The Impact of Foreign Player Acquisition on the Development and Progression of Young Players in Elite Level English Professional Football

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Abstract

English professional football has undergone substantial changes during the 1990s and is now considered to possess one of the most powerful leagues in the world (Maguire, 1999). The increased wealth of football clubs has helped to fuel the acquisition (and movement) of talented players, a process known as football labour migration (see Maguire & Bale, 1994; Maguire & Pearton, 2000; Maguire, 2004). Research in terms of examining the impact of the migration process on indigenous talent is limited. Through the deployment of a mixed methodological approach, the thesis aimed to explore the effect(s) of football labour migration on youth player development and progression in elite level English professional football. This aim resulted in three research studies.

Study 1 aimed to identify the trends (i.e., origins, ages and playing positions) of all players acquired into elite level English professional football from 1990-2000, whilst also examining trends (i.e., origins) in home-grown players. Findings revealed significant inward player migration from within the UEFA confederation (i.e., 92.2% of all acquisitions), predominantly from U.K. and Republic of Ireland players. Acquisition of players from non-European countries (i.e., CONMEBOL, CONCACAF, CAF and OFC) also increased throughout the time period. Significant differences in acquisition age also emerged from the study (χ^2 (7) =26.6; $p<0.01$). The number of English home-grown players that *did not* make a 1st team appearance increased over the time period and suggest limited player progression.

A qualitative approach, utilising a fieldwork and focus group methodology, was adopted for Study 2 and sought to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of home-grown players in elite level English professional football. The fieldwork found that a range of issues (i.e., power and authority, communication, selection and recruitment, progression, coaching style, release process and culture) permeated players' day-to-day existence in professional football. The analysis produced a number of themes to explore in the focus groups with players from four different Academies. The findings from the focus groups revealed that *most* Football Scholars believed an Academy system was intended to develop and produce players for a club's 1st team, but a variety of contextual factors influenced this process. Development was guided by appropriate levels of support (i.e., technical, physical, psychological, social and educational), but the psychological component was not expected prior to entering the programme. Support varied between clubs and suggests that different clubs and/or support staff appeared to place a greater or lesser emphasis on particular developmental components. Some players viewed the acquisition of foreign players as potential barriers to their progression, but their effect(s) was not operational within this study as all players had competitive playing opportunities.

Study 3 sought to explore the specific career experiences (and trajectories) of (young) professional football players. In-depth semi-structured interviews highlighted that the players experienced a lack of 'meaningful competitive football' in their respective club environments. Loan periods were also a feature that had developmental benefits. The possible existence of a 'glass ceiling', albeit at two different levels (i.e., reserve team level and 1st team level) also emerged and identifies the need for additional support (i.e., social, psychological) from a range of practitioners to aid the post-Academy player development and progression process. There is a need for administrators at the macro-level to focus more attention in the post-Academy area to enhance the career trajectories of home-grown players.

Key Words: Football Labour Migration, Elite Youth Football, Player Development and Progression, Football Academies.

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List of Abbreviations:

AFC	Asian Football Confederation
CAF	Confederation of African Football
CONCACAF	Confederation of North, Central American & Caribbean Association Football
CONMEBOL	Confederation of South American Football
FA	The Football Association
FAPL	The FA Premier League
FFE & VTS	The Footballers' Further Education and Vocational Training Society Limited
FS	Football Scholarship
FIFA	Federation Internationale de Football Association
OFC	Oceania Football Confederation
PFA	The Professional Footballers Association
SD	Selection Database
UEFA	Union of European Football Association
YDS	Youth Development System

Glossary of Terms

A range of contextual and environmental specific terms are used frequently throughout the thesis and are defined below:

Home-grown player	A football player that is either located within and/or has progressed through a professional football club's Youth Development System/Football Academy. Such a player may also be referred to as an indigenous player.
Football Scholar	A player that enters the Football Scholarship scheme within a professional football club's Academy system on a full-time basis after finishing compulsory education.
Football Academy	Professional football clubs that enter into the Football Association Premier League are required to have a Football Academy, which is a developmental training system that caters for players aged from 9 to 19 years of age.
Charter for Quality	A document produced by the Football Association's Technical Department in 1997 that outlines the required infrastructure, regulations and procedures for a club to operate a fully licensed Football Academy.
Player Acquisition	The movement of a football player from one professional football club to another.
Top level	The highest domestic playing league in English professional football (seasons 1990/91 – 1991/92: Division 1; 1992/93 – 1999/00: The Football Association Premier League).
Elite	Any individual and/or group of players located within the context of a top-level professional football club and Football Academy system.
Glass Ceiling	A structural location within a professional football club where further player progression became problematic.
Sports (Football) Labour Migration	A process that involves athletes (players) moving to and within countries for the purposes of their work.

Chapter One

Introduction & Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

The present thesis explores how foreign player acquisition, located within the broader framework of sports labour migration, effects the development and progression of home-grown players in elite level English professional football.

A noticeable feature throughout the history of professional sport has been the movement of talented athletes from one country to another, which has replicated the trends observed in many other industries. A geographically mobile workforce is considered to be a common trait of most modern industrial societies (Maguire & Bale, 1994). The process that occurs in the sporting domain is known as 'athletic labour migration' (Maguire, 1999) and essentially involves the recruitment and retention of professional athletes within numerous sports. Bale (1989) recognised that this process was evident in North American sports such as American football, baseball, basketball, ice hockey, soccer and track and field, and further noted that similar patterns were now apparent in UK professional sport.

It is not surprising then that researchers have developed a keen interest in this area, with Maguire appearing to be the prominent researcher in the field. He and other academics have explored developments in player migration in a number of sports, including professional football (see Maguire & Bale, 1994; Maguire & Stead, 1996, 1998; Maguire, 1999; Maguire & Pearton, 2000; Stead & Maguire, 2000). In recent years, other researchers have joined the scholarly debate in the area of football labour migration (see Magee, 1998, 2002; Magee & Sugden, 2002). Still, it appears that the impact of the football labour migration process on development and progression opportunities for indigenous talent (i.e., referred to within this thesis as home-grown

talent) remains relatively under researched and one that has been identified as an area for future research. In this respect, Maguire and Bale (1994; p.283) note, "...the presence of overseas players could deny indigenous players access and thus lead to personal and a national underdevelopment." Other commentators have also expressed a need for home-grown talent to be safeguarded against the labour migration process to ensure the future progression of talent at both domestic and international level within English football (Heighway, 2001; Atkinson, 2003). .

Maguire and Pearton (2000) identified the high prevalence of foreign players that represented English Premier League clubs in the 1998 season. Such observations offer a 'snapshot' of the phenomena, however longitudinal developments of football labour migration have not been investigated. It is felt that this form of research would compliment the existing literature. There is also a growing belief that the acquisition of foreign players is affecting youth development (Heighway, 2001; Atkinson, 2003) and it is felt that such assumptions require a further exploration of the perceptions of U.K. Academy based players. A limited amount of research has utilised a qualitative methodology to explore the perceptions of youth players and as such, it is felt that a mixed methodological approach to the area would allow a more extensive and meaningful understanding of the issues surrounding foreign player migration.

In light of these issues, the aim of the present thesis is to investigate foreign player acquisition and the subsequent effect(s) on the development and progression of home-grown players in elite level English football. In order to achieve this research aim the following objectives will be addressed:

1. To investigate the trends in origins, ages and primary playing positions of all players (i.e. U.K. and Republic of Ireland & Non-U.K. and Republic of Ireland players) acquired into elite level English football during the period 1990-2000.

2. To investigate the trends in origins of home-grown players in elite level English football during the period 1990-2000.

3. To explore the lived experiences and perceptions of Football Scholars (i.e., home-grown players) within English professional football.

4. To explore the post-Academy transitional experiences of two 'young' English professional football players.

Objectives 1 and 2 are addressed in Study 1 of the research and utilises a quantitative approach, whilst objective 3 is explored within Study Two Part I and Study 2 Part II and employs a fieldwork and focus group methodology. Finally, Study 3 of the thesis again utilises a qualitative approach and specifically uses a case study approach to address objective 4.

The research adopts a multi-paradigmatic and multi-methodological approach to the research question and its associated objectives. In this sense, it is believed that the present thesis is unique and novel in nature and one that would add to the growing labour migration debate and the subsequent issues surrounding young player development.

1.2 Literature Review

The purpose of this section is to introduce the prominent conceptual issues that permeate the developmental process in elite level sporting programmes, with a core emphasis on Association Football. The studies within this thesis are focused specifically on the player acquisition process and the perceptions and experiences of developing elite youth players in professional football. Given the focus of the research, the review of literature explores the notion of talent development. Yet, as the concept of talent identification underpins and inter-links the developmental process, it is also necessary to sketch out this concept in order to provide the reader with some contextual understanding. The mechanisms that exist (and have existed) to train young football players in England are outlined, prior to examining the structure of the Football Association Technical Department's 'Charter for Quality' (1997) and its implications for youth player development.

English professional football has undergone significant transformation over the last decade. The inception of the Football Association Premier League and its television deal with BSkyB, accompanied with the Bosman ruling in 1995 have altered professional football in England. In this sense, specific attention is given to the latter of these developments, the Bosman ruling, to illustrate its impact on elite youth player development and progression. The review then explores the notion of sports labour migration within football to further develop the rationale that underpins the present inquiry. Consideration is also given to the literature on youth player experiences in professional football. To conclude the chapter, paradigmatic issues are discussed, as the present thesis approaches the research question and its associated objectives from a multi-paradigmatic perspective. This section also attempts to position the

philosophical location of both the research and researcher during development of the inquiry.

1.3 Talent Identification and Talent Development in Sport

It is important for coaches, teachers, parents, talent scouts and all people involved in identifying potentially talented individuals to understand the concepts that underpin talent identification and development. The importance of developing and creating opportunities for individuals to participate (i.e., both recreationally and competitively) in sport has featured on the agenda of both past and current governments in their sporting policy documentation (DCMS, 1995, 2000, 2002). In attempting to define talent the Sports Council (1997; p.6) note that it is "...a sporting ability that exceeds the average standard, but which has not been fully developed." Accordingly, a talented individual is someone that demonstrates and/or possesses context specific characteristics that are considered essential components of future sporting performance. In this sense, the notions of talent identification and talent development are central in developing and/or producing elite level athletes.

Talent identification has been described as the recognition of sporting potential by means of certain measures that are acknowledged as indicators of future high performance (Borms, 1996). Similarly, Williams and Reilly (2000; p.658) referred to talent identification as "...the process of recognizing current participants with the potential to become elite players." Essentially, talent identification aims to increase the probability of selecting a future elite athlete at an early age (Williams & Franks, 1998). Talent development however, is concerned with providing individuals with an appropriate environment that is conducive to learning in the hope that potential is

realised (Williams & Reilly, 2000). A further component of the talent identification and development process is that of talent selection, which involves the ongoing process of identifying players at various stages, who demonstrate prerequisite levels of performance for inclusion in a given squad or team (Williams & Reilly, 2000). The identification, development and selection phases are essential if players are to progress in the context of professional football. However, there have been cases within English professional football where some clubs have disbanded their youth development systems and reserve teams altogether. For example, Kevin Keegan, the former Newcastle United manager reportedly removed the reserve team from the club's structure. Given that the reserve team is seen to be a natural progression route for 'promising' young football players the disbandment of such a system may clearly impinge on their development (Sulley, personal communication, November 2004).

Talent identification, development and selection has been explored across a range of individual and team sports and from a cross-gender perspective (see Hahn, 1990; Pienaar et al., 1998; Spamer & Hare, 2001; Baxter-Jones et al., 2002; Gabbett, 2002). However, the specific focus of this thesis is within the domain of Association Football, and as such, the literature review now outlines the historical and contemporary issues with regards to talent identification and development.

1.4 Talent Identification and Development Processes in English Football

Identification and development processes concerning young football players are now perceived to be fundamental components of (most) English professional football clubs (Stratton, Reilly, Williams and Richardson, 2004). However this has not always been the case. Indeed Burns (1996) stated that historically (i.e., until the-mid 1970s),

professional football clubs mainly used the school system to identify talented young players. This process involved professional clubs utilising scouts (or spotters) to frequent local school games to identify and recruit talented players, which is still a common feature of contemporary talent identification procedures. Following this initial identification phase, players were invited to a club for a period of training whereby coaches judged their suitability for selection into a club's youth development scheme. Burns (1996) suggests that since the decline in school sport and the emergence of Sunday league football in the late seventies and early eighties, professional football clubs have had to alter their recruitment methods. In this regard, it was deemed imperative that clubs established a systematic network of both local and national scouts to identify and recruit talented football players. The search for talent has intensified, with English professional football clubs' widening their recruitment 'radars' in the search for talented young players (see Bourke, 2002).

There have been a number of youth training initiatives operationalised within the football industry over the years, including the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) and Youth Training (YT). These training schemes replaced the Youth Opportunities (YOP) scheme and all have focused, predominantly, on providing young players with a systematic football training programme to develop their football talent in association with an educational element. The development of these schemes can be traced back to 1986 when the Football League altered its regulations to provide all trainees with a two-year (guaranteed) traineeship (FFE & VTS, 2002). This was to ensure that all young players entering the profession did so with equal opportunity (FFE & VTS, 2002). The traineeship provided a guarantee to the youngster of a two-year programme and was officially lodged with the Football Association Premier League

(FAPL)/The Football League (FL) and the Football Association (FA). However, it is important to note that it was considered the responsibility of professional football clubs' themselves to recruit young players onto these schemes and not the FAPL, FA or the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) and The Footballers' Further Education and Vocational Training Society (FFE & VTS).

Essentially, Youth Training Programmes started within the Football Industry in 1983 and since that time the PFA with the FFE & VTS have been key stakeholders in administering these schemes throughout the Football League and Premier League, since they were recognised with approved training organisation status in April 1987 (FFE & VTS, 2002). In an historical sense, the FFE & VTS was formed in 1979 by the PFA and the Football League with one of its key objectives to promote and enhance educational and vocational training for current and ex-professionals and trainee players (FFE & VTS, 2002). With the inception of the FAPL in 1992, the FFE & VTS are now part of an integrated administrative body in overseeing training programmes and educational and vocational provision in English professional football.

Clubs have largely been responsible for the footballing development of players that have entered training programmes, whereas the educational component was organised and facilitated by the FFE & VTS. The role of the FFE & VTS is to make connections to colleges regarding curricula opportunities for players and to arrange the financial aspects concerning the educational component of a young player's development. This process involves the PFA drawing down money from central government that is then administered and managed by the FFE & VTS (Walsh,

personal communication, February 2005). Walsh further asserts that prior to the inception of Football Academies, a narrow curricula choice existed for young football players with additional courses and/or subjects being the responsibility of the club and/or the player. The introduction of the Academy system and the Football Scholarship programme added greater academic flexibility (i.e., A-levels, advanced B-Tech subjects, vocationally orientated trade course) and duration (i.e., 12hrs per week) in terms of educational opportunities (Stratton et al., 2004). In addition, clubs have the task of ensuring its Football Scholars follow a core life skills programme that includes 22 subjects such as media training, drugs awareness, diet and nutrition, social/life skills. As a result of the more intensive nature of education within youth development programmes in professional football, Walsh suggests that the FFE & VTS has had to take on more operatives to be involved in quality assurance processes in terms of monitoring a player's educational progression and college provision (Walsh, personal communication, February 2005). This process involves a visit every eight weeks by one of the regional representatives from the FFE & VTS.

As from 2004/05 the government initiated a Modern Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence (i.e., MASE) and have tried to extend this into professional football, but this has been met with substantial resistance from some clubs (i.e., Bolton Wanderers) that operate an Academy system (Walsh, personal communication, February 2005). At the time of writing, the framework for the MASE scheme is being re-visited by a variety of stakeholders (i.e., football, government, civil servants, Quality Control Association) to make the currency of the scheme more acceptable to the whole of football. In spite of these developments, the short-lived modern apprenticeship is being re-titled the Advance Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence (AASE) (Walsh,

personal communication, February 2005). Such training and educational developments within the context of English professional football have allowed a greater emphasis to be placed upon both talent identification and development. The primary catalyst for this shift was the production of the Football Association Technical Department's 'Charter for Quality' in 1997.

1.4.1 The Charter for Quality and Football Academies

Mechanisms to enhance the identification and development process have traditionally been the responsibility of professional football clubs. These are evidenced in the 'Schools of Excellence' that were a common feature of many Youth Development Systems within the 1980s. However, the introduction of The Football Association Technical Department's 'Charter for Quality' in 1997 has provided formal managerial structures for professional football clubs to adhere to with regards to developing talented players from 8 to 21 years of age. The primary aim of the charter is to "...provide quality football education and participation for all young footballers" (F.A. Technical Department, 1997; p.3) and ultimately, has given professional football clubs greater power, accessibility and responsibility for identifying and developing young players. The rationale for its inception was to maximise the wealth of participation in the sport, and to increase the quality at all levels to sustain participation and improve performance (F.A. Technical Department, 1997). The resultant action was the creation of 'Football Academies', which are now pre-requisites for clubs that enter The Football Association Premier League. Moreover, clubs need to demonstrate specific criteria advocated by The Football Association Premier League in accordance with that agreed by the Technical Control Board,

before they are granted a licence to operate a Football Academy. A typical example of an Academy's organisational infrastructure is detailed in Figure 1.1.

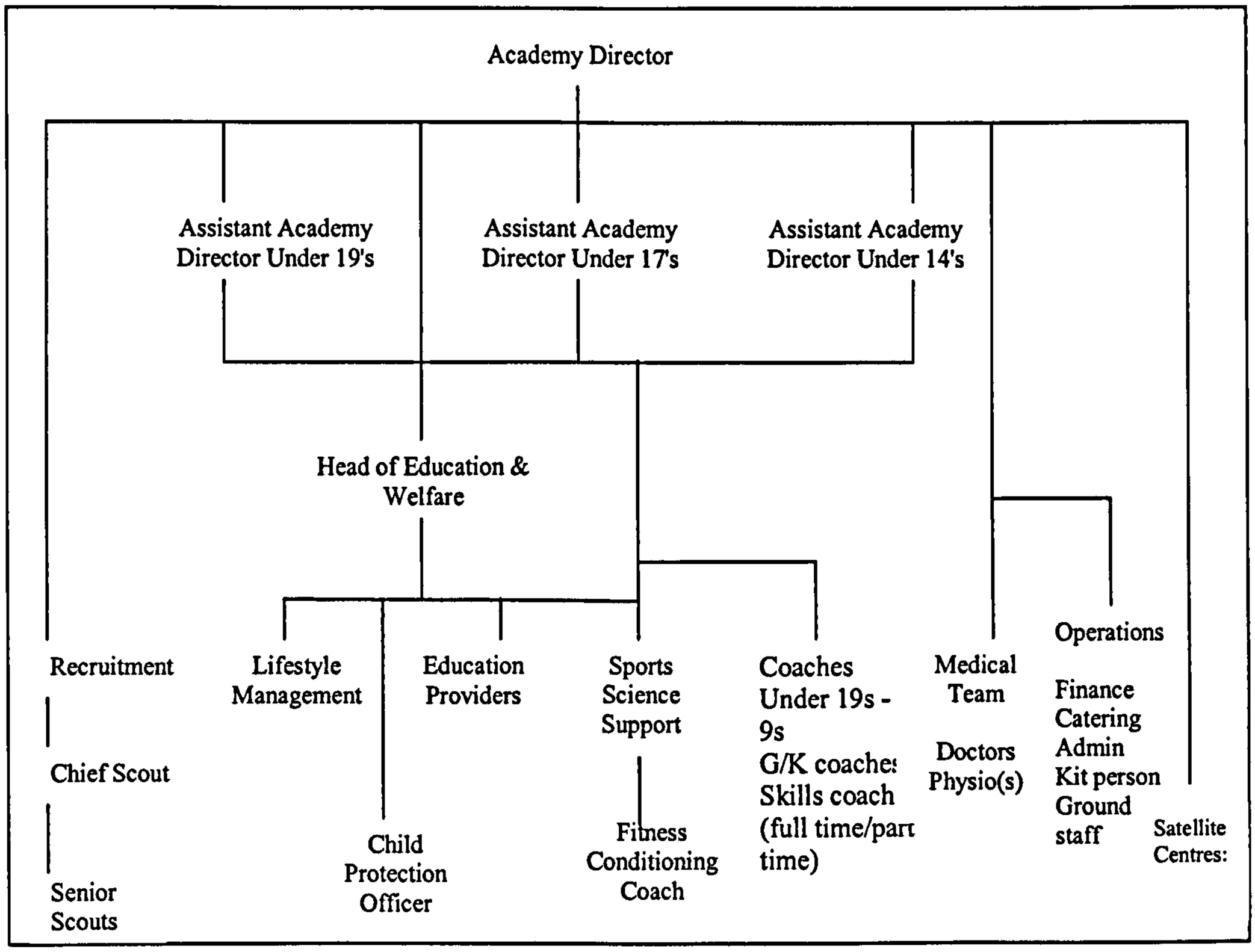

Figure 1.1: Representation of a *typical* Academy Structure (adapted from Richardson, Gilbourne and Littlewood, 2004)

Although this illustration is not exhaustive, the diagnostic offered by Richardson, Gilbourne and Littlewood (2004) provides an insight into the basic organisational mechanisms that *most* Academy systems possess. In this sense, it illustrates that the Academy Director at a professional club oversees the every day running of the Academy. Such responsibilities range from recruitment activities (i.e., talent identification), the coaching of players and their educational needs (i.e., including both formal and informal education) and ensuring that appropriate medical services and facilities are in place for the players that engage in training and competitive games. The Academy Director also has the responsibility of deciding (in conjunction

with other appropriate personnel) which players will be offered the opportunity of a Football Scholarship in an Academy system.

The Football Scholarship is an advancement of earlier occupational training schemes and is a full-time position that is rewarded to individuals at school leaving age. It was introduced in July 1998, when around 73% of all Premier League and Football League clubs agreed to convert to the Scholarship programme. This figure subsequently increased to 96.7% in July 2002 (FFE & VTS, 2002). The Scholarship was a component of The Charter for Quality (1997) and has almost fully replaced the Youth Training football programme. It extends to 3 years and offers a much wider range of academic and vocational qualifications to learners, with its content based upon a 4-year research project within the football industry worldwide (FFE & VTS, 2002). The research involved input from representatives from the FA, PFA, FAPL, the FL, football clubs and educationalists. In light of the enhanced profile of young learners (i.e., increase in number of GCSE's achieved) entering the English football industry over the past 10 years, the FFE & VTS recognised a need to offer a more comprehensive educational and vocational package to supplement the football curriculum. This extended package, perceived as a significant improvement on the earlier Youth Training programme (FFE & VTS, 2002) embraces a more 'holistic' approach to meet the needs of its learners and embodies a number of additional components to youth training programmes (e.g., core life skills programme, greater academic flexibility, FA Coaching Certificate and an outward bound/team building event). The FFE & VTS (2002; p.7) also claim that the programme has been described by officials from the National Training Awards as "...a good example of effective training" and "...a serious contender benchmarked against the best in the

UK". Figure 1.2 highlights the various stages during the Football Scholarship Scheme.

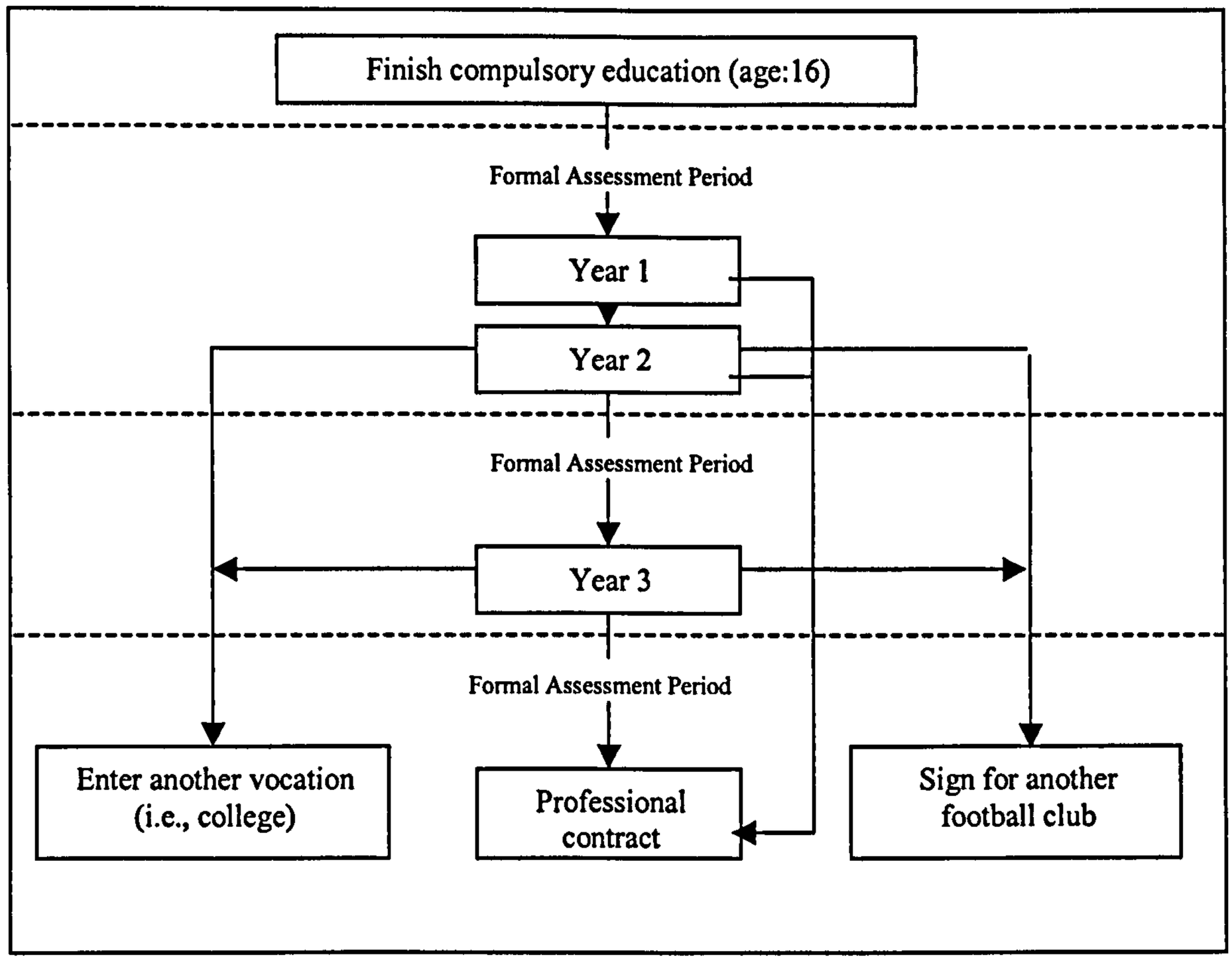

Figure 1.2: The *typical* routeway(s) of the Football Scholarship scheme (Adapted from Richardson, Gilbourne & Littlewood, 2004).

The Academy Director is also expected to liase with outside agencies to create what have been termed 'satellite centres'. These are football specific training centres located at various sites that aim to develop the football competencies of young players. The Academy Director primarily assumes a strategic role in the position and is *typically* accountable to the 1st team manager and/or the Board of Directors, with the latter responsible for the funding of the Academy system. In terms of funding it is not unrealistic to expect in excess of £1 million per year to be invested into youth development programmes within English professional clubs (see Fulham Football Club, 2003), with some English professional clubs investing significantly more in

their Academy systems. The operational running cost of a *typical* Academy is the sole responsibility of the club itself, however some funding is available from specific external agents/bodies (e.g., The Football Trust) for structural developments, subject to a successful application that is based on certain criteria (e.g., community based usage).

Along with the inception of the 'Charter for Quality' the football environment has witnessed a gradual introduction and acceptance of sports science support (also see Figure 1.1). This support has predominantly been physiological (and later psychological) in nature and has opened up new mechanisms for the identification and development of players. Indeed, it has been suggested that embracing such scientific support has helped those people within the football environment to supplement subjective assessments of talent with (more) objective criteria (Williams & Reilly, 2000). This is more prominent at junior and youth level (i.e., 6-18) where players' characteristics and attributes can be developed over time through exposure to specialised support staff and training within a club. At senior level within a professional football club, players might be perceived to have already undergone extensive training and development during their period of 'grounding in professional football,' and as such, their needs may differ from youth players. The scientific support that senior players may engage in may be in the form of nutritional and/or physiological support and guidance.

It is clear that developments have been made in terms of the way that youth development programmes in professional football are now structured, which appear to place a greater emphasis on the 'holistic' needs of the player. Moreover, a variety of

support mechanisms now exist within Football Academies that aim to ensure a smooth and efficient developmental and progression transition process (Richardson et al., 2004).

1.5 Talent Identification and Talent Development Research within Football

It has been well documented that the identification and development of elite level soccer players demands a multi-faceted approach (Maguire & Pearton, 2000; Williams & Reilly, 2000; Reilly et al., 2000; Reilly et al., 2003). This approach requires a systematic assessment of an individual's physiological, technical, tactical, social and psychological characteristics. From a historical perspective, this has been left to the subjective assessment of scouts and coaches and has been underpinned by a variety of acronyms that prescribe specific criteria. These have been influenced largely by the successful youth development system of Ajax F.C., who established the acronym model T.I.P.S. (Talent, Intelligence, Personality & Speed) (Ajax, 2003). Subsequently, other models have emerged within English football and are utilised in many youth development systems in professional football clubs. For examples, S.U.P.S. (Speed, Understanding, Personality & Skill) and T.A.B.S. (Technique, Attitude, Balance & Speed) are in operation at two F.A. Premier League clubs, namely Everton and Liverpool respectively. These models incorporate an eclectic combination of sports science disciplines (i.e., physiology, psychology and sociology) utilised in combination. There is an absence of literature in terms of establishing whether these models are based on any empirical evidence and may therefore benefit from a more systematic approach by professional football clubs in assessing their effectiveness. Williams and Franks (1998) illustrated their understanding of the multidisciplinary approach to talent identification in Figure 1.3.

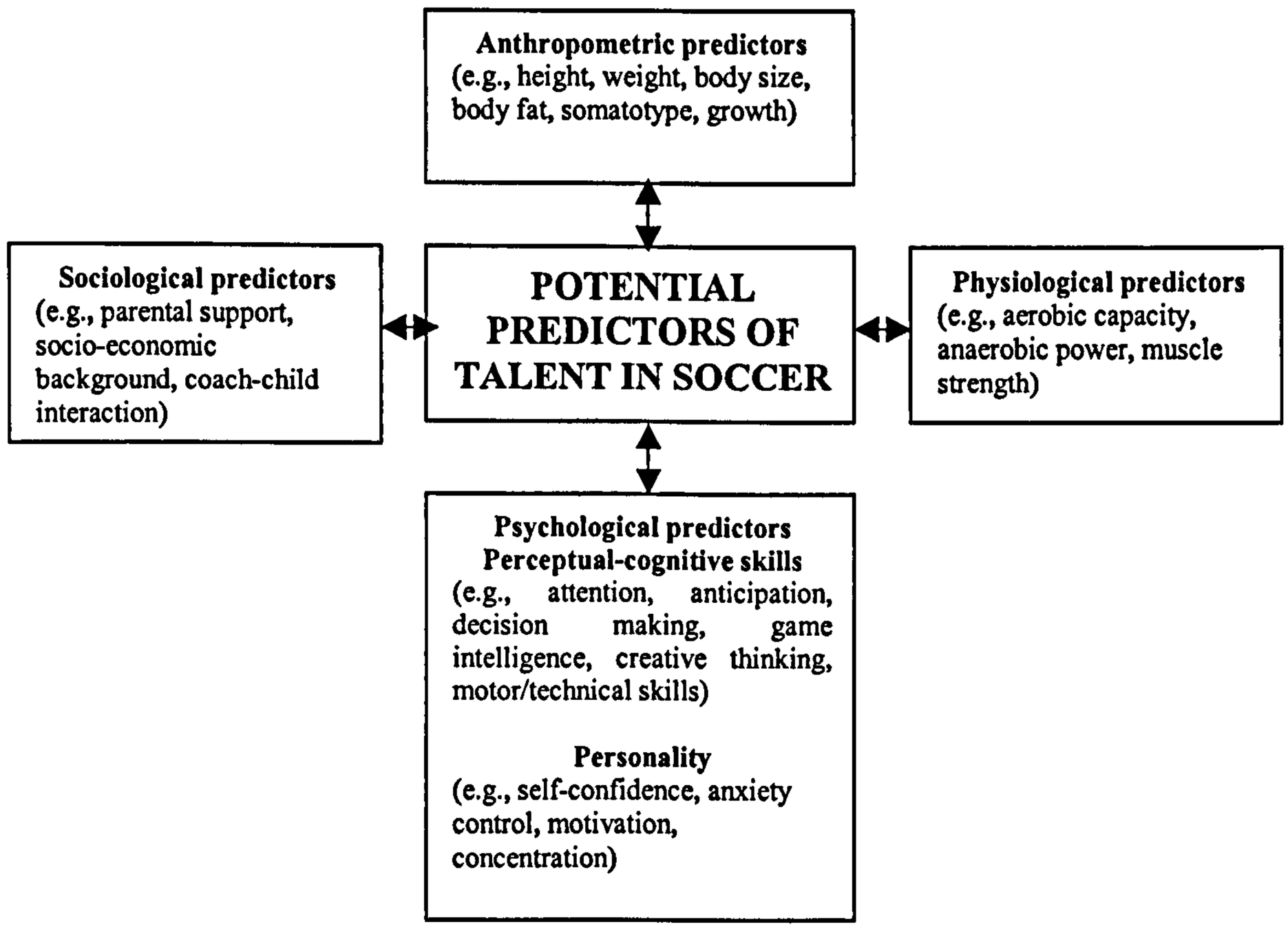

Figure 1.3: Potential predictors of talent in soccer from an anthropometrical, physiological, psychological and sociological perspective (Adapted from Williams and Franks, 1998).

Within the sporting domain, there have been studies that have tried to objectively quantify the predictors of sporting talent from various sports science based disciplines (see Williams & Franks, 1998; Morris, 2000; Reilly et al., 2000) and their relative importance in the developmental process. The following section explores these multidisciplinary research approaches.

1.5.1 Physical & Physiological Talent Characteristics

With regards to the physical characteristics of talent, it has been suggested that a players' anthropometric characteristics (e.g., stature, mass, body composition, bone diameter etc.) are related to sport performance (Pena Reyes et al., 1994; Borms, 1996; Malina et al., 2000). These commentators suggest that successful young football players appeared to have similar somatotypes and physiques to their older and more

successful counterparts. Evidence also exists concerning the biological and morphological characteristics of players. In this regard, elite youth football players tend to possess a greater biological age than that of sub-elite players and the research suggests that coaches have a propensity to select players that are advanced in terms of morphological characteristics (see Panfil et al., 1997; Malina et al., 2000). The literature also suggests that players born in the early part of the competition year (i.e., with regards to eligibility for year group selection) possess a competitive advantage over their peers (see Brewer et al., 1995; Richardson, 1998; Richardson & Stratton, 1999). Research within this domain has also indicated that the 'selection bias' favoured goalkeepers and defenders (Franks et al., 1999), which was attributed to anthropometric characteristics.

Extensive research has been conducted in terms of physiological talent characteristics (see Jankovic et al., 1997; Panfil et al., 1997, Franks et al., 1999; Reilly et al., 2000). Specifically, Jankovic et al. (1997) indicated that successful youth players possessed better physiological fitness than their less successful counterparts. Although this research emphasised the benefits of utilising physiological characteristics to distinguish between expert and intermediate young players, findings from other physiologically orientated research on players already selected and exposed to systemised training appears to differ (see Franks et al., 1999). In this respect, Franks and colleagues (1999) examined 64 players (aged between 14-16 years) that attended The English Football Association's National School from 1989 to 1993. Various anthropometric, aerobic and anaerobic data was collated and subsequently analysed. The results revealed no significant differences between those players that were defined as 'successful' (i.e., signed a full-time professional contract on graduation) or

'unsuccessful' (i.e., no professional contract signed). As such, it would appear that although utilising physiological measurements offers a more objective assessment of talent characteristics, they should not be used in isolation for the identification and selection of talent. Furthermore, this approach does not accurately distinguish between those players already identified as talented that are exposed to systematic training at the elite level (Franks et al., 1999).

1.5.2 Psychological Talent Characteristics

It is recognised that individuals who are successful in sport, require, and are able to draw upon a range of talent characteristics (Williams & Reilly, 2000), which include an appropriate level of psychological skills. Indeed psychological skills have been described as a primary distinguishing factor between successful and unsuccessful athletic performers (Morgan, 1979; Regnier et al., 1993). Such psychologically based competencies may consist of traditional mental skills such as coping skills, anxiety control, attentional focus, concentration skills, decision-making skills and goalsetting that individuals may execute during both training and competition to enhance performance. With regards to the deployment of such skills, it is proposed that certain individuals are predisposed to possessing certain psychological based personality qualities, due to heredity reasons, whereas others may have to devote time to practice in order to develop these qualities. Although the psychological facet is often one feature that is highlighted as being integral when describing what is takes to reach the elite level, it is also one that has received very little scholarly attention from a talent identification and development perspective (Morris, 2000). The deficit in such research has principally been attributed to the lack of knowledge concerning sports psychology by individuals that work within the football environment (Pain &

Harwood, 2004). Other factors that were found to influence knowledge and perceptions of sports psychology in professional football included lack of clarity concerning the services of a sport psychologist, problems fitting in, players' negative perceptions of sport psychology, practical constraints and its perceived value (Pain & Harwood, 2004). However, finance was rated as the highest barrier.

Williams and Reilly (2000; p.660) suggest that "...talented players possess personality characteristics that facilitate learning, training and competition", yet researchers have failed to identify the specific personality characteristics or psychological profiles that can be attributed to successful performances in the sporting domain (Morris, 2000). This raises problems in utilising psychological inventories to identify and develop sporting talent and it has been suggested that such procedures cannot be endorsed scientifically (Fisher & Borms, 1990). Indeed, Williams and Reilly (2000) report that the views of experienced coaches and scouts should be claimed to have a greater degree of validity in this process. Morris (1995) noted that if there is to be a role for profiling a player's personality, then this should be carried out in conjunction with other measures. This is not to say that the psychological component within the player identification and development process should be rendered redundant, merely that there are problems over where it should be located and utilised and a clear understanding of its merits should be accessed by those individuals involved in the process. Such confusion on these issues may only further fuel the sceptical perceptions of individuals within the football world and impact on the willingness to embrace this form of support.

Although there appears to be problematic issues concerning the role of psychological measures in the identification and development of talent, Morris (2000) has claimed that those individuals involved in developing young football players should allocate sufficient resources for the development of their psychological skills. Commentators have noted that an individual inherits between 30-60% of their personality traits (see Plomin et al., 1994; Saudino, 1997), which are highly amenable to specialised training. In this sense, it has been suggested that an individual's motivation, anxiety management, concentration, self-confidence and attentional style are psychological skills that can be refined through appropriate mental training (Williams & Reilly, 2000). It is claimed that considerable progress has been made within the sporting domain, predominantly by sports psychologists, who it is argued, can help to facilitate this learning and development process (see Hardy et al., 1996; Morris, 1997). Still, there is no evidence to suggest that psychological characteristics remain stable from adolescence to adulthood in the context of elite sport (Regnier et al., 1993) and therefore adds to the complexity of the psychological aspect within the talent identification and development process. From the literature presented it appears that there is still a clear requirement to understand the role and perceptions of the psychological dimension in the development process for young players.

1.5.3 Perceptual-Cognitive Talent Characteristics

A further approach to talent identification and development has involved focusing on perceptual-cognitive characteristics, such as decision-making (i.e., in key technical and tactical based execution tasks) and game intelligence (Williams & Reilly, 2000). In this regard, it has been reported that there are consistent differences between 'skilled' and 'less skilled' players in terms of their anticipation and decision-making

skills (Williams & Davids, 1995). Williams and Reilly (2000) emphasised that 'skilled' players possess certain qualities that differ from those of their 'less skilled' counterparts. They highlighted the ability of 'skilled' players to recall patterns of play, anticipate actions of opponents, possess more effective and appropriate visual search behaviours and their expectancy skills, as the primary differentiating factors. Williams (2000) highlighted that a possible reason for these observations might be due to a talented player's predisposition in acquiring the knowledge structures that underpin decision-making and perceptual skill in football.

Morris (2000) also identified intelligence and creative thinking as two further cognitive measures to supplement Williams and Davids' (1995) assertions. Although Neisser et al. (1996) claimed that the concept of intelligence is difficult to define and measure, there appears to be several components (i.e., analytical, creative, practical, emotional) that may be relevant to football (Williams & Reilly, 2000). Singer and Janelle (1999) commented that skilled players often contain, what they termed, 'game intelligence', which facilitates an analysis of the major facets of their opponents' play. However, it remains unclear whether the notion of game intelligence is linked (if at all) to academic intelligence (Williams & Reilly, 2000).

1.5.4 Sociological Talent Characteristics

It has been reported that "...the sociological considerations of the 'talent map' have been secondary to the conventional laboratory based scientific disciplines" (Richardson & Reilly, 2001; p.86). These commentators have also argued that it may be difficult to nurture those individuals that are identified as potentially talented, without the appropriate environmental support mechanisms. They identified a diverse

range of sociological variables that require attention in the player development process (i.e., readiness for competitive sport, the influence of significant others, environment and culture in which the sports participation occurs, socio-economic status of players and/or parents, social mobility, and deliberate practice). Given that the present enquiry draws heavily upon sociologically based characteristics in terms of understanding human interaction and the dynamics of behaviour (Potrac et al., 2002), the following sub-sections attend to these variables and the role that they play in the development of talented football players.

1.5.4.1 Readiness for Competitive Sport

Richardson and Reilly (2001) have commented that many children are exposed to competitive sport at an early age, with extreme cases of 3-4 years of age, but the average being from the age of 6-8 years old. Seedfeldt (1996) suggests that an individual's readiness to learn occurs once they have accumulated experience, which facilitates the acquisition of additional information, skills or values. In this sense, Richardson and Reilly (2001; p.68) comment that "...learning and development is more rapid and more enjoyable when readiness exists." Yet, there is still the need to ensure that there is a match between the child's chronological age, biological age (i.e., growth and maturation) and the subsequent demand presented by the particular competitive sport.

1.5.4.2 Significant Others

The notion of 'significant others' is a crucial component in the developmental phase of children that participate in organised sport. Significant others might include parents, friends, team-mates, peers, coaches and teachers (see Figure 1.4), who may be

instrumental in a child's decision-making and thought processes regarding sports participation (Richardson & Reilly, 2001). It has been asserted that participation decisions are based around their relationships with these 'significant others'. Richardson and Reilly (2001) advocate that serious consideration must be given to their influence and potential impact within the domain of talent development. Such responsibility lies with a variety of individuals involved in the organisation, management and facilitation of the sport. From a youth development perspective in professional football the individuals located in the Academy structure (see Figure 1.1) may be viewed as carrying a large responsibility with regards to these issues.

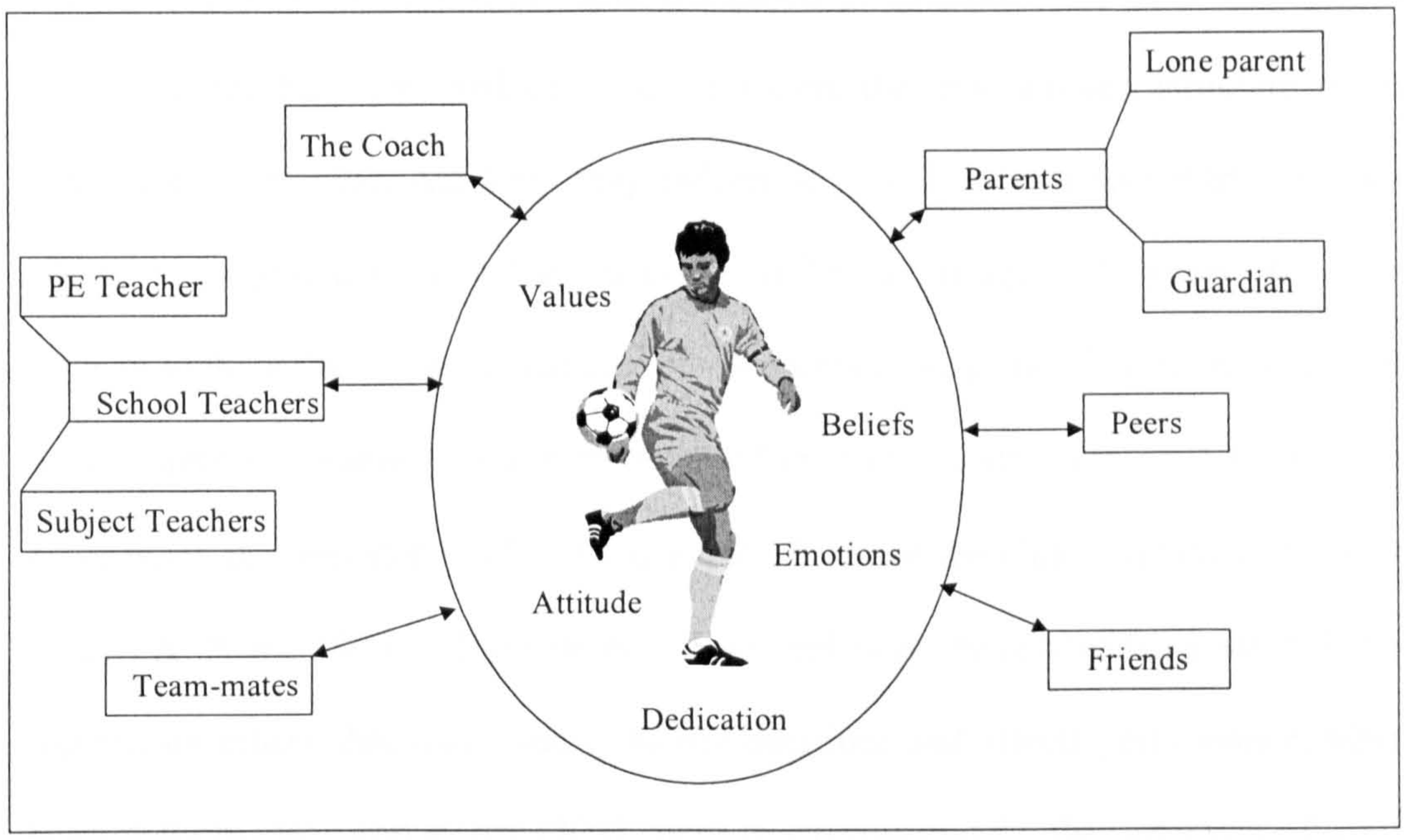

Figure 1.4: Significant others that may influence a young player's values, beliefs, emotions, attitude and dedication toward sport performance at any given time (Adapted from Reilly et al., 2000; p316)

As noted, the role of the family is crucial in the developmental process, as parents are the predominant agent in introducing their children to participatory and competitive sport. Such a pre-disposition to sport may be influenced by parents' own previous sporting experiences. Côté (1999) endorsed the significance of parental support and the need to embrace a positive attitude during the period of a child's growth. It has

also been reported that a child's actions and behaviours may be the result of effective or ineffective parenting (Hill & Tisdall, 1997). The role of the parent in providing encouragement and support is crucial in a child's competitive sporting experiences and is identified as a vital area in the development process (Bloom, 1985). In this respect, there are both positive and negative features concerned with parental influences. For example, parents can positively shape a child's beliefs, values, attitudes and feelings towards sport and those people involved within sporting programmes, through their interaction within them during childhood years. Yet, Cahill and Pearl (1993) have reported the negative consequences of parental influence when children are involved in rigid, organised programmes. This is exacerbated where parents have minimal or no control over the programme's structure or the outcomes. A football Academy may indeed be perceived as a somewhat rigid and organised programme given that players from 9 years of age to 16 years of age can train up to three times a week and also play a competitive game. Furthermore, parents have a limited amount of input in terms of programme structure or outcomes that emphasises the importance of communication between the club, coaches and parents (Cahill & Pearl, 1993). The role of friends and peers have also been identified as 'significant others' that shape and influence decisions and affects performance, which has led Richardson and Reilly (2001, p89) to suggest that "...the processes of group interaction, cohesion and sociometry (i.e., position within a group) need to be recognised." Whether these sentiments are being fully or partially embraced by professional football Academies is still yet to be fully understood.

