauldian lens throughout this research project, we can come to a similar conclusion to that of Avner et al. (2020) who suggested that using a problem based learning style within the academy can help athletes to develop critical thinking, analytical and self-evaluation skills through increased athlete questioning as well as having training sessions replicate realistic scenarios for the athletes (Avner et al. 2020). If we can reimagine what the day-to-day experiences of an academy footballer can look like, based on the findings of this paper, one solution could be to adopt a similar approach to 'Beat the Game' (Avner et al. 2020). By having increased dialogue between players and coaches to explain why certain technologies and practices are being used, we would hope to see players either develop an understanding of the practical implications of sports science technology being used within training, or even see more players, like the ones in the third theme, 'tensions with technology', begin to develop their own critical thinking processes towards the use of sports science technologies.

Of course this is not to advocate for the complete removal of sport sciences and monitoring technologies, rather it is a call to consider the role of these approaches with regard to athlete docility. Increased education and the provision of tools to take part in an in-depth problematisation of the underpinned practices within modernist coaching practices and their unintended consequences would no doubt help avoid the limiting outcomes of player docility (Avner et al. 2020; Denison et al. 2017). Another solution could be to give athletes a choice around the use of surveillance technologies in training session or sport science support in general. This could be made with a training programme in mind, for example, a player might want to consent to having their training sessions tracked mid-week

when their training load is high, but maybe not the day after or the day before a match day when they are taking part in a recovery session. This could also extend to players who are on an injury rehabilitation programme, which is something that could be looked into by future research, where players returning from injury may not see the benefit of collecting such vast amounts of data when they are trying to return to full fitness. This would have to be used in conjunction with an education process as this study has already indicated that the athletes are already docile and self-regulate themselves to conform to these processes due to the mindset that they are crucial to their professional development. However, the feeling is that by having this extended dialogue and increased understanding from the players, a more healthy, active and beneficial relationship can be developed between athletes and surveillance technologies.

5.2 Limitations of the research

The main limitation of this research was the population size. The process of liaising with the participant football club, during the COVID-19 pandemic, restricted the opportunities to connect and sign up participants to the study - the main outcome of which was that sample size was smaller than originally desired. As well as this, the study would have probably benefitted from an interview process that took place in person. With semi-structured interviews being one of the most flexible methods of interviewing, the lack of structure would have promoted a much more flowing discussion in person rather than being online and being dictated by set questions as opposed to a more structured interview (Tracy, 2019). As a result of having such a small number of participants in the data collection phase, this may have impacted the conclusions drawn from the data in the results phase of the research. It would be interesting to see from future research whether the same ideas and responses are seen within a larger pool of data.

5.3 Future recommendations

Moving forward with the knowledge gained from the analysis phase of the research, it is important that future research can look into further into players' ongoing normalised relationships with routine sports science support (including performance analysis and surveillance technologies).

Moreover, it would be interesting to see future research look more into the self-regulation aspect of academy footballers day to day lives. Could future research look to find an alternative daily routine or assess how a different routine would make players feel within the academy environment compared to their peers?

Future research projects could also look into the players relationships with surveillance technologies by exploring the impact of the complete removal of surveillance technologies from the training environment. Would players feel different without the inclusion of technology or would it be possible to see if players express a better experience of the training environment without the heavy input of sports science. It would be an interesting area to explore as such a heavy reliance, dependence and familiarity has been established in relation to athletes and their use of surveillance technologies, would players even express possible discomfort at the removal of surveillance technologies all together?

It has been briefly mentioned in the limitations of this research, however, could future research possibly look into a similar research method but present the research in an autoethnography? By having a research team working within the academy space, rather than remotely due to a pandemic, it would be interesting to see if a more long term placement, using insider status as a coach, could present findings that are not possible to hide from an interview. It would be interesting to read stories about what the academy space feels like for the researchers to be placed into and what actions and behaviours are presented by the players in this training space, practicing their routines, rather than discussing them and possibly looking to justify their behaviours in an interview.