A further sub-component of the 'significant others' category is the role of the coach. Various academics have commented on the immense impact a coach has upon a

child's socialisation into sport (Carlson, 1993, Richardson & Reilly, 2001). Indeed, Carlson (1993) further suggests that the behaviour and involvement of coaches with a child are more important in the development of talent than initial ability. Thus, the role of the coach may be viewed as a significant catalyst in the development process. However, the literature that exists within this field has often focused more on coaching issues (i.e., gender and coaching, race and coaching, teacher-coach role conflict), rather than the problems and realities of human interaction and key sociological considerations, which are inherent features of the coaching process (Potrac et al., 1999).

Humanistic features of development are evident in the work of Bloom (1985). Bloom identified potential characteristics of athletes, coaches and parents at various stages of their careers (see Table 1.1). Although this is useful in offering specific descriptive terms and characteristics of these individuals at various career stages, there is no recognition of how each of the characteristics interact and affect the development of individuals within the context of football. As a further critique, the unique cultural norms and values that are inherent features of professional football also need to be acknowledged as they may impact on the characteristics that are ascribed within the career progression model.

Table 1.1: Potential characteristics of talented soccer players and their coaches and parents at various stages of their careers (Adapted from Bloom, 1985)

	→ Career Progression →		
	Initiation	Development	Perfection
Players	Joyful, playful, excited, special	Hooked Committed	Obsessed Responsible
Coaches	Kind, cheerful, caring, process orientated	Strong, respecting, skilled, demanding	Successful, feared, respected, emotionally bonded
Parents	Shared excitement, supportive, sought mentors, positive	Made sacrifices, restricted activity	

The more recent, and culturally specific work of Potrac et al. (2002) examined the issues of human interaction within the context of sports coaching in professional football. As a development of their earlier research, they aimed to generate an in-depth understanding of the coaching behaviours utilised by a top-level English football coach and adopted a mixed method approach (i.e., systematic observation instruments, interpretive interviews). The most significant finding to emerge from the study was the interdependent relationship that existed between the concepts of social role, interaction and power. The desire to fulfil perceived expectations of his role as a top-level football coach, accompanied with attempts to create an idealised image of himself in the eyes of the players were factors that impacted on his coaching behaviour. The ability to establish and maintain relationships with players were not only framed in the context of gaining respect as a coach, but also as a person, which are further features that can be seen as the realities as human interaction within the coaching process. Such findings also concur with Bloom's earlier work. It is evident that a number of complex issues impact and interact within the coaching process and it is necessary to consider such issues when discussing research that explores developmental aspects within the context of professional football.

Salmela (1996) recognised that the creation of an appropriate 'learning' environment, in which to nurture talent played a more significant role in the development of expertise than heredity. It is believed that the coach orchestrates such an environment through a variety of methods (Richardson, 1999), which include their interpersonal behaviour, values and attitudes, the goal priorities they establish, their knowledge of the game, their relationship with the family, their ability to rule and enforce rules, and ultimately, their control over the limitation or enhancement of opportunities for achievement. Further to this, the identification of a player's preferred learning style, the promotion of an inclusive atmosphere and a coach's ability to provide unconditional support would supplement the coaching environment. The ability of a coach to be attentive to these additional features may ease the process of development for the child. Still, the distinct lack of empirical research in this area warrants further exploration to identify the extent to which coaches engage in such practices.

In summary, the range of 'significant others' have a crucial role to play in the social, educational and sporting development of talented youngsters. Although research has been conducted within this domain, it remains nevertheless an area that has been identified for further investigation (Richardson & Reilly, 2001). It is envisaged that the research within the present thesis will address various issues that permeate the role of the coach in the developmental process, and as such, extend the knowledge and understanding of this crucial area of talent development.

1.5.4.3 Environment and Culture

The environment and its associated cultural characteristics are further factors to consider in the developmental process. Richardson and Reilly (2001) claim that a

child's behavioural patterns, emotions and attributes are all affected by their surrounding environment and the nature of this environment. In addition, they also emphasise that a child's self-perception is a factor that dictates subsequent decisions, behaviours and sporting performances. These observations raise an important issue in terms of the environmental climate that is created by the facilitators of sporting programmes given its reported impact on the notion of self-perception. It is also widely acknowledged that young children are impressionable social participants that are influenced by social trends and popular culture (Hill & Tisdall, 1997). In this sense, children have opportunities to engage in and/or neglect cultural norms and traditions, which have been clearly identified to influence the socialisation process (see Hill & Tisdall, 1997). Within the context of professional football, Parker (2001) notes that the football environment was one that possessed hegemonic masculine norms and traditions that clearly influenced the behaviour of youth trainees during his ethnographic research within a professional football club. On the basis of these points it is necessary to highlight the potential impact of both environmental and cultural characteristics in the development of talented youth football players.

1.5.4.4 Socio-economic status and social mobility

The notion of social class is also worthy of consideration from a familial perspective. Although not a distinct feature of this research, it has been suggested that social class has a significant effect on sports participation (Power & Woolger, 1994; Kirk et al., 1997). Issues to consider here are concerned with the financial support of parents, greater mobility and flexibility in transportation and a more supporting family environment. Indeed, Williams and Reilly (2000; p.662) maintain, "...inequalities in access to intensive participation indicate that the early assessment of talent may be

confounded by social and environmental factors as well as the biological advantage of early maturation." In addition, Richardson and Reilly (2001) emphasise the importance of socio-economic status and social mobility and contend that greater emphasis should be given to the role that these issues play in the development of talent.

The inception of the Football Association's Charter for Quality (1997) serves to address the issues governing Academy attendance for players. The Charter states that players must adhere to a one-hour travelling distance to the Academy for ages under 9 years to under 13, which subsequently increases to 1.5 hours from under 13 to under 16. Player registration outside of this travelling distance is not permitted until 16 years of age. The Charter for Quality does not indicate the precise rationale for the rules that regulate travel commitments on parents/young players, but the implicit message is associated with a number of factors. Sulley (personal communication, February 2005) suggests that one of these factors is to promote 'competitive balance' amongst professional football clubs through restrictions in youth player recruitment policies. More specifically, this provides the perceived 'smaller' clubs with the opportunity to attract players that reside within their geographical proximity. Although a positive feature for smaller professional clubs, this may also be viewed by the larger clubs as restricting their ability to acquire players that fall outside of these guidelines. To combat this situation Sulley (personal communication, February 2005) comments that clubs may encourage parents and players not to sign for another club whilst offering (physically) to re-locate the family to fall in line with the recommended guidelines. Smaller clubs located within (say) a specific footballing region (e.g., Bury Football Club in the North West of England) may still face

difficulties in attracting players to their youth development system, as they have to compete with a number of other professional clubs in the area (e.g., Manchester United and Manchester City Football Club, Bolton Wanderers Football Club). In this regard, the recommendations of the Charter for Quality concerning Academy attendance may actually impede recruitment practices of smaller clubs.

1.5.4.5 Deliberate Practice

Deliberate practice, both formalised and non-formalised, is a further notion that has been identified as an integral component in the development of talent. Ericsson and colleagues (see Ericsson et al., 1993; Ericsson & Lehmann, 1996) propose that talent has only a limited role to play in the development of expertise. Rather, they offer the view that an individual's performances are linked to accumulated practice over a time period of at least 10 years. They suggest that engaging in the notion of 'deliberate practice' engenders the skills and experience that are required to become an expert within any domain. Similarly, the work of Williams and Davids (1995) and Williams (2000) also espouse the importance of deliberate practice in the development of expertise. This research could be utilised to challenge and support the philosophies and practice of those individuals that are currently responsible for the development of youth talent in professional football. The dissemination of such sports science research (i.e., from a range of disciplines) in which (football) practitioners can access has been in operation since the first publication of the Football Association Coaches Association Journal in 1998. Although the journal is widely accessed (within the football community), it remains unclear as to the relative impact that it has on current philosophy and/or practice.

In summary, sociological characteristics are crucially important in the initial identification and subsequent development of talented players. Although the sociological component focuses more explicitly on the environmental factors that shape the identification and development of football talent, Williams and Reilly (2000) claim that this is required to complement behavioural and biological approaches to talent identification and development.

1.5.5 Summary: Talent Identification and Talent Development in Football

Within the domain of sports science there exists a multidisciplinary academic approach to talent identification and development. However, a problem may exist in terms of the integration of the scientific approach alongside the subjective assessment of coaches/scouts, who it is described, use an individuals performance as evidence of giftedness (Williams and Reilly, 2000). One of the principal issues to consider from this part of the review is that those people (i.e., coaches, scouts, parents, managers etc.) involved in the talent identification and development process need to recognise its multifaceted nature, and as such, the relative advantages and disadvantages that each disciplinary approach possesses. Furthermore, development is much more complex that the initial identification of talent as it is more 'holistic' and embracing in nature. The series of research studies within this thesis attempts to enhance the body of literature that exists within the player development process.

1.6 Legislative Developments in English Football

This section of the literature review deals with one of the major changes that English professional football has had to adapt to over the past decade and one that has altered the acquisition strategies of clubs within the Premier League. The 'Bosman ruling' is explored and its role in intensifying football labour migration and its implications for youth player development and progression are discussed. The Bosman ruling has played a significant role in the player acquisition strategies of professional football clubs. The ruling refers to the employment rights of professional sports people that reside within the European Union (EU) and European Economic Area (EEA). Historically, as part of EU law and the creation of a single European market, *citizens* of the EU were free to seek employment within any EU country of their choice. However, until the Bosman ruling was passed in December 1995, *athletes* within the EU did not possess this same freedom.

The action that brought about a change to this situation and revolutionised the European transfer system was the case of a Belgium professional football player named Jean-Marc Bosman. The general details of the case are as follows. Bosman was employed by RC Liege who were then located in the Belgian first division. When his contract expired in June 1990, it is reported that he was offered a new contract, but at the minimum rate that was permitted by the Belgian Football Association (Giulianotti, 1999). Ultimately, his salary would have been reduced by 75%. Unhappy with the situation, Bosman contacted US Dunkerque (a French Second Division club) who agreed to arrange the transfer of the player to the club. In spite of this arrangement, RC Liege refused to sanction the transfer and suspended Bosman. Bosman subsequently took his case to the Belgian courts who then referred

his case to the European Courts. The argument that Bosman put forward was that European transfer regulations contravened Article 48 of the Treaty of Rome (Giulianotti, 1999). This article secured the freedom of movement of all EU workers against any discrimination based on nationality. After a four-year court battle for restraint of trade the European Court of Justice ruled in his favour. The outcome of the case was that professional football clubs within the EU had no right to buy and sell players as commodities at the expiry of their playing contracts. Hence, the existing transfer fee retention system was deemed illegal (Magee, 2002). In essence, EU athletes had the right to work in any country within the EU without any form of employment restrictions and Cashmore (2000; p.54) suggests that the Bosman ruling "...effectively ended the necessity for soccer transfer fees and opened the way for freedom of employment. Players were permitted to move from club to club as soon as their contracts expired."

A further result of the case, and more significant in the context of the present research, was the abolishment of the '3+2 rule'[1] on foreign players that existed within European football. Ultimately, the Bosman ruling, in making it illegal for domestic leagues to impose quota systems on employing foreign players, has significantly enhanced the mobility of professional football players. At the time of writing there are no limits on the number of EU and EEA players that professional clubs can acquire for their respective teams.

[1] Greenfield & Osborn (1998) state that this rule allowed European clubs to play no more than three 'foreign' and two 'assimilated' (i.e., foreigners that had been playing uninterrupted for five years, including three as a junior, in the relevant nation) players during matches.

Giulianotti (1999) also remarks that the balance of power has shifted considerably to the clubs that possess increased financial status as they have access to the best professional labour, and the potential to enhance their 'competitive balance'. In this regard, clubs with larger revenue sources (e.g., Manchester United Football Club, Chelsea Football Club) are able to offer enhanced salaries and signing on fees to players that are out of contract, which may ultimately create what is termed 'competitive imbalance' (Kesenne, 2003). This unequal earning of professional clubs is a feature that impacts their recruitment ability and is somewhat difficult to regulate. The income that top professional football players now earn is also a direct result of the Bosman ruling (Greenfield & Osborn, 1998). Given the implications of the Bosman ruling, accompanied with the increased financial wealth of Premier League clubs, serious questions emerge concerning the potential playing opportunities and subsequent development and progression of home-grown talent in professional football. Magee (2002; p.219) remarked that, "...European football was transformed post-Bosman as players utilised their new freedom to criss-cross the continent in search of inflated salaries in the wealthy core leagues." Magee's comments can be associated with the notion of skilled labour migration.

1.7 Skilled Labour Migration

The following section outlines the concept of labour migration by those individuals classified as highly 'skilled' and serves to locate labour migration within the thesis. This section also aims to provide a solid theoretical foundation for the later discussion that specifically examines the concept of labour migration in sport.

It is maintained that research into the migration by the highly skilled has until recently been somewhat limited (Koser & Salt, 1997). Koser and Salt (1997) highlight that research has been focused on immigration for permanent settlement, temporary labour migration and asylum. Indeed, Koser and Salt imply that it was only during the 1980s that the highly skilled were integrated more fully into the study of international migration. The motivation to conduct research into the migration by highly skilled was the result of fears that the British economy was suffering a 'brain drain', largely to the United States of America (Koser & Salt, 1997). In more recent times, Koser and Salt note that political change in Eastern Europe has again highlighted the concept of migration by the highly skilled. In exploring this more closely, they claim that the literature is reserved in providing a solid conceptual basis for defining 'highly skilled' and what exactly constitutes migration. Generic occupational terms have traditionally been used in defining the highly skilled (e.g., professional, manager) and have been appropriate to the companies and/or occupational groups that have been studied. However, Koser and Salt (1997) propose that definitions of highly skilled migration start from the interplay of the migrant, the state, and the employer, which have resulted in definitions that have highlighted the contrast with manual labour (i.e., migrant centred). State centred definitions have focused on the notion of 'priority workers' that possess specific skills to benefit the state on economic grounds. The employers of the highly skilled, especially Trans National Corporations, may define skills that are related to their specific occupational conditions and their strategic organisation (Koser & Salt, 1997).

Koser and Salt (1997) note that short-term movements are somewhat problematic in terms of consistency across countries. Nevertheless, the United Nations (UN) has

stated that a migration is a movement for at least a year (Koser & Salt, 1997). Yet with individuals moving to workplaces on temporary short-term contracts, difficulties in statistically monitoring the migration of the highly skilled may arise, thus creating further complications in accurately monitoring national and global migration trends. Due to the problems of defining both the 'highly skilled' and 'migration' more generally, Koser and Salt (1997) claim that it is no surprise that the literature does not agree on a single label for highly skilled migration. In fact, Salt and Singleton (1995) have called for the term 'expertise' to be utilised, as they perceive it to be less value-laden and more flexible than highly skilled. This view assists in differentiating between skills-based and qualifications-based procedures for recognising a migrant's professional expertise (Koser & Salt, 1997). These authors also propose that the short-term nature of an individual's movement, with no intention of settlement, as one of the main reasons why the highly skilled have not been fully integrated into international migration research. In this regard, they propose the term 'movement' to be considered more appropriate terminology than 'migration', as it bodes fewer assumptions concerning the length of time involved.

In light of the definitional problems presented, a wide range of individuals may be classified as highly skilled migrants, and as such, moves have been made to classify individuals based upon specific criteria and/or circumstantial issues of movement. An example of this is Salt's (1997) decision to focus on people typologies, where entertainers, sportspeople and artists are categorised together due to their (perceived) similar characteristics. Based upon such a classification migration is related to position in the respective labour markets (Koser & Salt, 1997). In the context of the present inquiry it is felt that professional football players can be defined both in terms

of their occupational position in the labour market (i.e., professional status) and also in terms of a skills based approach. However, the latter position is subject to debate given the differentiation that exists between the various professional leagues (i.e., Football Association Premier League, Championship, Division 1 & Division 2) within the structure of English professional football and playing ability.

From a theoretical perspective, the predominantly empirically based knowledge that has been accrued concerning migration by the highly skilled is assumed to be only somewhat partial, and as a consequence, has had an impact on theory development (Koser and Salt, 1997). These authors maintain that the literature is reserved in terms of placing highly skilled movement into the mainstream of migration theory, instead preferring to locate it within broader economic processes of global restructuring. This perspective suggests, "...the changing patterns of demand and the development of an organisational infrastructure within which the move takes place may be more applicable" (Koser & Salt, 1997; p.289). Although this is accepted as an important feature to consider in the movement of the highly skilled, it is also felt that the motives and aspirations of the individuals themselves are equally decisive. In a sporting context, the research of Stead and Maguire (2000) and Magee and Sugden (2002) address why football players chose to sign for English professional football clubs. The points that have featured within the discussion on highly skilled labour migration act as a guiding framework for the situation in sport.

1.7.1 Sports Labour Migration

The acceptance of sportspeople as 'highly skilled' workers (Koser & Salt, 1997) who are recruited for employment purposes within various countries draws the discussion

specifically to the concept of sports labour migration. The movement of sporting talent, most notable in English professional football post-Bosman (Magee, 2002), can be associated with the term 'sports labour migration'. Fundamentally, sports labour migration refers to athletes that move to and within countries for the purposes of their work. In line with the view of Koser and Salt (1997), it is claimed that migration generally occurs "...within nation states, between nation states in the same continent and between nation states in different continents" (Maguire & Bale, 1994; p.1). Given that the current research embraces elements of sports labour migration in the exploration of player acquisition trends, it appears appropriate to briefly review the major theoretical approaches that have been developed for the study of sport within global systems (Maguire, 1999).

1.7.1.1 Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Sport in Global Systems

One of the approaches to the study of sport in global systems is modernization theory. It is claimed that this theory was the leading paradigm in sociology until the early 1970s, and is associated with how traditional societies reach modernity (Maguire & Bale, 1994). More specifically, this perspective focuses on the social, cultural, economic and political processes that underpin this viewpoint. Imperialism and neo-imperialism form the second approach and are associated with Marxist writings that are "...fundamentally based upon explaining the colonialism of particular nation-states, in terms of its necessity for capitalist expansion" (Maguire & Bale, 1994; p.13). Essentially, these commentators have noted that there are three dimensions to this approach, which include (i) the search for new markets to sell products, (ii) the search for new sources of raw materials and, (iii) the search for new sources of cheap or skilled labour. Maguire and Bale (1994) emphasise that the aim of imperialism and

neo-imperialism acts to impoverish the rest of the world and subsequently assist Western economic development. Although the days of colonialism might now be perceived to be somewhat rare, it has been suggested that a form of economic neo-imperialism exists, in which Western nations try to maintain their positions of power by controlling the terms on which world trade is conducted (Maguire & Bale, 1994). Research within the sporting domain that has addressed this notion is evident in the work of Cashman (1980), Eichberg (1984) and Arbena (1989) (see Maguire & Bale, 1994). Contemporary research conducted by Darby (2005) specifically locates African football migration within this theoretical framework. In addition, Darby also draws on both dependency and world system theory in providing a detailed framework for interpreting the consequences of the labour exchange between Africa and Europe.

The third approach to understand sport in the context of global systems is dependency theory. Maguire and Bale (1994) suggested that this theory is linked to neo-imperialism as they are both concerned with the uneven manner and form of global development. These commentators argued that there are a number of components to this approach, which are stated as dependent underdevelopment, dependent development and dependency reversal. In essence, dependent underdevelopment implies that the global capitalist system operates to actively under-develop third world countries through their superior wealth and positions, with the latter becoming dependent on the former. Dependent development refers to the growth of some third world countries, but possesses limitations. As such, dependency reversal was introduced and suggests that third world countries can "...escape and reverse the previous disadvantageous relations with developed countries" (Maguire & Bale, 1994;

p.14). Research within the sporting domain that has explored this approach is evident in the work of Arbena (1988), Klein (1989) and Jarvie (1991) (see Maguire & Bale, 1994). However, these commentators suggest that, as yet, no single approach has dominated dependency theory.

Maguire and Bale (1994) suggest that the fourth approach, 'world system theory', is allied to the work of Wallerstein (1974). In essence, Maguire and Bale (1994; p.15) report that, "...a world system of commerce and communication has developed that enables the core states to dominate and control the exploitation of resources and production." More specifically, it is argued that those states that are dependent in various kinds of trading with core nations might be viewed as being semi-peripheral to the core nations. States that rely on trading directly with the core states are peripheral, and as such, are positioned on the outer edge of the world economy. Again, Maguire and Bale note that this approach has not been fully explored by researchers studying global sports development. In the context of the present inquiry, the quantitative examination of player acquisition can be aligned to research that has specifically located migration in these theoretical frameworks.

1.7.1.2 Sports Labour Migration Research

In the discussion that follows a number of sports are presented to highlight the historical and contemporary patterns of sports labour migration. One of the leading scholars who has contributed extensively to sports labour migration research within the United Kingdom is Joseph Maguire, along with various co-writers. Although Maguire has written extensively on sports labour migration over the last decade, he claims that research into the area is still in its relative infancy and that empirical

inquiry has so far only scratched the surface within the sociology of sport (Maguire, 2004). Indeed, Maguire calls for more scholarly activity within the social science community at both a conceptual and empirical level to allow more progress to be made. In examining sports labour migration and broader globalisation processes, Maguire adopts a process-sociological perspective, which emphasises "...every aspect of social reality – people's living conditions, beliefs, knowledge and actions – is intertwined with unfolding globalisation processes" (Maguire, 1999; p.37). Maguire further asserts that the explanatory frame of reference for process-sociology must be global in perspective. This standpoint regards social change as the outcome of struggles between the members of a figuration of interdependent and competing nation-states, rather than the internal development of societies (Maguire, 1999). It is from this perspective that Maguire has explored the migratory trends and experiences in a variety of sports, ranging from basketball, cricket, association football and rugby. Given that no single causal factor predominates in process-sociology, Maguire (1999) highlights the need to consider the multidirectional movements of people, practices, customs and ideas in forming a greater level of understanding in the area. With this perspective now outlined, attention is directed towards the empirical research within sports labour migration.

In terms of empirical inquiry within sports labour migration, Maguire and Stead (1996) note that the recruitment of overseas talent in English county cricket has been evident for over a century within the sport. They found that the type of *overseas* players recruited into county cricket were associated to specific playing positions. For example, it was observed that there was a preference to acquire *overseas* players (e.g., West Indians) that were associated with *match-winning* performances (e.g., fast

bowlers), as the recruiters (i.e., club owners) wanted an instant guaranteed dividend on their investment. Similar occurrences may therefore be apparent in association football; (say) specifically the relationship between the *match-winning* centre forward and country of origin. Maguire and Stead (1996) also reported that migrant cricketers were recruited to county cricket when relatively young (i.e., mean age: 28years). Potential replication of this observation is worthy of consideration within the context of the English Premier League. However, environmental specific factors (i.e., longevity of career) between the sports are duly noted and need to be taken into consideration. It is claimed that the migratory patterns in English county cricket are shaped by the transitory and seasonal nature of the sport (Maguire, 1999). For example, the cricketing calendar is a continuous one with the northern and southern hemispheres offering opportunities to engage in competitive cricket all year round. This feature of sports migration is also evident in golf and tennis with athletes' 'workplaces' consistently changing. Maguire (1999) cites the British tennis player Tim Henman as an example. He describes how Henman played in twenty-eight different tournaments, visited fifteen countries and five continents during the 1996 season. In this respect, both tennis and golf players have been described as the nomads of the sports labour migration process (Maguire, 1999).

There are a number of 'enabling' and 'constraining' figurational dynamics that characterise the experiences of athletes during sports labour migration and are illustrated in Figure 1.5. Through a number of empirical investigations, Maguire (1999) asserts that these dimensions repeatedly surface and permeate the lives of elite athletes.

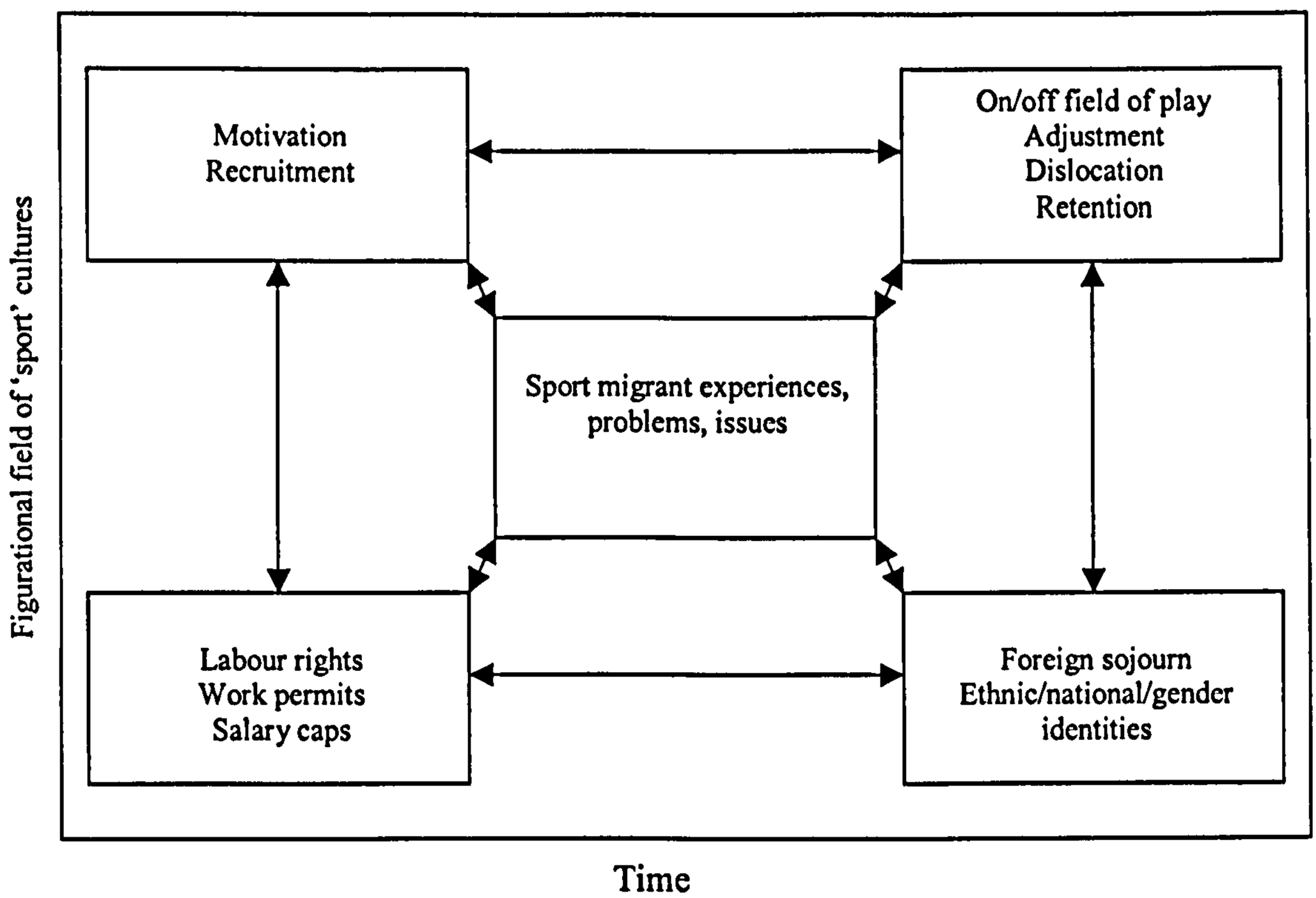

Figure 1.5: Sport migrant experiences, problems and issues (Adapted from Maguire, 1999; p.99).

The figurational dynamics highlighted in the above illustration are evident in a number of sports. Canada has long been associated as the home of ice hockey, but recent patterns indicate that the *out-migration* of Canadian players has been a distinguishing feature of the sport's geography (Bale, 1991). More specifically, Genest (1994) suggests that these trends are associated with the migration of the countries' players to European leagues. Further analysis of player migration within ice hockey indicated that in the 1970s the sides in the National Hockey League (NHL) in the United States of America (USA) recruited 80% of its players from minor junior leagues in Canada, with no players being acquired from Europe (Genest, 1994). However, Genest noted a shift in the recruitment patterns of European ice hockey clubs indicating a preference for players of Canadian origin. Figures reveal that European teams acquired around 70 players in 1970, but this had increased

dramatically to around 560 by the late 1980s. If players that had taken dual nationality were included in the analysis, Genest suggests that the figure would have been nearer to the 1,500 mark.

It also emerged that Britain was a prominent recruiter of Canadian ice hockey talent, with figures indicating an increase from 38 in 1983/84 to 108 in 1988/89 (Genest, 1994). Genest explained that culturally, linguistic adaptability was highlighted as a prominent feature that permeated the migratory patterns, whilst the economic wealth of specific European leagues and their clubs was a further contributory factor. Genests' (1994) research also provides a solid methodological base for research that seeks to explore the notion of sports labour migration given the availability of substantial quantitative data. This is commensurate with Koser and Salt (1997) who also highlighted the availability of such data as a useful method in observing migratory trends within specific populations.

There has also been considerable migration research conducted within the sport of rugby, which has concentrated specifically on the 'out' migration of Welsh indigenous talent (Williams, 1994). Williams indicated that since Rugby League's foundation in 1895, the sport has been attractive to Welsh Rugby Union players. This view is highlighted in the 156 Welsh players that changed codes (i.e., from Rugby Union to Rugby League) between 1895 and 1990. Similar to the research of Genest (1994), Williams indicates that this figure would have been be significantly greater if one was to account for uncapped Welsh players, with an estimated figure being put at 2000. Explanations that were attributed to this form of intra-nation migration concentrated on the fragile financial state of Rugby Union clubs in Wales throughout

the time period. The amateur status of Rugby Union compared to its professional counterpart Rugby League was also identified as a contributing factor.

A more contemporary trend has seen many top-name Rugby League stars (e.g., Jason Robinson - Wigan to Sale, Estyn Harris - Leeds to Cardiff and more recently Cardiff to Bradford Bulls, Andy Farrell – Wigan to Saracens) switch codes from League to Union. Commentators have called for drastic action to be taken to protect the opportunities for English players (Pearey & Elliot, 1999). They suggest that no more than five foreign players (i.e., as any non-English qualified person) should be permitted in a team's squad. This means that players from the remaining home nations would be classed as 'foreign'. Such a move, although stated to be not as draconian as that implemented in Australia, is perceived to facilitate the development and progression of local English talent and subsequently appease the frustrations of the national coach (Pearey & Elliot, 1999).

Sporting migratory patterns and trends are evident in a number of United States (U.S.) based sports, ranging from Basketball, Ice Hockey and Major League Baseball (MLB). More specifically, in-migration and out-migration have been observed (Chiba, 2004). Concurring with the views expressed in other sports labour migration literature (see Magee & Sugden, 2002; Maguire, 2004) Chiba relates the patterns within these sports to greater global processes occurring in sport and in society. Building upon earlier work conducted within MLB (see Arbena, 1994) Chiba specifically explored the propensity of sports migration between professional baseball leagues in the United States, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan from 1995 to 1999 (Chiba, 2004). The research found that in U.S. MLB, foreign-born players increased

from 201 (18.8%) in 1995 to 301 (25.3%) in 1999 (partly due to the addition of four new teams within the sport). Chiba notes that 90% of the players during this time period were of Latin American origin, whilst those of non-Latin American origin increased from 18 to 36 across the time period. Chiba further observed an increase in foreign-born players in Japanese baseball with American and Dominican players constituting 71.3% of all players in 1999. The trends in the Chinese professional baseball league followed a similar pattern with respect to the increase in foreign-born players. Similar to professional football, legislative changes governing the number of non-nationals permitted in a team was highlighted as an important contributory factor (Chiba, 2004). Likewise, the production of academy centres to nurture and develop young talent in 'donor' countries was described as an additional feature that enhanced the migration process. The only notable difference within the study was that of the Taiwan baseball league that imposed a foreign quota ruling during the time period. This however failed to significantly reduce the number of foreign players recruited as players were dismissed following poor performances (Chiba, 2004).

It is evident that sports labour migration has been in operation across a number of sports for many years and that the research points towards sports specific trends concerning the migration of sportspeople. The next phase of the review attempts to highlight the relevant migratory literature within professional association football.

1.7.1.3 Football Labour Migration Research

This section of the review takes forward the concepts of sports labour migration and focuses specifically on the research that has been conducted in association football. Similarly, particular attention is given to the patterns of football labour migration and

its perceived impact on the development and progression of home-grown talent, which focuses on both positive and detrimental aspects. As a final discussional point, the policies that have been debated to restrict the migration of players are explored.

Within the European continent it is argued that the migration process is arguably most pronounced in soccer (Maguire, 1999). From a historical perspective the work of Lanfranchi (1994) provided an interesting insight into the migration of footballers in France from 1932 to 1982. In this respect, Lanfranchi suggested that since the introduction of a French professional football league in 1932, one of its distinguishing characteristics was its multi-ethnic composition. He noted that core players of the national team that reached third place in the Swedish World Cup in 1958, were second-generation immigrants. Similarly, he suggested that the 'stars' of the French national team in the 1980's, Platini, Tigana and Fernandez, were also the sons of immigrants. As such, one of the prominent features of the sport in France has been its association with immigrants that "...adopted the sport as a patrimonial element" (Lanfranchi, 1994; p.66). Moreover, Lanfranchi noted that unlike Italy, Spain and Germany, who acquired players that possessed cultural similarities, the footballers that came to France were from a large catchment area. The reasons attributed to these acquisition strategies ranged from financial to positional stereotypes. The latter assertion however has been difficult to quantify, with little research evidence existing to support the claim that certain nationalities provide a specific positional superiority over others.

The requests from those within the academic community (Maguire, 1999; 2004) to continue to engage in sports migration research, and in particular, to assess the impact

of sports migration on 'donor' nations has seen recent empirical inquiry within the area. More specifically, Darby (2005) states that he aimed to examine the nuances, nature and consequences of football labour migration between Africa and Europe. He reports that the transcontinental migration of African footballers to the elite leagues within Europe has undergone a phase of remarkable expansion. Specific migratory patterns indicate that European football clubs employed over 50% of players that participated in the African Nations Cup in 2000. Darby explains that it is not surprising to learn that specific European countries with colonial links to Africa (i.e., France, Belgium, Portugal, Germany and increasingly England) were prominent recruiters of African players. He further notes that the continued flow of African talent to 'core' European leagues is rooted in the imperialist connections between the two continents and asserts that historical and colonial links are still a significant factor in the migration of African footballers.

In a theoretical sense, Darby (2005) locates his findings to three perspectives: imperialism and neo-imperialism; dependency; and world system theory. Based on a study commissioned by FIFA, Darby notes that Europe is regarded as a core region within football's world system and Africa is categorised as peripheral. In the conceptual language of world system theory Darby therefore proposes that the European confederation is viewed as 'core', whereas the African confederation is 'peripheral'. Subsequently, the peripheral position of the African confederation promotes a dependency type relationship with core countries. Such assumptions correlate with the idea of a hierarchical dependency and exploitation within the world system (Darby, 2005). Darby further asserts that the notion of exploitation by the wealthy clubs within European leagues is associated with a form of economic

imperialism. He concludes that if African domestic football is to make advances in the future, there is a requirement to "...take steps to regulate, if not work towards a cessation of, the export of its most talented players to Europe" (Darby, 2005; p.238). Self-sustaining initiatives, plus sizeable financial subsidies by FIFA are highlighted as mechanisms to combat the 'brawn' drain of African football talent (Darby, 2005). .

In bringing the focus of the review to the U.K., Moorhouse (1994) has provided a detailed overview of the migration of players in Scotland. He notes that between 1872 and 1986 only five players gained international caps whilst playing for clubs outside Britain. He claimed that whilst the propensity for Scottish players to venture abroad has been limited, the same cannot be said for their movement south of the border. In this respect, Moorhouse (1994; p.81) notes that "...the movement of Scottish footballers to England is surely the oldest and steadiest migration of sports talent in the world." In particular, the migration figures indicate that in the five seasons from 1968/69 to 1972/73, 61 players moved from Scottish clubs to their English counterparts, with over £2.3 million being paid in transfer fees (Moorhouse, 1994). Yet, since the 1960s, it is necessary to note that English clubs have signed Scottish players direct at a young age and it is therefore reasonable to assume that the transfer statistics might be inaccurate. Indeed, Lay (1984) found that 1,653 Scottish players had played for clubs in the English league from 1946 to 1981. Such figures are a striking example of the migration process that has existed between England and Scotland, which has raised questions concerning the loss of national identity as a result of the migration process (Moorhouse, 1994).

In recent years however, Scottish football has been subject to a migration trend of its own, which is evident in the acquisition of English and foreign players. Examples to illustrate this form of migration include Chris Woods, Trevor Stevens, Mark Walters, Mark Hately and Terry Butcher, all England internationals when they were acquired by Glasgow Rangers in the late 1980s and early 1990s. More recently, the two Glasgow teams, Celtic and Rangers, have continued this trend in the acquisition of international players from numerous countries. Again the examples of Paul Gascoigne (Rangers & England), Ronald and Frank de Boor (Rangers & Holland) and Henrik Larson (Celtic & Sweden) illustrate this point.

In essence, Moorhouse (1994) positions *economics* and *power* at the heart of this migration. It has become clear that football labour migration possesses similar patterns throughout football in the U.K. and Europe. Figures from the Italian Serie A for the 1999-2000 season indicated that 33% of the players were foreign, the French First Division was 23%, whilst figures relating to foreign player acquisition in both Spain's Prima Liga and Germany's Bundesliga were around 40% (Massarella, 2000). The following discussion attempts to capture the prominent issues that are specifically located within the context of English football.

1.7.2 Football Labour Migration in England

As noted, England has had a long established relationship with Scotland with regards to the movement of football talent (Moorhouse, 1994), but in recent years the acquisition of players has taken a distinctive turn. Maguire and Pearton (2000) specifically identified England as a major purchaser of elite football talent. This was illustrated by the 11 foreign players that were acquired by English clubs six years

prior to the 1998 World Cup, to the 200 that were acquired in the season after the competition. This observation led the Chief Executive of the Professional Footballers Association, Gordon Taylor, to suggest that there are now more non-nationals than nationals within the Premier League (Sunday Times, 2000).

The past research and observations of commentators clearly indicates that the English Premier League is an attractive destination for the foreign migrant (i.e., Maguire & Stead, 1996, 1998; Maguire & Pearton, 2000; Stead & Maguire, 2000; Magee, 2002; Magee & Sugden, 2002). However, it is necessary to explore the reasons why foreign players have been attracted to English football, which has been addressed by Magee and Sugden (2002). These authors utilised a world systems theory approach, similar to Darby (2005), to offer an understanding of the political economy of world football (Magee & Sugden, 2002), which helps to provide an understanding of "...how the local and global intersect in migration processes" (Maguire, 2004; p.477). Utilising semi-structured interviews with 22 professional foreign players between the 1996-1997 and 1998-1999 seasons Magee and Sugden produced a typology of football labour migration. As depicted in Table 1.2, the typology classifies foreign players into one of six categories and offers a definition and example of each type of player.

Table 1.2: A Typology of Football Labour Migration (Adapted from Magee & Sugden, 2002)

Category	Definition	Example
Mercenary	A player that is primarily motivated by earning capacity and who moved into English football for financial rewards.	Anders Limpar Former Arsenal & Everton F.C.
Settler	A player that has moved to English football and has remained for a sustained period of time (i.e., 4-5 seasons).	Stig-Inge Bjornebye Former Liverpool & Blackburn Rovers F.C.
Ambitionist	(i) A player that has a strong desire to achieve a professional football career.	Gerard Weikens Manchester City F.C.
	(ii) A player that has a high preference for playing in English football rather than elsewhere.	Toddy Orlygsson Former Nottingham Forest F.C.
	(iii) A player that has the desire to improve his career by moving to a better quality league.	Slaven Bilic Former West Ham United F.C.
Exiler	A player that for football-related, personal or political reasons chooses to leave their country of origin to play football in another country.	Sasa Ilic Former Charlton Athletic F.C.
Nomadic Cosmopolitan	A player that is motivated by a desire to experience different nations and cultures, especially in major world cities.	Jurgen Klinsmann Former Tottenham Hotspurs F.C. Ruud Guillit Former Chelsea F.C.
Expelled	A player who is, in effect, forced to migrate to England possibly in part due to the difficulty of sustaining a professional football career in their respective homeland.	Eric Cantona Former Leeds & Manchester United F.C.

With regards to Table 1.2, Magee and Sugden (2002) note that the career stage of the individual player is a variable that affects the appropriate or assigned typology, thus a degree of flexibility is required when examining and applying the typology. Although the typology is helpful in terms of understanding the different classifications of foreign migrants in English professional football, it does not specify certain performance related criteria (i.e., technical/playing ability, playing position, duration of stay, player age). The integration of such material may be beneficial in terms of enhancing the understanding of the foreign migrant and the underlying process of football labour migration.

Much of the migration-based research conducted in the context of English football has concentrated on the movement of professional players (i.e., those classified as elite), rather than the patterns concerning pre-elite players (Bourke, 2002). More precisely, Bourke (2002) suggests that this may be due to a lack of data and media interest, and these points are used as the rationale for her research into the motives of Irish youngsters that opted for a career in English professional football. Drawing on a mixed-methodological research design that used primary and secondary data sources, Bourke's work, to some extent, can be seen to mirror Magee and Sugden's (2002).

Players were asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire, whilst Bourke also engaged in individual semi-structured interviews with a sample of the players. The findings on players' reasons for a career in professional football were wide ranging and included the 'love of the game', 'dreams', 'future hopes' and 'desire to make money'. Additional responses, although possessing a lower rank, implicated a number of significant others that were involved in the decision-making process concerning career choice. From these observations, Bourke suggests that many young Irish football players are attracted to England in the hope of making a career in the game, but that these decisions are characterised by limited pre-departure planning. This is compounded as the decision to pursue a career in football is made at a very young age, which Bourke further points out subsequently impacted on post-arrival experiences (see section 1.8). Bourke (2002) also notes that, over the years, a number of English professional football clubs have formed strategic alliances with some Irish clubs who act as feeders of their 'young' promising talent. The examples include Manchester United and Shelbourne, Leeds United and Home Farm, Newcastle United and Bray Wanderers/St Joseph's Boy's, and it is these established links that have been

found to influence a player's decision regarding his choice of club in Ireland (Bourke, 2002). The strategic links also serve to promote and encourage the migration of pre-elite talent. The significance of Bourke's (2002) findings illustrate the *power* and *control* that English clubs have exerted over the Irish labour market in terms of recruiting 'young ' football talent, and demonstrate that labour migration practices also exist at the youth level within the game. The review now presents a glance at the factors that influence the process of football labour migration.

1.7.3 Extended influences on Football Labour Migration

The reasons attributed to labour migration in other sports are duly acknowledged (i.e., instant guaranteed return - Maguire & Stead, 1996; linguistic adaptability and economic wealth - Genest, 1994, Williams, 1994), whilst Magee and Sugden's (2002) typology provides an insight into the motivational tendencies of foreign players. However, there are other factors to consider that lubricate the football labour migration process. Magee and Sugden (2002) stated these as; (i) the introduction of the European Champions League accompanied with its high levels of financial reward; (ii) the Bosman ruling that resulted in freedom of movement for citizens within European Community countries and the subsequent end of the foreign quota ruling, and (iii) a significant increase in the revenue accrued from the media and sponsors. The review has already explored the Bosman ruling so this will not feature in the following discussion. Instead, attention is given to additional factors, which include managerial influences, player characteristics and transfer market forces.

The manager of a professional football club is largely responsible for selecting and retaining the players that he/she wants to represent the club. Although in recent times,

the position of Director of Football also appears to be involved in the identification and selection of players at the senior level. It may be reasonable to assume therefore that a manager plays a role in creating the perceived impact (i.e., the perception of foreign players decreasing opportunities for home-grown talent) that currently surrounds the acquisition of foreign players. An example of managerial influences is evident in the case of Stoke City Football Club. Adamson (2000) noted that after Gunnar Thor Gislason became chairman of Stoke City F.C., following the £6.5 million take-over by an Icelandic consortium in November 1999, he appointed his fellow countryman Gudjon Thordarson to manager. Thordarson proceeded to sign a number of Icelandic players for the club (e.g., Midfielder - Brynjar Gunnarsson, Midfielder - Sigursteun Gislason, Striker - Arnar Gunnlaugsson & Midfielder - Bjarni Gudjonssson - see Adamson, 2000).

In a Champions League game in 1999 Chelsea F.C. included only one Englishman (i.e., Dennis Wise) in the team's line up (Morgan, 1999), a trend replicated by Arsenal F.C. and Bolton Wanderers F.C. who have both fielded teams that contained eleven players from outside the U.K. and Republic of Ireland. To explain the rationale for these observations, it is reported that the financial rewards for Premier League survival are in the region of £20 million, which invariably places the mangers of clubs within this league under considerable pressure. It is no surprise to learn therefore that the average tenure for a Premiership manager stands at 2 years (Maguire & Pearton, 2000). Thorpe (2001) suggests that this might be a reflection of the pressure for 'success' (e.g., Premier League survival, qualification for European places or winning trophies) that is often sought by the owners of Premier League clubs. As such, the

prospect of integrating home-grown players into a club's 1st team may not be viewed by these managers as a *realistic* option in achieving the notion of 'success'.

Instead, the recruitment and player acquisition strategies of managers may be focused towards more 'established' players (i.e., internationally recognised) who may offer a greater chance of achieving the notion of *instant* success (Maguire & Pearton, 2000). Foreign players' cheaper market valuation and their ability to quickly adapt to the English culture and style of play have been identified as further reasons for their acquisition (Chaudhary, 2000; Stead & Maguire, 2000). Chaudhary (2000; p.32) suggests that, "...the cost-effectiveness of Icelandic players in an increasingly inflated European transfer market also makes them attractive to clubs continually looking to save them money and unearth a cost-price gem." Moreover, Chaudhary (2000) reported that in the case of Icelandic players, they have been described as a 'manager's dream', due to their technical ability and willingness to work hard. Coupled with their linguistic adaptability, English football has seen a rise in the number of players from this region (Adamson, 2000).

With regards to the notion of their cheaper market valuation, Atkinson (2003) noted that Arsenal acquired the Brazilian World Cup Winner Gilberto Silva in 2002/2003, for almost the same price that Birmingham City spent on acquiring Clinton Morrison from Crystal Palace. As such, this example serves to highlight the financial benefits that clubs can gain by acquiring foreign players. Clearly, these factors have all contributed to the in-migration of foreign players into English football. However, in the context of the current research, it is also pertinent to address the implications of

their acquisition. Specifically, this is focused on the lack of opportunities for home-grown players to progress through to a clubs' first team.

1.7.4 The Impact of Football Labour Migration

The following section explores the impact of football labour migration in professional football. One of the most prominent issues that has received considerable media attention throughout the years with regards to football labour migration is the restriction of career opportunities for indigenous talent in domestic club football (Maguire, 1999; Darby, 2005). There have also been claims that National Teams would suffer due to the underdevelopment and lack of exposure given to young talent in elite level domestic club football, an obvious progression route to the national team (Maguire & Stead, 1996; Maguire & Pearton, 2000; Darby, 2005).

These sentiments are echoed by a variety of commentators. For example, Moorhouse (1994) suggested that the Scottish national manager in 1990 remarked that the number of foreigners that were playing in the domestic league meant that the chances for Scottish youngsters were being significantly reduced. This was identified as a trend that would ultimately affect the national team. Lanfranchi (1994) also questioned whether the promotion of French local talent would be restrained by the acquisition of foreign players within French professional football. Bonizzoni (cited in Lanfranchi, 1994) was far more critical in his appraisal of the acquisition of foreign players in Italian football. He suggested that Italian football was far more damaged than assisted by their presence, and that foreign player recruitment was an insult to the scouts and coaches within domestic clubs. Cesar Maldini, the former Italian Under-21 national coach, concurred with both Lanfranchi and Bonizzoni when he pointed out that the

number of foreign players being signed by Italian clubs were restricting the opportunities for young indigenous Italian talent (cited in Maguire & Pearton, 2000). In contrast, Silvio Berlusconi, the owner of AC Milan, argued for no restrictions in the acquisition of foreign players for domestic clubs and suggested that the national team would become less important in the future. Indeed, he stressed that spectators in Italian football associated far more with professional clubs, rather than the national side (World Soccer, 1992). As previously noted, Darby (2005) has highlighted the underdevelopment of African domestic football as a result of the migration of the continents 'raw' talent to economically superior nations such as France, Italy and England. Concerned with the 'de-skilling' effect of such migratory patterns, Darby concludes that as long as the African continent continues to reside in the periphery of the world economy, it looks increasingly likely to remain trapped in a dependency type relationship within the global football industry.

In the context of English professional football, a variety of commentators have expressed concern over the acquisition of foreign players. For example, Jody Morris, a past product of the Youth Development System at Chelsea F.C. only figured occasionally in the club's first team during his time at the club. In trying to establish himself as a regular starter within the 1st team at Chelsea, Morris suggested that his long-term future could lie away from the club. Specifically, Morris commented that:

> *"...when I first came to the club and saw foreigners coming in like Luca Vialli and Roberto Di Matteo, I used to get a buzz. But as I've got older, I've started to think 'please don't buy another central midfielder, even if he is the best in the world."*
>
> (Speck & Edwards, 1999; p.69)

This comment was born out of the acquisition strategy of Chelsea F.C. and provides anecdotal evidence to suggest that foreign players might be restricting the opportunities for English home-grown talent. Morris was later to be given a free transfer from Chelsea F.C., and after a brief spell with Leeds United Football Club, was signed by Stoke City. Likewise, Matthew Upson experienced similar progression problems to Morris. However, rather than stay at Arsenal F.C. and compete for a starting place since his arrival as a 17 year-old in 1997, Upson joined Birmingham City F.C. in January 2003 for £1 million. This move contributed to Upson gaining his first full international cap for the senior England team. These two examples illustrate the difficulties for home-grown players in breaking into the starting eleven of a Premier League team, which may be replicated within other Premier League clubs.

Commentators within the coaching and managerial domain have also made reference to the issue. For example, Steve Heighway, the current Academy Director at Liverpool Football Club suggested that "...football is a very competitive industry. Because of the foreign players in our game there are fewer opportunities for them [home-grown players]. They've gone as far as they can" (cited in Calvin, 2001; p.122). Further, Ron Atkinson, the former Manchester United and Aston Villa manager echoed Heighway's comments, "...so much foreign influence cannot be good for the future of English football" (Atkinson, 2003; p.1). Atkinson was making reference to the development of young English players and the longevity of the national team. Although it was acknowledged that his latter assertion was not a current problem, it was suggested that if the trend (i.e., increase in foreign players) continued, then it would certainly become a problematic issue for the national manager for the 2010 World Cup.

The review thus far in this section has concentrated on some of the negative connotations associated with football labour migration. However, it is also necessary to address the literature that outlines the positive features of this phenomenon. In this respect, Curry (2003) suggested that Gianfranco Zola, Chelsea F.C.'s former Italian centre forward, was an inspiration for aspiring football players. Zola, who played in the English Premier League for a number of years, suggested that he tried to educate the young players at Chelsea F.C. by setting an example both on and off the field. Specifically, he emphasised that footballers have to make certain sacrifices within their lifestyle if they want to achieve professional status (cited in Curry, 2003). Such inferences have also been resonated by Atkinson (2003), who suggested that Ashley Cole has undoubtedly benefited from playing alongside Thierry Henry and Patrick Viera at Arsenal F.C., both proven French internationals. In addition, Sir Alex Ferguson, the manager of Manchester United F.C, made his view clear on this issue. Ferguson noted that the Frenchman Eric Cantona played a large part in changing his philosophical outlook on football. He suggested that "...Cantona came to the club and after training he stayed behind to practise. Even in mid-winter" (cited in Carlin, 2000; p.15). These are certainly profound comments from Ferguson as he not only appears to be espousing the virtues of a foreign migrant, but paradoxically, is also a firm believer in the concept of youth development (Carlin, 2000). Moreover, the comments of Ferguson, regarded as the most successful manager in recent times, would certainly highlight the potential benefits of foreign players within English football.

It is therefore reasonable to assume that foreign players such as Gianfranco Zola, Eric Cantona, Thierry Henry and Patrick Viera might be regarded as influential role

models to enhance the profile of English football and educate its youngsters. With regards to the latter, it has been suggested that one of the ways to increase the quality of developing youngsters, is through the learning of foreign player's perceived *superior* technical ability and professionalism (Richardson & Littlewood, 1999). These commentators also reported that *good quality* foreign players (i.e., internationally recognised players) might serve as effective role models for home-grown players through the method of observational learning. They further argued that a controlled mix of good quality foreign players combined with British players might be beneficial to the future of the National game (Richardson & Littlewood, 1999). However, it would appear that ensuring quality foreign players within English football has become increasingly difficult, especially with the inception of the Bosman ruling and the subsequent relaxation of the foreign quota ruling. The prospective policies that have been mooted to address this concern are now briefly highlighted.

1.7.5 Policies to Restrict the Acquisition of Foreign Players

Since the Bosman ruling of 1995 and the subsequent influx of non-U.K. based players, there have been various debates within U.K. professional football and central government, concerning policies to control the migration process. At the time of writing, no formal policies have been introduced, but discussion has centred upon restricting the number of non-U.K. born players, built upon certain criteria. Presently, clubs are permitted to acquire any player from within the E.U. and E.E.A. without the need of a work permit. In contrast, players from outside this region require a work permit from the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). Specifically, the criteria issued by the DfEE (2001) states that:

- A player must have played for his country in at least 75% of its competitive "A" team matches when he was available for selection and during the two years preceding the date of application[2]; and,
- The FIFA ranking of the player's country must be at or above 70th place in the official rankings' list when averaged over the two years preceding the date of application.

If a player's criteria are deemed satisfactory, work permit applications are granted in parallel duration with the player's contract up to a maximum of four years. All subsequent applications need to meet the same set of criteria.

However, in recent times, there have been calls for some form of policy to be applied to players from within the E.U. and the E.E.A. (see Richardson & Littlewood, 1999; Chaudhary, 2000; Wright, 2002; Atkinson, 2003). A leading figure in this respect has been Andy Roxburgh, the technical director of UEFA. Roxburgh suggested that it was illegal through European law to prevent clubs from fielding as many European based players as they wished (cited in Wright, 2002). Yet, he is actively seeking a ruling whereby 50% of a team will be made up of players that are home-grown. This means that they will have had to come through a club's youth development system. It is envisaged that such a move would help to protect the young talent in many countries, whilst also helping the long-term future of national teams. Indeed, Roxburgh has suggested that the Juventus coach Marcello Lippi "...endeavours to ensure that at least half his team comes from the local region in Italy" (cited in

[2] A competitive "A" team international match is a World Cup Finals game or World Cup qualifying group game. In addition, confederational tournament games such as The European Championship, The African Cup of Nations, The Asia Cup, The CONCACAF Cup and The Copa America are also included as "A" games.

Wright, 2002; p.1). Concern about the future development of young English players has received added impetus from the Premier League secretary Mike Foster. Specifically, he commented that, "...we (The Premier League) have a responsibility to the English game and the development of English players" (cited in Chaudhary, 2000; p.32). He also emphasised the importance of English clubs and their coaches having access to the best talent from outside the country's boundaries. In a wider context, the Italian Football Federation (FIGC) has decided to put a cap on the number of players from countries outside the European Union that play in its top division. This form of legislation, which was introduced in the 2003/2004 season aimed to guarantee the predominance of Italian born players at the highest levels of domestic football. The results of this move are, as yet, unclear, but it constitutes a move that may preserve the longevity of home-grown player development and progression in elite level Italian football.

More recently, Richardson, Littlewood and Gilbourne (2005) provide a critique of the campaign by UEFA in July 2004 to create what is termed 'a level playing field' within their respective competitions (i.e., Champions League & UEFA Cup). This will be accomplished by UEFA implementing a European wide policy on the utilisation of home-grown players, which they feel should be embraced by its member associations (i.e., English Football Association etc.) at a domestic level. More specifically, the guidelines state that clubs entering UEFA competitions in the 2006/07 season will be required to include (at least) two players trained by the club's own football academy (i.e., any player registered for a minimum of 3 seasons with the club between the ages of 15-21 years) and a further two players trained by other clubs from the same association (i.e., any player who has been registered for at least 3

seasons by the club or by other clubs affiliated to the same association between the ages of 15-21 years) within their 25 player 'A' list squad (Richardson et al., 2005). Additional features see one place per season in the following two years being added to these conditions. This means that from the 2008/09 season, clubs entering UEFA competitions will be required to have 4 club/academy trained and 4 association trained players in their 'A' list 25 man squad. As noted, UEFA also propose that member associations introduce similar measures at a domestic level, but they did not specify time periods for any such modifications to be achieved.

Richardson et al. (2005) note that the introduction of this policy is rooted in a number of concerns by UEFA. These include the perceived lack of emerging young talent across UEFA associations, the unwillingness of (some) clubs to invest in training their own players, a perceived domination of UEFA competitions by fewer teams, a belief that top flight leagues across Europe are becoming less competitive, the (so-called) 'hoarding' of players within bigger squads (i.e., restricting and/or preventing the appearance of (some) internationally recognised players at a domestic level), a lack of local and/or regional identity in (some) club sides and finally, concerns for national sides. In essence, the proposals suggest a move towards more equally balanced domestic leagues and UEFA competitions, whilst also helping to facilitate the development and progression of home-grown talent in European football. However, Richardson et al. (2005) emphasise that although the philosophical sentiments of UEFA's proposals are sound, they are legally restricted in terms of specifying the precise nationality of the home-grown players for clubs' to acquire and develop. In this sense, it is difficult to see how the move aims to tackle the acquisition of foreign talent. Nevertheless, it appears that the issue of home-grown player development and

progression is one that is clearly on the agenda of European football's governing body.

1.7.6 Summary of Football Labour Migration:

Financial wealth, the Bosman ruling, EU legislation, cultural adaptability, individual preferences and managerial influences have all been identified as factors that have contributed to an increase in football labour migration. This has led many people to believe that such an increase may have a detrimental impact on the development and progression of home-grown players in English professional football. In the context of this research, understanding what is meant by the term *'impact'* requires an analysis of several interconnected factors, which includes the development (i.e., technical, cultural & professional), the progression (i.e., in terms of frequencies of players acquired) and the perceptions of home-grown players. Thus, it is not only necessary that the player acquisition trends are quantitatively examined, but also the perceptions and lived experiences of young players (i.e., Football Scholars) are explored through a qualitative framework.

1.8 Youth Player Experiences in Professional Football

To date, there has been a paucity of research addressing the lived experiences and perceptions of youth players in professional football from a developmental perspective. The research that has been conducted within the football domain has explored other aspects. As noted earlier, this research has tended to concentrate on the physical and physiological characteristics of players for talent identification and developmental reasons. However, one of the earliest insights into life within the domain of professional football is the work of Hunter Davies. Davies spent a year

during the 1971/72 playing season inside Tottenham Hotspur Football Club with the aim of exploring the realities of the occupation. He went on to report that although there were indeed cases of financial affluence amongst players, even in professional football in the 1970s, the notions of *insecurity*, *loneliness* and *rejection* were distinct features of the occupation[3].

The research conducted by Parker (1995, 1996a, 1996b, 2000 & 2001) compliments Hunter's earlier work and offers an additional (and more relevant in the context of the present research) insight into the lived experiences of youth players in professional football. Parker conducted a sociological case study analysis of Youth Traineeship within English Professional Football in an attempt to discover the features of masculine construction within a group of youth trainees. Parker embraced an ethnographic research design[4] and concentrated his inquiry on one professional football club. Similar to Davies, Parker's research lasted for a period of 10 months, during the 1993/94 domestic playing season. Both authors' approaches to their respective work can be seen to share similarities in terms of contextual location and duration of time, but it is necessary to note that differences also exist. For example, Parker was governed by the rigours of academic research and the principles of ethnographic inquiry, whereas Davies' research was not an academic study, and as such, has no mention of ethnographic principles, but nevertheless is still a noteworthy contribution. The decisions and processes that the researcher(s) engage in need to be carefully considered, as they carry an implicit ethical dimension and responsibility (Hammersley, 1992).

[3] It has also been suggested that *insecurity* is still a distinct feature that is evident in today's game (see Potrac et al., 2002).

[4] See section 1.9.3.2 for further details on ethnography.

Parker (2001) identified the professional football environment as a key location for the demonstration and reinforcement of traditional working-class masculine values. Moreover, he reported that the identities of the youth trainees were shaped and constructed in unity with a series of 'official' and 'unofficial' institutional norms, values and assumptions. For example, reference was made to the players' experiences and perceptions of the menial chores that they had to engage in, the coaching style and strategies of the youth team coach, the authoritarian club culture, and education. He reported that these facets all served to shape the youth trainees' life inside the professional football club.

Reflecting on his ethnographic based fieldwork within professional football Parker (1995; p.123) remarked that, "...as my experience at Colby Town proved, football apprenticeship is not about feelings or personal dignity. It's about opinions, authoritarian attitudes and domination. About discipline, tradition, superiority and respect for professional reputation." Both Davies' (1972) and Parker's work are crucial in providing methodological and contextual understandings of the professional football domain. The current study's focus is on exploring the effect of foreign player acquisition on the development and progression of youth players in professional football, an area bereft of academic research. Parker (1995) offered an explanation for this lack of research in professional football when he suggested that those living and working within the sport have created and perpetuated an insular atmosphere. As a consequence, insightful research on the lived experiences and perceptions of players within professional football has been somewhat limited.

Bourke's (2002) work on the motives and career planning of 'young' Irish players also serves to offer a glimpse into the lives of individuals that enter the football industry at youth level. In framing her conceptual approach, Bourke notes that working in and coping with a foreign culture can lead to what is termed 'culture shock' (i.e., a psychological phenomenon that may lead to feelings of fear, helplessness, irritability & disorientation). In this respect, she emphasises the importance of both pre and post awareness training to enhance knowledge concerning situations and experiences that players may ordinarily meet. Such an approach aligns itself to the sports psychology literature on the management of career transitions in professional sport (Lavallee & Wylleman, 2000). Bourke (2002) found that players thought very little about the reality of club life prior to their departure, as they were eager to start playing football for their respective clubs. However a number of players' observed that they would have done several things differently, as the reality of living and working in new surroundings provided many challenges. The prominent difficulties that players' reported upon entering their respective training schemes included the absence of family ties and close friends, and difficulty coping with/adjusting to their first time living away from home. Although the players (generally) agreed that the decision to pursue a professional career was a satisfying one, some negative issues arose. Such issues included not getting along with the manager and pressure to perform. Bourke's work adds to and complements other research that has been conducted within this area, but it is felt that more specific data would have enhanced clarity in terms of player difficulties.

There are clearly numerous advantages associated with the position of (elite level) professional football player, which range from enhanced wealth, social status, self-

confidence and a variety of other trappings that are generally beyond the reach of many individuals in society. However, the supply far outweighs the demand, and there are limited opportunities for individuals to progress at the highest level. Given the appealing features of the occupation, the nature of the football industry is extremely competitive and the labour wastage at the youth level is very high. Therefore research within this domain is vitally important if we are to enhance our knowledge about the patterns of movement and experiences of those that function within the realms of professional clubs.

1.9 Location of the Research: Paradigms, Moments and Ethnography

Having sketched out the theoretical and conceptual issues that permeate the thesis, it is also pertinent to outline the paradigmatic landscape of the present inquiry. In this sense, the following section is divided into three. The first section introduces the notion of research paradigms and provides a historical insight into the development of qualitative inquiry, whilst also illustrating how ethnographic principles can be used as a vehicle to transcend the paradigmatic landscape. The second section highlights the introduction of qualitative inquiry within the domain of sport and exercise sciences and the final section locates the theoretical paradigmatic position of the research studies and maps their respective content and structure.

1.9.1 Paradigms

It has been suggested that both qualitative and quantitative researchers hold a belief that they know something about society that is worth telling to others (Becker, 1986). However, one of the major differences between these forms of research is concerned with the philosophical approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). For example, Denzin and

Lincoln (1994; p.4) report that qualitative research "...stresses the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied and the situational constraints that shape inquiry", whereas quantitative research "...emphasises the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes, and as such, inquiry is alleged to be within a value-free framework." Both forms of research are based on an individual's particular ontological (i.e., the nature of reality), epistemological (i.e., the relationship between the inquirer and the known) and methodological (i.e., how do we know the world or gain knowledge from it) beliefs, which locate the individual within a research paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Research paradigms represent belief systems that attach the researcher to a particular worldview and shape a research strategy that is adopted to explore a particular phenomenon. In addition, it has been suggested that qualitative research is structured and organised by paradigms (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) and as the present thesis shifts across paradigms, it is necessary to examine the historical changes that have taken place. These have been traditionally referred to as 'the five moments of qualitative research' (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

1.9.1.1 The Traditional Period - first moment

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggested that the traditional period began in the early 1900s and continued until World War II. They noted that during this period "...qualitative researchers wrote 'objective' colonializing accounts of field experiences that were reflective of the positivistic scientist paradigm" (p.7). A leading figure during this period was Malinowski, and much of his early ethnographic writings were influenced by a necessity to produce valid, reliable and objective interpretations, akin to the criteria of positivistic research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Positivistic research

applies specific criteria to its inquiry, which are associated with notions of validity and reliability. More specifically, this deals with internal validity (i.e., the degree to which findings correctly map the phenomenon in question), external validity (i.e., the degree to which findings can be generalised to other settings similar to the one in which the study occurred), reliability (i.e., the extent to which findings can be replicated, or reproduced, by another inquirer), and objectivity (i.e., the extent to which findings are free from bias). The legacy of the traditional period began at the end of the 19th Century when the social sciences and the novel had become disconnected (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). However, the Chicago school introduced an interpretive methodology that still focused on the narrated life history approach. This emphasised the life story and 'slice-of-life' approach to ethnographic materials (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) and facilitated the production of texts that empowered the researcher to represent the subject's story.

1.9.1.2 The Modernist Phase - second moment

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggested that this phase built upon the traditional period, whereby the "slice-of-life" ethnographies and naturalism were still valued, and extended through the postwar years to the 1970s. More specifically, academic texts attempted to formalise qualitative methods to make this form of research as rigorous as its quantitative counterpart. In this sense, it was suggested that researchers "...combined open-ended and quasi-structured interviewing with participant observation and the careful analysis of such materials in standardised, statistical forms" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; p8). This approach clearly espouses positivistic and post-positivistic notions, which include an ontological belief of *critical realism* (i.e., reality assumed to exist but to be only imperfectly apprehendable because of flawed

human intellectual mechanisms), an epistemological belief of *modified dualist/objectivist* (i.e., dualisms are largely abandoned as not possible to maintain, but objectivity remains 'regulatory ideal') (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). With the introduction of various methods and strategies of inquiry in 1969, it was suggested that this was when the modernist period came to an end (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

1.9.1.3 Blurred Genres - third moment

The third moment of blurred genres was characterised by a diverse range of research paradigms, methods and strategies of inquiry from which qualitative researchers drew (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). This moment also witnessed a rise in data collection and analysis techniques available to qualitative researchers (i.e., open-ended interviewing, observational experience, documentary methods). In this sense, there was a greater need to develop and fully understand the judgement criteria that should be utilised within this form of inquiry. As such, the *parallel perspective* was established as a framework that attempted to conceptualise the notion of validity for qualitative researchers. In contrast to the *replication perspective* (i.e., a view that assumes no special differences between positivistic inquiry and qualitative research) (Sparkes, 1998), the parallel perspective maintains that qualitative research symbolizes an alternative paradigm to the positivist view. In this regard, Sparkes (1998) suggested that a set of criteria unique to qualitative inquiry needed developing. Lincoln and Guba (1985) were leading figures in this respect and aimed to ensure that qualitative research could be legitimised through a series of procedures, which they defined as *trustworthiness criteria.*

The trustworthiness criteria advocated by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were *credibility* (i.e., equivalent to the internal validity of quantitative research) where researchers are encouraged to engage in an eclectic mix of techniques ranging from prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, referential adequacy and member checks. *Transferability* (i.e., external validity) was achieved through providing thick description and providing a database for reader judgement of potential transferability. *Dependability* (i.e., reliability) was achieved through demonstrating credibility, multiple methods, stepwise replication and inquiry audit. *Confirmability* (i.e., objectivity) was achieved through the technique of inquiry audit, whilst researchers were also encouraged to maintain a reflexive journal. Although research should aim to acquire as many facets of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) trustworthiness criteria, studies have been conducted that have not captured all of these components (e.g., Côté et al., 1995 Gould et al., 1996; Bloom et al., 1998).

The parallel perspective has done much to encourage qualitative researchers to explore the social reality of others, but there are also criticisms associated with its inception and utilisation. Some of these criticisms are concerned with the explicit rationale to explain why certain techniques were chosen over others to establish trustworthiness, and the definitions that researchers cited that were associated with these techniques (Sparkes, 1998). A further criticism of the parallel perspective was connected to the inherent philosophical contradictions on which it was based (Sparkes, 1998). In this sense, Smith (1984) questioned the foundational criteria employed by Guba (1981) to ensure validity, which was accentuated given that Guba accepted the philosophical differences between a positivistic and naturalistic inquiry.

Smith (1984) suggested that if one possessed a view of ontological *relativism* then it would be difficult to distinguish between reports that are trustworthy and others that are not, given that this view accepts multiple views on the nature of reality. Guba and Lincoln (1994), having reflected on their earlier notion of the parallel perspective, commented that its relationship with positivistic principles might have left it open to criticism. Clearly, the parallel perspective does possess some limitations, but this is not to say that it should be disregarded in the methodological decision making process.

It was during the traditional period that Geertz (1973) suggested that more interpretative perspectives were superseding the approaches within the human disciplines. Geertz noted that the boundaries between the human and social sciences had become *blurred.* Researchers at this time were locating themselves in interpretivist and constructivist paradigms, which assume a *relativist* ontology (i.e., realities are apprehendable in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature and dependent on their form and content on the individuals persons or groups holding the constructions) and a *transactional* and *subjectivist* epistemology (i.e., the investigator and the object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the findings are literally created as the investigation proceeds) (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Of crucial importance here was the presence of the author in the interpretive text (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). This was confounded by the fact that the *blurred genres* were a period that questioned positivistic beliefs concerning silent authorship, its standards of evaluation and subject matter.

1.9.1.4 Crisis of Representation - fourth moment

The fourth moment is associated with a crisis of representation. It is claimed that Marcus and Fisher were the first people to declare that a crisis existed within the social sciences in 1986 (Tierney, 2002) and their sentiments have since been echoed by other researchers (i.e., Clifford, 1988; Lather, 1993). In essence, the fourth moment derived from "...shifting assumptions about how authors ought to present knowledge claims that they have created from their data" (Tierney, 2002; p.386). As such, the crisis of representation is concerned with epistemological movements with regards to an individual's claim to understanding the *other*. This has contributed to researchers questioning how they knew what they knew and how they presented these research findings within their final written accounts. In this sense, some qualitative researchers have commented that they no longer felt secure that the data gathered from an extended period of engagement in the field would be regarded as legitimate (Clifford, 1988; Richardson, 1997).

However, some researchers have dismissed the presence of a crisis of representation, and instead, have argued for greater methodological detail to ensure validity and reliability (Tesch, 1990). Others have proposed suggestions concerning researchers' methods of data collection to ensure greater claims to trustworthiness, which might dissipate the fears of the crisis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). More specifically, Tierney (2002) commented that within the qualitative community, there has been little convergence over how to write, yet there have been similar examples of writing styles. Some of these styles have been the utilisation of the first person ("I") into the text, whilst also applying the personal experiences of the author as a way to make meaning within the text. Moreover, authors have adopted different genres, examples

of which include poetic writing (Richardson, 1997), autobiographical accounts (Sparkes, 1996; Gilbourne, 2002) and journal narratives (Olesen, 2001). However, whatever strategy is embraced to represent the reality of others, Tierney (2002) claims that attention should be given to three central factors; the nature of writing, the readers of a text and the purpose of the research act.

1.9.1.5 A Double Crisis - fifth moment

The present research has been conducted within an academic environment whereby a double crisis of *representation* and *legitimisation* exists. It is regarded that these two crises are "...coded in multiple terms, variously called and associated with the *interpretive, linguistic,* and *rhetorical* turns in social theory" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; p.11). The crisis of representation has been addressed above, whilst the second is concerned with the criteria that are used to evaluate and interpret qualitative research. Given the move towards different representational writing styles to capture the world of the 'other' and the 'self' (i.e., autoethnographies, journal writing, narratives, poetic writing) it has been suggested that the traditional criteria to pass judgement on these forms of writing have become problematic (Sparkes, 2000). Although attempts have been made to ease such concerns (i.e., parallel perspective), significant issues and questions are raised when *evocative narratives* are utilised to document one's findings (Kiesinger, 1998). As such, Sparkes (2000) recommends that to transform such *evocative* pieces of qualitative research into accepted forms of academic scholarship, there is a need to add something in the form of theoretical abstraction or conceptual elaboration.

Clearly, pre-occupations with both the *representational* and *legitimisation* component of contemporary qualitative research are evident in the current academic community, but as Richardson (2000, p.8) points out "...we are fortunate, now, to be working in a postmodernist climate, a time when a multitude of approaches to knowing and telling exist side by side." In this sense, a postmodernist's viewpoint is to doubt any method or theory, discourse or genre, whether they are traditional or novel, in claiming that they are the *accepted* form of authoritative knowledge. Moreover, a postmodernist position allows the people that ascribe to this notion to know something without claiming to know everything, whereby possessing a partial, local, historical knowledge is still viewed as knowing (Richardson, 2000). One particular facet of postmodernism that Richardson suggests has been helpful in her work is concerned with the notion of poststructuralism. She reports that poststructuralism utilises *language* to *produce* social meaning and *create* social reality. More specifically, Richardson suggests that language is historically and locally specific and constructs the individual's subjectivity, rather than being the result of one's individuality. Therefore, from a poststructuralist standpoint, writing is validated as a method of knowing. In essence, "...poststructuralism points to the continual cocreation of self and social science; they are known through each other. Knowing the self and the subject are intertwined, partial, historical, local knowledges. Poststructuralism, then, permits-nay, invites no, incites-us to reflect upon our method and explore new ways of knowing" (Richardson, 2000; p.9).

1.9.2 Qualitative Inquiry in Sports & Exercise Sciences

The present series of research studies have been conducted within the field of Sports and Exercise Sciences. The purpose of this section is to outline the development and

emergence of qualitative inquiry within this environment and in doing so, aims to give the reader an understanding of the researchers academic environment. To supplement this section, the paradigmatic position of the research studies is outlined.

It is regarded that researchers within Sport and Exercise Sciences operate in a community that is tied to positivist doctrines (Heron, 1996; Sparkes, 1998). However, over recent years, there appears to have been a shift with regard to the line of inquiry. Dale (1996) has reported that qualitative inquiry is gaining credibility within the domain of Sport and Exercise Psychology. More specifically, Biddle et al. (2001) highlighted a range of both *established* (i.e., case studies) and *emergent* (i.e., ethnographic studies) research approaches that have been utilised by researchers (see Faulkner & Sparkes, 1999) within the qualitative research domain. The *emergent* forms of academic inquiry clearly highlight the willingness of researchers to engage in more protean approaches to the study of the 'other'. Yet, it has been suggested that the dominant protocol in this field remains the semi-structured interview and content analysis (Côté et al., 1993).

As noted earlier, the Sport and Exercise community has traditionally relied upon experimental methodology to detail how research has complied with trustworthiness and legitimisation criteria (Hardy et al., 1996) and it is these positivist/postpositivist chains that have limited the emancipation of researchers to experiment with alternative forms of inquiry (Heron, 1996). The representational component of traditional *scientific* tales have seen "...a marked absence of the narrator as a first-person presence in the text, which becomes author-evacuated and dominated by a scientific narrator who is manifest only as a dispassionate, camera like observer"

(Biddle et al., 2001; p.801). However, given the growth and acceptance of qualitative research in the social sciences of Sport and Exercise Sciences, there are now a growing number of researchers (Hardy et al., 1996; Krane et al., 1997; Faulkner & Sparkes, 1999; Gilbourne 2002) that have embraced qualitative forms of research to fully understand social science phenomena. In line with this thinking, it has been suggested that there is a greater need to develop and fully understand the criteria that should be utilised to judge these *alternative* forms of inquiry (Krane et al., 1997; Strean, 1998; Sparkes, 1998, 2000; Biddle et al., 2001). As noted earlier, the *parallel perspective* proved helpful and researchers still draw on notions of it in contemporary research, despite its philosophical limitations (Smith, 1984). Still, academic writers have called for alternative criteria. Richardson (1994) emphasised that writing was a way of knowing about ourselves and about the topic of inquiry that "...allows the reader to *explore, engage* with and *understand* the phenomena being studied in a different way" (Biddle et al., 2001; p.802). Furthermore, Biddle et al. (2001) also suggest that alternative genres of representation might facilitate different levels of knowing about social science phenomena. They highlight various examples that range from confessional tales, impressionist tales, autoethnography or narratives of self, critical autobiography, ethnographic drama, ethnographic fiction, and short story forms. Evidently, different forms of judgement criteria[5] are required, which Sparkes (2000) highlights as evocation, authenticity, verisimilitude, fidelity and believability. Moreover, there have been calls from qualitative researchers to renounce the term validity and reconceptualise, or even disregard the term that has served to be an essential element of positivistic research for many years (Wolcott, 1994).

[5] The notion of judgement criteria in qualitative research has previously been addressed in section 1.9.1.5.

There has been a gradual inception of alternative forms of representation within the domain of Sport and Exercise Sciences throughout the years, but this has been limited to the social science environment. Although there have been signs of experimentation from researchers (Biddle et al., 2001), it has been claimed that only quantitative data are ultimately valid or of high quality (Sechrest, 1992). Such comments undoubtedly highlight the contentious nature of representation within social science research. Given that the present thesis adopts a mixed-methodological design to explore its research objectives, it is pertinent to locate and map their respective theoretical paradigmatic position.

1.9.3 Locating and Mapping the Research Studies

This part of the thesis maps out the content and structure of the research studies. More specifically, it outlines the methodological processes that the researcher engaged in and locates the paradigmatic position of the research(er) through studies one to three. It also demonstrates how the researcher moved between theoretical paradigmatic positions by the utilisation of an eclectic mix of research methodologies.

1.9.3.1 Study 1 - Player Acquisition Database in English Football

In Chapter 2, Study 1 examines the trends in player acquisition profiles (i.e., player origins, ages and primary playing positions) in elite level English Football from 1990-2000. There was a specific emphasis on U.K. and Republic of Ireland football players, foreign football players (i.e. non-U.K. & Rep Ireland) and home-grown football players. The past research (i.e., Maguire & Stead, 1998; Maguire & Pearton, 2000) within this area has examined the acquisition and movement of professional football players within European football at specific time periods. However, there has

been no identification of trends in player acquisition profiles over a larger time period specifically focused in English football. Historical data (i.e., both numeric and categorical) was gathered and subsequently coded (see Appendix A) to ensure notions of reliability were adhered to. The data was then utilised to establish a 'selection database' in SPSS. A range of statistical analyses (i.e., descriptive statistics, Kruskal-Wallis, Chi-square) were conducted on the data to ensure objectivity and to identify relationships and trends within and between a range of different variables. Considering the nature of the research design and methodologies employed in the research process, the study was located in a positivistic research paradigm.

1.9.3.2 Study 2 – Qualitative Fieldwork & Focus Groups in Elite Level Football

Within Chapter 3, Study 2 is divided into two parts (i.e., Part I & II) and marked a shift in the researcher's paradigmatic position. In light of the dominant trends that emerged from the analysis of Study 1, Study 2 aimed to generate an understanding of the environment and lived experiences of Football Scholars in order to identify the possible existence of the foreign player theory. This was achieved by adopting a qualitative approach to the research and used a fieldwork element in the methodological design. The fieldwork process not only served to uncover players' lived experiences in a club environment, but also acted to generate a number of *themes* to explore in a series of focus groups with Academy based players. Ethnographic principles acted to guide and develop the research during the fieldwork process. The paradigmatic position was at this stage was constructivist, which assumes that realities are socially based and are local and specific in nature (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The traditional positivistic criteria that were utilised in Study 1 (i.e., validity & reliability) were replaced by notions of *trustworthiness* and *authenticity*

(Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Prior to detailing the content and structure of Study 2 Part I, the assumptions and principles of ethnography are briefly outlined in order to give the reader a clearer understanding of its background and underlying principles.

Atkinson and Hammersley (1998) suggest that numerous fields and disciplines (i.e., social and cultural anthropology, sociology, human geography, educational research, cultural studies) have adopted ethnographic approaches for the purpose of social research. They also note that defining the term ethnography has been surrounded by controversy as it has been referred to as a philosophical paradigm that individuals commit to, whilst also being viewed as a method that one employs. Tedlock (2000) suggests that ethnography involves a continual endeavour to place specific encounters, events and understandings into an extensive, more meaningful context. In a practical sense, Atkinson and Hammersley (1998, p.110) highlight generic features that ethnographic research possesses:

- A strong emphasis on exploring the nature of particular social phenomenon, rather than setting out to test hypotheses about them.
- A tendency to work primarily with "unstructured" data (i.e., data that have not been coded at the point of data collection in terms of a closed set of analytic categories).
- Investigation of a small number of cases, perhaps just one case, in detail.
- Analysis of data that involves explicit interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions, the product of which usually takes the form of verbal descriptions and explanations, with quantification and statistical analysis playing a subordinate role at most.

These features permitted the research question to be explored by using a qualitative methodology that was underpinned by ethnographic principles. In embracing these characteristics the researcher essentially becomes the *chief* research instrument. Participant observation was used as the primary research technique. Extensive fieldnotes were maintained throughout the process and were analysed in order to generate *structural* themes for the focus groups. These were utilised to explore the perceptions, attitudes and beliefs of a range of Football Scholars from four elite level English professional football clubs and forms Study 2 Part II.

1.9.3.3 Study 3 - Case Studies: Individual semi-structured Interviews

In Chapter 4, this study builds upon the findings of Study 2 by exploring the specific career experiences (and trajectories) of two (young) professional football players. A collective case study approach is deployed for the study and a number of individual semi-structured interviews are conducted. In line with notions of constructivism and the transactional and subjectivist epistemological position that this paradigm assumes, a number of thematic issues are explored throughout the interview process. These thematic issues emerged from the earlier findings from Studies 1 and 2, accompanied with issues that emerged during the interviews with the players. In this sense, knowledge and understanding of the research objective was constructed through this interactive process and longitudinal engagement.

Chapter 5 presents an integrated discussion of the research findings and aims to synthesise the implications of the research. The chapter also sketches out the philosophical location of the research(er), outlining the paradigmatic and associated epistemological changes that occurred during the utilisation of various methodologies.

The conclusions of the research are presented within this final chapter, whilst the author also engages in a personal reflection on the research journey. In summarising the thesis a number of recommendations and directions for future research are highlighted.

With the outline of the research studies explained and the philosophical stance of the research(er) made explicit, critical judgements can be made about the research venture, and consequently, the conclusions that have been reached.

Chapter Two

Study 1:

A longitudinal examination of the player acquisition process in elite level English professional football (1990-2000)

2.1 Study One - Introduction

This study aimed to produce a detailed picture of player trends and profiles in English professional football over a ten year time period. With regards to the past trends within English football concerning transfer activity and the acquisition (i.e., the purchase of a player) of talented football players, it has been noted earlier that England has had a long established relationship with Scotland and the other home nations (Moorhouse, 1994). However, this relationship and movement of players within the U.K., specifically players from Scotland, has decreased from 77 in 1970/71 to only 25 in 1994 (Daily Mail, 1994; cited in Maguire & Stead, 1998) with other relationships now appearing to have emerged. For example, Maguire and Pearton (2000) highlighted Premier League clubs' acquisition of foreign players (i.e., non-UK and Republic of Ireland) and noted that in 1992 (6 years prior to the 1998 World Cup in France), there were only 11 foreign players that played their domestic club football in the English Premier League. Yet, after the 1998 World Cup this figure had risen to almost 200 with the players coming from 56 different countries. These figures alone highlight the increasing number of foreign players within the English Premier League and reflect the changing pattern of player acquisition by professional clubs.

There are now more non-national players than national players that play in the English Premier League, and as such, there have been calls to protect home-grown players. In the context of this research, home-grown players refers to those players that are acquired into a professional football clubs Football Academy/Youth Development System at school leaving age. Home-grown players does not refer to any U.K. and Republic of Ireland player that is acquired after this age (i.e. school leaving age). One rationale for calls to protect home-grown talent is to ensure that such players are given

the opportunity to develop and progress into a professional club's first team. As previously noted, a further argument is the concern for the development and long-term stability of the English national team (Atkinson, 2003; Maguire & Pearton, 2000). It is envisaged that if home-grown talent is denied opportunities at a high competitive level (e.g. English Premier League) then this will impact on development and subsequent progression of U.K. based players.

The past research that has been conducted within the area of football labour migration within the U.K. (see Moorhouse, 1994; Maguire & Stead, 1998; Maguire & Pearton 2000) offers an insightful account concerning the patterns of professional football players. In addition, Magee and Sugden's (2002) research specifically explored the motives of foreign players that signed for English professional football clubs. However, specific trends and profiles of foreign players acquired into English professional football from a longitudinal perspective have not yet been fully explored.

The aim of Study 1 is to examine the player acquisition process in English professional football over a ten-year time period (1990/91 – 1999/00) to uncover specific trends and player profiles.

In order to achieve this aim the following objectives will be addressed:

1. To investigate the trends in origins, ages and primary playing positions of all players (i.e., U.K. and Rep Ireland & Non-U.K. and Rep Ireland players) that were acquired into elite level English football during the period 1990-2000.

2. To investigate the trends in home-grown players in elite level English football during the period 1990-2000.

2.2 Methodological Construction of Study 1

This section aims to demonstrate the methodological construction of Study 1. In order to accurately explore the specific objectives of this study there were a number of data collection factors that required consideration. These are outlined in greater detail between 2.2.1 and 2.2.3.6.

2.2.1 Data Collection

Due to the large amount of data that was collected, a selection database (S.D.) was created in this study. This facilitated the management and analysis of the player acquisition variables. The selection database was designed using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS V9&10). This package was employed to design and manage the database due to the ease of coding, defining and analysing the large volume of categorical data. One of the advantages that this package offered was its ability to manage and organise the data. In this sense, SPSS enabled certain variables to be excluded from the analysis if they did not meet specified conditions. For example, one could quite easily select players that were acquired in the 1999/00 season alone for analysis and exclude all players acquired in subsequent seasons (i.e., 1991/92-1998/99). The numeric coding of categorical variables simplified this process.

2.2.2 Data Source

The primary data sources that were used to gather and record the variables were official player directories (i.e., Rothmans Football Yearbooks, 1990/91 to 2000/01; The Official Professional Footballers Association Factfile, 1999/00 to 2000/01). These reference books provided a detailed and comprehensive overview of player

profile characteristics and have been utilised by other researchers (Maguire & Stead, 1998; Richardson & Littlewood, 1999) within the field of association football research.

2.2.3 Selection Database Variables

In order to understand what specific player variables were needed to meet the objectives and to ensure the validity of the research, a pilot study was first employed. This focused on two professional football clubs (i.e., Manchester United & Liverpool). Both had been in the top league of English football over the ten-year time period. Upon entering the player characteristics for both clubs it became evident that the results of any future analysis would be somewhat restricted, due to the lack of differentiation between the type of players and their respective nationalities. It was therefore decided to include player nationality as a differentiation variable and also to ascribe players' nationalities into the regional affiliations of Federation Internationale de Football Association (F.I.F.A.) (see Table 2.2).

Due to the large number of categorical variables a large proportion of the data had to be coded (i.e., to numeric values that reflected the categorical variables) for the purposes of analysis. In total, there were 24 player profile variables recorded, of which 24 variables were required for players that were sold and 19 variables for players that were acquired (see Appendix A). The total number of player entries for both the acquired and sold players amounted to 4822 entries. As such, the creation and subsequent data inputting of the player variables was an extremely time consuming process. The prominent variables that were employed to construct the selection database and analysis are outlined below.

2.2.3.1 Type of Player

An initial decision was made to use four categories of players to distinguish between the type of players, which are represented below:

Table 2.1. Type of Player and Selection Database Coding

S.D. Code	*Type of Player*
1	Home-grown
2	U.K. (England, Scotland, Wales & N. Ireland) & Republic of Ireland
3	European
4	Non-European

However, in order to gain a clearer picture of the inward migration patterns of foreign players (i.e., non-UK & Republic of Ireland) acquired into English football at a deeper level, it was necessary to differentiate between their respective *continents* and *countries*. To achieve this, each nationality of player was categorised into one of the six regional confederations as advocated by world football's governing body, F.I.F.A. These confederations are depicted in Table 2.2, along with the S.D. coding.

Table 2.2 Regional confederations of F.I.F.A.

Regional Confederations	*Abbreviation*	*S.D. Coding*
Union of European Football Association	UEFA	1
Confederation of North, Central American & Caribbean Association Football	CONCACAF	5
Confederation of South American Football	CONMEBOL	6
Confederation of African Football	CAF	7
Asian Football Confederation	AFC	8
Oceania Football Confederation	OFC	9

Maguire and Pearton (2000) suggested that the European Federation (i.e., U.E.F.A.) is soccer's core economy. They found that clubs within Europe employed 62% of the

players at the World Cup in France 1998. In addition, given that U.E.F.A. is regarded as being the most powerful of the six F.I.F.A. confederations (Maguire & Pearton, 2000), a decision was made to create sub-groups within this confederation (see Table 6.1, Appendix A). The countries that fall into the five remaining regional confederations of F.I.F.A. are also displayed. [6]

2.2.3.2 Player Age

A players age when acquired was a further variable that was required to explore the profiles of players over the time period. It was also necessary to differentiate between the players' ages from different regions, and as such, acquisition age was a vital component in the database. This data was ascertained directly from the official player directories. Home-grown players are signed on a full-time basis by professional football clubs after completing secondary education at age 16 years. Given that this would be a consistent feature for all home-grown players that were recorded in the database a decision was made by the researcher to exclude this type of player from the overall analysis on player age when acquired. This was because home-grown player acquisition age was not a distinct objective of the study and its inclusion within the analysis would have distorted the results.