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7.0 Appendices

7.1 Appendix A – Interview guide used during the data collection phase

Version: v.1.05

Date: 02/08/2021

Section 1: Tell me about yourself

- How has preseason gone so far, are the boys still busy training?
- So tell me, how long have you been part of the academy?
- How has it felt to be part of an academy set up such as this?
- Is there anything you feel the academy is particularly strong in, what is it best at?
- Did you start your career at the academy or do you have a background in professional football before?

Section 2: Playing experience section

- Have you played within your age group before or have you taken a step up before?
- Do you feel like you have a good relationship with your team mates here, is there a healthy competitive relationship?
- What is your overall goal?
- How hard are you willing to work for that goal, do the academy help you do that day in day out?
- When you first joined the academy, how did you adapt to the step up in quality and professionalism?
- How did the process and adjustment phase go in terms of your overall fitness?
- Has there been a heavy focus on sport science during this process to help you progress?
- What is your past experience with sport science in your playing career?

Section 3: Academy focused

- By being at the academy, is there a philosophy that you as players/coaches abide by in order to achieve a common goal?
- Was this a signed declaration or is there proof of this on record?
- When it comes to the club philosophy do you think this affects the following:
- Your behaviour in the club
- Your behaviour outside the club
- How does that make you feel if you have to behave in this way
- Do you and the lads ever talk about the club philosophy, do you like to make sure you are all following it together?

- Is there a fine system at the academy in order to keep the lads on track?
 - Does this help with moral and overall behaviour
 - Do the lads and coaches find it funny when someone else gets fined, can it provide some entertainment alongside the football?

Section 4: Work and social life

- When it comes to balancing football with the rest of your life, was there a point where you had to balance football alongside education?
- Were you given time off for this?
- (If they have been at the academy long enough) Does the academy provide support for players in this scenario for their lives past football?
- Did this process of balancing work and football become harder as you became older?
- Do you have any other interests outside the academy?
 - *Are you limited on how much free time you have?*

Section 5: Day to day practices

- So when it comes to a typical training session, talk me through, briefly, from start to finish, what happens?
- Is there a heavy input from the sport science team to monitor fitness, fatigue and the overall progress of the players?
- Are you expected to do anything else besides playing in training, are there any tasks expected of you as a group of players/individuals
- How much of a role do the coaches play in the session, do you work in separate groups or does the squad and team of coach come together to work as one?
- How do the coaches behave during these sessions, do they help facilitate your learning or are they very focused on delivering the session with little input from the players.
- Do you find a way to make training enjoyable with your teammates, do you have any games you play?
 - *Can these become quite competitive (in a good way)*
 - *Do the coaches ever take a step back and let you dictate sessions*
- How do you feel about your position at the academy / chances of retention / becoming a pro?
- Do you feel part of the central group?
- Do you talk amongst the players about who might 'make it' or who might get released?
- How does this possibility impact you and your daily experience? Is it something you think a lot about?

Section 6: Sport Science influence on training

- Are you familiar with the technologies used by the sports science team?
- Do you use GPS vest and playermaker trackers often as well?
- Are these used more in training or in matches?
- How does the academy like to apply these technologies?
- Do they make player profiles
- Do they track stats or biometric data (pre season such as heart rate, blood pressure etc)
- Are you used to wearing these now
- Do you feel that these are vital to improving as a player? How do you think they can help you improve?
- Is the data ever used in a team environment? If not GPS data, is any data used to help run performance analysis sessions for example?
- How early did you experience these technologies as a player?
- Do you think they've helped you to improve and notice what you need to work on?
- What relationship do you have with your body as a professional player?
- Do you feel the effects of training, if so, what effects?
- Do you feel fitter?
- Do you feel the value of training in such a high amount?

Section 7: Relationship with the coaches

- Do you have a good open relationship with the coaching staff, do you feel it is transparent?
- Do you talk about your progress as a player often
- Are there conversations you have with them that you wouldn't have with your team mates?
- Do you feel the coaches provide the best possible set up for you to perform, if so, how?
- Has there ever been a time where you have challenged or been challenged by a coach?
- Do coaches ever call out poor performances from players?
- Is this tactical, personal of fitness wise in the gym?
- Do you find that some coaches approach the game differently to others, are there behaviours from coaches that help you succeed in particular?