2.2.3.3 Primary Playing Position (P.P.P.)

This variable was again obtained from the official player directories and assigned to players on their acquisition to a professional football club. Table 2.3 depicts the selection database coding and the respective primary playing positions. It is accepted that due to tactical formations and strategies certain players may occupy/move

[6]To aid in this classification process Figure 6.1 was utilised for guidance (see Appendix A).

between these categories, yet initial coding from the primary source (i.e., official player directories) ensured internal consistency.

Table 2.3. S.D. codes for Primary Playing Position

Code	*Position*
1	Goalkeeper
2	Defender
3	Midfielder
4	Attacker/Centre Forward

2.2.3.4 Time Period

The differences across time also needed to be explored to achieve the objectives of this study. In this sense, the playing seasons that players were acquired into English football were defined and ranged from 1990/91 to 1999/00 (see Appendix A, Table 6.2).

2.2.3.5 Professional Football Clubs

Over the ten-year time period a number of professional football clubs have been present in the former Division 1 (1990/91-1991/92) and the Football Association Premier League (1992/93-present). Similarly, these are tabulated in Table 6.3 in Appendix A.

2.2.3.6 Selection

A further variable that was codified within the selection database was associated with selection. In this sense, the dichotomous variable was coded in the following way:

Table 2.4 S.D. Coding & Selection

Code	*Selection*
1	Acquired - any player signed by a club within the study
0	Transferred - any player sold or released by a club within the study.

2.3 Statistics

Statistical analysis was carried out using SPSS for windows Version 10. The differences in the acquired players' ages was analysed using the Kruskal-Wallis test, with statistical significance set at $p<0.05$. With regards to analysing the association between acquired players and their primary playing positions the Chi-Squared test was used with a statistical significance set at $p<0.05$. The remaining analysis of the data was employed by utilising the 'descriptive statistics' function in SPSS. This facilitated the production of frequency data.

2.4 Results

This section deals with the analysis of the research objectives for the present study. The interpretation of the results will be maintained within the context of the football environment, whereby it is aimed to identify underlying exploratory factors that are pertinent to the findings. These findings are then used to generate specific research questions for the next phase of the research.

2.4.1 Player Acquisition Trends

The first exploratory research objective was focused on examining where the players that were acquired into English football originated. For the purposes of this objective home-grown players were excluded from the analysis. This decision was taken because the impact of inward player migration on home-grown talent was a central component of the study, and the inclusion of this category of player would have distorted the data. The initial exploration of the selection database (S.D.) indicated that there were 1344 players acquired by the teams within the division over the ten-year time period. From the 1344 players acquired, Table 2.5 illustrates the F.I.F.A. confederations and their respective acquisition frequencies and percentages.

Table 2.5 Regional Affiliates of F.I.F.A.

Regional Affiliates of FIFA

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	UEFA	1239	91.8	92.2	92.2
	CONCACAF	22	1.6	1.6	93.8
	CONMEBOL	26	1.9	1.9	95.8
	CAF	32	2.4	2.4	98.1
	OFC	25	1.9	1.9	100.0
	Total	1344	99.6	100.0	
Missing	System	6	.4		
Total		1350	100.0		

It is clear from Table 2.5 that there has been considerable *'intra-confederational'* migration within English football over the last ten years. More specifically, this has taken place within the European (i.e., U.E.F.A.) confederation (92.2% of all migratory signings). To gain a clearer understanding of this intra-European migration it was necessary to examine the sub-groups of U.E.F.A. By including time as a factor, it was deemed that a definitive picture of inward player migration would emerge.

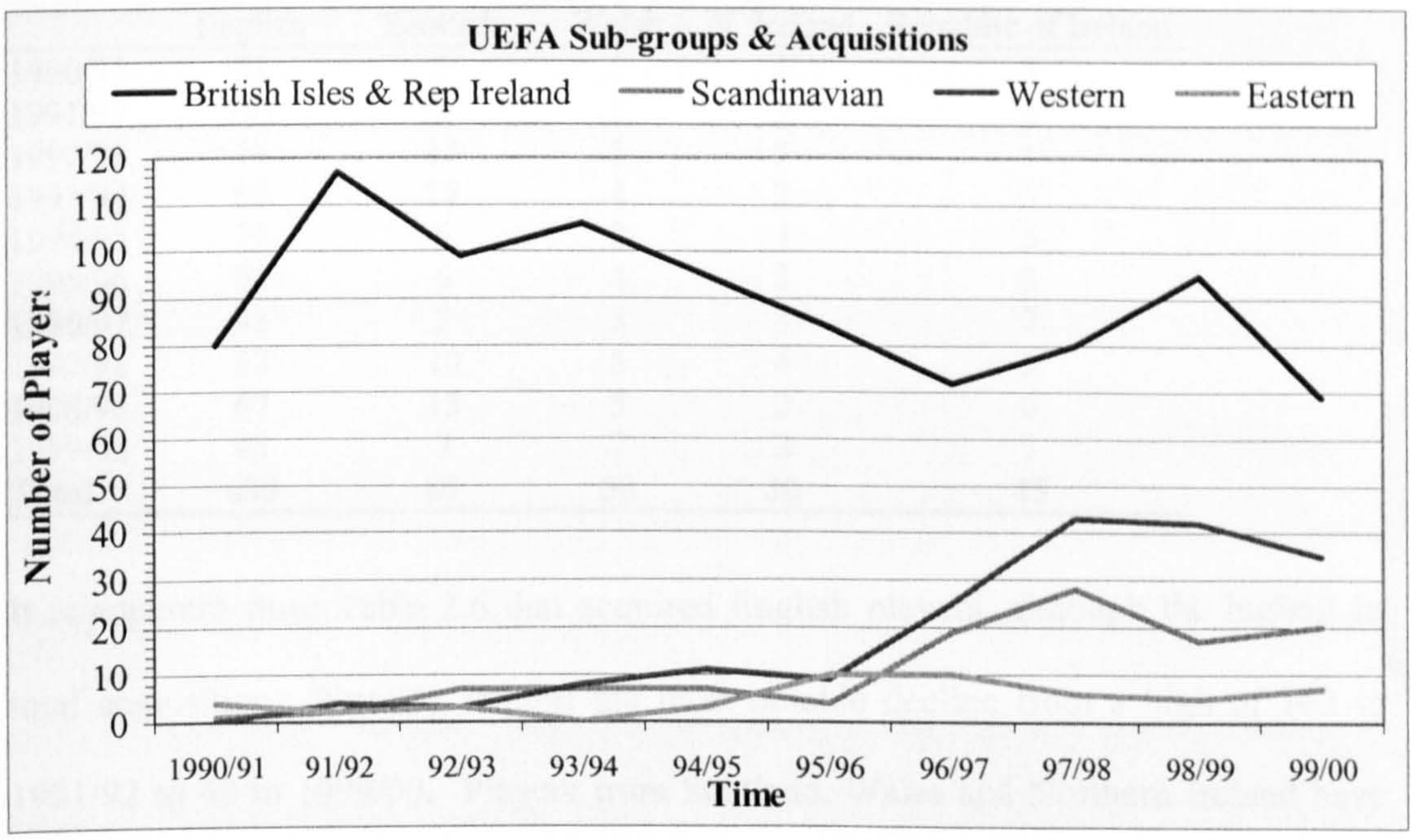

Figure 2.1 Players acquired from within the UEFA confederation (1990/91-99/00)

The trends in Figure 2.1 indicate that the largest proportion of the intra-European migration over the ten-year time period was by players from the U.K. and Republic of Ireland (N=897). However, this group witnessed a decline in acquisitions over three seasons from 1993/94 (N=106) to 1996/97 (N=72), followed by a further decline from 1998/99 to 1999/00 (N=69). In comparison, and possibly as a consequence of the former groups decline, there appears to be an increase in the acquisition of Scandinavian players (1995/96=4 to 1999/00=20) and Western European players (1995/96=9 to 1999/00=35). Eastern European players appear to fluctuate over the

time period (1995/96=10 to 1999/00=7). The total acquisition frequencies for the former groups are 112, 180 and 50 respectively. To generate a deeper level of understanding concerning the observed decrease in acquisitions of players from the U.K. and Republic Ireland, it was also necessary to examine the *relative trends* for each of the countries (see Table 2.6).[7]

Table 2.6 Acquired players from within the U.K. & Republic Ireland (1990/91-1999/00)

	English	Scottish	Welsh	N. Ireland	Republic of Ireland
1990/91	61	5	5	1	8
1991/92	102	5	5	3	2
1992/93	74	14	5	5	1
1993/94	85	12	4	2	3
1994/95	79	6	2	3	5
1995/96	68	6	4	3	3
1996/97	48	7	5	5	7
1997/98	53	10	8	4	5
1998/99	67	15	5	2	6
1999/00	48	7	7	2	5
Total	**685**	**87**	**50**	**30**	**45**

It is apparent from Table 2.6 that acquired English players, although the highest in total acquisitions (N=685), exhibit the most notable decline from a high of 102 in 1991/92 to 48 in 1999/00. Players from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have all increased slightly over the time period, although somewhat marginal, whilst players from the Republic of Ireland have decreased from 8 in 1990/91 to 5 in 1999/00. An examination of the acquisition of players from the remaining F.I.F.A. confederations was also undertaken and is illustrated in Table 2.7 below.

[7] The data for acquired English players does not include home-grown player data.

Table 2.7 Players acquired from the remaining F.I.F.A. confederations (1990/91-1999/00)

Season	CONMEBOL	CONCACAF	CAF	AFC	OFC	**Total**
1990/91	1	0	0	0	0	**1**
1991/92	0	1	1	0	3	**5**
1992/93	0	1	0	0	3	**4**
1993/94	0	1	0	0	0	**1**
1994/95	2	2	6	0	1	**11**
1995/96	4	2	3	0	5	**14**
1996/97	2	4	1	0	3	**10**
1997/98	2	4	7	0	2	**15**
1998/99	8	3	9	0	2	**22**
1999/00	7	4	5	0	6	**22**
Total	**26**	**22**	**32**	**0**	**25**	**105**

When compared to Figure 2.1, the number of acquisitions from non-European countries and their respective confederations are somewhat smaller in frequency over the ten-year time period. Nevertheless, the pattern of inward migration over the ten seasons appears to have increased for each group, most notably after the 1995/96 season. This is highlighted by the acquisition frequencies of COMEBOL (1990/91=1 to 1999/00=7), CONCACAF (1990/91=0 to 1999/00=4), CAF (1990/91=0 to 1999/00=5) and OFC (1990/91=0 to 1999/00=6). In terms of inward player migration from the non-European confederations the data indicates that the largest exporter of players to the English Premier League over the ten seasons, was the African confederation (N=32). In addition, the data signifies that there were no players acquired from the Asian Confederation throughout the whole time period of the study. This observation would clearly warrant further exploration but is beyond the scope of the present research.

The analysis revealed that significant inward player migration has taken place within English football over a ten-year time period, and specifically, that this is associated with players from countries within the U.E.F.A. confederation of F.I.F.A. It must be noted that it lies beyond the present enquiry to specify the exact reasons for this

inward player migration due to the methodological construction of the study. However, the following discussion attempts to address the possible underlying factors.

2.4.1.1 Summary of Player Acquisition Trends

It was noted in Table 2.6 that the number of acquired English players had decreased over time and that subsequently players from within the sub-groups of Scandinavia, Western and Eastern U.E.F.A. had increased. It is reasonable to assume that the Bosman ruling played a part in perpetrating these inward migration trends. This is because players whom originate from within E.U. and E.E.A. countries are eligible to seek employment within England, without having to meet certain criteria surrounding their eligibility. In contrast, players from outside the E.U. and E.E.A. do have to meet employment criteria (see section 1.7.7). Still, given this employment criterion, Table 2.6 indicates that all of the non-European confederations (i.e., CONCACAF, CAF, OFC & CONMEBOL), apart from the AFC, have witnessed an increase in the number of players acquired over the ten seasons. More specifically, the results indicate that Premier League clubs demonstrated a propensity to acquire players from the African confederation.

The identification of factors that may have contributed to this inward migration have been outlined by Maguire and Pearton (2000). They suggested that 'push' and 'pull' factors that exist, which are important when trying to interpret the findings. For example, they suggested that migration is clearly influenced by economic rewards that are available to athletes (i.e., players). Given the increased financial wealth of many

Premier League clubs this may enhance their capability in attracting and signing elite soccer players.

A further 'pull' factor may be the perception that foreign players have of the English Premier League. Maguire and Stead (1998) stated that the English Premier League is now perceived to be among one of the strongest leagues, both *financially* and *competitively* in Europe. In this sense, they suggested that this has led to the league being viewed as an attractive destination for the internationally mobile player, which touches on the typology highlighted by Magee and Sugden (2002). In addition, Chaudhary (2000) identified various factors that he believes contribute to the migration of Scandinavian players to English football. As noted earlier, he suggested that the conditions such players were exposed to in their homeland contribute to their migration. In this respect he alluded to the training and playing facilities in Iceland and suggested that English players do not experience such conditions. Revenue generation was also identified as a further factor that inhibits clubs in Iceland. The arduous weather conditions that players are exposed to in both training and competition may also be a further factor that makes other European destinations an attractive option (Chaudhary, 2000).

An issue that must be mentioned is the cost-effectiveness of Scandinavian players in what is now perceived to be an increasingly inflated European transfer market (Chaudhary, 2000). The acquisition frequency of the Scandinavian players (e.g., Norway 47%, N=53, Sweden 21%, N=24, Denmark 21%, N=23, Iceland 6%, N=7 and Finland 5%, N=5) indicate the readiness of Premier League clubs to acquire these players. Such factors would therefore reinforce the need to examine the home-grown

players perceptions to the acquisition of foreign players. This is an area that has been identified as vital when researching the effects of sports migration (Maguire & Stead, 1996; Maguire & Stead, 1998; Maguire & Pearton, 2000).

2.4.2 Age Trends in Acquired Players

This research objective was concerned with exploring the age of players when they were acquired into English football. To test for statistical significance the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test was utilised with a significance level set at $p<0.05$. The Kruskal-Wallis statistic tests for differences between groups, and as such, the mean rank of ages for the sub-groups were examined. The analysis indicated that significant differences existed between the ages that players were acquired and their respective regions (χ^2 (7) =26.6; $p<0.01$). However, the Kruskal-Wallis test does not indicate where the differences lie between the mean rank of ages. In this sense, a boxplot was produced to visually illustrate the findings (see Figure 2.2).

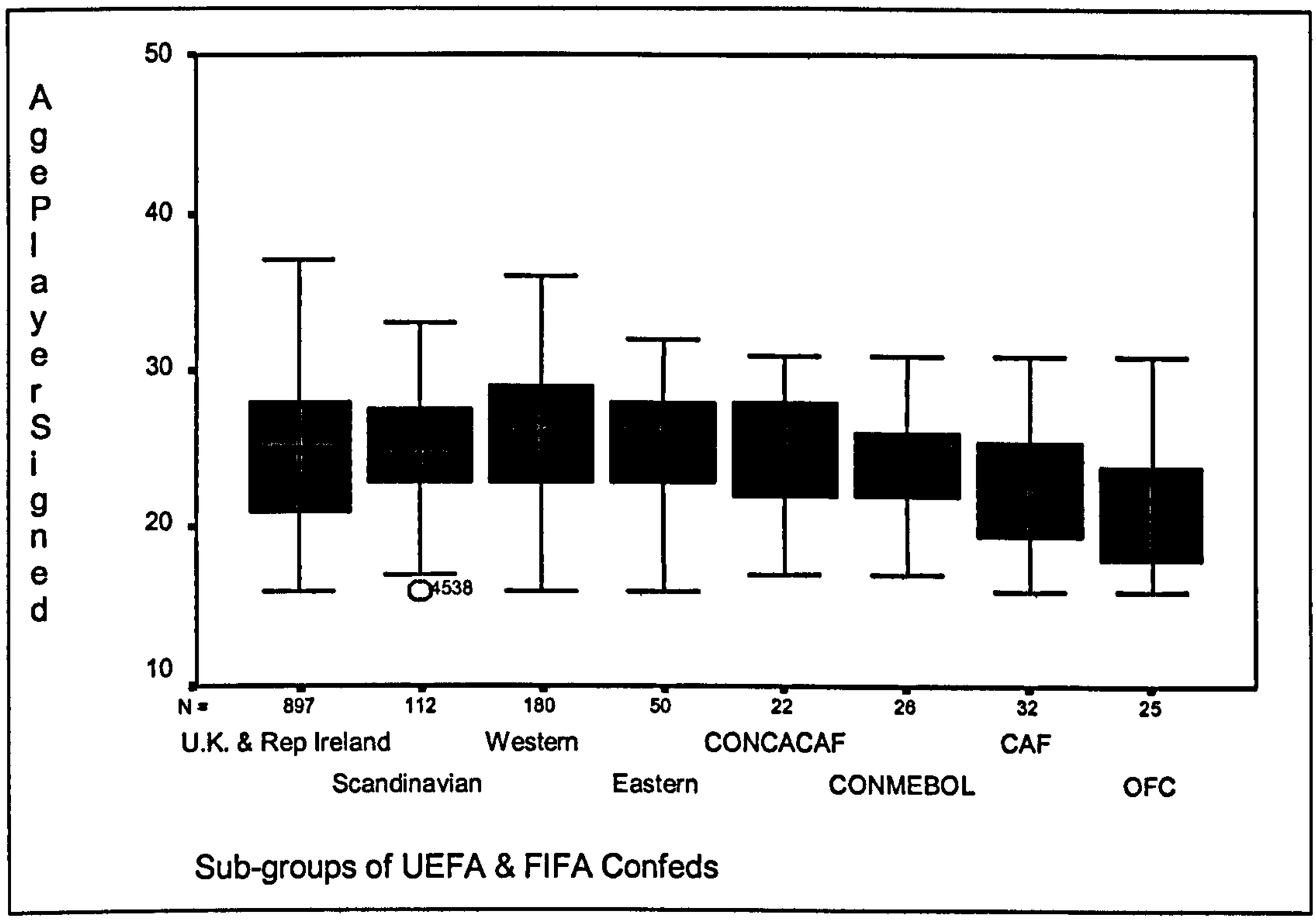

Figure 2.2 Mean ranks of acquired players' ages for UEFA sub-groups and remaining FIFA confederations.

Figure 2.2 indicates that the African Confederation (CAF) and Oceania Confederation (OFC) are the groups that have the youngest mean rank with regards to player acquisition with 22.81 and 21.68 years respectively. Players from the Eastern (age-25.66) and Western (age-25.55) sub-group of U.E.F.A., along with players from CONCACAF (age-25.05) appear to be the oldest when acquired. The data for the U.K. and Republic of Ireland indicate that the mean age of players when they were acquired was 24.92. Moreover, these players represent the largest variance in age acquired, but this finding may be attributed to the large sample size within this group (N=897).

2.4.2.1 Summary of Age Trends in Acquired Players

When considering the age trends in acquired players the statistical analysis indicates that there are significant differences between the groups, which are visually illustrated

in Figure 2.2. One of the main issues to consider from these results is that the mean acquisition age for all groups does not deviate higher than 26 years. In fact, the mean acquisition age of players from the Scandinavian (age-24.79), CONMEBOL (age-24.54), CAF (22.81) and OFC (21.68) are in fact lower than those players from the U.K. and Republic of Ireland group (age-24.92). These acquisition ages, specifically for foreign players, are lower than those observed by Maguire and Stead (1996) in their examination of overseas players in English county cricket (28 years). The length of a playing career in cricket in comparison to football may be a factor to note from these observations. The result obtained for this objective provides evidence that refutes the popular media suggestion that foreign players only come to the English Premier League when they are reaching the end of their playing careers (Speck & Edwards, 1999).

These findings suggest that there are developmental issues that require consideration. For example, a foreign player that is acquired when relatively young, might require time to develop and fine-tune their skills whilst in the environment of a professional club. One consequence of this could be the restriction of opportunities for home-grown players. If foreign players are acquired at a young age, this may increase the possibility that those players developing within the context of English football and ultimately having a longer career in England.

2.4.3 Positional trends in Acquired Players

The purpose of this objective was to ascertain if there was a preference, by clubs, for a certain type of player (i.e., nationality & playing position). The players were again

examined with regards to their respective sub-groups and a cross tabulation was employed to analyse the data (see Appendix A for output).

The cross tabulation indicated a significant association (χ^2, (21)=70.5; $p<0.01$) between the frequencies of observations for the players (i.e., sub-groups) and their primary playing positions when acquired. Specifically, the results indicated that midfield players from the U.K. and Republic of Ireland accounted for 21.4% (N=287) of the total players acquired, followed by defenders (20.6%, N=277) and forwards (19.1%, N=257). However, to examine this variable further an exploration of each sub-group was conducted, which is illustrated in Table 2.8[8]. When examining Table 2.8, a limitation is concerned with the tactical formations that are employed within football (i.e., 4-4-2, 3-5-2, 4-3-3 etc). In this sense, it is necessary to note that both defensive and midfield positions can occupy more players than the goalkeeping and attacking positions within a team. Nevertheless, the data still provides a clear picture of positional associations within English football.

Table 2.8 Primary playing positions of players from the sub-groups of UEFA & FIFA confederations.

	Primary Playing Position & Percentage				
Region	*Goalkeeper*	*Defender*	*Midfielder*	*Forward*	*Total*
U.K. & Republic of Ireland	Count = 76 8.5%	277 30.9%	**287** **32%**	257 28.6%	897 100%
Scandinavian	12 10.7%	**37** **33%**	34 30.4%	29 25.9%	112 100%
Western	13 7.2%	52 28.9%	**66** **36.7%**	49 27.2%	180 100%
Eastern	4 8%	14 28%	**20** **40%**	12 24%	50 100%
CONCACAF	8 36.4%	0 0%	5 22.7%	**9** **40.9%**	22 100%
CONMEBOL	0 0%	**11** **42.3%**	10 38.5%	5 19.2%	26 100%
CAF	2 6.3%	7 21.8%	9 28.1%	**14** **43.8%**	32 100%
OFC	**10** **40%**	4 16%	9 36%	2 8%	25 100%
Total	125 100%	402 100%	440 100%	377 100%	1344 100%

[8] Within Table 2.8 the %'s represent playing positions within regional sub-groups, not overall *cumulative playing position %'s.*

Table 2.8 indicates that the highest observed counts and percentages of players from the Scandinavian region were defenders (33%, N=37), whereas midfield players were prominent from both the Western and Eastern European regions with 36.7% (N=66) and 40% (N=20) respectively. However, the primary playing position of players from outside the U.E.F.A. confederation appears to differ. In this sense, there appears to be a preference for attacking players from both CONCACAF and CAF (N=9, 40.9% & N=14, 43.8%), whereas defending players accounted for the highest percentage from CONMEBOL (N=11, 42.3%). Finally, players from OFC were associated with goalkeeping positions (N=10, 40%).

2.4.3.1 Summary of Positional Trends in Acquired Players

There was a propensity for Premier League clubs to acquire higher numbers of both Scandinavian defenders and midfield players. In this regard, Schram (cited in Chaudhary, 2000) suggested that Icelandic players possess the attributes to easily adapt to the physical style of the English game. Similarly, attacking players were acquired from both the CONCACAF and CAF regions. Factors to consider here may be concerned with perceptions about the abilities and attributes of such players. To explore these observations further an in-depth examination of coaches and managers perceptions on the attributes of foreign players is warranted. Research in other sporting domains has addressed this issue. For example, Maguire and Stead (1996) commented that the importers of overseas cricket players wanted an instant guaranteed return on their investment. They suggested that this accounted for the high number of West Indian fast bowlers (associated with 'match winners') acquired in English county cricket. Whilst these factors are noted to be an emerging issue, the present thesis develops by focusing on player perceptions and issues of development.

2.4.4 Trends in Acquired Home-grown Players

Within this section, the analysis of home-grown players occurs when those players are offered a professional contract by their respective football clubs. The data suggest that there was an increase in home-grown player acquisition from 100 in the 1990/91 season to 128 in the 1999/00 season, with the total number of acquisitions amounting to 1236. Given that these figures include home-grown players from a range of countries, it is necessary to differentiate between their specific nationalities to allow the relative trends to emerge (see Table 2.9). It is apparent from Table 2.9 that the acquisition of English home-grown players by professional football clubs, attained, and maintained, the highest frequency throughout each season (1990/91, N=79 to 1999/00, N=85). In addition, Table 2.9 depicts that the acquisition of Scottish, Welsh, Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland home-grown players did not decline over the ten seasons, although their acquisition frequency is somewhat smaller than that of English home-grown players. A factor that emerged from the data is associated with the increased acquisition frequency of non-U.K. and Republic of Ireland home-grown players. Although only relatively small in frequency, 7 players were acquired from 5 European countries (excluding UK & Rep of Ireland) and 14 players from 7 non-European countries. The acquisition of these players can also be seen to increase over the time period. Given the emergent foreign player acquisition trends that were represented in Figure 2.1 and Table 2.7, this is an issue that requires monitoring. In the context of youth development in professional football, it would appear important that the player acquisition trends identified within this study do not become an endemic feature of Academy recruitment strategies.

Table 2.9. Home-grown Player nationality and their acquisition over time (1990/91 to 1999/00)

Nationality * Time Period Crosstabulation

Count

		Time Period										Total
		1990/91	1991/92	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	
Nationality	English	79	67	98	76	117	117	81	121	134	85	975
	Scottish	4	5	4	6	5	2	6	12	10	11	65
	Welsh	8	3	1	1		5	6	8	3	8	43
	Northern Ireland	1	2	6	3	4	2	1	4	2	3	28
	Rep Ireland	8	3	6	11	10	8	11	14	18	15	104
	Swedish								1			1
	Australian						1			2		3
	American				1						1	2
	Nigerian					1				2		3
	New Zealand			1	1	1						3
	French										2	2
	Zimbabwean		1									1
	German					1					1	2
	Italian										1	1
	Trinidad & Tobago									1		1
	Kosovan FYR										1	1
	Sierra Leone							1				1
Total		100	81	116	99	139	135	106	160	172	128	1236

2.4.4.1 Appearance Trends in Acquired Home-grown Players

A further component that was also explored within this study was the number of first team appearances that the English home-grown players made for their respective clubs when initially acquired (i.e., in 1st year) as a professional. The analysis revealed that throughout each season there was a high percentage of English home-grown players that did not make a single first team appearance. This is illustrated in Table 2.10. It is clear that the number of English home-grown players that did not make a first team appearance increased over the ten seasons, from 68 (86% of total players acquired) in 1990/91 to 81 (95%) in 1999/00. The total number of players that did make a first team appearance decreased from 11 (14% of total players acquired) in 1990/91 to only 4 (5%) in the 1999/00 season. The total number of appearances that this group of players made, also decreased from a total of 27 to only 5 in the same time period.

Table 2.10. Number of English Home-grown players that made 1st Team appearances (1990/91-1999/00)

Season	*Number of players & % of total that made zero 1st Team Appearances*		*Number of players & % of total that made a 1st Team Appearance (Total Appearances)*			*Total Players*
1990/91	68	86%	11	14%	(27)	**79**
'91/92	57	85%	10	15%	(69)	**67**
'92/93	85	87%	13	13%	(80)	**98**
'93/94	70	92%	6	8%	(18)	**76**
'94/95	109	93%	8	7%	(23)	**117**
'95/96	106	91%	11	9%	(51)	**117**
'96/97	74	91%	7	9%	(17)	**81**
'97/98	115	95%	6	5%	(9)	**121**
'98/99	128	96%	6	4%	(16)	**134**
'99/00	81	95%	4	5%	(5)	**85**
Total	**893**	**92%**	**82**	**8%**	**(315)**	**975**

The issues to consider from this analysis are that although the acquisition frequency of English home-grown players increased in top level professional football clubs (N=79 in '90/91 to 85 in '99/00), this trend was not replicated in the number of first team appearances that these players made for their respective clubs on *initial*

acquisition. These observations might potentially suggest that the 1st team playing opportunities for English home-grown players were being restricted. Yet, a limitation of the analysis is that it does not take into account the number of 1st team appearances that the English home-grown players went on to make for their respective clubs throughout the remainder of the time period. This is because the analysis was concentrated on the *initial* number of appearances those home-grown players made when they were acquired as a professional for their respective clubs. However, the data does suggest that the initial progression (i.e., 1st team appearances) that these players made decreased over time. The trends that have been observed, which indicated an increase in foreign player acquisition, might be a causal factor to the observations noted in Table 2.10. An in-depth comparative tracking and monitoring process would undoubtedly yield a clearer picture.

2.5 Overview - Study 1

This study has found that within the player acquisition process in top level English professional football, the acquisition of foreign players has increased throughout the ten seasons examined (i.e., 1990/91 to 1999/00). Moreover, there are specific trends associated with their acquisition. For example, the largest proportion of foreign players acquired was from within the European confederation of F.I.F.A., with the prominent sub-regions being Western Europe and Scandinavia. An increase in the acquisition of non-European players was also observed within the study. English Premier League clubs demonstrated an increased propensity to acquire African players. Furthermore, it was observed that the acquisition of English players (excluding home-grown players) decreased over time. The foreign player acquisition trends concur with Maguire and Bale (1994), who suggested that the player migration

process in soccer is 'speeding up'. Age trends in acquired players indicated that players from the Oceania Confederation were the youngest with regards to foreign player acquisition, with a mean age of 21.6.

A factor that has been highlighted by many commentators (Genest, 1994; Lanfranchi, 1994; Moorhouse, 1994; Maguire & Stead, 1996, 1998; Pearey & Elliot, 1999; Maguire & Pearton, 2000) and one that has received very little research in football, is the effect that inward player migration has upon a country's home-grown talent. This study confirms that in spite of the increase in foreign player acquisition, home-grown player acquisition has increased throughout the ten seasons, with English born players attaining and maintaining the highest acquisition frequency. However, these players did not replicate this increased acquisition trend with regards to making 1st team appearances. It was observed that the percentage of English home-grown players that did not make a single first team appearance increased over time. Such statistics may be as a consequence of the increase in the acquisition of foreign players. The impact of foreign players on home-grown talent is not an uncommon phenomenon as Moorhouse (1994) claimed that the chances for young Scottish talent were being drastically curtailed and that this would impact the national team.

This view is aligned with the underdevelopment of home-grown talent and is one that has gained momentum within domestic English football (see Atkinson, 2003). With the sums of money that are now guaranteed for Premier League clubs for survival in the league, accompanied with the implications of the Bosman ruling, the barriers that once thwarted domestic English clubs with regards to enticing foreign players to their shores now appear to have diminished. This is illustrated in the trends that have been

represented in the present study. One possible impact that could follow from these trends is the potential barriers to progression that are now perceived to be synonymous with the in-migration of foreign players to English football (see Heighway, cited in Calvin, 2001; Atkinson, 2003). The home-grown player and foreign player acquisition trends that have emerged from the analysis suggest a need for further examination of this issue.

Chapter Three

Study 2:

An exploration of the lived experiences and perceptions of Football Scholars in elite level English professional football.

3.1 Introduction - Study Two

The rationale for this second study is now presented and is underpinned by a discussion on the methodological approach to the qualitative research. As stated earlier, a variety of commentators suggest that the effect of sport labour migration on a country's home-grown sports talent should form a major area of enquiry (Genest, 1994; Lanfranchi, 1994; Moorhouse, 1994; Maguire & Stead, 1996, 1998; Pearey & Elliot, 1999; Maguire & Pearton, 2000). However, despite these suggestions there is limited academic research in this area. Research that has been conducted has largely been undertaken from a quantitative perspective (see Richardson & Littlewood, 1999; Littlewood et al., 2000).

The findings from Study 1 indicated that elite level English football has been subject to a pronounced 'in-migration' of players from outside the U.K. and Republic of Ireland over a ten-year time period. Specific patterns were also associated with this acquisition process (i.e., player age, position and country of origin). In respect of these dominant migratory trends and the request from commentators to gain a deeper understanding of the effect of sports talent migration, the aim of this study is to explore the experiences and perceptions of young 'home-grown' players in the youth structures of elite level English professional football.

To investigate the research question the study is divided into two parts. The first part examines the lived experiences of a group of Football Scholars in one elite level English professional football club and embraces a fieldwork element within its methodological design. The second builds upon the findings of the fieldwork process via a focus group methodology and examines the perceptions of Football Scholars

from four separate professional football Academies. It was felt that the lived experiences be best sought from a group of Football Scholars (i.e., a player that is acquired by a professional football club at school leaving age of 16 years to embark on the Football Scholarship scheme) as these players would have had direct experience of trying to develop and progress within the context of the English game. Within the qualitative approach the researcher embraced ethnographic principles in order to understand how foreign player acquisition impacted on English based player development and progression within a constructivist framework. The discussion now centres upon the methodological approach adopted for Study 2 part 1.

3.2 Context and Method: Study 2 Part 1

This section aims to discuss the methodological considerations that underpinned the approach to Study 2 part 1 and as noted draws from ethnographic principles. The rationale for embracing such principles is due to the fieldwork element of the present study (Silverman, 1998). In this respect, ethnographic research cannot be detached from fieldwork activity and it is necessary therefore to draw directly from this literature base. The research is broadly located in a constructivist paradigm, which assumes a relativist ontological position, a subjective epistemological stance and a broad hermeneutic philosophy. Manning (1997) suggests that when one undertakes constructivist inquiry it is necessary to outline the criteria that one used to ensure the quality and rigor of the research. As such, notions of *trustworthiness* and *authenticity* criteria are addressed later. Prior to engaging in the qualitative based fieldwork there were a number of important methodological issues that needed to be planned and accounted for, which have been highlighted as core features of sport (and non-sport)

based ethnographic research (Silverman, 1998, 2000; Faulkner & Sparkes, 1999; Parker, 2000; Holt & Sparkes, 2001).

3.2.1 Ethnographic Research

Given the nature of ethnography and its association with the notion of naturalism (Silverman, 2001), researchers are often told to just 'go out and do it' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). In this sense, ethnography's major facets are open-ended observations and detailed description. This is not to say that the research design should be rendered redundant, merely that the strict protocol associated with the positivist paradigm need not be applied in the same sequential regimented form. Indeed, what is unique to ethnographic research, and is an integral part of the current research design, is the reflexive focus that ethnography affords. It is in this way that the researcher can shape the research focus by engaging in elements of reflexivity during the prolonged period of engagement in the field. This process is facilitated through the production and maintenance of a fieldwork diary.

The rationale for this study emerged from the systematic data collection and analysis of data from Study 1. Strauss (1970) recommends that a research strategy should exist before the commencement of fieldwork, but he also suggests that insufficient knowledge of a phenomenon or process is sometimes viewed as a legitimate starting point for research. In this context, whilst literature does exist concerning home-grown player development in professional football, little is known about their lived experiences from a developmental and progression perspective, which provides a further rationale for the nature of the current research (Strauss, 1970).

3.2.2 Data Collection Technique: Participant Observation

Within qualitative fieldwork the researcher assumes the role of participant observer, a central technique that is utilised and relied upon in many ethnographic based studies (Silverman, 2001). This is because participant observation acts as the main source of data collection (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1998). Participant observation is a component of ethnographic fieldwork and is viewed as establishing a place in some natural setting on a relatively long-term basis in order to investigate, experience and represent the social life and social processes that occur in that setting. In essence, the researcher inscribes social discourse and through written accounts brings versions of these worlds to others (Geertz, 1973). As a qualitative research method, participant observation has a historical association with anthropology and sociology (Burgess, 1991; Silverman, 2001) and Becker (1958) summarises the task as:

> *"The participant observer gathers data by participating in the daily life of a group or organisation he studies. He watches the people he is studying to see what situations they ordinarily meet and how they behave in them. He enters into conversation with some or all of the participants in these situations and discovers their interpretations of the events he has observed."*
>
> (p. 652)

Viewed as both a method and a technique within the qualitative domain (Silverman, 2001), participant observation enabled the researcher to capture a deeper understanding of the lives of Football Scholars. Gans (1999; p.540) further pointed out that "...participant observation is still my preferred method. I also consider it the most scientific, because it is the only one that gets close to people. In addition, it allows researchers to observe what people do, while all the other empirical methods are limited to reporting what people say about what they do." A number of sport-based ethnographic studies have also utilised participant observation as the main methodological tool in their enquiries (see Faulkner & Sparkes, 1999; Parker, 2000;

Holt & Sparkes, 2001). This supports the notion that the chief instrument of data collection when discussing participant observation is the researcher himself (Burgess, 1991; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

3.2.3 Role of the Researcher

There are a number of social roles that the researcher can adopt during fieldwork, which have been distinguished between 'complete participant', 'participant observer', 'observer as participant' and 'complete observer' (Junker, 1960). When the researcher engages in the 'complete participant' role the ethnographer's activities are wholly concealed. In this regard, the researcher may join an organisation or group as though they were an ordinary member, but with the purpose of carrying out research. In addition, within the 'complete participant' role the researcher may already be a part of the group or organisation that they decide to study (Holdaway, 1982). In contrast, the 'complete observer' has no contact at all with the subjects that the researcher is studying (Corsaro, 1981). However, the framework that Junker (1960) proposed does not provide opportunities for researchers to engage in 'overt' research roles, rather it appears to restrict the role of the researcher to 'covert' research. The distinction between the two is research that is sanctioned by the group (i.e., overt) and research in which the group knows nothing (i.e., covert) (Dandelion, 1995). With regards to this issue and Junker's (1960) assertions, there are certainly ethical issues to consider before choosing whether to inform (or not) the group of one's specific research aims and objectives. A principal ethical issue that was paramount within this research was associated with the notion of 'honesty'. In this case, the researcher adopted an 'overt' research stance from the onset of the inquiry. This involved communicating the intentions of the research to both to the gatekeeper (i.e., a person that provides access

to the research setting) and the subjects (i.e., the Football Scholars) within the research setting. This decision was thought to ease any ethical issues concerned with data collection.

A further problem of Junker's (1960) theoretical social roles is that it does not take into account whether the researcher has to gain access from a gatekeeper. In this sense, access appears to be a non-factor. However, access within the domain of professional football was certainly a factor to consider and has proved problematic for other researchers engaged in fieldwork in professional football (see Parker, 1998). These factors influenced both researcher role and the nature of the research. Specifically, it was deemed appropriate to adopt a more 'overt' research strategy.

3.2.4 Establishing Trust

The ability to generate and establish trust with the players was deemed a crucial issue during the fieldwork process. Sparkes (1994) noted that trust was a major factor that elicited in-depth accounts, in his case for life history research, which underlines the importance of trust in research that aims to explore the social reality of others. The role that was adopted within the present study was that of 'Researcher into Youth Development', with an 'overt' research stance, as it was thought that this would avoid potential hierarchical constraints (i.e., not being viewed as either a coach or player).

3.2.5 Access to the Settings

The choice of research *setting* was of great importance within the present study as both foreign and home-grown players were required in the locale to explore the research question. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995; p. 37) suggest that, "...the

ethnographer is rarely in a position to specify the precise nature of the setting required." However, in this instance, the researcher was fortunate to be able to specify precisely the cases that were required to explore the phenomenon. Consequently, an informed choice was made to the precise nature of the setting; that being an elite level English professional football club. Access was gained after a protracted period of negotiation and contact with numerous Academy Directors at professional football clubs (see Appendix B for Personal Communications). Upon gaining access, the researcher attended an elite English professional football club for a period of 3 months for between 2 to 3 days/week.

Within the United Kingdom, there were approximately twenty settings that possessed the institutional factors that would allow the research area to be explored. In reality however, it was not possible to simply choose anyone of these settings. Given the high profile nature of elite professional football in the U.K. and the prominent status that professional footballers currently possess, one cannot just simply gain access to a football club for research purposes.

Indeed, professional football clubs have been described as very insular environments whereby their everyday working practices are not open to the public eye (Parker, 1998; Magee, 2002). Indeed, Tomlinson (1983; p.151) described football clubs as:

> *"...jealously guarded worlds. Like governments, clubs are interested in good publicity or no publicity at all. They are therefore, quite suspicious of social researchers and of press and broadcasting journalists, whose interests lie in anything other than the straight report or the novelty item."*

Parker's (1998) football related ethnographic research illustrated the difficulty associated with gaining access to professional football clubs. He remarks that it took

him nearly twelve months before he finally gained access to a club to conduct his research. Once inside, he was required to phone the youth team coach on a weekly basis to ensure his continued access. In contrast, the selection of settings and issues of access for ethnographic research within other domains does not always pose such problems. One of the primary reasons for this is because access does not (generally) have to be *negotiated* and *granted.* Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) highlighted public settings such as streets, shops, public transport vehicles, bars and similar settings to illustrate this point, but problematic methodological issues still arise. For example, the individuals or groups that one may wish to study are indeed available in these places, but they may not always be receptive to researchers. Subsequently, the researcher may have to adopt various approach strategies in order to study the individuals or groups.

3.2.6 Data Recording Methods

Participant observation not only involves the researcher gaining access to settings and embedding themselves in their subject's daily lives, but it also requires the researcher to produce written accounts and descriptions (Tedlock, 2000). It has been suggested that these written accounts bring the world of others to others (Geertz, 1973) and within ethnography, are usually produced in the form of fieldnotes (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, Silverman, 2001).

3.2.6.1 Fieldnotes

It is claimed that the writing of fieldnotes facilitates the production of a coherent ethnographic account and constitute a fundamental activity of participant observation during ethnographic inquiry (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). They are a form of

representation that compress observations (i.e., accounts of people, events, scenes, dialogue, personal experiences and reactions) into written accounts that subsequently reconstitute that world in preserved forms, which can be reviewed, studied, and thought about time and time again. The events that one observes during participant observation are selective in that they never provide a complete record of that social world. Observations are researcher orientated, based on what they perceive to be significant, and it is this that may be thought of as a weakness in this form of inquiry (Atkinson, 1992). Nevertheless, the importance of fieldnotes are highlighted by Emerson et al. (2001; p.352) who comments that:

> *"...writing fieldnotes, rather than writing finished ethnographies, provides the primal, even foundational moments of ethnographic representation and that most ethnographic monographs rely upon, incorporate and may even be built from these initial fieldnotes."*

There are various approaches to the writing of fieldnotes depending on the researchers understandings of their ultimate value and purpose (Emerson et al., 2001). Emerson and colleagues discuss two extremes. Some ethnographers would rather focus on the actual 'doing' of ethnography and suggest that focusing too much attention on the systematic recording of observations and interactions 'clouds' ones ability to reach a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. In contrast, they also comment that fieldnotes are positioned at the very heart of the ethnographic project, which ultimately facilitates the writing process of the ethnographic account. The present research subscribed to the latter assertion as the production and maintenance of fieldnotes were expected to encourage reflexivity. This in turn helped shape any decisions that were made whilst in the field. The fieldnotes are interwoven throughout the representation of the fieldwork to illustrate the players' experiences.

Additional components of fieldnotes are the researcher's personal feelings. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) remarked that feelings such as personal comfort, anxiety, surprise and shock are of analytical importance as they affect the social relationships that one engages in within the field, whilst also shaping the researcher's perceptions towards the important elements within the fieldwork setting. However, feelings of anxiety can pose limitations to data collection, culminating in the researcher adopting a narrow focus to the observations. It would appear imperative that the researcher needs to be aware of their feelings and emotions whilst engaging in work of this nature and capture these within the fieldwork diary and subsequent representational accounts.

3.2.6.2 Organisation of Fieldwork Diary

In the present study it appeared appropriate to arrange the fieldwork diary in a chronological format, rather than by topical entries. With regards to temporal considerations, it has been suggested that the longer the period of time between observation and recording, the more troublesome will be the recall and recording of adequately detailed and concrete descriptions (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). A decision was therefore made to record the entries into the fieldwork diary as soon as was practically possible. This task was often undertaken upon the researcher's return home, away from the research setting, where all notes and reflections were typed up. With regards to the form of fieldwork entries Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) further assert that analytical memos constitute precisely the sort of internal dialogue or thinking aloud that is the essence of reflexive ethnography. In this sense, the researcher engaged in this practice, whilst also being attentive to the descriptive element of writing fieldnotes.

3.2.7 Ethical Considerations

When engaging in qualitative research it is claimed that researchers have an ethical responsibility to the individuals that are being studied (Silverman, 2000). For example, the qualitative researcher conducting fieldwork within a specific social setting will invariably have a degree of intimate engagement with a range of individuals (Mason, 1996). As such, the researcher is required to consider the pertinent ethical issues. In the context of the present inquiry, the Academy Director at the professional club granted consent for the participant observation component of the fieldwork. Upon entering the club environment, the researcher also informed the players that the research was interested in exploring what life was like for a Football Scholar in an Academy system. In framing the context of these discussions, the researcher was distinctly aware of what Silverman (2000) describes as 'contaminating' the research environment by giving subjects too much information about the precise research question to be studied. In that sense, a decision was made to refrain from revealing to the Academy Director and the players my interest in exploring the foreign player issue in relation to home-grown player development and progression. This decision was also underpinned by the comments of Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) in their description of ethnography as a form of naturalistic inquiry. It was felt that the natural 'everyday' behaviours and perceptions of the staff and players might be influenced if I had informed them of my central research question concerning foreign players. As a final point, ethical approval was granted under the auspices of Liverpool John Moores University's ethics committee for the series of qualitative studies within the thesis. .

3.2.8 Analysis of Data

The analysis of the data during the fieldwork phase was not a distinct stage of the research process. It started in the formulation and clarification of research problems and continued through the entire research process. In a formal sense, the analysis took the form of analytical notes within the fieldwork diary, whilst at later stages in the research process, utilised notions of content analysis (Scanlan et al., 1989) to analyse (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Scanlan et al., 1989) the fieldnotes. The analysis was *predominantly* inductive in nature (Krane et al., 1997; Biddle et al., 2001) and facilitated the identification and production of *structural themes* for the focus groups (see Appendix B). As a further analytical point, the observations that were made throughout the fieldwork process where connected to theoretical and conceptual issues that were raised earlier within the thesis. The integration of this material alongside the primary data serves to provide the backdrop to which the fieldwork is framed (Baszanger & Dodier, 1998).

At an informal level, the analysis was embodied in my ideas and feelings throughout the fieldwork process. The data was analysed internally by the researcher and relates to the continual reflection on the fieldnotes throughout the research process. Wolcott (1995) refers to this process as making 'notes on notes'. The fieldwork diary facilitated systematic reflection and theorising on a number of issues (Holt & Sparkes, 2001), ranging from my feelings and behaviours, the behaviour of the players and coaches in the setting and my relationships with them. The fieldwork diary also documented any surprises that emerged from the fieldwork experience. Holloway (1997) suggests that it is crucial for qualitative researchers to engage in 'reflexive'

processes as they are described as the main research tool or instrument and therefore possess the ability to shape the way that the research progresses.

As ethnographic research is a form of naturalistic inquiry and has been described as subjective in nature (Pettigrew, 2000), it was necessary to engage in ethnographic reflexivity, which is regarded as a further form of data analysis or verification procedure (Pettigrew, 2000). In this regard, the researcher engaged in peer triangulation procedures that have been described as common features in sociological based research (Patton, 1990). These procedures allow experienced qualitative researchers to ask challenging questions that related to methodological decisions that were made during the fieldwork. Questions were also asked about the meanings and interpretations that were being formulated as a result of the observations and entries into the fieldwork diary. Data analysis was therefore ongoing as it was reflected upon throughout the study from both an internal and external perspective. Similar analytical procedures exist in sport-based ethnographic research. For example, Faulkner suggests that Sparkes acted as a 'critical friend' or 'a devil's advocate' in their ethnographic research on cohesiveness in college soccer (see Faulkner & Sparkes, 1999).

3.2.9 Biographical Positioning

When engaging in ethnographic research it has been suggested that there is a need for the researcher to explore the relationship between the 'self' and the 'other' (Foley, 2002) and indicate their biographical positioning in relation to the research process. Similarly, Richardson (1994) advises that researchers should engage in a self-reflexive analysis of the social categories that they attribute themselves to as these

mediate what constitutes knowledge in any project. In essence, these processes highlight that qualitative researchers are part of the social world that they study. They influence it and are affected by it. In this sense, it appears timely to offer the reader a glimpse of the author's own biography.

My own personal background was similar in many respects to the players that were studied. I had a significant association with professional football during my early childhood and teenage years after progressing through the pathways of youth football (i.e., schoolboy, county, school of excellence) and into the domain of professional football. This culminated in my acceptance on to a Youth Training Scheme with Leeds United Football Club in 1992 for a period of two years. Following this two-year training period I was 'released' by the club (i.e., not offered a professional playing contract). Thus, I returned to my parents home and soon realised that I had to find another vocation in life. Given the quite evident occupational similarities between the Football Scholars and myself, the one most noticeable difference was age. I was twenty-five when I entered the research setting whilst the Scholars' were aged between sixteen and nineteen. My academic interest in youth development coincided with my undergraduate degree course where I was able to examine a 'topic of my own interest' and hence, this is where my research journey started. Since then I developed a deeper interest in youth development processes and more specifically the occupational experiences of the people that enter the football environment. It is from this position that my research subsequently evolved. The specific interest in foreign player acquisition was a growing and intriguing feature of elite level professional football that I wished to explore, with an emphasis on their effects on home-grown players.

3.2.10 Representation of Data

The representational component of qualitative research is a crucial process in effectively capturing the realities of human existence and interaction of the individuals that are studied. However, the appropriate writing strategies for researchers to employ in communicating their fieldwork experiences to the academic community have received considerable scholarly debate (Okely, 1994; Charmaz & Mitchell, 1997, Sparkes, 2000, 2002). In outlining this point, Sparkes (2000), in drawing from the work of Krizek (1998), alludes to this point:

> "Many of us 'do' ethnography but 'write' in the conservative voice of science... In short, we often render our research reports devoid of human emotion and self-reflection. As ethnographers we experience life but we write science." (p. 93)

Sparkes is referring to the author-evacuated texts that render the researcher's voice silent in the final written production of fieldwork and describes this form of representation as a realist tale. This way of reporting research seeks to separate the fieldworker from the data and offers a more theoretically laden account of the culture studied (Van Maanen, 1988). Such approaches have been highlighted as a criticism of early ethnographic writings (Davis, 2000). In contrast to the realist tale, Sparkes (2002) notes that the confessional tale explicitly locates the author in the text and seeks to reveal what actually happened in the research process. It illuminates the researcher's voice and guides the reader through the narrative by attempting to outline the impact that the research process has had on the fieldworker (Sparkes, 2002). The representation of the fieldwork process in the present study draws specifically from these qualitative writing conventions and adopts an eclectic writing strategy. More specifically, the integration of the my voice in the text as the first person ("I") represents the confessional approach, whilst the writing aligns itself to the realist

viewpoint by detaching from this personal approach and synthesising the emergent issues to wider conceptual, theoretical and methodological based literature. To further supplement these stylistic writing decisions, the integration of my field notes feature at certain junctures in the narrative. These serve to elucidate the events that form the backdrop of the fieldwork experiences.

The representational strategy also carries with it an ethical dimension for the researcher, as they effectively are responsible for interpreting and reconstructing how 'others' interact with their world. These challenges were prominent in the 'disciplined' and 'principled' representational choice made by the researcher.

There are a variety of social actors (i.e., players and staff) that feature prominently within the fieldwork representations. One of the aims of the writing is to promote a sense of authenticity so that the complexities and challenges of the social actors can emerge. Lincoln (1993) suggests that authenticity emerges when the writing conveys the *'feeling tone'* of the life or lives as lived. Sparkes (2000; p33) notes that authenticity is "...best conveyed when the text itself admits and invites the *active reader* into a vicarious experience (however brief) of the life or lives being described." The writing principles advocated by Mitchell and Charmaz (1997) were also embedded within the text and include such elements as (i.e., experiential mood, feeling, experience, situational variety and language) to encourage 'active' readership.

The representations present a series of pertinent issues that were common features of the fieldwork process and surfaced from the analytical processes (Okely, 1994). These provide 'snapshots' of the fieldwork experience that are fashioned from the

extensive fieldwork diary. At times however, there may be overlap in terms of the concepts that are located in the discussion. Okely (1994) describes this overlap as an inherent feature of fieldwork. Finally, a few technical guidelines may be helpful. Pseudonyms are used throughout the text and fieldwork excerpts to ensure confidentiality of the club, its players and its staff.

3.3 Brent Town Football Club: In search of the foreign player phenomenon and early fieldwork experiences

I started the fieldwork process with what Wolcott (1990) refers to as a general research question. Broadly speaking, this was to explore the effect of foreign player acquisition on the development and progression of home-grown players within an elite level English professional football club. Following the negotiated access to the 'private setting' (Silverman, 2001) of Brent Town Football Club, I started my 3 months of fieldwork during the 1999/2000 playing season. In line with the recommendations of the Charter for Quality (1997) the club possessed a Football Academy, which consisted of 22 Football Scholars (9 players in their first year, 8 in their second year & 5 in their third year). The club also employed a number of foreign professional players with nationalities ranging from France, Spain, Italy, Jamaica, Denmark and Iceland. Their presence within the club illustrated, in a 'physical' sense, the findings of Study 1 and ultimately provided the conditions that were required for the empirical inquiry (Silverman, 2001).

The Academy Director at Brent Town was the only person that responded to the letter that I sent out to a number of professional football clubs and the Professional Footballers Association. Following a meeting with him to discuss the aims and procedures of the research, he granted access to the Academy and its players. As noted, numerous requests to other professional football clubs had failed to materialise, which echoes both Tomlinson's (1983) and Parker's (1998) views concerning the problems associated with access to professional football clubs for the purposes of academic research.

With access granted, I was eager to start the research process. Even though I had engaged in reading about the role of participant observation (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1998; Gans, 1999) and the complexities and challenges of qualitative field research (Parker, 1996b; Silverman, 2001), I was nevertheless still anxious about the impending research. An extract from my first day's field notes illustrates these early concerns.

Monday 12th November 2001: First Day at the Club
I was driving along the motorway towards the club's training ground in readiness for my *'first day in the field'*. The nearer I got to the training ground the more apprehensive I became. As a neophyte researcher, I expected to feel anxious about the research questions and my methods of data collection. These weren't the only issues troubling me. I was also concerned about how the players would react to a complete stranger joining their group, a 25 year-old stranger too! The age factor played on my mind. The Football Scholars that I was about to immerse myself with for the next two months were aged between 16 to 19 years.

Other questions raced through my mind. How would the staff and players treat me? Would anybody talk to me? Would I fit in? Would I be able to train with the players? What type of things should I observe? Although I had previous experience of working in the football environment, my aim now was to conduct research and this invoked unusual feelings.

"I am a researcher in Youth Development and I'm just interested in finding out about the player's experiences in an Academy system." I repeated my introductory statement over and over again in my mind. As I entered the car park my senses were on full alert. The complaints of a weary suspension competed with the 'delightful' sound of footballs being passed around the training pitches. I hid my car in a corner away from the numerous BMWs and Mercedes Benz sports cars. I couldn't help but feel slightly self-conscious as I stepped out of the old banger. After all, first impressions count.

I was dressed in a tracksuit, with boots, towel and numerous shorts and t-shirts in my bag. I walked nervously across the pot-holed car park. This was it, I was here, no turning back now, the start of my fieldwork journey. I approached the coaches' room and gently knocked on the door. Sat comfortably in his black leather chair was Dennis Gray, the Head of Recruitment. I'd not expected to be greeted by Dennis, it was supposed to be Peter Jeffries (Academy Coach). Before I could say a word Dennis said, *"Alright there, Martin is it?"* I responded rather nervously *"yeah"* and wondered how he knew who I was? *"We've been expecting you Martin, come on in"* he uttered in a gruff tone. He greeted me with a soft shake of the hand and suggested we make our way to the canteen area to wait for Peter Jeffries, the Academy coach. Dennis appeared to be a pleasant, well-mannered man in

> his mid 40s. I later came to understand that the players within the Academy were unaware of the precise nature of Dennis' job. I suspect that given his appearance, suit, slightly overweight, with The Times newspaper tucked under his arm, he might have been viewed as somewhat alien within the football environment. Designer clothing, the latest Nike trainers and more often than not the Daily Sport or The Sun newspaper for early morning reading, was the customary gear of the Football Scholars.

The decision to don myself in sports clothing on arrival at the club was influenced by Coffey's (1999) comments on identity construction in terms of locating the self within the field. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) further refer to this issue as impression management and specify the use of clothes and speech (i.e., cultural language) as important factors to consider. On this first day in the club, the youth team coach arranged for me to wear some of the club's training kit, which meant that I could assimilate myself into the environment a little easier, whilst also acting to diminish potential access barriers with players (Silverman, 2001). My personal biography also facilitated choices concerning identity construction and as the fieldwork process progressed, I felt that I integrated somewhat successfully in the daily routines of club life. Parker (1996b) relates his own biographical experiences of working-class culture and industrial apprenticeship as factors that facilitated his relationships with the trainees in his study. I too felt that my previous involvement in the football industry enhanced my relational acceptance. I felt that this was demonstrated in my ability to function effectively in the football specific training drills, which appeared to engender a degree of 'respect' from both the players and coaching staff. Further, my 'release' from a professional club at the youth level also served to redefine my role to one of 'confidant', which again appears to resonate specifically with Parker's (1996b) comments. The following fieldwork excerpt illustrates this point, but at the same time reveals developmental related issues.

Monday 12th November 2001: First Day at the Club
Inside the confines of the training complex I was again faced with the decision of what to do and where to go? What would players normally do I thought? What did I use to do? I ventured outside in the direction of the boot room. Once inside, the welcoming smell of leather and boot polish circulated through the air. I exchanged greetings with two players. They introduced themselves as Lee Brady and Ryan Mullaney who were both 2nd Year Football Scholars. Within moments Ryan left. Before I could generate any form of conversation Lee Brady threw a question at me *"You was at Leeds weren't ya?"* to which I responded *"Yes"*. Lee then delivered a barrage of questions *"What was it like? Who was there with you? Why did you leave?"* He seemed intrigued by my past experiences and became somewhat animated when I began to talk to him about them. Given that I had told Lee about my experiences as a Youth Trainee, I then promptly inquired about his, *"...so, what's life like as a Scholar at Brent?"* Lee replied *"Yeah, it's alright man, but I'm not enjoying it too much at the moment."* When I asked Lee why he said that *"I'm not doin' that well man, I was flyin' last year, captain of the under 17s and everythin', but this year's been a fuckin' nightmare, I'm tellin' ya. I got injured at the start of the season, and I'm not playin' at the moment. I've been sub for the past couple of weeks and only been gettin' on for a few minutes."* I didn't interrupt Lee's flow, he was gesticulating with a boot in one hand and a buffer in the other; *"It just seems that the coaches like physical players at this club who get stuck in and like to tackle, but that's not me, that's not me man! I like to pass the ball, but it just doesn't seem to count."*

I was almost stuck for words. I hadn't expected Lee to be quite so forthright in his views about his experiences and in our first conversation. As it was, it wasn't to be our last. Lee continued with his tirade about the club, *"So if I'm not in the coach's plans now, nearly half way through my second year, what does that tell ya? It's looking ominous now man, but I'm not bothered coz I'm doin' quite well at college and I think I might go to Uni. What did you do Martin when you left Leeds? What course are you doin' now?"* Before I could take the conversation further Lee caught a glimpse of the clock in the boot room and said, *"Shit, c'mon Martin we're gonna be late for weights."*

Part of the players' daily routine meant that they frequently had periods of downtime, which was filled by personal chores (i.e., cleaning professional players boots, preparing the equipment for training sessions), resting in the changing rooms or merely hanging about in the corridors and gymnasium of the training ground. Although somewhat 'boring' for the players, these periods of the day were extremely fruitful in terms of my data collection. The above field diary extract demonstrates that some players clearly engage in acts of personal reflection and analyse their

individual experiences. These reflective processes serve to establish personalised views on developmental and progression-based issues. For Lee Brady, he felt that his perceived lack of progression in his 2nd year at the club meant that he was not going to be offered a professional contract by the club. He talked of coaches favouring 'physical' as apposed to 'technical' based characteristics and I wondered whether players could adapt their style of play to suit the coaches' views? I also questioned whether players' were correct in their appraisal of the coaches' expectations and whether players 'really' knew when they were not going to progress in the club? It was apparent that Lee had started to think about potential exit routes from football and he had identified college/university as an option. I was quite surprised by the relative ease in which Lee sought advice from me given the fact that I had only been speaking to him for five minutes and I felt that I had established a degree of (researcher) 'acceptance' with this player.

Even on my first day of the fieldwork I began to wonder whether the variety of other issues that existed within trainee life were more significant in terms of impacting youth player progression. Indeed, as my time in the club advanced it became apparent that certain contextually specific issues permeated the players' daily lives. One such issue being relationships with peers in the Academy.

3.3.1 Cultural Adaptation: The Acceptance of Personal Insults

One of the consistent issues that emerged during the fieldwork was the personal insults' that *most* youth players had to endure. The players frequently engaged in what was termed 'banter' or 'ripping' (i.e., contextual specific terms used to describe derogatory verbal remarks made by players concerning an individual's personal

features, family members, personal relations, and playing ability) with one another. Giulianotti (1999) suggests that this is a form of occupational practice where players employ coded communication strategies that are restricted in meaning to fellow players and highlights their shared sense of humour. This was generally initiated by the older players in the group and was predominantly aimed at the younger and more susceptible players. The established relational bonds that had been created amongst the players' during their period at the club meant that this form of cultural practice was part of everyday life. Ultimately, it was accepted, but not necessarily enjoyed by all.

> Wednesday 16th January 2002: 12.45pm
> The players and staff didn't stare at me anymore. I felt secure as I picked up my regular soup and breadroll in the canteen, poured myself a glass of juice and headed for the Scholars' eating corner. I had arrived later than usual. I originate from Lancashire and it is implied that people from this region possess a slow, dull and broad tone. A magnet for player banter *"Maaartin, yaaaaright...wat you doin' Maaartin."* The lads were in full swing. It was harmless football banter. In a perverse sense it felt good. They were engaging me. I laughed with the players, welcomed the remarks and tasted the soup. I had accepted the stick, 'rode it out'. The 'savages', lead by the respected Darren Simmons [2nd year scholar & U19s captain], turned their attention to further 'prey', but this time, one of their own. The onslaught started. Darren Simmons lead the attack on Brian Matthews [1st year scholar], *"...ya mother was good last night!"* Reece Chester followed suit *"Nah, she was shit."* Darren replied *"You must ave had her after me then...no didn't we ave her together?"* Ian Earnshaw, Danny Christy, Nick Nestor and Neil Lewis were all in fits of laughter. Brian Matthews took the bait, *"You're fuckin' knob heads you two. It's not funny that, it's sick!"* I thought to myself, 'bad move Brian'. Reece continued, *"She thought it was funny, she loved it."*

The football environment can be an intimidating place in the sense that it has its own distinct social norms and traditions that individuals are continually exposed to, which demand players to adopt a specific cultural mentality. It also necessitates individuals to develop a 'peculiar' sense of humour that may result in emotional difficulties for those players that fail to embrace this distinct occupational practice. The verbal chastisements were not only a feature of the day-to-day practices of the full-time

Football Scholars. On occasions, players that were brought into the club on trial or had been signed by the Academy during the season were also exposed to these practices. This was particularly apparent for one player that had just signed for the club.

> Tuesday 4th December 2001: 12.45pm
> Lunchtime proved to be an interesting yet disturbing experience. Brent had recently acquired Neil Dobson, an 18 year-old player from Rivington Rovers (a team in a significantly lower standard of league, yet Neil Dobson had been playing 1st team football). The eating rules within the canteen meant that professional players had a varied choice of foods, compared to the limited choice available for the Football Scholars. I noticed that Neil wasn't eating the same food as the Football Scholars. It had also caught their eyes. I was sat near to Neil and could therefore hear what a few of the other players were saying about him. If I could hear these comments, then surely Neil could too. I felt awkward as the conversation began to gain momentum *"...has he got a pro? If he has, then there's hope for us yet lads!"* This was greeted with rapturous laughter amongst the group. I noticed that the comment came from Ricky Carney, a 3rd year player that was currently not playing in his favoured centre midfield position. Neil Dobson also played in this position. I pretended not to hear what they were saying and felt for Neil. I did not speak to him. Did he deserve this? The next comment had an intentionally louder tone *"...are Rivington Rovers looking for a centre midfielder? Coz if they are I'm their man."* This time it was Lee Brady. Again the players glanced at Neil and smiled blatantly; full of mischief. Suddenly I didn't feel that hungry anymore.

There is a fine line that exists to separate football banter from more serious verbal chastisements. On this occasion I felt that I had just witnessed the latter. Neil did not respond to the players' provocative behaviour, instead he remained motionless in his seat and calmly accepted the onslaught. I wondered whether Neil had anticipated this form of reactionary behaviour from the players and as such was prepared to deal with these experiences? As time progressed, Neil's footballing ability and competitive performances endeared him to *most* of the Academy players and can be viewed as a sign of cultural and occupational acceptance. Players ultimately had to prove their 'worth' by the talents that they possessed. Some players achieved this and were

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elevated in hierarchical status amongst the peer group, whereas other players were continually criticised and ostracised based on negative perceptions of their performance related criteria.

The issues that have been presented here concerning occupational culture resonate specifically with Parker's (2001) observations. Parker provides numerous examples within his work to illustrate the ways in which the youth trainees at Colby Town (pseudonym) served to construct masculine images. He connects his ethnographic findings to the wider literature on working-class shop-floor life. In discussing the issue of 'piss taking' amongst the youth trainees at Colby Town, he suggests that "...in order to accumulate any kind of peer group credibility, individuals were not only required to 'take' the insults of others, but to 'give' as good as they got, thereby providing their masculine worth" (Parker, 2001; p72). The examples of player 'ripping' in the present study provide evidence to suggest that such occupational practices were apparent in the daily routines of the youth players at Brent Town and further, point to this being an endemic feature of the profession at youth level. Giulianotti (1999) also reported on the 'occupational sports subculture' that prevails within professional football players, and comments that players that do not 'fit in' with the dressing room banter are socially marginalized by their peers.

In response to the 'ripping' processes that players engaged in, Parker reported that the youth team players in his study sometimes 'snapped' (i.e., a verbal and/or behavioural reaction after failing to cope with the pressures), which was also a discernible feature within Brent Town. It was felt that such ripping was related to the frustrations of de-

selection from the youth team, and the time of the season where coaching staff were making decisions about the futures of some of the Football Scholars.

> Wednesday 12th December 2001: 12.15pm
> It had been another hard session, but I was gradually adapting to the intensity of the training sessions. We were well into the final 20 minutes of 5-a-side. Tensions had been running high throughout the session. Tackles had been aggressive. I sensed that people were on edge. Wayne Cullen [3rd Year goalkeeper] threw a ball out from the area. Trevor Meakin, a 2nd year player, intercepted the throw. Trevor had barely even touched the ball when Lee Brady erupted into a fit of rage. *"What you fuckin' doin Cully? Can you not chuck a fuckin' ball straight?"* The signs were obvious. Wayne surely wouldn't take this much abuse so soon after his 'humiliation' at being dropped from the youth team at the weekend. He replied, *"Shut up beaver teeth!"* This was a remark at Lee's physical appearance. The play continued. Only a handful of players on the sidelines witnessed the event unfold. Lee snapped back *"...I'll fuckin' knock you out Culley, you fat bastard."* Pride ensued. Neither Lee nor Wayne could be seen to back down. The play ceased as all the players focused on Wayne and Lee. Lee walked bravely towards the muscular thick-set Wayne. Wayne mirrored Lee. Head to head, the pushing commenced, punches were thrown, a flurry of arms cutting through the air. The players wrestled each other to the ground. Wayne still had his gloves on and was pushing Lee's face into the floor. The players on the sideline were in fits of laughter. The physio, who also witnessed the brawl, just pointed at them and laughed. At this point, their teammates rushed over to separate them. Lee, in the process of being restrained, was still furious, he pointed at Wayne whilst one of the other players held him back *"...you fuckin' dick head, you've not heard the last of this."* Peter Jeffries called the session to an abrupt end and remained silent as he headed for the car park.

It is in these periods (i.e., de-selection, release process) of Academy life that (some) players may require specific emotional and psychological support to help deal with the manifestation of personal issues (i.e., well-being, self-confidence, self-concept). However, there is a lack of clarity that exists within the documentation of the Charter for Quality (1997) in terms of identifying the specific personnel responsible for engaging in these support-based practices. It may be *implicitly* perceived that a club's Head of Education and Welfare (HEW) is the named individual responsible, but their specific remit does not include a performance-based support agenda. Instead, it appears to be more academically focussed in terms of liasing with schools and

colleges to ensure appropriate academic provision for youth players (Walsh, 2005). The (recent) inception and integration of Sports Scientists within professional football, in particular Sports Psychologists and/or Lifestyle Consultants, may be the individuals to provide the necessary expertise for players' to access when faced with emotional and/or psychological issues during periods of their programme.

In further locating the context of these findings, FFE&VTS (2002) documentation suggests that the Football Scholarship programme is highly learner centred where players receive 'plenty' of individual support (including personal welfare care). It would appear however that such individual support was at times absent within Brent Town Football Club. Although the FFE&VTS remark that individual support is a central feature of the programme, they also acknowledge the difficulties of ensuring quality within the football industry, but their specific definition of quality remains unclear. They comment that one of the barriers to ensuring quality is associated with the cultural aspect of professional football. A culture which they describe encourages a 'win at all costs' mentality amongst young players and staff. Consequently "...this often results in a highly competitive, physical and psychological environment where provocation, 'banter' and behavioural issues can become unhealthy" (FFE&VTS, 2002; p8). These issues can have a detrimental affect on relationships between players and staff on a day-to-day basis and are ultimately not conducive to player learning.

At this juncture it is pertinent to note that Brent Town Football Club employed a part-time sports psychologist. This individual was responsible for providing group based educational sessions on psychological based principles and also offering individually

tailored counselling support for Academy based players. Although psychological orientated services were available within the Academy, the players did not fully engage in the group sessions that were delivered to them. On one occasion during the fieldwork I observed the Academy players personally and professionally ridicule the Academy sports psychologist. This occurred when Steve Johnson (pseudonym) was demonstrating changes in emotional control by using a set of traffic lights on a busy main road outside the club's stadium. The session rapidly deteriorated after this conceptual analogy and provides the empirical evidence to support the findings of Pain and Harwood (2004). These commentators identified problems associated with fitting in (i.e., cultural adaptation) and players' negative perceptions of sports psychology as the reasons why Academy Directors' chose not to (readily) utilise sports psychologists.

The observations can also be discussed in terms of the relationship between youth footballers and education, a dynamic that has been highlighted as somewhat problematic (Parker, 2000; FFE & VTS, 2002). More specifically, the FFE & VTS (2002, p8) observe that, "...it is not uncommon for these learners [Football Scholars] to lose motivation and interest in achieving 'off-the-job' qualifications, and lose the desire to be in classroom situations for study which is non-football related." The sessions that Steve Johnson conducted with the Football Scholars during my fieldwork at Brent Town Academy were all football related, but they still appeared to result in behavioral difficulties from (some) players. Parker (2000) linked similar findings to the development of masculine identity. The fieldwork experiences here resonate specifically with these theoretical links. It is also felt that the personal qualities of individuals engaged in educational based work with young footballers in

professional football is a factor to consider in attaching meaning to the findings. Ultimately, such forms of player behavior may be facilitated by the fact that players that enter full-time professional football are conditioned to believe that they are going to make it as a professional footballer, and subsequently, notions of education may be rendered redundant.

It has been demonstrated that the notion of player 'banter' and 'ripping' was not only restricted to players, but also extended to *selected* support staff, and was perceived as an accepted day-to-day sub-cultural practice within the club. It is a behavioural practice that is reported to exist throughout the echelons of professional football (Giulianotti, 1999; Keane, 2002) and a feature that (most) players expect to engage in upon embarking on a career in the industry. Players and support staff have to deal with this form of occupational practice rapidly as it invariably continues throughout one's tenure at a club. For some players and staff, adapting to this aspect of trainee life was easy, for others it was far more difficult and added to the complexity of trying to gain a professional contract.

3.3.2 'Chasing a Pro': Progression Experiences of Football Scholars

The principle aim of the Football Scholarship programme is to develop young players' football/technical abilities in order to produce professional footballers (FFE & VTS, 2002). In essence, young players enter the Scholarship programme aiming to secure a professional contract that may lead them to perform for the club's 1st team. However, 80% of players that enter formalised training programmes (i.e., Football Scholarship) at 16 years of age are out of the professional game at 19. This figure increases to 95% when the age is extended to 21 (Walsh, 2005). In this regard, the

reality indicates that only a small percentage of players are 'successful' in establishing a career in the profession at the elite level (i.e., professional status) and highlights further the difficulty of the player development and progression process.

In the pursuit of a professional contract, the Football Scholars at the Academy had a diverse range of experiences, which served to shape their perceptions and attitudes towards the club and its staff. These experiences were wide ranging and included de-selection, selection, injury, feedback issues, and finally, the release process.

As time went on, the apparent discontent amongst a number of Academy players surfaced and was essentially focussed on the communication strategies of their youth team coaches. The significance of the coaches' role in the athlete development process has been well documented, as well as the value that athletes' attach to structured and positively orientated feedback (Bloom, 1985; Bloom et al., 1998; Cross, 1999). Formal mechanisms for coach-player feedback exist within the Football Scholarship programme as both parties are required to fill in a player's official log-book (FFE & VTS, 2002). Although this is a vehicle to review development and progression, many of the Scholars at Brent Town suggested that the process was just a 'tick box exercise', with little meaningful feedback offered by the coaches and no specific action points identified. The players' also noted that coaches rarely followed up these discussions with individualised development programmes. An effective procedure discussed by Richardson et al. (2004). The following extract from my field notes provides an illustration of a player's apparent confusion regarding aspects of his individual development.

Tuesday 27th November 2001:
I stayed out on the training pitch after the morning's training session. This was a good time to engage players in conversation. Lee Brady informed me that he was not in the starting line-up for tomorrow's F.A. Youth Cup match. I sensed the same disappointment that was evident in Brian Matthews last week. Whilst juggling a ball Lee said *"...I've always wanted to play in the F.A. Youth Cup, all my family will be there and I'll be on the bench."* He suggested that he was thinking of leaving the club at Christmas and talked about the options that were available to him. I prompted Lee to continue. He offered a potential reason for his lack of progression at the club *"...I know that I don't have a lot of pace man, but I'm a passing player and I don't think they (Academy coaches) like that sort of player."* I sensed that he also wanted me to know about his past successes at the club, *"...I was doin' really well last season, I was made captain of the under 17's and I was being watched by England scouts."*

It became evident that players' experiences can change very quickly in professional football and I sensed that Lee had been exposed to this process. Inferences were consistently made by the players on a range of talent characteristics that they perceived to by synonymous with selection and progression. At times, these were centred upon physical and physiological based criteria as opposed to the technical based competencies that some players highlighted as their strengths. This suggests a lack of clarity concerning the criteria associated with player progression. However, given the subjective nature of talent selection and progression, and the transient nature of professional football, it is extremely difficult (and somewhat dangerous) to offer progression characteristics in a prescriptive fashion.

A further example to illustrate player dissatisfaction with coach interaction and feedback was highlighted in a conversation with a 3rd Year Football Scholar. During the regular warm-up routine prior to training, the player informed me that the goalkeeping coach had told him that he was about to be released from the club. Ideally the release process should involve a range of club personnel (i.e., Academy Director, Club Manager, Head of Education and Welfare) to discuss the reasons for

release, and if necessary, provide appropriate (emotional) support and discuss possible exit strategies (i.e., trials at other professional clubs, other vocations). The example serves to illustrate just one of the ways in which inappropriate practice engendered notions of 'resentment', 'hostility', 'frustration' and 'anger' to the club and specific members of staff. Unfortunately, these feelings were exacerbated for this particular player as the following field extract demonstrates.

> Saturday 8th December 2001: 10.15am
> I stood beside a window watching the players warm up for their match against Walton City. I felt a presence behind me. I turned around. Wayne's [Cullen] face was tinged with anger and frustration. *"What's the matter Wayne?"* I said, trying to get to the root of his obvious problem. *"He's a right fuckin' wanker him, I can't believe what he's done. He told me I was playing yesterday, the printed sheet for the spectators even says I'm playing, but now he's just told me that fuckin' Bernard Jacques [young French professional recently signed by the club] is playing, it's a fuckin' disgrace."*

The player later informed me that the Academy Director told him the decision to play Bernard Jacques had come from the 1st team manager. A point not always communicated to the young players. The Academy Director 'officially' (i.e.. face-to-face) told Wayne that that he was being released some weeks after this incident and explained that his physical deficiency (i.e., lack of height) was the primary reason. In one sense this serves to highlight the 'harsh' reality of youth player progression in professional football, but equally illuminates the lack of systematic assessment of a player's capabilities to perform at a higher level. Other players were also told of their release from the club around this period, which seemed to result in severe self-doubts over playing ability and hindered self-confidence. It is in these times more than ever that appropriate player support mechanisms are required (Richardson et al., 2004), but their lack of existence was a marked observation within Brent Town Football Club. In light of the significant emotional, physical and temporal investment that players' commit in trying to achieve and sustain the status of professional footballer, the

'release process' is an area that requires further thought by relevant agencies (i.e., professional clubs, PFA, FFE&VTS, FAPL, FA). Areas of good practice in this area invariably exist within the confines of certain professional clubs and it is imperative that these are disseminated amongst the football community.

3.3.3 Foreign Players and the emergence of the Glass Ceiling Effect

The earlier research findings in Study 1 demonstrated a significant presence of foreign players within the English Premier League, a trend that was also a noticeable characteristic at Brent Town. However, I sensed that the impact of these players at the club did not seem to permeate the day-to-day experiences of the Football Scholars in the Academy. This was not to say that the fieldwork was devoid of inferences to foreign players. On the contrary, some of the players referred to the positive aspects that they perceived foreign players to bring to the game (i.e., professionalism, diet and nutrition, lifestyle), which concurs specifically with Magee (1998). However, the dietary differences that existed between some of the English and foreign players was a source of occupational 'banter'.

> Friday 23rd November 2001: 1.00pm
> Whilst I was sat in the canteen consuming my customary soup and bread roll, Lee Norris, a 1st team regular, yet still only relatively young, came and sat on the table next to me. This was unusual behaviour as the professionals had their own area in the canteen. Some of the older Scholars gathered around Lee. Darren Simmons, Nick Nestor, Reece Chester and Daniel Christy. They seemed fascinated by Lee's presence. Cars soon emerged as the dominant topic of conversation. The players laughed at Lee's every quip. He engaged in a conversation with a fellow professional player who was also sat in the canteen, *"Soren [1st team player & Danish International], where did you get that shirt from? It's fuckin' mingin."* The Scholars responded with laughter. Soren, hardened to the football 'banter', turned towards Lee, laughed, and then carried on eating his lunch. Lee followed up with yet another remark to the Scholars *"Look at the food he's eating!"* Again, shouting across the canteen to Soren, Lee said, *"What's up with chicken butties?"* This time, there was no reply.

My fieldwork experiences coincided with the January 'transfer window' (i.e., a period in the season [1st to 31st January] when professional football clubs are permitted to acquire new players). A period that subsequently resulted in a number of foreign players joining the club. After the arrival of the new foreign signings, much of the youth players' discussions were focussed on who could clean their boots, which I sensed was a symbolic sign of 'player status' and 'acceptance'.

The themes presented so far have highlighted the complexities of the Football Scholars' daily lives within the club and provides evidence of the widening of the observational lens throughout the fieldwork. In fact, the ability of the researcher to focus on interesting new data during the fieldwork process has been highlighted as one of the fundamental strengths of observational research (Silverman, 2001). It was felt that this broader observational mindset led me to an area within the club structure at Brent Town where the effect of foreign player acquisition appeared to be more 'meaningful' and potentially 'significant'. Again, this shift in analytical theorising is a marked feature of qualitative fieldwork where the scope of the research question can be clarified through what Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) describe as 'progressive focussing'. This shift occurred from the Academy domain to the professional domain and is illustrated in Figure 3.1.

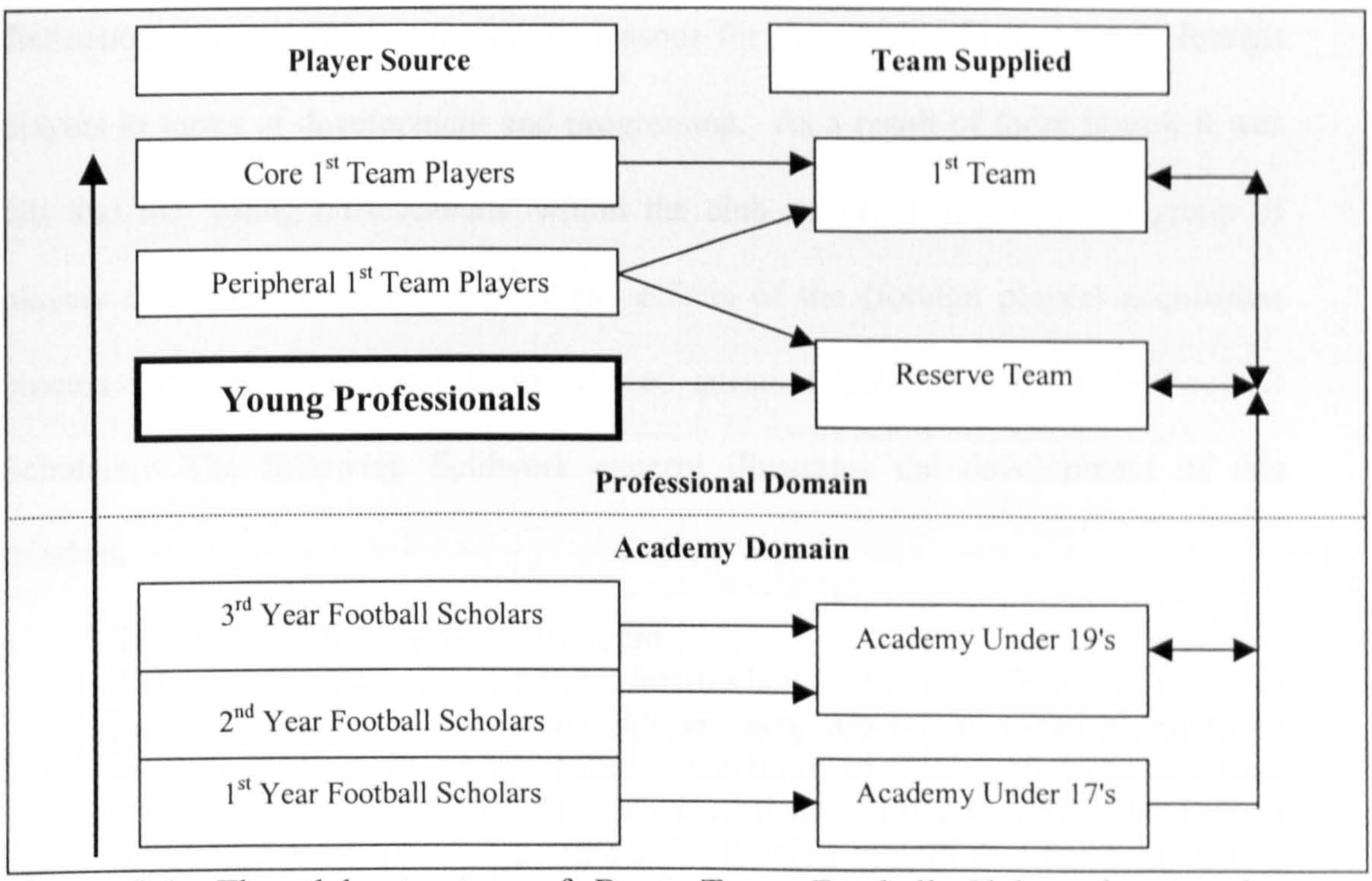

Figure 3.1: The club structure of Brent Town Football Club and respective progression routeways.

The figure represents the club structure that existed within Brent Town and is *typical* of most professional football clubs. It highlights 'player source' and 'team supplied'. In this respect, the Football Scholars in the Academy domain had the benefit of regular competitive football for their respective teams (i.e., U17s & U19s), but this was not the case for those players categorised as 'young professionals'. This was primarily due to their age, given that they were not legally permitted to represent the Academy teams, which only left the reserve and 1st team as the remaining options. Given the high number of professional players that Brent Town employed, it was felt that the opportunities for the young professionals to further enhance their development in the context of the reserve and 1st team environment was somewhat limited. Moreover, I sensed that the existence of the Academy/Professional divide prevented the Football Scholars from being explicitly affected by the acquisition process (i.e., 1st team professionals, including foreign players). Such environmental

distinctions may constitute one of the reasons for their lack of reference to foreign players in terms of development and progression. As a result of these issues, it was felt that the 'young professionals' within the club structure might be the group of players that were *'more exposed'* to the effects of the (foreign player) acquisition process rather than the initial foreshadowed question that focussed on the Football Scholars. The following fieldwork excerpt illustrates the development of this mindset.

> Tuesday 4th February 2002: 10.30pm
> Before training commenced Peter Jeffries had said to me, *"You might want to put some tracksuit bottoms on this morning Martin as we're going to be working on shape in a 11v11 game."* The familiarisation period was now long gone, so this comment did not worry me. It was an opportunity. There was a bitter cold wind circulating around the training ground that morning, not an ideal time to be standing on the sidelines. I adjusted my focus. What else could I see? I stayed in the entrance to the training complex and leant against a wall, my face pressed against a single pane of glass, watching, thinking. I noticed that four young professionals were training with the Scholars. They were not involved with the 1st team training session and as such there was a need to accommodate them somewhere. After fifteen minutes of observing their warm-up and usual Scholarly banter, Frank Saunders (Academy Physiotherapist) appeared from the background, *"Cup of coffee Martin?"* He joined me for the remainder of the Scholars' session that morning. He didn't have any injured players. Conversation was easy with Frank. He was designed for the football environment. I asked him about the young professionals that were training with the Scholars. *"Yep, they're the ones that are regularly excluded from the 1st team squad. They sometimes don't even get a sniff in the reserves. The bomb squad!"* [Bomb squad referred to a group of players that had not been selected to play]. Frank was a prudent man. His scrutiny of the group continued, *"They shouldn't be training with the young ones [Football Scholars] them lot, they're a bad influence. They've got nothin' to aim for, everybody else prepares for a game during the week. Them lot prepare for nothin'. Where's their motivation to train come from? They can sometimes go a month without a game."*
>
> I sipped some more of my coffee and listened intensely. Frank continued in his assessment, *"Watch the reaction of Nick Nestor [2nd year Scholar] when the young pro's are training with them. Watch his behaviour change straight away. I'd put him with the younger lads, bring him down a peg or two."* Frank wasn't afraid to express his views. This wasn't the first time that he had talked openly to me about the players at the club. He towered over me. I let him speak. His bold judgment unrelenting, *"There's players out there that are simply not good enough to be at this club Martin. They'll have to move on if they want a career in the pro game and it'll probably happen soon. How long*

can you go on without having a competitive game and then training with the young lads?" I sensed that Frank felt he had been heard.

I sensed that the clinical assessment of the young professionals situation in the club offered an insight into the developmental and progression barriers that were faced by the young professionals after their post-Academy transition. The continued existence of this situation may well manifest a range of negative emotions that could be detrimental to both the individual and the club. A prolonged period of time spent in the 'bomb squad' and its associated negative stigmas may well serve to impede the intrinsic motivation of those players within this group. With my altered analytical mindset I sought to speak to one of these players.

Friday 15th February 2002: 12.15pm
Whilst I was stood on the sidelines watching the Scholars train, Dave Meadows [Fitness & Conditioning Coach] shouted in my direction, *"Martin, can you make the numbers up in this session mate?"* I had to be flexible. I had to adapt to the environment. *"No problem Dave, where do you want me?"* I was already kitted out. I found myself with the group that Frank Saunders and others had termed 'the bomb squad'. This was an exciting opportunity. There was a mixture of players, which consisted of old and young professionals, experienced and inexperienced, foreign and British. I coped with the session. After it had finished I again positioned myself on the touchline and observed the Scholars. Stuart Croft bellowed at the players, *"Hit the target, make the keeper do some work, take care of the ball."* One of the professional players that I had just been training with, a member of the 'bomb squad' came and stood next to me. We watched the Scholars train. He was waiting to use the goals to practise his free-kicks. Pleasantries were exchanged. He introduced himself as Warren Price. He was in his second year at the club as a professional.

I later came to understand that Warren was a player that many people in the club had expected big things from; yet he was still trying to deliver. He was a well-mannered 21 year-old. I asked him how long he had left on his current contract at the club. He replied, *"I've only got till the end of the season, but it doesn't look like I'm gonna get another contract. So it looks like I'll probably have to move to another club to get 1st team football."* He went on to say that he had enjoyed his time at the club, but understood the situation that the club and manager were in. Brent needed to stay in their division. As a result, experienced players had been acquired, thus appearing to limit Warren's chances of 1st team football. Warren continued, *"The gaffer's [1st team manager] dead understanding here, he's been great with me. He understands my predicament and I understand his, there's no hard feelings."* Had this

> coincidental opportunity presented a different facet to my enquiry? Did it have a deeper meaning with regards to the initial research questions?

The club's 'apparent' acquisition strategy had increased the number of players that were considered 'core 1st team players' and distributed other professional players into the 'peripheral 1st team players' sub-group. It was felt that this form of player redistribution increased competition for reserve team places, which further limited the available playing opportunities. It appeared that the 'young professionals' within the club structure would often be the group that would suffer as a consequence of the player redistribution process. I felt that these issues might ultimately form and shape the 'young professionals' perceptions over the foreign player issue and assist in shedding more light on the topic. Moreover, this observation can be related to one of UEFA's concerns, which they describe as the 'hoarding of players' (Richardson et al., 2005). In this case, it can be seen to have progression implications for young professionals in a club structure.

3.4 Conclusion: Study 2 Part I

In this section I have attempted to highlight the prominent points that I felt emerged from the fieldwork process, whilst also briefly documenting the personal issues that I endured during fieldwork. In my challenge to identify and locate the effect of foreign players on the development and progression on young 'home-grown' players in one English professional football club, I came to understand that there are a plethora of localised issues that play a significant role in their everyday existence. It was felt that the paradigmatic, methodological and representational-based decisions that were made within the study facilitated the emergence of such data.

More specifically, the inquiry illuminated the intricacies of the players' relationships with both peers and support staff within the club environment and it is these that shaped their perceptions of life as a Football Scholar. The unique cultural traditions and facets of the football environment facilitated the relation-based events that have been documented. In turn, the observations can be mapped against and compared to the previous research within this domain by Parker (1995, 1996a, 1996b, 2000, 2001), Bourke (2002) and Richardson et al. (2004) whose findings resonate specifically with the present inquiry. It is also felt that the eclectic writing style adopted for the narrative has permitted an insight in the reality of life as a young player in a professional club.

3.5 Introduction: Study 2 Part II

The fieldwork process and subsequent representation highlighted some key features that permeated the day-to-day experiences of a group of Academy players' in an elite professional football club. The next phase of the inquiry builds upon these findings and explores the perceptions of a number of Football Scholars from various 'other' elite level professional football club Academy systems. This will serve to broaden the scope of the thesis and seeks to further explore the Academy experience.

The following study utilised focus groups for data collection. Engaging in a focus group methodology complements the fieldwork as it enabled the author to further explore the fieldwork observations and emerging themes with a range of Football Scholars within professional football. More specifically, the focus groups act as an effective adjunct to other methods as they can facilitate the generation of new insights on earlier fieldwork findings (Bloor et al., 2001). Further to this, Baker and Hinton (1999) advocated the use of focus groups towards the latter stages of their longitudinal anthropological research. The contextual knowledge accrued from the fieldwork experience subsequently enhanced the design and management of the focus groups that they performed. In the present inquiry, the fieldwork acted as a critical vehicle in the production of contextual knowledge for the focus groups. The fieldwork enabled a mapping of players' views to specific occupational features. Additionally, I became 'more' aware of the contextual and culturally specific language that is employed by players within the professional football environment. Such experience and knowledge assisted in creating (and understanding) 'indigenous coding systems' during the focus group procedure (Bloor et al., 2001).

The decision to engage in focus groups rather than other methodological data collection techniques (i.e., individual and/or group interviews) was also underpinned by a number of other issues. Debate within the literature notes the explicit use of group interaction to generate data during focus groups as the primary differentiating factor to group interviews (Bloor et al., 2001). This is characterised by the researcher asking each member of the group to contribute responses to the same question (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999). Such approaches may limit the conversational aspect of focus groups, which is regarded as a fundamental component of the technique (Fern, 2001). Although the researcher does have to ask initial questions to stimulate responses amongst the participants, the aim of the present study was to explore how the players' views in the context of their club environment were constructed and expressed on a number of pre-defined themes. To this end, it was felt that a focus group approach would facilitate interaction around these themes and shed further light of the area.

A further qualitative data collection method that may have been deemed appropriate for the study is individual interviewing. Silverman (2000) regards this as an extremely effective method of obtaining meaningful data that has been used extensively within qualitative research. The approach allows for in-depth probing of respondents' perceptions on certain issues and is claimed to elicit 'personalised' and confidential information that may not necessarily be disclosed in group-based situations (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999). Mitchell (1999) recounts how an individual interview approach with 'low' status girls in her study elucidated feelings and personal information to develop a clearer sense of bullying and victimisation. Equally, there are limitations concerned with this approach. For example, if an

interviewer is not familiar with the interviewee (and vice-versa) and the interviewee is nervous of being the sole focus of the researcher's attention, then this may affect the 'quality' and 'richness' of data obtained (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999). In this regard a focus group approach may provide a suitable alternative. The merits of both these alternative methodological approaches are duly acknowledged, but the features of focus groups were deemed suitable to address the question under investigation within the specific cultural context of professional football. As a final point, situational and environmental factors also guided the methodological decision making process, as the collection of data from a number of participants in a small amount of time did not impact the players football curriculum, and in this sense, access was deemed more likely. The following section provides a brief historical overview of focus groups and comments specifically on the way in which the present research was designed, conducted and analysed.

3.6 Methodology: Study 2 Part II

Essentially, focus groups are carefully organised group discussions based on a singular theme or set of themes (Krueger, 1988; Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999, Bloor et al., 2001). As already noted, it is a qualitative research technique that is utilised to collect rich and innovative evaluation data (Trenkner & Achterberg, 1991), which is historically associated with market research (Fern, 2001). Focus groups are also commonly used in the fields of health and education (i.e., Basch, 1987; Trenkner & Achterberg, 1991; Murphy et al., 1992; Porcellato et al., 2002) with one of the primary purposes to generate research questions that can later be examined through the use of quantitative methods (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999). This latter point highlights that focus groups can be a facet of multi-method research studies.

In line with Porcellato et al. (2002; p311), the focus groups were developed to "...elicit perceptions, feelings, attitudes and experiences through interaction from the participants in a permissive, non-threatening manner." Specifically, the focus group aimed to explore a range of players' perceptions and experiences on a number of pre-defined themes that were specifically informed by the fieldwork process. These themes were open and flexible and allowed for intensive researcher exploration (see Murphy et al., 1992). The open and flexible approach also allows for an assessment of how knowledge and ideas develop within a cultural context (Porcellato et al., 2002). Wilkinson (1999) also discusses the cultural context issue and critiques a range of traditional research methods (i.e., surveys, questionnaires, experiments and even interviews) in the way that they seek to decontextualise data. Writing specifically from a feminist perspective, Wilkinson (1999) notes that the individual is not acting in isolation within a focus group as they are part of a wider social group that serves to add to context to the setting. She also suggests that it is the interactions between respondents that act as the primary data source. In this sense, focus groups can be seen to possess a range of advantages as a research technique, but they have not escaped criticism. Trenkner and Achterberg (1991) comment that the moderator has less control over any outcomes and that they must be trained to lead a discussion in a way that encourages the free flow of ideas, while staying within a constructive framework. Given that the historical and contextual background of the focus groups has been outlined, the discussion now turns to their design in the present study.

3.6.1 Design of Focus Groups

Comprehensive guidelines exist that offer insights into how to conduct focus groups in social research (see Krueger, 1994; Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999; Bloor et al., 2001;

Fern, 2001). These texts offer a complete critique of the pre-requisites that researchers should consider in the preparatory phase of focus group research and have outlined a number of issues to consider. The setting chosen for a focus group is one these.

3.6.1.1 The Setting

The setting where the focus group takes place is an important consideration to the success of the method (Porcellato et al., 2002). The setting for the focus group should be easily accessible to the participants (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999) and aim to promote freedom of expression and reduce any inhibitions that the participants may feel (Murphy et al., 1992; Bloor et al., 2001). The setting is a factor that impacts on the atmosphere created within the discussion and given that the focus group should encourage people to share their experiences in an open and honest manner, it is vital that the participants feel no threat of judgement or disapproval (Porcellato et al., 2002). Prior to conducting the focus groups it was necessary to make contact with the 'gatekeepers' (i.e., a person that provides and maintains access to cases within the research setting) at the four clubs. During this contact it was emphasised that there was a need for a setting that ensured privacy. This was to make sure that the players felt that they could talk openly and honestly to me, without the clubs' coaches and staff interrupting the fluency of the discussion. Three of the four focus groups were conducted within the classrooms of the clubs' training complexes and were viewed as familiar settings for the players. One further focus group was conducted in an executive box in the club's stadium. The settings were all appropriate for the focus groups, apart from the fact that I had to re-arrange the furniture and seating arrangements, but this did not cause any adverse logistical problems.

3.6.1.2 Group Composition

The aims of the focus group sessions were structured within the domain of professional football, which made the identification of the subject group a relatively simple procedure. However, given that there are three age groups within the Football Scholar classification, it was necessary to explore a diverse range of the cohorts' opinions. A decision had to be made with regards to the exact group composition. It was decided that three 1st year, two 2nd year and two 3rd year Football Scholars would be requested for each focus group as this represented a cross-section of the population. A separate focus group could have been conducted with each age group of players, but the ability for participants to be able to interact and exchange views on current and past experiences is considered an important element (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999) in generating interaction. Similarly, the sharing of experiences between the age groups appeared appropriate for the study. The group size was restricted to seven, apart from the focus group with club B (n=8), which all fall between the guidelines for appropriate participant numbers (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999). These commentators suggested that when the group size exceeds eight, there is the likelihood that the in-depth probing of participants, described as a unique trait of the focus group, may be restricted. Ultimately, this might impact on the quality of the research findings.

Commentators have also suggested that if one is to achieve freedom of expression from the subjects within the focus group, then the group composition should preferably be homogeneous with respect to certain socio-demographic characteristics (i.e., Murphy et al., 1992; Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999; Bloor et al., 2001). The Football Scholars within the professional football clubs possessed a number of

homogeneous characteristics. All were male, aged between 16 to 18 years and were employed as Football Scholars. It was felt that the pre-existing nature of the group composition would facilitate flow and interaction throughout the focus groups (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999).

3.6.1.3 Recruitment of Participants

The recruitment of participants for this study was influenced significantly by the research question and group composition. In other fields of research (i.e., health & marketing), the researcher can often contact the participants directly for recruitment purposes. In order to gain access to the football scholars in the present study, the researcher had to identify and contact a 'gatekeeper' within each of the professional football clubs. This was achieved by sending a letter to both the Academy Director and Head of Education and Welfare at each of the four professional football clubs (see Appendix B). The content of the letter outlined the rationale for the research and the precise requirements in order to conduct the focus group. Although the requirements were specified within the letter, it was necessary to trust the professional judgement of the 'gatekeeper' with respect to the identification and selection of participants. The dependency on the gatekeeper for recruitment purposes may have restricted specific choice of players', but this was an uncontrollable factor. In recruiting participants for focus groups, Kitzinger and Barbour (1999) suggest that it is also necessary to inform them of the general area of discussion. This prior priming is important, but conversely it has also been highlighted that disclosing too much information to the participants could serve to contaminate the focus group by restricting the spontaneous reactions of the participants (Silverman, 2000). These factors were considered in the letters and follow up conversations that I had with the 'gatekeepers' in the clubs. I

also asked the players' prior to starting the focus groups if they were happy to engage in the research and made it explicit to them that they could withdraw at any time, which acted as verbal informed consent (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999).

3.6.1.4 Number and Duration of Focus Groups

Four focus groups were conducted for the study in order to gain a more diverse range of perceptions, attitudes and beliefs towards the structural themes under invesitgation. With regards to focus group duration, Murphy et al. (1992) suggested that the ideal time should be between 1-3hours. Given that the gatekeeper had informed me of the limited time that was available in the Football Scholars' weekly timetable, it was suggested that the focus group would not exceed 1-½ hours.

3.6.1.5 Constructing the Focus Group

Careful consideration and planning was given to preparing the content and structure of the focus groups. A number of meetings were held with my supervisory team that had previously utilised focus groups as a research technique (see Appendix B for draft versions), and resonate with McFee (1992) who highlighted the effectiveness of within methods triangulation. These meetings helped to stimulate critical discussion on the preliminary issues that had been identified through the analysis of the fieldwork. Through a continual process of reflection and discussion it was decided that five issues should be explored with the players (i.e., Role of the Academy, Role & Responsibilities of a Football Scholar, Typical Player Characteristics, Developmental Support Mechanisms & Progression Characteristics). It was also felt that the players would be more willing to discuss *generic* developmental issues at the beginning of the focus groups (i.e., Role of the Academy), rather than the more

personal issues evidenced in the latter phases (i.e., views on Academy staff as developmental support mechanisms). This 'easing-in' aimed to facilitate the moderator-participant relationship and a free-flow of conversation that are crucial components of a focus group (Bloor et al., 2001).

3.6.1.6 Moderator Training

Commentators have stressed the importance of the moderator in the logistical operation of the focus group (Trenkner & Achterberg, 1991; Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999; Bloor et al., 2001; Porcellato et al., 2002). Specifically, the moderator's skill, perceptiveness and sensitivity may determine the depth and relevance of the findings obtained (Murphy et al., 1992). In particular, Trenkner and Achterberg (1991) emphasise the significance of listening and directive skills for the success of the focus group. In this sense, I felt that it was crucial to further enhance my listening skills that led me to engage in a 10-week course in Counselling Skills. This course positioned 'listening skills' as a central element of the learning experience. The person centred-approach to counselling (Rodgers, 1975) was the principal literature that guided this form of training. To further supplement moderator training, I adopted the role of scribe as a colleague conducted a focus group, which served to familiarise me with the procedural issues.

3.6.1.7 Focus Group Procedure

All focus groups were recorded using a dictaphone and lasted no longer than 1½ hours. Porcellato et al. (2002) emphasises the benefit of an 'ice-breaking' exercise prior to starting the focus group and in this respect, all participants in each focus group were asked to write their names on a piece of card, place it on the desk and

briefly introduce themselves. This stimulus exercise had a dual purpose. It aimed to decrease participant anxiety, whilst also enabled me to identify and speak to the players' by their names. In line with the past research by Porcellato et al. (2002) and the comments of Kitzinger and Barbour (1999) a detailed explanation of the rationale, procedure and ground rules was made explicit to the participants prior to the start of each focus group. Additionally, the players were informed that they were the experts and that all of their opinions and perceptions were important and valued (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999). The notion of confidentiality was discussed and I emphasised that a generic report was being provided to club, but that individuals would not be identified in the report. Specific clarification and elaboration probes were also used to ensure consistent depth of questioning across the focus groups (Scanlan et al., 1989).

3.6.1.8 Participants

A total of 29 Football Scholars from four elite level English professional football clubs participated in 4 single-sex focus groups and are represented in Tables 3.1-3.4. To ensure participant and club confidentiality, names and specific details have been omitted. The coding system devised to identify the player, year of Scholarship and club name and subsequently used in the process of transcription, analysis and representation is illustrated in the tables. In addition, pseudonyms were used, specifically in the results section, when the players referred to their peers and staff within their club environment.

Table 3.1: Participant details of Club A

Participant Number (P)	Year of Scholarship	Age	Gender	Nationality	Living Arrangements Home (H), Club Housing (CH)	Club Code	Complete Player Code
P1	3	19	M	Welsh	CH	A	P1 (Y3A)
P2	3	19	M	Scottish	CH	A	P2 (Y3A)
P3	1	17	M	English	H	A	P3 (Y1A)
P4	2	18	M	English	CH	A	P4 (Y2A)
P5	2	18	M	English	CH	A	P5 (Y2A)
P6	1	17	M	English	H	A	P6 (Y1A)
P7	1	17	M	English	CH	A	P7 (Y1A)

Table 3.2: Participant details of Club B

Participant Number (P)	Year of Scholarship	Age	Gender	Nationality	Living Arrangements Home (H), Club Housing (CH)	Club Code	Complete Player Code
P1	1	17	M	Welsh	CH	B	P1 (Y1B)
P2	1	17	M	English	CH	B	P2 (Y1B)
P3	1	17	M	English	CH	B	P3 (Y1B)
P4	3	19	M	Rep Ireland	CH	B	P4 (Y3B)
P5	2	18	M	English	H	B	P5 (Y2B)
P6	3	19	M	English	H	B	P6 (Y3B)
P7	2	18	M	English	H	B	P7 (Y2B)
P8	2	18	M	English	CH	B	P8 (Y2B)

Table 3.3: Participant details of Club C

Participant Number (P)	Year of Scholarship	Age	Gender	Nationality	Living Arrangements Home (H), Club Housing (CH)	Club Code	Complete Player Code
P1	3	19	M	Rep Ireland	CH	C	P1 (Y3C)
P2	1	17	M	English	H	C	P2 (Y1C)
P3	3	19	M	Welsh	CH	C	P3 (Y3C)
P4	2	18	M	English	H	C	P4 (Y2C)
P5	2	18	M	English	H	C	P5 (Y2C)
P6	1	17	M	English	H	C	P6 (Y1C)
P7	1	17	M	English	H	C	P7 (Y1C)

Table 3.4: Participant details of Club D

Participant Number (P)	Year of Scholarship	Age	Gender	Nationality	Living Arrangements Home (H), Club Housing (CH)	Club Code	Complete Player Code
P1	1	17	M	English	CH	D	P1 (Y1D)
P2	1	17	M	English	CH	D	P2 (Y1D)
P3	1	17	M	Scottish	CH	D	P3 (Y1D)
P4	2	17	M	Scottish	CH	D	P4 (Y2D)
P5	2	18	M	N. Ireland	CH	D	P5 (Y2D)
P6	3	19	M	English	CH	D	P6 (Y3D)
P7	3	19	M	English	CH	D	P7 (Y3D)

3.6.1.9 Analysis of Data

Focus groups can produce very large amounts of rich and dynamic data that make the data analysis process extremely time consuming (Knodel, 1993). A number of analytical techniques exist for such data, which include a conversational analysis approach (Myers & Macnaghten, 1999), approaches that focus on group dynamics (Kitzinger & Farquhar, 1999) and content analysis, which bears many similarities to analytic induction (Frankland & Bloor, 1999; Myers & Macnaghten, 1999). The technique that was employed within the present study was (a form of) content analysis. Silverman (2001) describes this data analysis technique as a quantitative procedure, as responses are generally counted and assigned to specific categories. Wilkinson (1999) argues that content analysis is an inappropriate technique for analysing focus group data as it fails to capture the contextual dynamic. However, it is necessary to note that specific quantification elements of content analysis were not engaged in the present analysis. Instead, the technique was used to associate similar segments of conversation around specific deductive and inductive themes. These themes are presented and discussed in relation to their contextual meaning. The process ensures that data analysis is systematic and follows a number of pre-defined stages to ensure a balanced approach to analysis (Frankland & Bloor, 1999).

There were a number of procedures that I engaged in during the data analysis process that are now outlined. Firstly, each focus group was transcribed verbatim, which given the nature of focus group data, was an arduous and time-consuming process (Bloor et al., 2001). The participant number and different player nationalities within each focus group compounded the process and the complexity was heightened as players often responded simultaneously during the focus groups (Bloor et al., 2001).

Atkinson and Coffey (1996) note that the transcription process forms the early part of data analysis as it allows the researcher to become accustomed to the data. Transcription also serves to note patterns and themes of interest recurring in the data (Frankland & Bloor, 1999). The transcripts were then re-read and segments of the text were highlighted and assigned to a particular theme. This process is known as 'indexing' and was carried out throughout all focus group transcripts. The analysis was predominantly deductive in nature, as the data was analysed and assigned to specific themes that were the focus of the investigation. However, an inductive approach was also a feature of the data analysis process given that emerging conceptual elements need to be captured and explored (Biddle et al., 2001). With regards to the difference between inductive and deductive approaches to data analysis, Scanlan et al. (1989; p68) comments that:

> *"The deductive approach involves using a pre-determined set of themes and categories to organise the quotes [from within the transcripts], while the inductive approach allows the themes and categories to emerge from the quotes."*

Essentially, the manual indexing process served a number of functions. It enabled relevant phenomena to be noticed, examples collated and an analysis to be undertaken to find commonalities and differences (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). This systematic data analysis process then allowed the data to be interrogated to generate meaning in relation to the area of study (Biddle et al., 2001). To supplement the analysis process, there was also a rapporteur (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999) in attendance at each of the four focus groups whose aim was to observe and record his views on the issues that were discussed. A de-briefing exercise was carried out immediately after each focus group, which allowed different viewpoints to be critically discussed (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999). Triangulation procedures were also embraced, which in this context,

refers to the inclusion of experienced qualitative researchers acting as critical friends to question the meanings, interpretations and constructions that emerged from the analysis phase (Patton, 1990).

In accordance with Bloor et al. (2001) the following section interweaves segments of verbatim conversation from the range of focus groups that demonstrate their contextual and dynamic features. This representational decision also allows the players' voices to be acknowledged from within the focus groups so that changing points of view can be traced through the transcript (Bloor et al., 2001).

3.7 Results and Discussion: Study 2 Part II

The results for the study are presented as follows. The rationale for each *structural theme* is firstly introduced, which was achieved through the analysis of the fieldwork process. The slides that were utilised within the focus groups are then presented to illustrate their design and specific content. Following this, the analysis of the primary data from the focus groups is offered and synthesised alongside appropriate literature where applicable. It is important to note that the structural themes are presented and discussed in the order that they were explored within the focus groups. A number of emergent themes were generated from the focus groups that were not the central focus of the inquiry, but this is regarded as a distinct feature of qualitative research that has to be attended to by the researcher (Silverman, 2000). These 'emergent' themes were therefore viewed as central to the players' lives and are included in the subsequent analysis and discussion.

3.7.1 Role of the Academy

The first structural theme that was explored with the Football Scholars was the generic role of the Academy. The decision to explore this theme was because it was viewed as a non-confrontational issue and would also provide a topic that the players' could easily relate to and feel comfortable discussing.

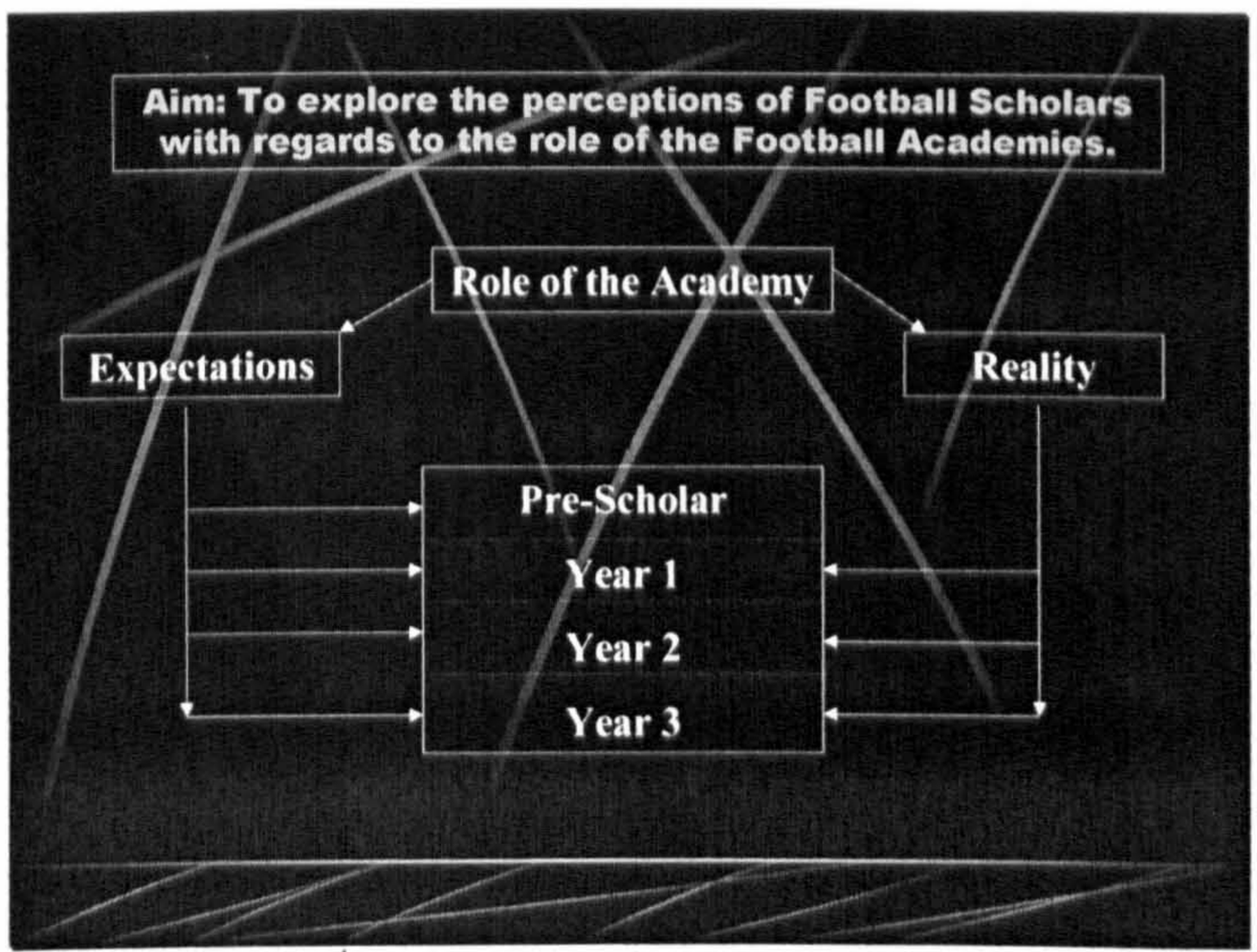

Figure 3.2: 1st theme that aimed to explore the perceptions (i.e., expectations and realities) of Football Scholars with regards to the role of the football Academy.

The players' within all focus groups identified that the central purpose of an Academy system was to 'develop' and 'produce players for the 1st team', which is congruent with the objectives of the Charter for Quality (1997). Although this perception was widely acknowledged within the data, some players also addressed the role of the Academy from an individual perspective. It was suggested that the experience could be used to develop qualities to be used as a 'stepping-stone' for an alternative career if one was unsuccessful in the pursuit of a professional contract.

The players' explicitly identified the central aim of the Academy at each club, but as conversation progressed within each of the focus groups a number of distinct themes emerged that appeared to be central to their lives. The following segments of data reveal the 'localised' issues at each club and highlight the contextual nature of the

conversations that took place within the separate focus groups (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999).

Players' in club A identified that some players in the Academy were 'over ambitious' with regards to their rate of progression, which was influenced by 'comparisons' that were made to players at other professional clubs of a similar age. It was thought that players that were making 1st team appearances for other professional football clubs was linked to the perceived status of the club, a factor that may be influenced by the philosophy regarding youth player progression. Specific reference was also made to the number of professional players that club A employed, which may be considered a barrier to future progression.

P2 (Y3A): I mean we enjoy it but I don't think, I think some of us are over ambitious in were we want to be at this time, you know what I mean? Some of the 2nd years are wanting to play in the reserves and some of us, the 3rd years are wanting to play in the reserves, whereas the first team [players] are coming back [from injury] and wanting games.
P4 (Y2A): I think the thing is though, I think from our point of view is that a lot of us see like say [player name], who is your [P3] age, you see him playing for [other club name] first team and you're thinking you know we've played against him, players like that....
P2 (Y3A): I mean we see players at other clubs breaking through, like the [player name] at [club name] and [player name] at [club name] and we've played against them this year, well they're still playing 19's and pushing for reserves.
P4 (Y2A): I mean what you've gotta realise is that we're at [club A] aren't we?
P5 (Y2A): I mean there's just so many players, there's a massive first team squad and a big reserve...
P1 (Y3A): The 1st years brilliant coz there's no pressure on you, you play games, you enjoy it you play in the same age and that, the second year you step up to the 19's coz you're a year older, it's just the third year ...
P2 (Y3A): Coz basically after the Christmas in the 2nd year until after the Christmas in the 3rd year the pressure is just unbelievable, the pressure that's on you, coz your pushing for a new contract, your pushing to get into the reserves.

Localised themes also emerged in the focus group at club C as players' talked about 'staying realistic' and utilising the experience for different purposes (i.e., education). The nature of the football industry in terms of progressing to the 1st team level was

identified as 'hard' due to the 'global expansion of English football'. This latter point was an explicit reference to the acquisition of 'foreign players', which made it difficult for Academy players to progress[9]. However, an alternative perception was that players' would progress if they were deemed 'good enough' in terms of their ability. Holistic player development (i.e., concerned with technical, tactical, physical, psychological & social characteristics) also appeared to be an occupational feature within the Academy at club C. Such an approach is highlighted as an area of good practice by professional clubs (Richardson et al., 2004).

P4 (Y2C): I think the first thing is from a club's point of view is to develop players for the 1st team but individually it's try and become a pro footballer, but if not develop as a person and use it as a stepping-stone for a different career or different club.
ML: Is that what you expected before you joined the club?
P4 (Y2C): Yeah, before I joined I never really expected, well it's an aim but I never really expected, I don't expect as much to go right through the ranks to the 1st team. I usually you know stay realistic and say if I don't make it to the 1st team, use it as a stepping stone for another club or if it doesn't work out in football, to use the education for going to University or something.
P7 (Y1C) I think the majority of people who come here don't expect to get through to the 1st team so.
P1 (Y3C): It's so hard isn't it, everyone's gone global football like coz they bring all the foreigners in and things like that so it's so hard for the academy players, but if you're a good player you'll make it like because people have shown it, so you've just got to keep working hard and see what happens, if you're good enough you're good enough.
P3 (Y3C): I think before I came here I expected them to concentrate more on football but there's more concentration on developing as a person, so when you leave here you've got your own standards and you don't drop below them, you got to set an example to everyone around you.
P4 (Y2C): The 1st year, I didn't expect it to be so emotionally draining the 1st year because we're coming into a place were, I mean there was older lads I mean lads like 2 or 3 years older than you and you're coming in straight from school were you're around all your mates and you've got to come in here everyday. I mean it's good training but the first few months just wears you out and then the college on top of that and trying to improve and push on it all just gets on top of you a bit, but that's like the test at the beginning whether you can get through that.

[9] The notion of 'foreign players' is acknowledged, but this is addressed in greater detail in sub-section 3.7.5.1 - Barriers to Progression.

The analysis of the focus group data from club B also revealed that the 'lack of opportunities' to perform at a higher level in the club structure impinged on 'personal enjoyment' within the Academy. However, other cases suggest that the reality of life as a Football Scholar upon initially joining the club was clear. In some cases this raises the issue of whether pre-Scholarship awareness training was made available to the players. These findings resonate specifically with Bourke's (2002) discussion on 'culture shock' that young Irish football players' experienced on initially signing for English professional football clubs.

P5 (Y2B): You're expected to get chances at all levels but some people don't
P7 (Y2B): I was expecting to enjoy it more.
P8 (Y2B): I wasn't expecting to enjoy it, I thought it was going to be boot camp man. Leaving home and that
P5 (Y2B): Do you know the Academy...is the whole idea of an Academy is supposed to like make you not do jobs and things like that?
P5 (Y2B): To bring the players through, coz we have to do jobs and all that and hoover and clean boots but if we didn't do that we'd be in the gym pumping iron...and we'd be bigger and stronger and it'd help us with our football or we could go on the field and practice our skills, but we're cleaning boots instead, how does that help us with our football?
P6 (Y3B): I think if you're given chances it's more enjoyable, but if you're not given chances then you don't....
P5 (Y2B): If things are going good it's good, but when you're down they just kill you. They destroy your confidence. It's so hard to get back after they've killed your confidence it's unbelievable...
P4 (Y2B): The main thing is that you should be enjoying yourself. You're young when you come over here. You're 16 you should just be totally enjoying yourself.
P6 (Y3B): But when you're in here everyday you don't enjoy yourself as much.
P6 (Y3B): All other people at the club, like the senior staff should show you a bit of respect and you show them respect and it should work both ways...

Similarities were expressed by players in club's C and D over their initial expectations of the role of the Academy and again correspond with Bourke's (2002) findings on the difficulties encountered by young Irish players' during their first year in England. These issues concentrated on the specific nature of the Football Scholarship programme as players' had expected to concentrate more on the 'football side' or

'technical' elements, rather than on other aspects of their development (i.e., 'personal/social' & 'mental').

P1 (Y1D): ... they're (coaches) big on the mental thing here.
P7 (Y3D): I thought it would be more technical than what it is like...
P6 (Y3D): You think it would just be football...
P7 (Y3D): They (coaches) go on about how it's 50% in your head like whatever, positive thinking and it's mainly mental and we do like the technical yourself really in the morning and obviously in the training, but it's more like you're doing it yourself in the gym...

A further component that emerged from the focus group analysis was concerned with the players' views on education. Education is a fundamental component of the Football Scholarship programme and offers players' a wide curricular choice and time in terms of academic and/or vocational interests. With the high attrition rate for players that enter the football industry at youth level (Walsh, 2005) it is deemed crucial that players' actively engage in educational based activities (FFE & VTS, 2002). Past research has documented the negative perceptions of education and behavioural difficulties of young football players in classrooms situations (Parker, 2000) and the views expressed in the range of focus groups shed further light on these findings. From a thematic perspective the players' predominantly expressed negative views on education and college, and provided a number of explanations. In this sense, education was regarded as 'boring' and as time taken away from engaging in training and football related activities. Some players suggested that they were simply not interested in education and viewed time at college as a period to 'rest' or 'piss about'. It was also felt that having to complete homework and coursework for college added further 'pressure' during their period on the Scholarship programme. Conversely, education in club C was discussed positively. This may be due a greater self-awareness of the role and value of education or possibly due to the individuals that were selected by the gatekeepers.

P4 (Y2C): If it doesn't work out in football, to use the education for going to University or something...I mean now that all this business is happening with ITV aswell, even more players are going to come in thinking they're not going to have a lower division team to fall back on if they don't make it here, so I think using your education is even more important now because there's going to be more people having to branch of into other occupations.
P7 (Y1C): It gives you a good stepping-stone like to go onto university or college or another job or something if you don't make it at football.
P4 (Y2C): It's not just a stepping stone, it's getting injuries, I mean there are always people that are going to get injured or just get distracted from football and the education here is a good, you know it sets you up for what you want to do, if you want to go abroad and go to university or stay locally and go to university.
P1 (Y3C): Obviously we, it wouldn't be our choice, we'd rather play football every morning but we have to do it so you might aswell get your head down and get the qualification if we have to do it.
P5 (Y2C): Yeah, it's a must, you have to do it. It's give me an option now to go over to America and a great opportunity to go to university and that so yeah, you've got to do it.

3.7.2 Role and Responsibilities of a Football Scholar

This theme was identified from the analysis of the fieldwork process that is illustrated in Figure 3.3. This highlights that the non-football related responsibilities was an issue of concern for some Football Scholars. The guidelines for the fulfilment of menial chores are noticeably absent within the official scholarship guidance booklet and record of achievement pack that is provided for every Football Scholar by the FFE & VTS. However, Lally (2004) suggests that issue is left to the discretion of the club in terms of how they interpret occupational related duties. Although some players within the fieldwork accepted specific occupational duties (i.e., cleaning professional players' boots) as a form of 'grounding' in professional football, other players expressed a negative attitude and perception toward the menial chores that they engaged in, which formed the rationale for exploring this theme with the players.

Raw Data	1st Order Themes	General Dimension
P15 - The club has just recently signed a French goalkeeper on the Football Scholarship scheme. On his way out to training with the goalkeeping coach a comment is made by the coach about the player **not having any jobs to do at the club yet**, which sparks a response from a senior professional **'the lads don't do any jobs anyway'.**	Professional perception of Scholars role	Role & Responsibilities of a Football Scholar
P41 - Lee commented that **'we shouldn't have to do jobs,** I mean I don't mind cleaning boots because everybody's always done that kind of thing, but cleaning toilets, that's for fuckin cleaners in it'. He further commented that 'the 1st Years get the fuckin piss taken out of them with jobs, I fuckin hated bein a 1st Year'. P41 - Ryan goes on to say that they (current FS) think that they have **got it hard at the club because of all the jobs that they have to do**, both at the training ground and at the stadium. He also says that at other clubs, the FS do not have to do any jobs and that one club employ a full-time boot cleaner who does all the professionals boots.	Football/Non-football related jobs	
P66 - I have a conversation with Eric Wood (1st YFS), who is a very quiet and introverted person. Eric says that he is looking forward to going home after the game tomorrow, to see his family and friends. He also comments that he finds **it hard coming back to the club after he has been home**. P117 - Waiting for lunch - Robbie Price (1st YFS) - *'I thought I'd find it harder at the club in my 1st year having to train everyday and then play at the weekends, because before coming to the club I only used to train twice a week and then play at the weekends, but I've found it alright'.*	Adapting to life/demands of Football Scholarship	

Figure 3.3: Analysis of fieldnotes to generate 2nd structural focus group theme

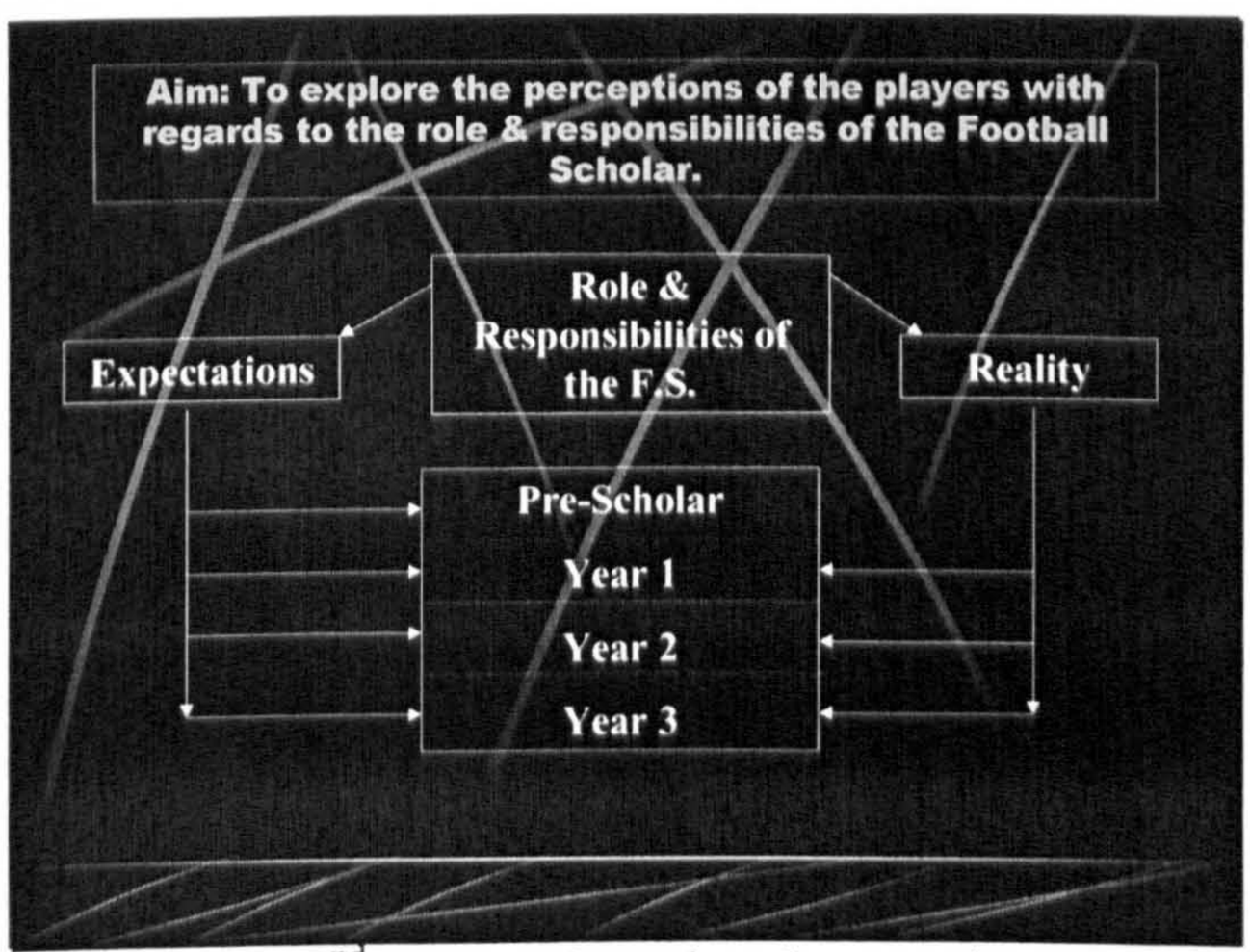

Figure 3.4: 2nd theme that aimed to explore the perceptions (i.e., expectations & realities) of the players with regards to the role and responsibilities of the Football Scholar.

The players identified a number of both 'generic' and 'club specific' responsibilities within their role as Football Scholars. The players at clubs' B and D made reference

to the 'jobs' (i.e., cleaning boots, preparing training equipment & cleaning changing rooms) that they had to engage in and expressed concern over their rationale and perceived transferable benefit (i.e., off the field jobs influencing on field jobs). Indeed, it seems quite illogical to suggest that there is a direct link between non-performance and performance related responsibilities, but it was felt that coaches' were trying to instil 'discipline' as the following citation explains.

P7 (Y3D): They are trying to make you look after things and appreciate things. They don't think that we [Academy players] do so they kind of make you and if you do. If the balls aren't pumped up and they [coaches] run you, "...that'll make sure you don't do it again and you'll make sure they're pumped up next time."

It was also suggested by the players' in club D that their jobs were withdrawn as they entered the 3rd year of the Scholarship scheme, in order to allow a greater amount of time to be spent on individual development, given the fact that they were "...going for a pro contract." Except for the apparent 'softening' of occupational duties with age, the findings again mirror those of Parker (1995) who suggests that the players in his study felt their 'menial' duties were also irrelevant in terms of their development as players. More specifically, Parker discusses the notion of 'discipline' and links this to wider industrial issues. Given the advancement in occupational indenture within professional football since Parker's research in the early 1990s (i.e., introduction of Academies and Football Scholarship programme) the menial practices still seem to be prevalent in the football industry with seemingly (perceived) little benefit for those individuals that engage in them.

Player 'behaviour' was a further issue that was identified within the focus groups and in particular the players' at clubs A and C. Specific reference was made to the expected standard of player behaviour in club housing (i.e., digs), at college and away

from the club as they were viewed as ambassadors for the club. The perceived rationale for these standards of behaviour was identified, which concentrated on 'giving the club a bad name' and 'the club's reputation'.

P5 (Y2A): They [Academy staff] like make you try an, coz of the school and that, it's mixed and things like that they try and make you be responsible and like not mess about at school and not look as if you're being...
P7 (Y1A): Coz everyone looks up to you and....
P5 (Y2A): They [Academy staff] say that everyone looks up to you and things like that....
P4 (Y2A): I think to be fair to the club with the goin' out thing, is that at the end of the day you like what happened to [player name] this season and no matter what, if people find out that we're [Club A] players and we get into trouble, no matter who we are all the paper has to put is that a [Club A] player was out causing trouble....and they don't want to get the club a bad name coz of us and they don't want us to get in trouble, so they have to protect themselves and say you can't go out in town.
P7 (Y1C): You've got to behave well, in the Academy, you've got to behave well coz if you don't they know straight away and you're giving the club a bad name and they make sure that you know. They tell you not to be messing around and...
P4 (Y2C): I think it's the responsibility off the pitch aswell, I mean Terry (Head of Education & Welfare) said how you carry yourself around the place and around where you're from. I mean people do notice you and the word is going to get round and you're playing for a big club like [Club C] and the club won't stand for people who let down the club's reputation, the club's name. So it's always, I mean you have to make sacrifices not to go out boozing till all hours and that's just you know not a footballer's life you've got a different lifestyle. You've got to live your own lifestyle if you want to make it...

As noted above, a localised issue that the Scholars at club C highlighted was the sacrifices that they had to make if they wanted to become a professional player. In this respect, the players suggested that the club had put an element of 'trust' in them by giving them the opportunity to become a professional football player, which meant that they had to adapt their lifestyle. This was viewed as a personal sacrifice that was a small price to pay for the major rewards that success in professional football could bring and was a feature that permeated the discussion in club C.

P7 (Y1C): It's like the club are giving you the opportunity to be a footballer and for them to teach you and if you don't give yourself the best chance they see that you're wasting the opportunity, you know say going out drinking and that you're not giving

yourself the best chance to make it, so you're letting yourself down and you're letting the club down for them like putting their trust in you to become a good footballer.
P2 (Y1C): You've got to be prepared to make the sacrifices really to be a player, that's what it comes down to at the end of the day, you've got to discipline yourself, that's what they drill into you, to not want to do it because they say but want to do it because you want to be the best and you want to be a player and that's what I'm learning to do now.
P1 (Y3C): That's what it is really, sacrifices coz me and Paul [another Academy player] had to sacrifice leaving family and friends for this opportunity and I'd like to think that we're giving it our best and like you don't leave home at 15 like we both did just to come here for 3 years, mess about and then go home with no qualifications. So sacrifices is a good word yeah.
P4 (Y2C): I think the sacrifices are minor though compared to the major rewards that you can get at the end of the day, I think giving up drink and fast foods is nothing compared to if you do make it as a professional footballer, the money and the lifestyle and I mean you're set up for life aren't you if you're on the money that is being splashed around nowadays. It's worth it.

A localised responsibility that emerged from the focus group with the players at club A was associated with 'performance responsibility'. It was suggested that they were expected to win their competitive matches in the Academy league. Club status was again highlighted as the issue that contributed to this expectation. Indeed the players also felt that the club's status (i.e., history, tradition) impacted on the coaches' ability to motivate them for competitive matches. It appeared that there was also an implicit responsibility for the Academy players to be like the club's 1st team.

P2 (Y3A): Being here [club A], it's difficult as well because allot of who you have got to play against they are all up for the game. You are going to get a difficult game no matter where you go...
P1 (Y3A): You're always expected to win aren't you?
P4 (Y2A): So I think for us, that's us responsibility because we are playing for [Club A] and we have got to expect that we are a team that everyone wants to beat.
P2 (Y3A): I think it is difficult for the coaches as well to motivate us sometimes because we cannot play against anybody bigger than ourselves, we are playin' lesser teams, if we're goin' to [opposition club name] to play we're expected to win no matter what, whereas [opposition club name] just say well we've not got any pressure on us.
P4 (Y2A): So it's a responsibility really to be like the first team in a way, not like them, but because it's the same, people still want to beat us no matter.

The responsibility of the individual (i.e., player) to learn was a further localised theme that surfaced from the focus group with the players at club A. It was suggested that

player learning was facilitated through the coaches and the Academy staff and would ultimately provide a base for a player's future in the game.

P4 (Y2A): But going on to the point that I think like that Michael [pseudonym] just said then, that we all like want to be in the first team and that's true, but we are at [Club A] and we supposedly got the best coaches and the best staff here. So if you use that for 3 years then you should have a good base for the future no matter where you go. And if you use it all to good effect then we are going to get somewhere else. If you haven't used it then obviously it's your own fault

3.7.3 Typical Player Characteristics

This focus group theme derived from two 1st order themes, 'physical versus technical characteristics' and 'recruitment philosophy' (see Figure 3.5) and was specifically concerned with exploring what the players' felt were important characteristics for the position of Football Scholar. The focus group slide explored perceptions towards technical, physical, psychological, social and intellectual characteristics[10].

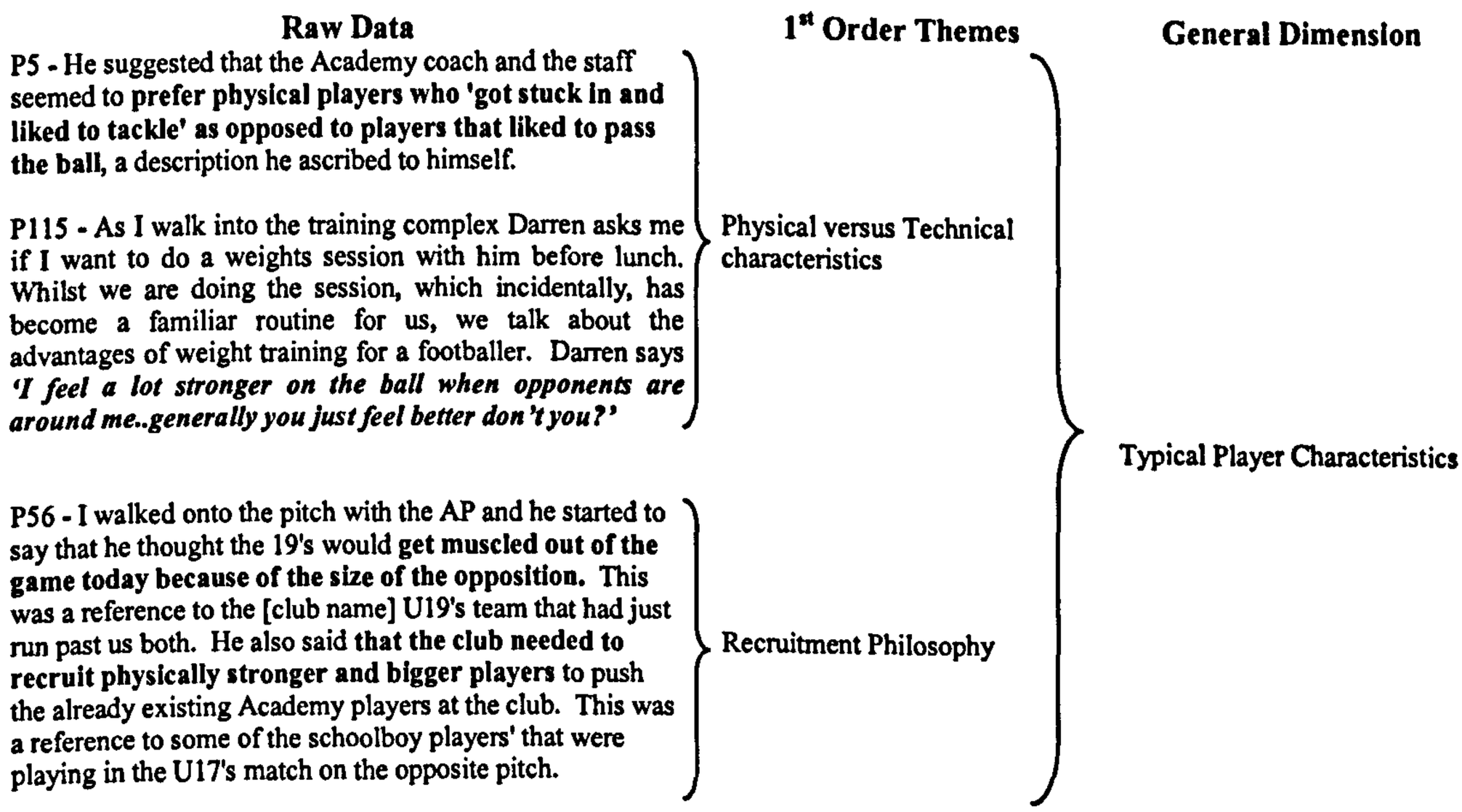

Figure 3.5: Analysis of fieldnotes to generate 3rd structural focus group theme

[10] This theme possesses similarities to the 5th focus group theme (Progression Characteristics) but attention was given to those factors deemed important in gaining a Football Scholarship.

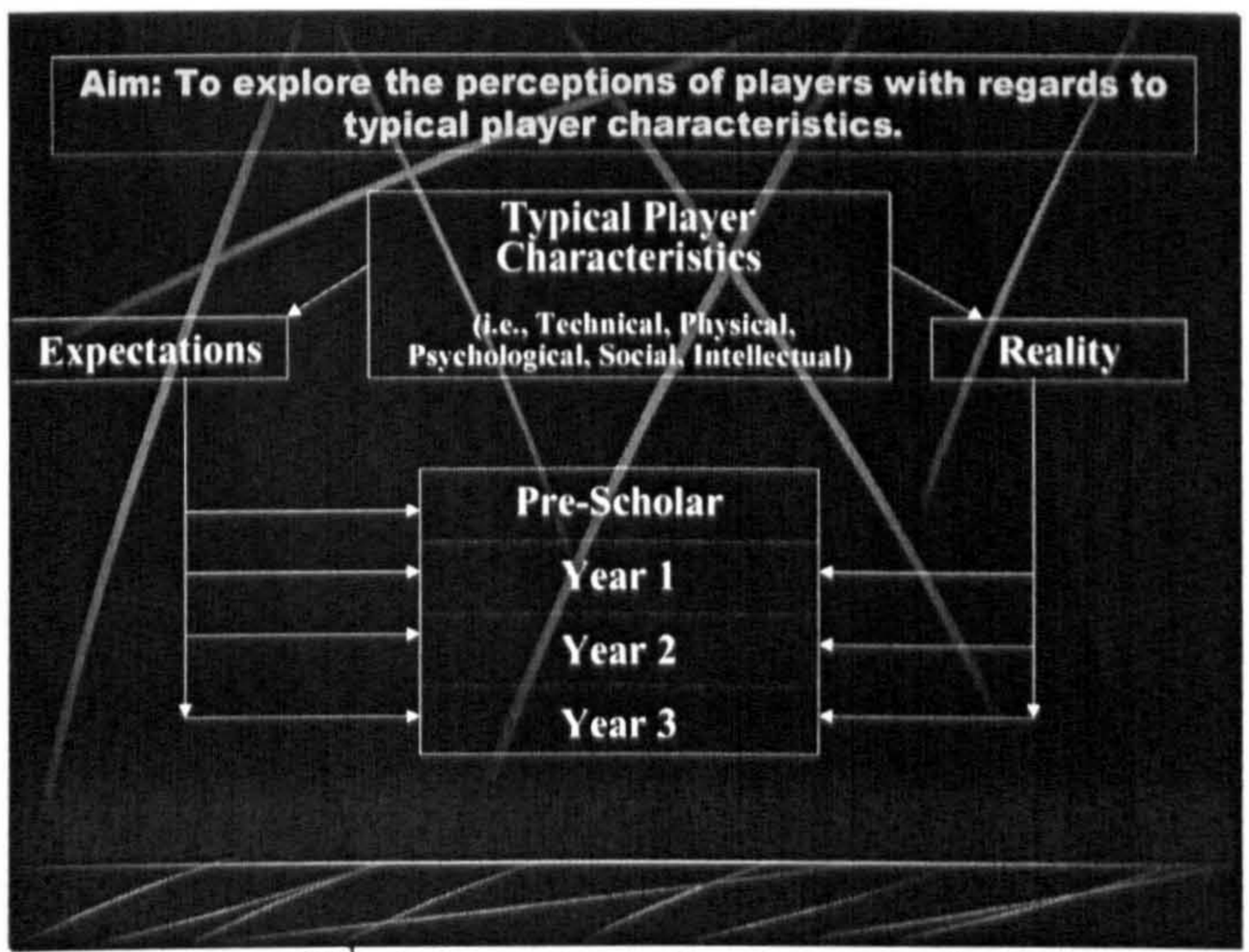

Figure 3.6: 3rd theme that aimed to explore the perceptions (i.e., expectations and realities) of players with regards to the typical player characteristics.

Technical Characteristics:

The players in all four focus groups identified 'technical characteristics', 'natural ability' and 'talent' as core requirements of a Football Scholar and suggested that they were expected to possess these characteristics in order to become a Football Scholar. The expectations on this dimension of development were said to increase by the coaching staff once players had been acquired on a full-time basis.

P2 (Y3A): I think everybody has to have the technical ability here to start with.
P5 (Y2A): Well that's the reason why you're here coz technically you're good….(P1,Y3A: You wouldn't be here otherwise would you)…coz the rest you can always build on, you build on your technical thing but you gotta have talent to get here first and to be seen.
P2 (Y1B): You've got like the natural ability…
P2 (Y1C): I think that's expected of you when you come here, but you do learn from a young age like. Everyone wasn't as good technically as they are now when they first came coz you do develop it, but everyone I think has the basic technique when they first come. So like it doesn't really take much to learn the technique of the game coz most players that come here are gifted aren't they.
P7 (Y3D): With the technical I think when they (club) are looking at bringing Scholars in they obviously want to see if they've got some like good ability, but they want to see if they can improve them as well. Coz sometimes they just get athletes in and think we can teach them how to play football and that and do the technical bit later, just get the basics first.
P1 (Y3C): Whether they work hard enough, whether they're good off the field, whether they do the right things, eat the right foods and things like that, so as soon as you come in it all changes really, but when you're 14 and, you're a good footballer you come in they expect a lot more than to be just a good footballer

It was also suggested that players' who enter the professional football environment in their 1st year might be somewhat 'naïve' in terms of understanding occupational related expectations. The FFE & VTS scholarship guidance booklet maintains that all newly acquired players engage in a comprehensive induction process to outline the specific features of the role. Rather than engage in a prescriptive technical introduction to the profession, it may also be pertinent to position a tailored educational package alongside this process, which may alleviate some of the misguided assumptions that some players possess. Such an approach would appear to concur with Bourke's (2002) views on pre and post-arrival arrangements for players entering the world of professional football given the adjustment related difficulties that were reported by the players in her study.

Psychological Characteristics:

The following conversational dialogue appears to suggest that psychological characteristics are a core element of professional football. Being 'mentally strong' was (again) linked to the status of the club. This suggests that players require a sound psychological dimension due to the number of both performance and non-performance related situations that they have to cope with. In essence, just being affiliated with the club appears to bring with it an implicit responsibility and expectation.

P4 (Y2A): I think everybody has to have that will to win especially playing for [Club A].
P1 (Y3A): You got to be strong mentally.
P4 (Y2A): And I think that's something that they tell us we're not at the moment, we're not like tough mentally to see off teams, you know what I mean.
P4 (Y2A): But I think we've got to, that's something you have to have, but it's something you get as you get older.
P4 (Y2A): You're expected to cope with it, that's why they take us on trips abroad as well to cope with the different things that our 1st team have to cope with so that we get ready for it.

P1 (Y3A): There's so many different situations that you've got to cope with....
P2 (Y3A): I think that's good going abroad to play against other teams.

Although the psychological domain was generally recognised as a beneficial developmental feature given that it enhanced contextual understanding (Williams & Reilly, 2000), it was also identified as the 'hardest thing to grasp'. This may be due to the relative infancy that the discipline occupies within professional football (Pain & Harwood, 2004). It is felt that such issues (again) highlight the need for a more comprehensive induction programme (Bourke, 2002) to make players explicitly aware of the Scholarship package.

P2 (Y1C): That's the hardest thing to grasp like, the psychological has been the hardest for me this year because I didn't even think we'd do anything like this like I said before, it's just hard getting your head around it at first but it gets easier the more things you do.
P1 (Y3C): No, as I say I just expected to come in and play football everyday and play me matches on a Saturday and that was it but I never even thought about college or doing psychological courses or anything like that it was just like I wanted to play football all the time but I think it does help a lot. We've done a couple of courses and we've found out things about ourselves and others that have really helped us to get through games if you're feeling tired and even the teachers that have come in are really helpful.

P7 (Y3D): No, I didn't expect it to be as much as it is, it's a lot like...
P6 (Y3D): I think it's right when they do try and like change you like because for one minute you can be playing on the pitches here and like within like, it could be whenever you're playing in front of thirty thousand people couldn't you, so I think you've got to adapt to that and that's like a big thing. And you have got to change your attitude haven't you.

Physical Characteristics:

The discussion within the focus groups on the physical characteristics identified two distinct themes. The players' in club D noted that specific 'physical attributes' such as height and strength might be linked to the club's 'recruitment philosophy' for Academy players, which was being directed by the club's 1st team manager. These perceptions would appear to provide the empirical evidence to support the findings of

Malina et al. (2000) who report that coaches have a propensity to select players that are advanced in terms of morphological characteristics.

P4 (Y2D): They [generally speaking] say that, when we first came in this club's got a reputation for big players who can't play, like rock solid players who can't play football or anything just kick it long and just scrap out results, but like they've [Academy staff] tried to change it, well that's what they've said.
P7 (Y2D): You've got to be fast and that now as well, you've got to be reasonably fast, if you're slow you've got no chance. They didn't used to work on speed when we first came in but now like they do certain types of sessions where it's just all speed work. So they've seen that that's more important now, so there's more input.
P6 (Y3D): I'd have said that that would have come from higher up [1st team staff] aswell, they would have probably told, obviously the gaffer [1st team manager] down the bottom, coz he's gonna say what he wants coz he's looking for players in the next three or four years he won't be wanting small centre backs.
P5 (Y2D): The thing is as well like is that they [Academy players] come down here sometimes the wee lads when they're about nine [year old], get into the gym until about thirteen and pump the weights like...

In contrast, the discussion of physical characteristics by the players' at club C was focused on the 'physical demands of training', which were highlighted as being of a 'high intensity'. Reference was also made to the difficulty of combining college and training on the same day, but again suggested that it was a feature of the occupation that they had to adapt to if they were going to progress.

P2 (Y1C): It's [full-time training] dead demanding straight away, so demanding you wouldn't believe how demanding it is but it's like you say you get used to it, we do weights and that...
P4 (Y2C): You get munched physically but emotionally aswell...
P7 (Y1C): And with the college in a morning you think 'oh, it's college this morning I've got a day off', but you've still got to work hard in college for three hours then you've got to go out and train aswell, so it's not that easy at all.
P5 (Y2C): I think the higher you go aswell the more physical it gets so...

Social/Intellectual Characteristics:

It is important to note that not all focus group discussions entered into dialogue on this issue, but the players at club C did, and suggested that 'communication' and 'leadership

skills' were important social characteristics. It was felt that these could be applied in both a performance and non-performance context.

P2 (Y1C): I didn't really think they'd [Academy staff] have bothered with it but they have a lot. You've got to have good communication skills and you've got to be able to talk to people and socialise. And on the pitch you've got to be able to talk to your team-mates and you've got to learn to become a leader in your own right just by doing your best all the time. That's what they drill into you.

The views of the players' towards intellectual characteristics were somewhat mixed as discussion centred on the meaning of intelligence in the context of professional football. In this regard, intelligence was viewed from two different perspectives; one that viewed it as being effective in non-performance domains, and effective in a performance domain. The latter classification was termed 'football intelligence' and resonates with Singer and Janelle's (1999) research that points towards the ability of skilled players to analyse major facets of their opponents play. The contextual descriptions of these terms however would need to be examined further to demonstrate an explicit link.

P4 (Y2C): I think players nowadays though are getting more intelligent and intellectual. I think you need to know not just about the game of football but the business as well. I mean you need to know where all your money is going and properties and investments.
P4 (Y2C): It does help though. I mean even on the field if you're an intelligent lad off the field it will help you on the field. Just working situations out being streetwise and that.
P1 (Y3C): I think as well, people can be like very intelligent on the pitch and not be so in studies and things like that, coz I don't think I'm very good at computer courses and doing all my college work and all but on the pitch I feel that I'm quite bright, so like I don't know if intelligence comes into it really.
P1 (Y3C): Obviously it will help with your media studies and things like that but they've signed you because they know you're intelligent on the pitch and you know what to do.

It was also suggested by a player at club C that having a high intellectual capacity was not associated with producing better players, which highlighted an alternative perspective in conceptualising the understanding of the term.

3.7.4 Developmental Support Mechanisms

This theme was derived out of three 1st order themes, 'exposure to professional training methods', 'awareness of staff roles' and 'feedback from coaches', which is illustrated in Figure 3.7. Within a professional football club, players are exposed to a number of staff that specialise in their specific area of expertise (i.e., coaching, physiology, psychology, physiotherapy and education) and as such, all play a prominent role in the development of a player's talent characteristics. The views of the players' towards these developmental support mechanisms were therefore explored during the focus groups.

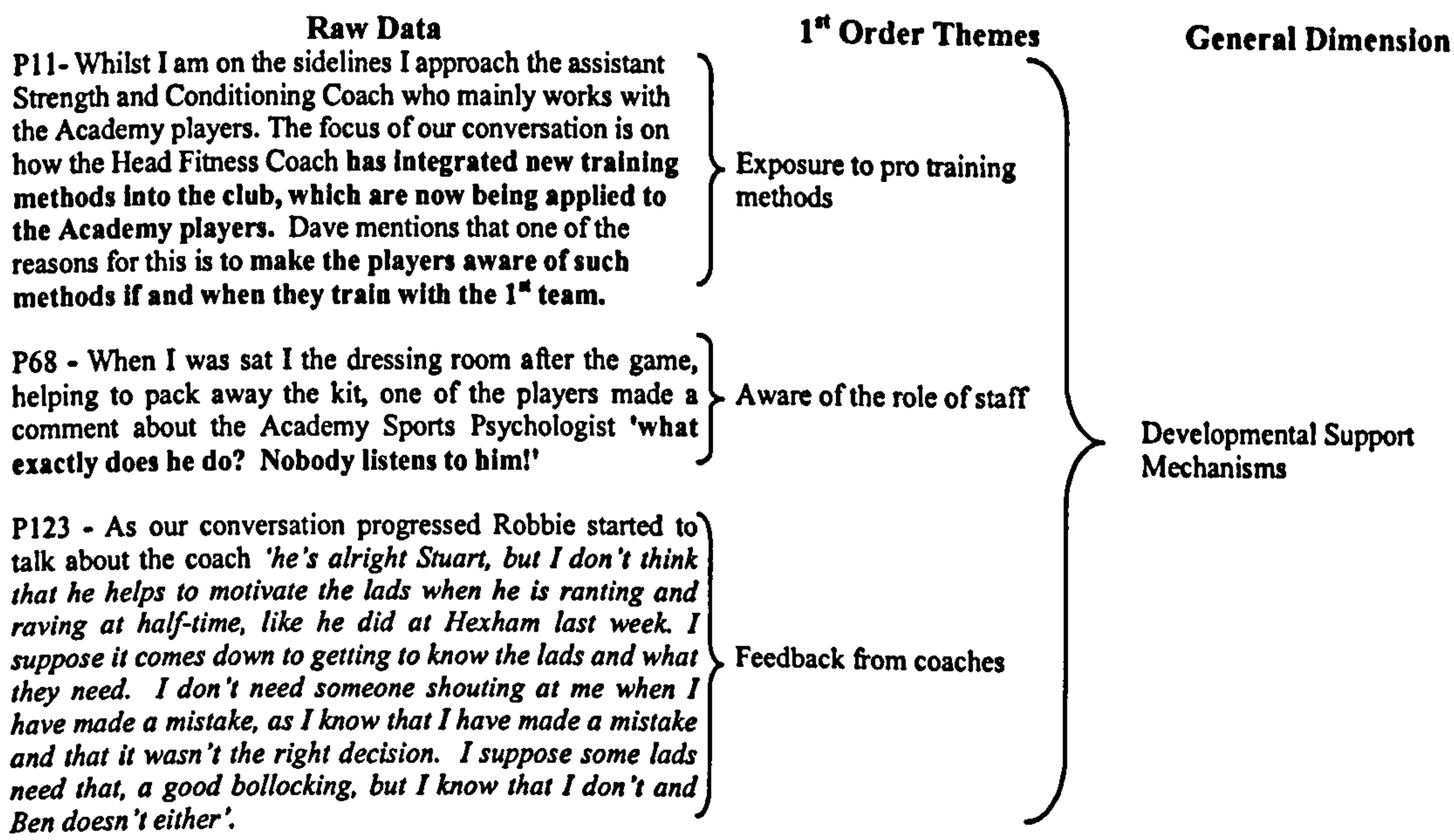

Figure 3.7: Analysis of fieldnotes to generate 4th structural focus group theme

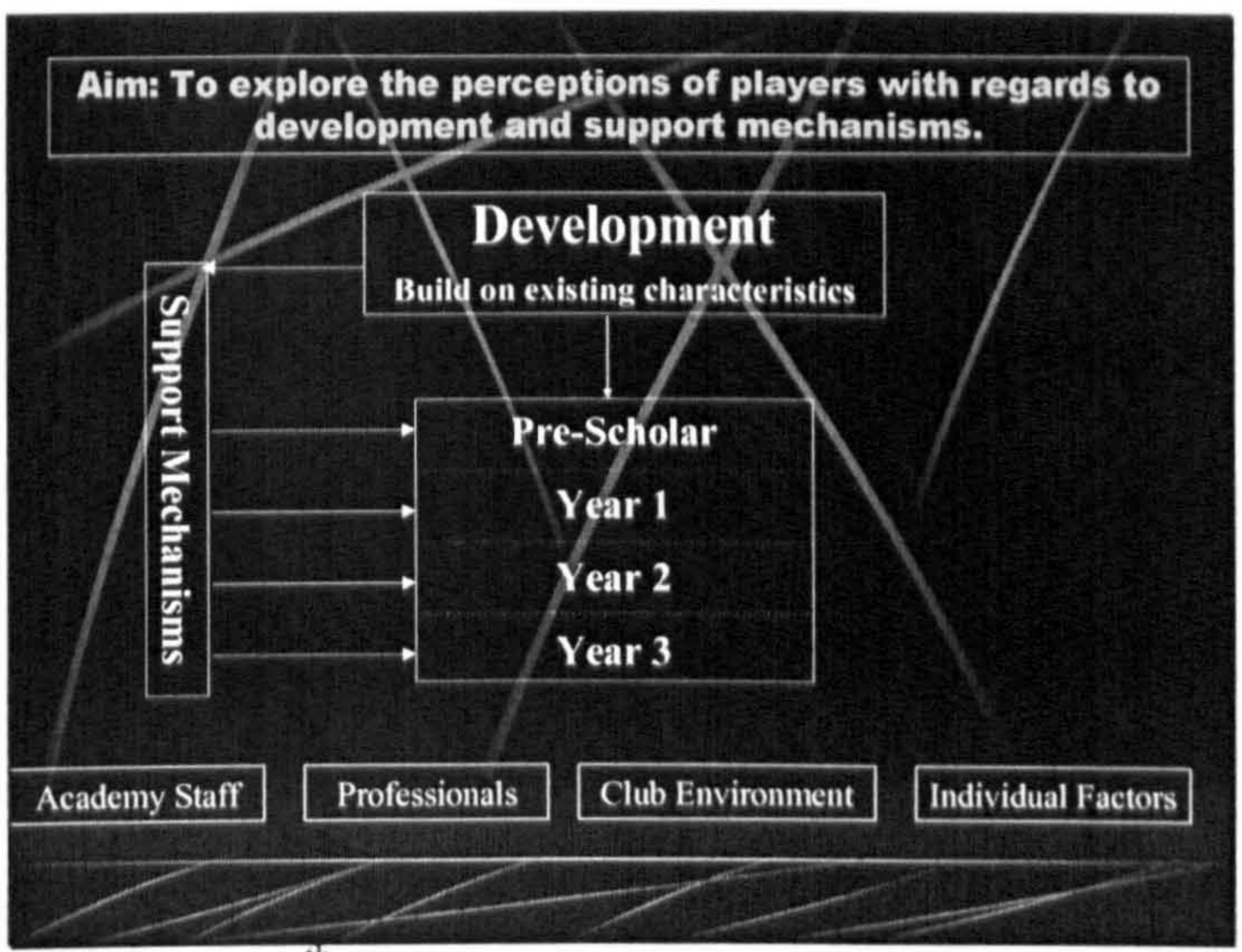

Figure 3.8: 4th theme that aimed to explore the perceptions of players with regards to the support mechanisms that exist within the club domain that affect their development (i.e., role of Academy staff, professionals, club environment and individual factors).

The discussion of this theme was focused around four separate sub-themes, which included the Academy staff, professional players, club environment and individual factors. In this sense, the aim was to uncover the players' perceptions on how these sub-themes impacted and influenced their development within their respective club domains. The role of the Academy staff is first presented and possesses a large amount of the conversation about the role of the coach in their period within the Academy.

Academy Staff:

The players in club A and D both expressed similar views towards the 'coaching style' of their respective under 17's coach as notions of 'discipline' and 'strictness' were both discussed (see Potrac et al., 2002). More specifically, the players' at club A felt that a more disciplined approach was intended to develop them 'mentally' in order to 'prepared them for the next level' (i.e., professional domain).

P2 (Y3A): The U17s coach is probably the best one to develop you. See when you come here in your 1st year, I'll use U17s coach as an example because when you come here in your 1st year he's a strict coach, he'll iron you out, takes all the badness out of you and he'll develop you the best he can but....
ML: In what ways would he develop you?
P4 (Y2A): Just mentally
P2 (Y3A): Mentally
P5 (Y2A): He'd try and change you from being a schoolboy into a professional footballer
P1 (Y3A): He'd prepare you for the next level sort of thing

Similarly, the players at club D also alluded to the notion of 'discipline' as a feature of their U17s coach, but suggested that the transition from under 17s coach to under 19s coach simulated a change in working atmosphere as training was more 'individualised' and they were encouraged to become more 'independent'.

P6 (Y3D): They [Academy staff] like, we're fortunate because we've got good staff, like good coaching staff we have got good coaches and that and I think when you come in your 1st year and you have Liam, he helps you a lot because he is a good coach and he disciplines you and that and it's better when you're coming in. But like when you leave the 1st year these (indicating to current 1st years) will probably find out next year it gets like, you go with the next coach and he's not as, because you've been disciplined in your 1st year and that and he's [U19s coach] not as strict is he? It's more of a like, (P1 Y1D:...it's more of a laugh like...)...you've gone through your development in your 1st year and 2nd year is more like that's when it should be more individual...(P7 Y3D:...it's more for you isn't it...)...most of the lads are 18 then and it's mainly like that I think.
P7 (Y3D): I thought they'd ask more of you like the further you went on but it's like, but really what they're saying is like it's up to you if you want to get further.
P6 (Y3D): It's like the leap after your 1st year but then you go on, not on your own but you should be more independent really, you should get on with it yourself, you know what you should do now and that.

In contrast to both these views, the players at club C suggested that the atmosphere that was created in the under 17's age group was 'relaxed' and became 'more serious' in the under 19's age group. This observation can be associated with Richardson's (1999) comments as he suggests that an increase in player age may be associated with a heightened level of expectation and a decrease in tolerance for failure from coaches. The players attributed this change in atmosphere to the closeness of the under 19's to

'the reserve team' and also because they were playing for 'another contract' (i.e., professional).

ML: How have you found moving from the 17s to the 19s coach? Are they different, different coaching styles? How have you found that as a player?
P5 (Y2C): The discipline like, in the 17s even though it's still serious, you can have a little laugh and a joke you know and all that, but now it's just no room for that really.
P7 (Y1C): Coz the 19s don't have a keeper this year coz Paul's at (1st team training ground) I have to slot between the sessions like and the difference it's much more serious like, there's no room for joking, I mean you can still have a laugh and that every now and again but in the 17s it's like much more relaxed and that but in the 19s it's much more focusing on the game ahead and being really serious and that.
P4 (Y2C): I think it's just that one step closer to the resses [reserve team],
P1 (Y3C): You're playing for another contract and you're playing to get a place in the reserves and trying to move up the ladder whereas at the 17s you always know that the 19s is next year and we can get there and then be serious like...
P7 (Y1C): They've [Academy] definitely got the coaches the right way around because the Under 17s coach has a laugh and takes it easy and he's still a good coach and everything, he gets everything done but when you get to under 19s, under 18s you know you've got to do it then, you know it's now or never, you've got to make the step.

A player in Club D also mentioned the issue of 'safety of next year' that was expressed above.

P6 (Y3D): ...like you go through your 1st year and in a way it's like, like your playing every week and you've got no competition and it's like it's easier in a way coz you know you're going to get picked for the games...

The players at club B did not discuss the differences in coaching style and atmosphere, as all Scholars (i.e., 1st to 3rd years) were exposed to the same coach on a regular basis.

A further theme that emerged from the focus groups was the issue of 'coach feedback'. In this respect, the players at club's A, C and D all suggested that coaches provided feedback and felt that they were 'openly accessible' in order to seek advice concerning their development and competitive performances. The following individual verbatim citations from the focus groups illustrate this point.

P1 (Y3A): You can just knock on their door for advice.

P1 (Y3C): The coaches are quite easy to talk to yeah, they'd be quite happy for you to go to them and they'd be quite happy for you to come to them and ask them questions about the game.

P4 (Y2D): Like they take you in sometimes like one-on-one and like talk you through like what you've done, your marking, like there's an A, B, C for the match and they'll tell you what like you've got to improve on, what you did well.

However, this was highlighted as an issue of concern for one player at club B and demonstrates the complexity of gaining feedback for some players who feel that they cannot approach a coach due to their personality and/or coaching style.

P8 (Y2B): When I got taken off, they [Academy coaches] don't ask you 'are you alright?' It's not 'you alright', it's nothing like that...not 'you feeling alright today?' They don't ask you, they don't say a word...they don't say a word. But if some of them asked and you don't know, you might not be feeling well, but we can't approach them and say 'oh, I don't feel well today'. 'Oh fuck off you fuckin' fanny, get some of that down you.'

Other club specific themes emerged from the focus groups as the players at club C suggested that the coaches largely focused on the negatives in their performances and rarely praised them.

P3 (Y3C): They concentrate more on the negatives than the positives from every game so like it's you improve on the negatives. So they don't want to give you too much praise in case you get big headed and like...
P7 (Y1C): After the game you won't hear the coach say 'you were fantastic today, you were brilliant well done'. They'll say 'you can do things better' and things like that.
P2 (Y1C): It's very like rare that they'll come in and say 'good performance that, I couldn't have asked for any more'.

This group of players also suggested that one of the hardest issues to come to terms with when they joined the club on a full-time basis was the way that the coaches spoke to them during a competitive game. This is consistent with the findings from Parker's (1995) research as he comments on the way that the youth team coach at Colby Town adopted an authoritarian approach to player management. The players mentioned that it was something that they had expected prior to joining the club as they had witnessed this form of behaviour by the coaches on previous occasions. It was felt that it

affected players in different ways, but was primarily dependent on a player's personality. They highlighted this as an issue that they had worked on with the coach during 'reflective exercises'. This was a psychological based educational element of the Scholarship programme that was managed internally by the club and provides an example of good practice in terms of increasing awareness of the impact of coaching behaviour on player development (see Richardson et al., 2004). The following text outlines the nature of the conversation that took place.

P5 (Y2C): I think one of the hard things when you first come in was when you were playing in the games, was how the coaches scream on at you (AGREEMENT HERE)...but like you've just gotta learn to deal with it and that, it's just one of the things to develop you.
P7 (Y1C): It affects different players though, coz some players it can help and some players it can make them go worse. Do you know what I mean? If you make a mistake maybe the last thing you want to do is someone bawling at you saying what you should be doing or what you should have done, but other people, they can listen to it and it can help them so they try and get you like that...
P7 (Y1C): The beginning of the season he [coach] was dead loud and he would shout on at the smallest thing like and really magnify it for the whole crowd to see and it makes you feel like a right idiot you know, when he bawls onto you like your deaf...(GROUP LAUGHTER)...and everyone was going on about it in the changing room how it was too much and then we do a thing called the 'reflective practitioner' and it was brought up in that and then we had a meeting with our coach, like Mark [pseudonym] said and we spoke to him about it and ever since that meeting he's been a different manager.

The players at club A also discussed issues that permeated the player-coach relationship and it was suggested that 'trust' was an important element. Similarly, Potrac et al. (2002) felt that it was essential to generate a respectful relationship with players. In the context of the focus groups it was felt that trust emerged from 'honesty' and 'respect', which they described as a feature of their relationship with the under 17s coach in the Academy.

P5 (Y2A): I don't think you should be friends with him [coach] or anything like that because he's your manager and you should...(P4, Y2A:...no I don't know, I think sometimes, I think sometimes)...you should be able to talk to him, but not like he's your mate.

P4 (Y2A): No I think sometimes you do need that because if you're getting on with them then they're gonna help, you know what I mean, I think that if you just like you can work better with them
P4 (Y2A): That's what I mean, if you know him better and you feel as though, I know Harry [Academy player], everyone gives him a bit of stick with U17s coach but I know Harry has gone back to him allot and spoke to him about contracts and things like that and it's good when you've worked with U17s coach in your 1st year, later on, say in your 3rd year and you're worried about something and you can go back to him...
P1 (Y3A): You feel like you can trust him.
ML: How do you establish trust?
P4 (Y2A): If you're honest
P5 (Y2A): If he respects you
P4 (Y2A): If you're honest as well as a player and not on and off the pitch

The coaches' 'training methods' was also a feature that was highlighted by the players in club's A and B as they suggested that occasionally the training methods were somewhat 'repetitive', which again is an issue that mirrors the findings of Parker (1995). There may be issues here to consider in terms of ensuring that coaching sessions are stimulating for players. However, coaches' perspectives are warranted to further enhance our understanding on the issue.

P7 (Y2B): It's [training] too repetitive, we're doing the same things [drills] every week.
P3 (Y1B): Every week it's the same thing, every week...(P7, Y2B:...we do the same thing every week).....like during mid-season say when we're doing this thing, like Monday afternoon was fitness, Tuesday was going down the line crossing and finishing and it was that for about four weeks the same thing.
P1 (Y3A): Sometimes training, you're always doing the same sort of thing...
P7 (Y1A): Repetitive

Professionals and Club Environment:

It is necessary to discuss these two sub-themes together as they are inextricably linked. In addition, it is also worth pointing out at this stage of the discussion that clubs A and B possessed a 'joint training complex' (i.e., Football Scholars & professionals trained at the same site), whilst Clubs C and D had 'separate training complexes'. The notion of the training complex is regarded as an environmental factor and is one that clearly impacted and shaped the players views of the professionals in their respective clubs.

Although clubs C and D had separate training sites, it was expressed by the players in all clubs that exposure to professional (i.e., 1st team players) players could have a beneficial impact on their development. In this sense, players attributed their benefit as, 'a confidence booster', 'just speaking to them' to 'just looking at them'.

P6 (Y3D): I think the professionals like, when I've been down the bottom in my 3rd year, I think it helps you a lot...I think I came on a lot better coz I played, like just being around like, because they are obviously better players down the bottom and it seems easier because you've got better players around you and you feel more confident. And when you're down the bottom, say like you played in the reserve game or whatever and one of the pro's who's like 1st team, who's not played, comes up to you and says like 'you've had a good game and that', it's like a confidence booster and that. It helps you when you're around them.

P4 (Y2C): Even just speaking to them I think it helps you, it gives you that extra bit of confidence, just knowing that they're taking an interest and they're start talking to you, that can help you a lot.

P4 (Y2A): Just looking at them...

More specifically, the players in club B suggested that the ability to 'observe' the professionals whilst in training was a positive factor and suggested that on occasions they 'made the numbers up' in training, which highlights the advantages of a shared training complex. Reference was also made to the transition from Academy status to professional status, which again was positively facilitated by the shared training complex. This is captured in the following conversational dialgue.

P8 (Y2B): To be fair Ricky, we have got it good like mixing with the 1st team. At Dunstill (P8's former club) yeah, when I was there, we'd never, never see the 1st team. They've got a totally different training ground...so we are lucky that we're there with the 1st team so you do get to train with them.
P2 (Y1B): They treat us like, as though we're on the same level as them, like we're all in it together and that...(P8, Y2B:...yeah coz they've all been there innit, that's good though)....they've all been there and that makes us feel better and that...they treat us as though we're on the same level as the 1st team...
P5 (Y2B): Do you know coz we're training at the same place, I think that helps us because like if we're like training there and like the 1st team are training and they need another player they can just say like come over and we want suchabody or whatever, but like say at [Club D] they have two separate training grounds so say if they're

training, they can't just say 'oh you come over here and train' coz they won't know obviously. So I think that helps coz they can see you better sometimes.
P2 (Y1B): We can watch them as well
P3 (Y1B): And it's not that big of a step then when you actually do make the step rather than having to go to a different training complex.
P5 (Y2B): That is a positive point

It was suggested by some players within the focus groups that training with professional players on a regular basis had 'developmental benefits' that enhanced specific individual characteristics.

P7 (Y2B): ...like he's [referring to P8] developed this season because he's been training more with the reserves and the 1st team, I've not developed because I've been training with schoolboys [younger aged players in the Academy system].

P7 (Y1C): You can tell with [P3] like coz he's been up there [training with the professionals] since the start of the season and you can tell the difference, he's just much quicker and things like that, it helps loads.

P3 (Y1D): It would improve the pace of your game as well especially playing with better players...and if you mix with them [professional players] you'll probably find if you picked the pace up of your game you'll take it into a game on Saturday and you'll probably get better results.

However, although the players at club A also shared their training complex with the professionals at the club, they commented that there was 'too big a gap' and that they did not have any 'interaction' with the 1st team professionals. In this sense, the players made reference to the 'size' of the new training complex, which they identified as a factor that impinged on their ability to interact with the professional players.

P2 (Y3A): I'll give you an example, today we trained with four 1st team players. I mean that's a one off we hardly ever train with them, I think I've trained with them once...
P7 (Y1): I think there's too big a gap
P1 (Y3A): To be fair, when we were at [former training complex] in our 1st year and we saw the 1st team and you'd just see them everyday wouldn't you and they'd speak to you and ask how you are an all that. But here [new training complex], the building is just too big, you just don't see them, you're lucky enough to see them you know once a day.
P4 (Y2A): Even training, by the time we've come in from training there's no 1st team here. They're all gone.
P2 (Y3A): Sometimes I'd prefer to watch the 1st team train because when we come off the training pitch and the 1st team are training we'll all stand and watch what they're

doing. I mean if we stood and watched them train, like say they're start training at half ten, if we came in at half ten and watched them train and then trained I mean I'd still do that and then we're wouldn't be as drained as what we are now.

As noted earlier, the players at clubs' C and D highlighted the potential benefit of exposure to professional players, but their single site-training complex was highlighted as a factor that impinged on the extent of their 'exposure' and the potential benefits.

P1 (Y3C): We don't even know them [professional players].
P5 (Y2C): Like at other clubs, like people like us will train with the 1st team and be around them all the time so when they go up there [1st team training ground] they're not overawed and all that.
P2 (Y1C): That would help a lot, if you're around them but coz they've built this place [Academy complex] then...

P5 (Y2D): Allot of other clubs in England would have the Academy and the 1st team training ground together, I think it would be better that way, you would learn more say if we could. It could be better if some of the Academy trained with the pro's, it would be better.
P7 (Y3D): That's why it would be better if we trained down there [1st team complex], if we trained next to the 1st team or whatever coz you know what to expect from them. Coz you don't know what the standards like sometimes coz you've never seen them train. It's a bit like two different clubs, one up here and one down there, we don't even know what they're like or anything.

For some players at club D the lack of prior exposure to professional players invoked 'negative emotional feelings' once they were in the company of professional players either in training or playing for the reserve team. These identity effects resonate with the career transition literature and more specifically Schlossberg (1981; p.5), who comments that a career transition can result in "...a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one's behaviour and relationships."

P4 (Y2D): When we go to the bottom [1st team training complex] and train there, sometimes you're scared like, well you're not scared like but you're nervous. You see some of the 1st team players in the dressing room and you'll just be like...[gesturing as though in awe of them]
P4 (Y2D): You daren't call them by their 1st team nickname in case you get hammered [verbal chastisement] from them.

Although the players at club C and D highlighted the 'positive elements' of their single-site training complex, in terms of the facilities and specialised support staff that they had, a concern was expressed towards the 'institutionalised nature' of their Academy site.

P4 (Y2C): I think just knowing that your in the best facilities to help you develop as a player in the world, I don't think there's a good as place as this, I think we've got the best facilities to use, the best pitches...
P3 (Y3C): It feels like a prison sometimes, well most times really coz we're in here like all day.
P5 (Y2C): With it being as tough as it is and demanding, physically and mentally and that, if you didn't have a laugh and that, something to take you away from it all it'd just be, you may as well be in prison honestly.
P2 (Y1C): Mentally, mental tiredness sometimes, when you come in and you're like tired of the place and the surroundings, that can affect you as well as being physically tired.

P7 (Y3D): I think as well like it's because most of the lads have to stay [living accommodation] here [Academy complex] all the time so they're dead bored...because when you're here, it drives you mad sometimes, it's so boring being here all the time, you want to get away from the place sometimes...

The association of the training complex and living accommodation with a prison highlights the highly institutionalised nature of the profession at youth level at some clubs, which again compliments Parker (1996), who used Erving Goffman's interpretations of total institutional life as the backdrop to his findings. The present findings are associated with this conceptual framework as they too describe life as a Football Scholar as being in 'prison'. Moreover, the players in club D made specific reference to the coaches' perceptions with regards to the effect that the Academy complex had on their 'psychological development'.

P1 (Y1D): All the coaches say that this [Academy complex] breeds a soft player coz we get everything done for us, everything there's for us, everything's here for us. They say it breeds a soft player, 'we're breeding soft players' that's what he [Academy coach] always says....
ML: What do you mean by a soft player?
P7 (Y3D): Not mentally strong
P4 (Y2D): Everything is done for you here.

Individual Factors:

This sub-theme explored the players' views on the individual factors that they utilised to support their development and it was felt that the responses generated touched on notions of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as a source to facilitate development and progression. The verbatim citations represented below are taken from a number of separate focus groups and are used as examples to illustrate the players' views. The issues that emerged from the analysis of club A highlight 'ambition' as a individual issue used as a motivational constructs.

P2 (Y3A): No disrespect to the 1st years but I don't want to be training with them everyday, I want to be training with better players than them, although I think they're good players I don't want to be training with them everyday...**(Directed towards 1st years)**....Do you want to be training with the schoolboys everyday?....**(response NO)**.....Exactly, you want to be playing against the highest players you can.
ML: So where has that come from then in you?
P2 (Y3A): It's ambition, I mean the day we did train with them (professionals) and we trained with them (1st years) as well I'm happy enough to do that, but sometimes you do train with the 1st team and reserves and the next day you're down training with the 17's...

The conversational dialogue from club D suggests that 'comparisons to friends' are used as motivational tools to focus on issues of individual development and progression, whilst 'lifestyle characteristics' were also alluded to, which some of the players' viewed as symbolic features of professional status (Parker, 2001). However, lack of progression also promoted an element of self-reflection and highlights the importance education and college.

ML: Ok, just moving on to the final factor now, what about individual factors on your development?
P6 (Y3D): I use like, coz I'm in my 3rd year now, I think like what am I going to do if I get released. What do I do after football if I don't get another club or like, you're going to be like one of your mates aren't you, working on a building site or whatever. It would be a big shock to you so it's a big motivation if you think about it that way.
P5 (Y2D): The coaches always say like you shouldn't really want to do it for like the money, fame or the cars like you should really always want to be a professional footballer...
P6 (Y3D): And everything else will come then won't it...

P5 (Y2D): I'm sure a lot of people see the 1st team in the cars and going out with whatever bird and that and they want that there as well...
P7 (Y3D): I mean you sometimes look at some professionals and you think 'oh he's got this amazing car' and you look at him and think 'my god he's not even that good him' and you sometimes think he's just got the opportunity and done well or whatever and he's not even that good and just wish that could be me and that but if you start thinking about that too much it stops the way you're playing so you've got to try and concentrate on your football more and worry about that later on.
ML: What about as 1st years, what do you think about that?
P6 (Y3D): Even as 1st years you don't realise when you come in, everyone thinks they're going to make it don't they but like what is it this year, what was it when we came in as 1st years, there was about 10, 12 players and how many get kept on, like from now there's only three gone down the bottom and all the rest are either gone or don't known or whatever.
P5 (Y2D): When you come in as a 1st year you think yeah everyone's going to make it, that's what a lot of them sort of...but now like I'm sort of scraping to get results in college because you know now you need it like coz I look at the 3rd years now and like a few of them have left and that and you think that could be me next year, you need something (from college) you know what I mean.

Similarly, 'lifestyle' related issues were also a feature within the focus group with the players at club C.

P4 (Y2C): Personality
P3 (Y3C): Lifestyle
P1 (Y3C): And you've got to want to win as well.
P7 (Y1C): You've got to want to get out there and do it, say if it is a cold day or it's icy or it's raining, you might not be up for it but that's when you find out who really wants to be a player or win things, just get out there and get on with it.

3.7.5 Progression Characteristics

This concept was generated from four 1st order themes (i.e., 'physical versus technical characteristics', 'attitude', 'information retention' & 'competition amongst peers') and represents the progression characteristics that emerged from the analysis of the fieldwork experience (see Figure 3.9).

Raw Data	1st Order Themes	General Dimension
P5 - He suggested that the Academy coach and the staff seemed **to prefer physical players who 'got stuck in and liked to tackle' as opposed to players that liked to pass the ball,** a description he ascribed to himself. P22 - Whilst I was waiting for the afternoon session to start I had a walk into the gym where a few of the lads were doing a few extra fitness exercises. As our conversation progressed Lee commented that **the reason that he was doing the extra training (weights) was because the Academy staff had told him that he needed to be stronger and physically bigger.** P115 - As I walk into the training complex Darren asks me if I want to do a weights session with him before lunch. Whilst we are doing the session, which incidentally, has become a familiar routine for us, we talk about the advantages of weight training for a footballer. Darren says ***'I feel a lot stronger on the ball when opponents are around me..generally you just feel better don't you?'***	Physical versus Technical characteristics	Progression Characteristics
P12- He tells me that he has just had a bollocking from the Head of Education & Welfare for his **behaviour** at college. He goes on to tell me that his **relationship** with the HoEW and the course tutor at college is not good and that he has been told by the HoEW to distance himself from his regular friends P42 - The coach also talked about the **attitude** of certain FS with regards to development and progression as a football player. He commented that a simple thing such as **punctuality** at college was something that **reflected a player's attitude.** He provided specific examples to reinforce his comments, whilst he also talked about some players **lacking in discipline with regards to nutritional habits and refuelling habits.** P80 - He expanded on one player's **attitude,** Nick Nestor (2nd YFS), by saying that he was at the back of the group for most of the runs and **didn't seem to be trying that much.** Concern was expressed by both parties (AC & AFC) over his attitude, with the AFC drawing on an earlier incident in the day to highlight the point. P120 - He is a substitute and during our conversation he says that ***'it's a fuckin joke here man, they (the club) say that they will play you so that other people can watch you, but they never do. I've had one of the best attitudes at the club, but that gets you nowhere, what do you need to do?'***	Attitude (behaviour, punctuality & discipline)	
P45 - During the 11V11 practice match the Academy coach came over to where I was stood and provided examples of certain situations and players that highlighted the point of not being able to keep possession. He suggested that after 8-9months of telling certain players not to do things in a game, that they were **still making the same mistakes** Ultimately, he suggested that this would affect their progression as a football player.	Information retention	
P93 - I overheard Terry say that it was out of order that Ben was not involved in the game tonight, whilst a schoolboy who has been offered a FS was on the bench.	Competition amongst peers	

Figure 3.9: Inductive analysis of fieldnotes to generate 5th structural focus group theme

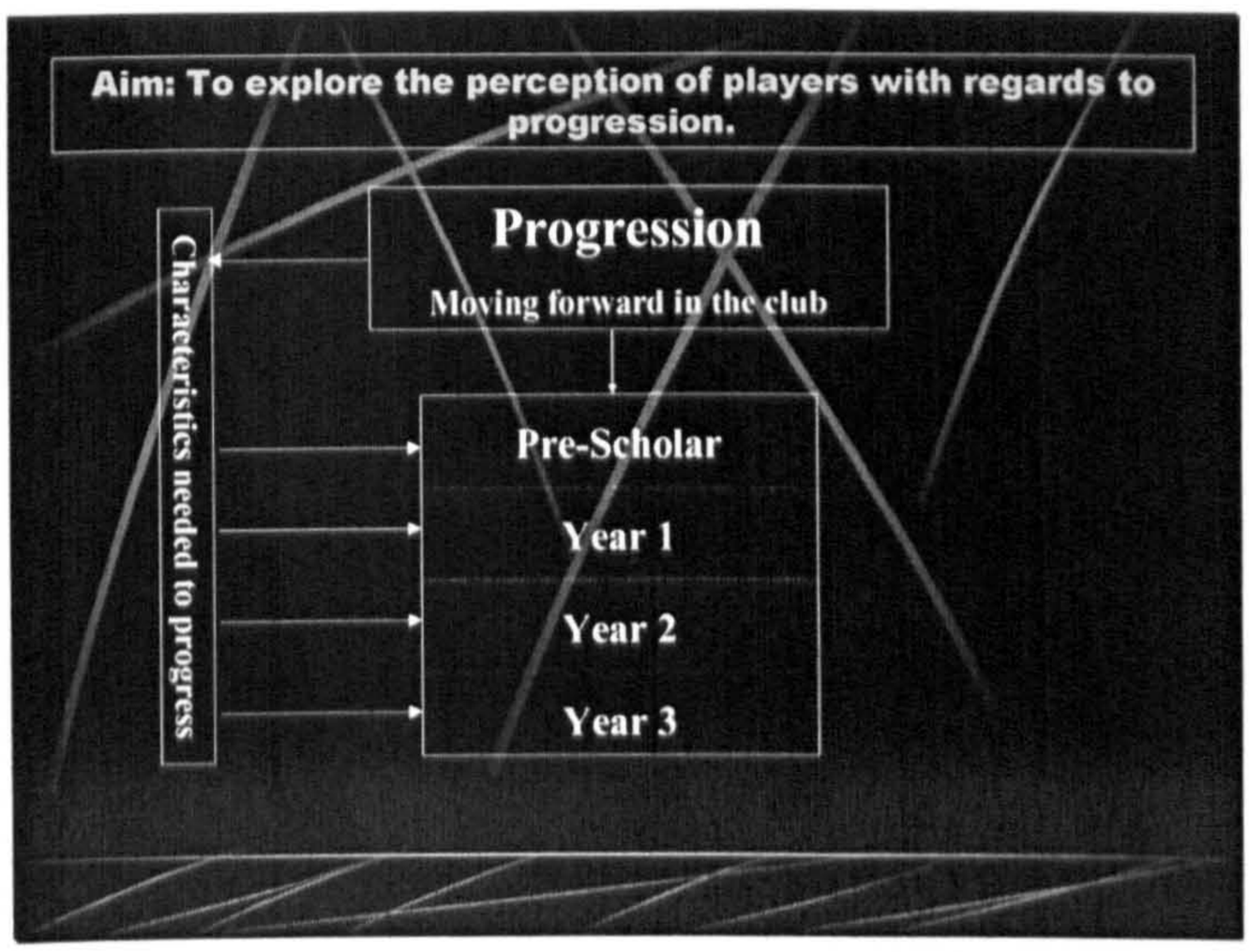

Figure 3.10: 5th theme that aimed to explore the perceptions of players with regards to progression characteristics (i.e., technical, physical, psychological, social & intellectual).

Discussion and Context of Response:

'Attitude' was considered a core progression characteristic that the players felt they needed to demonstrate in order to progress. This was shaped by their interactions with the coaches within their respective clubs. However, views on this issues were somewhat mixed and suggest a misinterpretation of what (good) attitude means. Players in club B emphasised the priority that coaches attached to 'attitude', but felt that their individual experiences did not replicate this view as players' that had demonstrated a good attitude had not progressed. They also equated 'jobs' as an example of a good attitude, which they believed had no association with their football performances and subsequent progression.

P6 (Y3B): They [coaches] always say attitude is the most important thing but it's not….they say attitude is the major thing in football but like [referring to a 1st team player], he's the only big thing that's come out of the Academy really and when he was a Scholar he never did his jobs and all that.
P4 (Y3B): He [**talking about P5 who had been released**] has one of the best attitudes I've ever seen for a footballer…
P7 (Y2B): All the ones that have had brilliant attitudes have gone, all the ones that never did their jobs wrong, that had their jobs done everyday have gone.
P2 (Y1B): Round the training ground and that me attitude int good like coz I don't do my jobs and that but on the pitch it's a totally different thing.

P5 (Y2B): It is, he gives everything on the field but his boots and that, it's two different types of attitude int it.
P4 (Y3B): How can you explain that with me not getting a contract because of me attitude, if you can do the thing on the pitch what's the problem?

In contrast, the players at Clubs A, C and D held the belief that attitude was indeed a vital component that was required to progress. It was suggested that although technical ability was important, there was a need for it to be underpinned by attitude. The individual citations capture the views of some of the players who highlight notions of 'dedication', 'discipline', 'mentality', 'sacrifices' and 'single minded' as components of attitude.

P4 (Y2A): You have got to put the time in, like for them in their 3rd year they've got the option sometimes whether they stay in (training complex) or go home. Now it's quite easy and I know it'll be the same for us next year, quite easy just to go home but at the end of the day....(P3, Y1A:..if you want to get to the top...).....yeah, you have to put it in. No matter if you sat in here saying 'yeah I do this and I practice at home' and they all laugh at you, no matter how much they laugh at you, if you make into the 1st team they won't be laughing then will they?
P2 (Y3A): I mean you could probably play here and not be the greatest player in the world but you could have the best attitude in the world and that could get you somewhere.

P4 (Y2C): Probably were you are now, everyone's got talent here, football talent, but I mean most people fall short on is the attitude and the lifestyle. I mean I think there are people in the world with football talent and they could have gone all the way but without the attitude you can't do this.

P7 (Y3D): You've got to be right mentally as well, you've got to be single minded and not worry about anyone else. You've got to be a bit selfish and try not to bother about other people and you've got to like, I mean other people might give you stick if you're doing something extra. They'll say like you're being 'busy' but you've not got to let that affect you and be like 'I'm going to make it or whatever' and just keep doing it. There's one lad there right (within the Academy) and he doesn't really talk to the other lads in the Academy, because he's got stick and stuff for being busy or whatever and he's got a contract now. But it's because he's been, coz the lads go out and stuff and he's not done it and that he's done it all for himself and it's paid of for him.

A further theme that emerged from the focus group analysis was 'coach favouritism', which was also a feature of the fieldwork process. One player at club A illustrates this.

P4 (Y2A): It's like we said, if your face fits unfortunately, there's a lad that played in the reserves...and I think it was [P5], he went into his log book and asked U19's coach, 'how come he played in the reserves?'....(P2, Y3A:...and he was younger than P5)....and what U19's coach said to him was 'it was nothing to do with me, it was people higher up wanting him to play'. It was nothing to do, based on how he'd been playing

P5 (Y2B): Like say on a Saturday, say if someone plays well in the 19's on a Saturday, star man and all that, say there's two midfielders and one plays absolutely great game and star man in the 19's and then in midweek the other one that's not played well is in the reserves. What's all that about, they (coaches) don't even talk about the game.

P4 (Y2D): See that's where like favouritism comes in eh like coz me and him (P3) started in midfield against Allsop [club name]...(P3, Y1D:...but that was actually a better team and I just got a slap in the face by not playing at all)...

There were also localised themes that emerged from the focus groups. The players at club A commented on the importance of 'learning' and 'understanding' what was expected from players that aim to play at 1st team level and they suggested that 'more interaction with 1st team professionals' would enhance this process. From analysing their comments it appears that there is an implicit responsibility for players to engage in occupationally related tasks to further their chances of progression. This however is dependant on clear developmental related feedback from coaches. In this sense, feedback mechanisms appeared to be applied inconsistently across Academies.

P4 (Y2A): Just so you're learning and that you keep improving, if you're not improving you're never going to progress at club A or anywhere...
P2 (Y3A): I think you need to take things in as well coz if the coach makes a point to you, if he says to him 'your crossing's bad' and consistently for weeks after that your crossings still bad well he's gonna see that you're not taking it in so basically...
P4 (Y2A): Just say for instance, I know a lot of clubs especially Ikleston they take a couple of their Youth Trainee's to every 1st team game, away games as well, just travelling with them.
P2 (Y3A): They travel with them and take the kit out and they sit in the changing room with them and get them this and get them that. I would love to do that coz you're seein' how they prepare and see what they do, we don't do that, we're hardly ever with the 1st team.
P4 (Y2A): That's what it's all about really, our progression is the 1st team it's not, we can progress as players, if we want to play for Club A we've got to understand what they do, why are they playing for Club A's 1st team?

ML: So you'd like more involvement with the 1st team players and finding out about...
P2 (Y3A): I mean I'm not saying everyday of the week we do something with the 1st team but I'm saying maybe once a week, or once a month, there was a tournament like this morning were everybody in the club was involved. I think that would bring everybody on leaps and bounds.

In terms of progression related issues at club B the players' identified a range of issues that they perceived as being influential factors. For example, they suggested that the 'relationship with the coach' was important and that this relationship was influenced by the notion of 'respect' and 'feedback'. Lack of performance related feedback was highlighted as a problem for some players. They also felt that 'physical characteristics' were important aspects of progression within their club environment and attributed this to the 1st team manager's philosophy and playing requirements. Such sentiments therefore imply that physical related developmental characteristics may influence progression related opportunities for Academy players' in club B..

P5 (Y2B): That's the most progression factor, the relationship with your coach...
P7 (Y2B): I've been on the bench, well I was on the bench the other week, I played four games, thought I did alright and then I was sub the next week, they [coaches] didn't even tell me why, they didn't even say anything, so if they want respect of me I think they should tell me what I've been doing wrong and what I need to do right to get back in the team.
ML: Does that not happen here?
P4 (Y3B): They don't give you any feedback at all.
ML: Is that important for you?
P4 (Y3B): It is yeah, coz you want to know where you are and stuff like that innit.
P7 (Y2B): Coz he's [referring generally to players] big [in terms of height] and powerful and that's what the gaffer [1st team manager] wants in his team.

Players' at club C identified a number of issues with regards to progression characteristics. A 'winning mentality' emerged as an important characteristic, which was further highlighted as a cultural difference between the professional and Academy environment. The cultural differences noted here are again located in the career transition literature. Commentators (see Lavallee & Wylleman, 2000;

Richardson et al., 2004) emphasise the importance of the pre and post environmental conditions during a career transition that require effective internal support systems, institutional support and physical settings. Indeed, Lavallee and Wylleman (2001) report that coaches have an obligation to prepare athletes for transitions of this nature (i.e., a youth player progressing from the Academy to the professional environment). This transition appeared to be further compounded by the separate training complexes that existed in the club. 'Personality characteristics' was a further theme that was developed from the data as players also commented on how levels of 'maturity' and 'self-confidence' could both positively and negatively influence progression. The ability to accept more responsibility in one's behaviour was used as an example of personality.

P3 (Y3C): You've got to want to win like, being down at 1st team training ground, if you play a little 5-a-side game, if you give a bad ball they'll [1st team professionals] absolutely cain [verbal chastisement] you for it because they all want to win, even the 5-a-side games, which you get absolutely cained for it if you don't...
P3 (Y3C): Yeah, like the 1st team that's what you're aiming to get to really, but here [Academy] in the 5-a-side games you have a bit of a laugh and a joke, but once you step up there you can't take the piss really coz you've got the likes of [1st team player] and them throwing stupid challenges in, in small sided games, that's how keen they are so that's how they got there with there attitude and they want to win.
P4 (Y2C): Bottle as well, that's part of it as well bottle, coz if you go down [1st team training ground] and you just stand there in the corner like a little lost kid...(P3: Y3C...like a little scared bunny) ...they're not going to take you on aren't they so you need a lot of bottle as well to...
P1 (Y3C): Personality as well, you need to be confident in yourself.
P2 (Y1C): If you've got no self-confidence then you're going to fall short.
P2 (Y1C): If you've got too much self-confidence, then that can be a bad thing as well coz you can be big time and think you've arrived and...
P7 (Y1C): You think you don't need to try as hard when you get to that stage, you know if you think you've made it or you think you're that good, you think, you're effort levels drop then, you've got to keep on going to the next level.
P2 (Y1C): You need to mature as a person if you want to progress to the next level, coz as P1 has just said when he goes with the reserves it's more serious and he can't like do what he does here, you know have a laugh and that so you have to really mature to be a professional, like you've got to mature as a person and as an adult. Coz as 1st years we're still young and having a laugh and that and I don't think we're the finished article yet and that's what you've got to do to be the finished article, mature.

The themes that emerged from the focus group with the players at club D were somewhat limited. However, reference was again made to 'personality characteristics' that they felt the coaches looked for in players, which focused on their reactions over selection issues. The 'incentives of professional contracts' was also identified as a factor that enhanced player motivation to progress, but similarly, the players also felt that it could negatively affect levels of motivation and provided specific examples to illustrate.

P7 (Y3D): They [Academy coaches] might, say the coach might want to see how you react. When he (P4) wasn't in the team he wouldn't have thought it but they'd have been interested to see how he reacted to not being in the team, whether he thought 'oh, sack it' and felt sorry for himself or worked hard like he did and they notice that more than you think and then when you do come through and do well they'll tell you that they noticed that you didn't get down and kept training well and stuff and it's paid off for you like. So if they see you keeping training they're looking to give you the chance to see how you do.
P5 (Y2D): Pushes you on more like of they give you a big contract like, when you come and you sign your first contract like, you get a big contract to start off with I think it pushes you on more like.
P6 (Y3D): I think here at this club they give like contracts out, they give like 1st years big contracts like, like £400, £500 pound a week and it's like they get that and it's like, they relax. I've seen allot of players think they've made it.....(P3, Y1D:...think they've made it...)...and they don't have to work, whereas if players who have just got your normal Scholarship and that it's like, you're not playing for like, coz some of them players are just playing for money and players who are on Scholarships, you're not really bothered about the money coz you're not getting fuck all anyway are you.
P7 (Y3D): It does annoy you when you see his attitude's not right as well, coz you think like...
P3 (Y1D): Some of them don't realise anyway that when they get their 1st contract, they think like that's their contract, they don't realise that they've got to work for another contract and another contract. They think when they've got that one then they're settled until they realise that they're in their last year like, it's too late, what am I going to do now?

3.7.5.1 Barriers to Progression

An additional focus of the 5th structural theme was to explore the players' views on the barriers to progression that they felt existed within their respective clubs. A generic theme that emerged in all four focus groups was associated with the 'acquisition of players' for the club's 1st team and all players' alluded to the 'number of professional

players' that their respective clubs employed. Again, this perception is aligned to UEFA's concerns in terms of the hindering the progression of home-grown players in a club's structure and has been termed 'the hoarding of players' (see Richardson et al., 2005). The players' views are also congruent with the findings in Study 1 and 'foreign player acquisition' was an additional theme that emerged to limit the extent of their progression. Further discussion on these issues highlighted that the acquisition process served to 'restrict opportunities' for selection in both the reserve and 1st team environments. In contrast, it was suggested that 'young' home-grown players in lower leagues in the structure of the football pyramid (i.e., all professional leagues) were being given 'opportunities to progress'. Such practices appeared to be an issue that frustrated players in some clubs.

P4 (Y2A): But I think just to, particularly in the Premiership it's going to be so hard to make it nowadays because there's so many foreigners coming in now. But I think if you look at Nationwide, how many clubs are now bringing...playing 18 year olds every week, not just one, but maybe two or three.
P5 (Y2A): I think it makes you feel bad when you see like, well not bad but, when they're buying loads of players and they've got such a big squad, because you know that there's already people ahead of you who're a year above and then reserves and then you know that there's all the 1st team as well and if they keep buying more and more players...(P2, Y3:...it's just gonna get clogged up)...it's so difficult then.

P6 (Y3B): The coaches should look after us coz we're home-grown and we're from round this area, we've come through the system but if you've got a foreign name or a foreign player comes in they'll just fuck you off straight away for them. You might have been at the club for so many years but they don't take that into consideration, they'll just fuck you off.
P4 (Y3B): I think there are a few good players on this table that are not getting there chance that should be getting a chance because the people who are there (reserve team) are shite, you know what I mean? Like Christy said, there are foreign players in the reserves that haven't got a clue and people on this table should be getting in, but they're not.
P5 (Y2B): Yeah, that's the purpose of it (bringing players through the Academy) and they don't even look at us, they bring foreign players in, they bring foreigners in.

P3 (Y3C): But I think they're (the club) just concentrating on the foreigners, bringing the foreigners in now so...
P2 (Y1C): It's just all foreigners isn't it?

P6 (Y3D): I think they (professionals) can stop you progressing, like we've got players here at this club who are never going to play in the 1st team, the manager obviously doesn't want them and they are playing in the reserves and they're stopping you playing in the reserves and you're getting kept here so you're not progressing any further...(P7, Y3D:...they've probably got a team there...)...but it's got better recently, they've been leaving a lot of players out, it has got better.
P6 (Y3D): You don't expect that (selection for reserves), I think you don't expect that in your 1st year coz you're not expected to get like, you're not expected in the reserves are you really, you're only like 17, you don't expect it. You expect the ones who are above you who are going to be in there, but they can't get in there like, it's like a big slide, sending everyone down kind of thing. You've got a big like 1st team and reserves, you don't get 3rd years pushing on, you don't get 2nd years pushing on.

In addition to the themes identified above, the players in clubs' A and C also made specific reference to the 'age' that foreign players were being acquired in their clubs, which again may further restrict progression if those players' stay in the club context for a considerable period of time.

P1 (Y3A): Like when they bought [foreign player] you're thinking like how old is he, 21.

P7 (Y1C): I mean they've [the club] already signed two young French lads haven't they, the same age as us aren't they? They said they're coming over in 2003/2004 something like that, just because they play well when they're our age doesn't mean they're going to be Premiership level when they're, in 3 or 4 years. So I don't think that's right.

There were also localised themes that emerged from the focus groups to supplement the generic themes that have been outlined with regards to players' perceived barriers to progression. In this respect, 'club status' was again a dominant theme that players in club A felt impacted on the 'high recruitment strategy' for the Academy. In this respect, the players' suggested that it was not unrealistic for the club to acquire in excess of 16 1st year scholars per season. This recruitment-based practice was felt to impact their subsequent chances of progression. The players' also made comparisons to other clubs with regards to this issue and highlighted it as a factor that impacted on playing opportunities in the reserve team, again mirroring UEFA's sentiments over

the problems for home-grown player development and progression (see Richardson et al., 2005).

P4 (Y2A): Yeah, they [Academy coaches] expect you to understand and to just be happy with it and not moan but like I think we [Club] take too many people on. You look at other clubs and they hardly get any people taken on.
P2 (Y3A): We take 16 [1st year scholars] on a year and they're not going to get one in the 1st team.
P4 (Y2A): Take [named another professional club] for example they hardly take anyone on so that they can play people up, so that they can play their 17's and 19's, so that they can play their older 19's in the reserves, but it's all about you're at Club A so you've just got to put up, be happy with it.
P2 (Y3A): To be fair over the last couple of years it's changed because our year (3rd Year Scholars) we brought in 16 their year (2nd Year Scholars) only brought in 7 and that year brought in 10 (1st Year Scholars), but next year they're bringing in 16 again so it's all going to get clogged up.

With regards to the localised issues in club B, 'hierarchical processes' emerged as a central theme. This referred to selection based decisions that the players' felt the coaches made for the reserve team, which neglected youth player inclusion in favour of seniority. Other themes to consider in the analysis of the data were the 'acquisition of peers' and 'financial factors'. The latter of these themes refers to the increased revenue that Premier League clubs receive from the broadcasting deal with BSkyB, a factor noted for the increase in foreign players in the context of the English Premier League (Magee, 2002). The verbatim dialogue captures the raw data that these themes were extracted from.

P6 (Y3B): The [reserve team coach] spoke to me before the game last night and he said to me 'you played last week in the resses and I thought you were outstanding' and then he said 'you came on the other day and the game changed around, you scored and that' and he said 'I think you've been quality, but I have to drop you tonight because [1st team player] and [1st team player] have got to play'. If you can see yourself going somewhere then you keep trying and everything but...
P7 (Y2B): They [coaching staff] have to justify why they have spent £300grand on a player, so they've got to start him, so it doesn't help.
P7 (Y2B): Last year before we had all this money for getting players and everything a few of us made the 1st team bench, it's never looked like happening this year.

In light of their experiences within the club domain, one player from club B made an extreme comment that clearly demonstrates the sensitivity of these issues concerning youth player progression.

P6 (Y3B): That's why I hope every game when I come here [1st team match days] to watch the games I hope they [1st team] get hammered [defeated], coz I want them to go down [relegated from division], because that's the only chance that we'll [Academy players] get.

The players in the focus group at club C also highlighted localised themes that were specific to their club situation. For example, they felt that the 1st team coaching staff should watch more of their competitive performances before making decisions regarding their futures at the club. It was suggested that this opportunity for 1st team coaching staff to watch them was restricted due to the separate training ground sites. It was even suggested that decisions over the futures of Academy players by 1st team staff had been made on the basis of only two competitive games. Such a claim would require further investigation before any firm conclusions could be drawn from such inferences. It was acknowledged that the purpose of the Academy system was to develop and progress players to the 1st team, but recent 'young' foreign acquisitions were now a feature within the Academy. The debate around this issue was somewhat sensitive as players began to express their thoughts and feelings in a different tone of voice. It was felt that the 'foreign nationality of the 1st team manager' was a factor that had influenced the 'recruitment philosophy' and 'training methods' at the club, which had filtered down through to the Academy.

P3 (Y3C): Coz he [1st team manager] never comes down to watch the games anyway, none of the 1st team staff ever really come down to watch so I don't know how they can make a decision really. It's different for me because I've been down there [1st team training ground] training, but when you're playing the games that's when they'll really know if you're a good player or not. And no-one really comes down from the 1st team, like the 1st team staff have only really seen me play twice this season and they've made a decision on me, so I'm not good enough obviously. And a couple of

other lads only found out a couple of days ago and 1st team assistant manager has only seen them play once and said they're not good enough, so I don't think that is fair.
P5 (Y2C): At the end of the day, they're [the club] are only bothered about you know, their own interests, their 1st team, they're not bothered about, 'oh we're bringing English guys through', they just want the best, you know what I mean? They're finding the next bloody Zidanes' from France. They're not bothered are they?
P3 (Y3C): But if you've got a foreign manager, he's not really going to be bothered about the young English lads in the Academy, but if you've got a British manager he understands more what it's about really.
P1 (Y3C): Well I was here when [former English manager] was here and the change is just unbelievable, like everything, the training methods, it's gone, completely different.

The pertinent issues that were identified as barriers to progression to the players in club D have been identified in the generic themes section, which focused on the 'player acquisition process'. There were limited localised themes that emerged from the focus group with these players, but a positively orientated statement was made about the 'role of the 1st team manager' had played in utilising more young players in the club. This is in sharp contrast to the views of players in Club C.

P6 (Y3D): It has it's got a lot better, we've obviously got a new manager [1st team manager] and all that who's started playing younger players.

3.8 Conclusion: Study 2 Part II

The introduction of the Charter for Quality by the Football Association attempted to restructure and modernise youth development practices in English professional football. In doing so this has brought about widespread changes in terms of the criteria that professional clubs must have in place to be granted a license to operate a Football Academy. The benefits of enhanced facilities, staff and provision were clearly recognised by the players in the study and serve to reinforce the aim and objectives of the Charter. In spite of these positive elements, other themes emerged from the study and highlight areas of provision that some players felt were absent within their respective Academy; and wider club structure.

The study revealed that (most) Football Scholars viewed the Academy system as a vehicle to 'holistically' develop and produce players for a club's 1st team. However, in reality, players' experiences of their respective Academies appeared to be somewhat disparate. The players had unique individual experiences that impacted upon their perceptions of the Academy, the club and its staff. These views were shaped by their experiences of daily life in a professional football club. Invariably, the players' expectations of an Academy system were often not met in reality. A point also noted by Bourke (2002), which may highlight the need for pre-arrival awareness training in order to aid the assimilation process. In spite of recommendations concerning the role and responsibilities of the Football Scholarship programme (see FFE & VTS, 2002), differences in terms of occupational practices existed across the Academies. In this regard the menial chores (i.e., jobs) that some players had to engage in and its relevance to their footballing development was questioned. This was consistent across (most) Academies.

The extent of developmental provision within the players' Academies was positively discussed. However, the psychological aspect of some of the players training was identified as one of the most difficult areas to understand (also see Pain and Harwood, 2004). A notable component in the development process is the role of the coach and the players identified 'coaching style' as a factor that influenced development. The approachability and personality of the coach was identified as a positive feature of some coaches and can be linked to a more democratically orientated position (see also Potrac et al., 2002). In contrast, autocratic tendencies were also discussed and concentrated on the strict and disciplined demeanour of the coach (see also Parker, 1995). Such inferences to coaching style were associated with the fluency and type of

feedback that coaches provided, which may serve to shape the outlook of those players entering and during the Scholarship programme.

Wider environmental development considerations focussed on the 'shared' and 'individual' training complexes that their respective clubs' possessed. Specifically, both positive and negative features were interwoven into this issue. Access to, and interaction with professional players was a constructive factor to note in this regard. Paradoxically, their acquisition and existence was also highlighted as a significant barrier to their progression within the context of their clubs; a feature extended by the global expansion of football in England (Magee & Sugden, 2002). This finding also resonates with UEFA's concerns over the development and progression of home-grown talent within domestic clubs in European football (see Richardson et al., 2005). This emergent theme also corresponds with the fieldwork process represented within the thesis and brings into focus an area in a 'typical' club structure where the effect of foreign player acquisition may be more pronounced. Although the manifestation of foreign players was an issue for some players, it is felt that a closer inspection on the specific career experiences (and trajectories) of a small number of currently serving (young) professional footballers would further illuminate the complex issue of foreign player acquisition.

Chapter Four

Study 3:

A case study approach to examine the specific career experiences (and trajectories) of (young) professional footballers in English football.

4.1 Study 3 - Introduction

In light of the findings from the previous studies within the thesis, this study aimed to better understand the specific career experiences and trajectories of two (young) professional football players in English football. More specifically, Study 2 Part I identified the transition phase from the Academy environment to the professional environment as an area that appeared to be more susceptible to the effects of the foreign player acquisition process. This transition recognises those players (i.e., Football Scholars) that have progressed through the Academy structure into the professional environment. The nature of their situation and opportunities to engage in competitive football in order to progress appeared to be distinct from that of the Academy environment. A qualitative approach was again employed for the final phase of the inquiry and draws on notions of constructivist research to understand the players' experiences. Two 'young' professional football players participated in a series of in-depth individual semi-structured interviews (Dale, 1996) and adopted a collective case study approach (Stake, 1998). Specifically, "...each case study is a concentrated inquiry into a single case" (Stake, 1998, p.87). Although the players may exhibit similarities in their perceptions, it must be noted that a number of contextual factors (i.e., club environment, staff and peer relations) must also be a consideration of the post-Academy experience.

4.2 Methodology

As noted, the case study approach adopted an in-depth, semi-structured interview approach (Dale, 1996), whilst it also integrated prolonged engagement and the inclusion of repeat interviews into the research design that served to add technical rigour within the methodological approach. Although the semi-structured approach

does possess an inherent structure that guides the process, it also promotes flexibility with regards to the issues that the interviewee (and participant) wishes to pursue. Dale (1996) suggests that too much rigidity in the interview process is a factor that might inhibit the ability of the interviewee from successfully capturing a participant's experiences. Specific clarification and elaboration probes were used to ensure consistent depth of questioning across interviews (Scanlan et al., 1989). It was hoped that such techniques would facilitate a deeper level of understanding to emerge from the interview process. Although the interview framework for both participants was similar in design, it was necessary to explore *unique individual perceptions* in each interview to allow localised views to emerge. The formulation of interview 'content' was guided by the findings of the earlier research in Study 2 Part I and II. A flexible questioning and sequencing approach was an inherent feature of the interviews that ensured an open dialogue. This flexibility also aimed to ensure that each participant felt relaxed and comfortable with the interview and to facilitate openness and flow (Kvale, 1996). Subsequent follow up interviews with the players built specifically on their previous responses, whilst also integrating evolving researcher concepts. As part of the methodological process, the researcher engaged in researcher triangulation (Patton, 1990), to consider multiple perceptions of the data and clarify meaning (Stake, 1998).

Inductive and deductive themes from each case study emerged utilising the 'general' tenets of content analysis (Biddle et al., 2001). Whilst content analysis can act to decontextualise data (Tesch, 1990), the present study utilised the content analysis process as a framework from which primary data could be reworked into individual narratives (Faulkner & Biddle, 2004). This allows data to be recontextualised to

portray a sense of time and place. The case studies also permit the presentation of a greater volume of primary data to be presented allowing the participants to speak for themselves (Wolcott, 1994). Similar analysis techniques have recently been employed in other sports and exercise qualitative studies (i.e., Faulkner & Sparkes, 1999; Faulkner & Biddle, 2004; Richardson et al., 2004).

The following presentation of the case studies utilises the researcher's 'voice' as a background narrator and linking devise. Throughout the reporting of the findings, links to conceptual and theoretical literature is maintained and positioned alongside the integration of verbatim citations that illuminate the voices of the players (Wolcott, 1994).

4.2.1 The Participants and the Research Process

Two 'young' professional football players were identified for inclusion within the present study (i.e., players that had signed a professional contract at the end/or near to the end, of the Football Scholarship programme). Contact was made with the relevant gatekeepers at two professional football clubs who helped to identify and secure access to the players for the study. To ensure contextual similarity the selection process was guided by inclusion criteria namely; (i) the players must have progressed through to a 'young' professional from the club's Academy system and, (ii) both players' clubs must have been in the same domestic playing league. Prior to presenting the research findings, player profiles are illustrated in Figures 4.1 and 4.2. The player profiles aim to give the reader biographical and contextual information of each player. In line with ethical issues concerning this form of research, pseudonyms

have been employed for *all* names of players, coaches and professional clubs that were utilised and cited in the study.

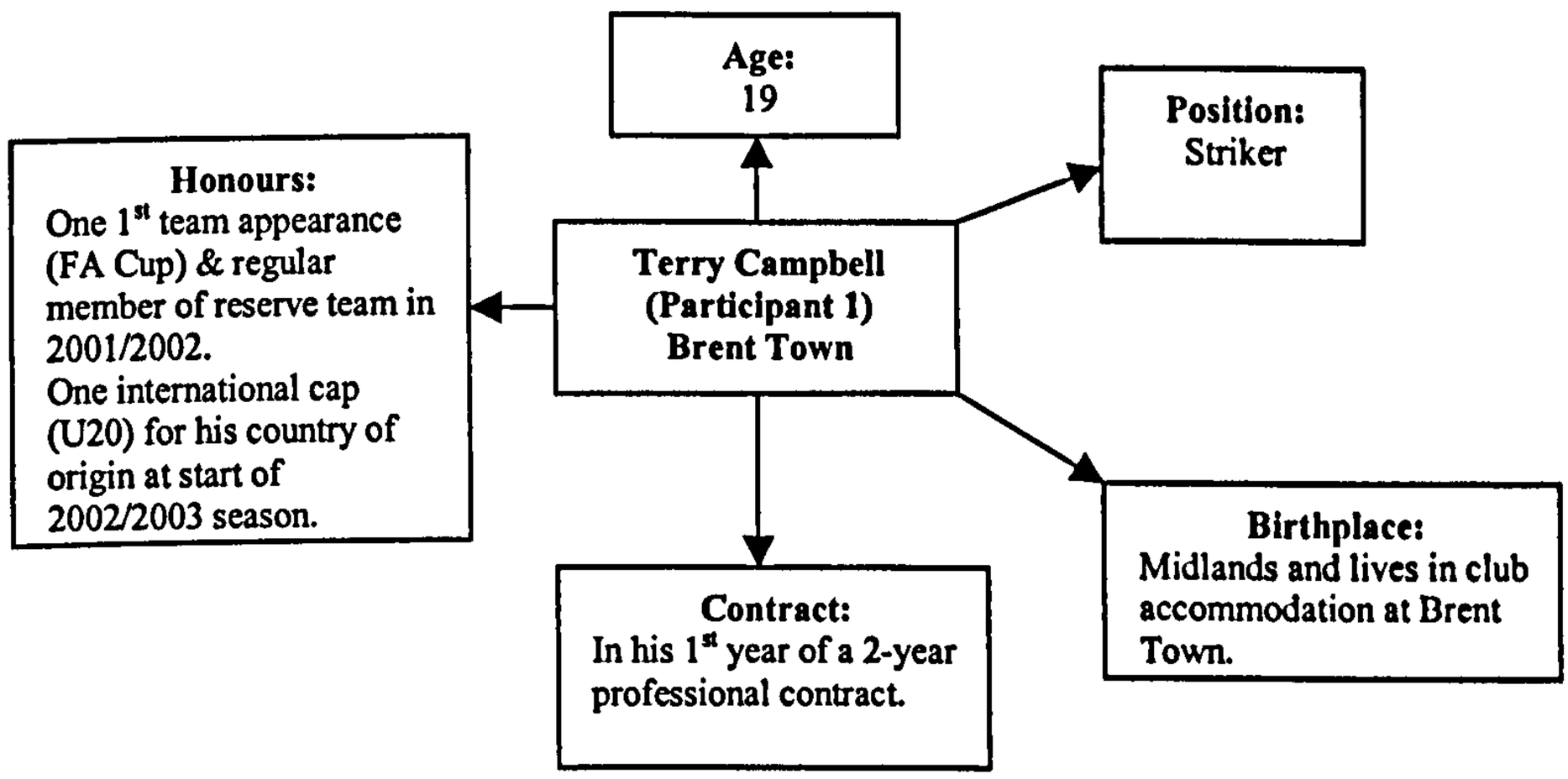

Figure 4.1 Participant 1 player profile details.

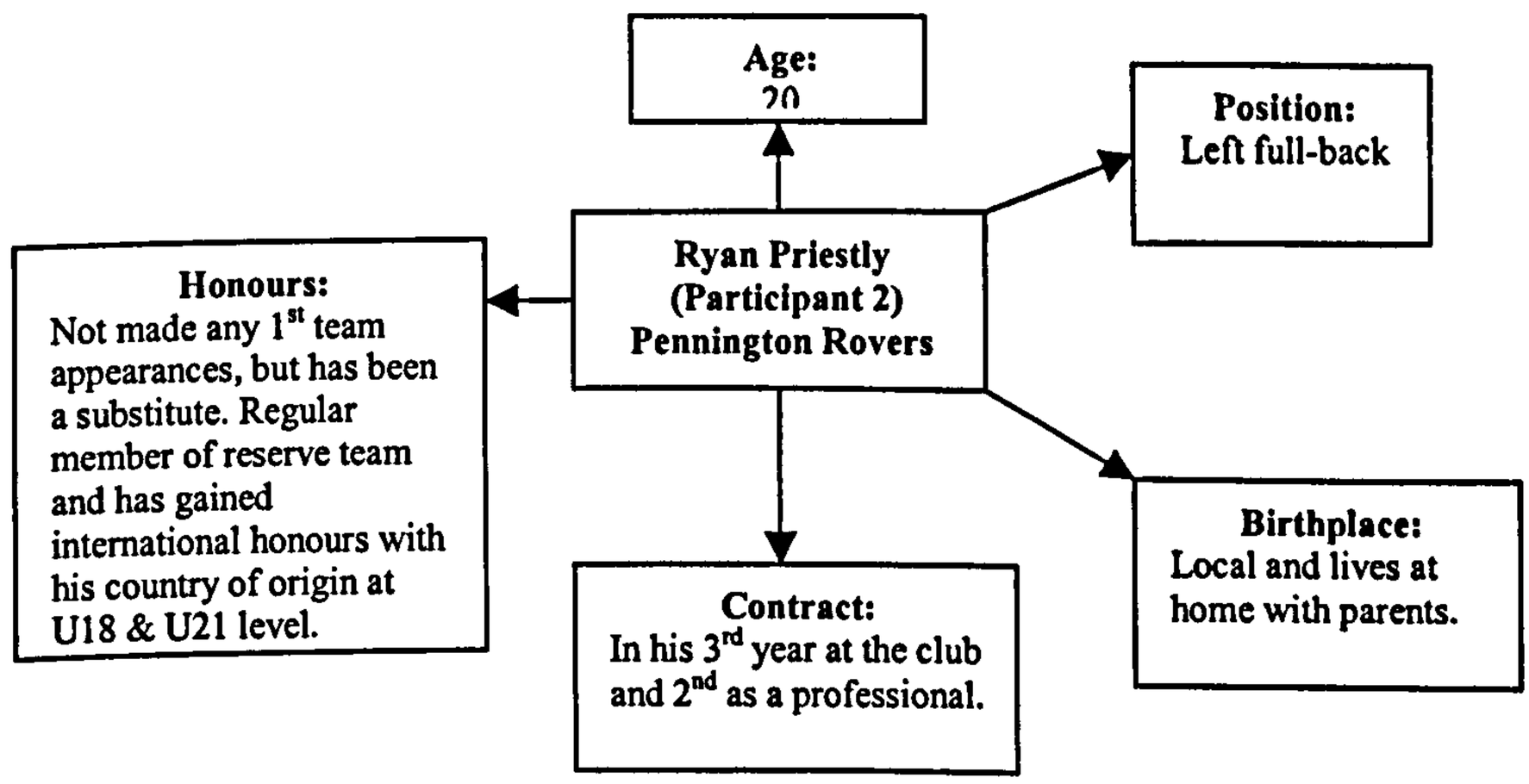

Figure 4.2 Participant 2 player profile details.

The interviews started in October 2002 and finished in March 2003. In total, six interviews were conducted with the players at the training ground of their respective clubs (i.e., four with Terry Campbell and two with Ryan Priestly). Informed consent was obtained from the players prior to engaging in the interviews. Ethical approval

was gained under the auspices of Liverpool John Moores University ethics committee. Due to a serious injury that Ryan Priestly sustained during the research process and the difficulties in arranging appropriate interview times, two interviews with Ryan had to be cancelled. However, it was felt that sufficient interview data had been gathered from previous interviews with Ryan in order to shed light on his own post-Academy career experiences. The interview protocol is located in Appendix C.

4.3 Case Studies: Research Findings and Discussion

The first phase of the interview process acted to familiarise the players with the rationale of the research and interview process. The baseline interviews aimed to generate and establish a relationship with the respective players, whilst also encouraging them to speak openly about their experiences. Questions related to the club environment, developmental support mechanisms and relationships were also explored in the baseline and subsequent follow-up interviews. The main themes of exploration concerned the players' post-Academy perceptions on development, progression and the acquisition of foreign players. In the section that follows, the pertinent issues that emerged from each individual interview are presented along with relevant contextual details.

Contextual Details of Clubs

Prior to representing both players' perceptions, I feel that it is important to sketch out the relevant contextual factors associated with Brent Town and Pennington Rovers Football Clubs. In comparison to Pennington Rovers, Brent Town could be considered a relatively smaller club that possessed lower expectations regarding success (i.e., winning honours). Survival in the domestic league was deemed a

priority for Brent Town and was perceived as a successful season. In contrast, Pennington Rovers were expected to be consistently successful (i.e., winning domestic honours). It would appear therefore that the notion of 'success' was *relative* to the context of the club. Moreover, the two clubs had contrasting financial states, which one might assume influenced and impacted on their acquisition strategies. To expand on this point, Brent Town did not appear to be in a strong financial position, and as such, often acquired players on temporary contracts in the form of 'loan deals'[11]. In contrast, it was not uncommon for Pennington Rovers to spend vast sums of money per season on acquiring 'new' talent for the club. Although both professional football clubs operated in the same domestic playing league, the contextual factors associated with the clubs appeared to be markedly different.

Terry's story: The Bad Times.

Terry had a goal for the season, which was to make a 1st team appearance. He needed to 'get games under his belt' and argued that the large size of the first team squad restricted his opportunities to play in either the 1st or the reserve team; a feature discussed by Richardson et al. (2005).

"Well standing in my way, coz we've got alot of players...so you've got your 1st team and then we've got like another 1st team basically coz we've got a big squad. So they have to play in the ressies [reserve team]. So players who were playing in the ressies get pushed down again, so it's quite tough..."

Since joining the club as a Football Scholar Terry felt that his career had progressed quite well. He had moved from the U17s to U19s team and again to the reserve team. He even suggested that he had touched the 1st team 'fringe squad' and talked positively about these progression experiences. As we spoke for the first time he had

[11]A loan spell is a period of time when a player trains and plays with another club outside their contracted club for a period of at least 2 weeks through to a full season.

just returned from a loan spell at another club. He had mixed feelings about the experience:

"...it was good... but, it was more of an off the pitch experience because I didn't get many games on the pitch. So I was experiencing a lot of things like not playing and why is he not playing me? And what do you do? Or do you go to training and say 'I'm not bothered' and come back to Brent? Or do you just try and stick at it and try and get in the team."

Although the loan spell gave Terry a chance to see what life was like at a lower level club (e.g., physical component of the game, resources, work ethic), the exercise had apparently failed. He had not experienced regular exposure to competitive soccer:

"I was dropped after the 1st game. I was just dropped and I didn't play the next game because he [loan club manager] said I was inexperienced and I was young. But if he gave me another chance maybe he would have seen another person. But he didn't give me another chance so..."

Terry told me that the manager at the loan club had called him into his office and suggested that he might have been wrong to play him in a competitive match, due to his lack of competitive experience at 1st team level. As the loan experience unfolded the rationale for the loan deal became increasingly unclear. Terry was in unfamiliar territory. He had not been prepared and/or educated about what to expect from the experience. It had been a bad move. Terry felt that he should not have been put in such a situation and criticised the unstable environment of the loan club. For clarification, the manager was sacked one week after his loan spell had expired.

"...I don't think a young player should be put into that really. It should have been somewhere where the manager's saying 'you're here now and we're going to play you and we're going to look after you and get games.'

Getting Stuck In: One hello and a few games.

Now back at the host club Terry achieved greater playing exposure through playing two games with the reserve team. The 1st team manager had also started to take an interest in him:

(Before) I was like nothings happening for me, nothings happening for me. It's like people are starting to talk to you now. If you get what I mean, coz you're in amongst the, even the gaffer said 'hello' today. "Alright Terry Campbell." So it's nice to know he still remembers you. And in another session he was like "Terry Campbell, show me what you've got then." So it was nice to know that he's not giving you the cold shoulder and he stills remembers ya..."

It appeared that Terry needed this kind of support (i.e., personal attention, confidence, belonging etc). However, further progression seemed unlikely given the club's precarious position in the domestic league. Terry also associated this precarious state with the lack of opportunities that were given to the 'young lads'. Terry also constantly battled against the number of professional players at the club, and positioned this as a primary barrier to progression:

"... There's like 40 odd players and probably my age, coz he's [1st team manager] got a few young players in that squad [1st team] but (for) a young player to get into any squad it's hard."

As we talked around the notion of progression, Terry spoke of a group of players that (together) were known as the "bomb squad" (players that were regularly not included in the training with the 1st team squad). At times he knew he was part of that scene. The integration of social support however was clearly absent for Terry during this time:

"... it's a bit upsetting when I'm in that squad [bomb squad] sometimes. I think it's one of those things at this moment in time that I've gotta accept coz I've been away and that and I'll just have to get on with it. It's all down to me now."

Being located in the 'bomb squad' increased Terry's fear of being released from the club and it was a squad that he wanted to move away from.

The next time we met Terry had progressed out of the bomb squad and had started to have more contact with the reserve and 1st team squad. The battle, though, never stopped, the number of professional players at the club continued to be seen as a barrier:

"Just like the blockage of players now, coz we've got so many players in the squad, even though the squad's been reduced due to injuries, there's still a lot of players that are not playing in the 1st team and have to play in the reserves. They've got people like [names of both U.K. & foreign players] and you'd have thought the reserves would've been for the young lads really, but obviously it's not is it? So it's players like that are just blocking it up at the moment for us young lads."

Working alongside what appears to be a 'glass ceiling ' of seniority was a constant challenge for Terry:

"That's just the way the club is at the moment isn't it. They've got a big squad and people need to play innit so you can't really do much about it. It's upsetting coz you're not getting a chance to show what you can do, coz obviously you can train as much as you want but if you don't do it in a game then it doesn't make no difference. So it's just trying to get a game to show what you can do. "

It was apparent that a number of contextual factors limited his chance to realise his goal of more competitive exposure. The host club's need for domestic league survival dictated that the 1st team could not afford to experiment with younger players. Furthermore, a number of older professionals were often required to play in the reserve team if they were returning from injury or needed 'a run out'. Terry mused over what the future might hold:

"...at the present time, I say to myself, I wouldn't mind going to a lower club really...Sometimes I wouldn't mind coz sometimes you watch like young players doing well in the 1st Division and that innit. So sometimes I wouldn't mind actually."

Foreign Players: They're just another player aren't they?

Terry's views on the foreign players' that the club employed appeared to be very clear:

"Not a problem, if they're [foreign players] good then they can play, but not a problem really. If you're good enough you'll play with them...obviously there are just more players. But it's not a problem that they're foreign really."

On exploring the notion of foreign players restricting opportunities for home-grown players, Terry suggested that:

"I'm not arguing against it, but I haven't experienced that here, it's different. But obviously if you're better than them you'll go further up and then you'll play with them. So it's not really hindering our chances."

The club structure at Brent Town was also discussed and I asked Terry if he thought the progression of young home-grown players was 'more' affected by the foreign player acquisition at Academy level or post-Academy progression level (i.e., young pro). Consistent with the findings of Study 2 Terry believed that (some) players were more affected once they became a young professional. I also explored whether Terry had felt affected by the acquisition of foreign players whilst in the Academy domain, to which he responded:

"No, because you just totally enjoy your football innit...it's like you go from being the top [in the Academy] to the bottom, if you get what I mean. So you're the top in the Academy, so you're playing well week in, week out and you're one of the better players and then you move up and suddenly you're the bottom innit. So you're not one of the better players, but you've got to try and progress innit, so...coz when you're with the top in the Academy you've got to try and progress, but there's so much you can do around the players, but when you step up you're the bottom. You're a no-one as it is!"

These views highlight the importance of the transitional phase within the player progression continuum. Re-occurring themes that were identified as barriers to his progression were associated with the 'club's situation' and a 'lack of competitive

playing opportunities'. The latter was confounded by the high number of professional players that the club employed, which Terry attributed for the slow-down in his rate of and/or opportunities to progress:

"Yeah, probably standing in the way, but they're [professional players] there. Do you know what I mean? They're not standing in the way, they've been put there because the gaffer [1st team manager] wants them there. So they've been brought in because the gaffer wants them in. So in a way they are standing in the way of my progression but what can you do?"

Terry appears to be referring to what UEFA have described as the 'hoarding' of players in large first team squads. However, he accepted the fact that competing with these players was part and parcel of his development experience. He also recognised that they were just 'players'. Players in his way; but nevertheless just players.

"Yeah, it is a concern, but that's football innit! You know when you enter football that's football and if they don't want you...football's ruthless at times. They'll just say there's the door, off you go son."

Terry summarised his thoughts on the foreign player issue as he suggested that:

"...I've got English players ahead of me...if you're better than them, you're better than them. That's it at the end of the day really."

Meaningful Exposure: A roller coaster back to the future

The next time we met, Terry was soon on the move, sent out for a second period on loan. This time the loan club was located in the Nationwide Conference and the manager of the loan club had seen him perform in a reserve team game. The experience made him reflect on the characteristics that were required to perform at that level and he identified 'mental' qualities as prominent. However, the focus groups suggested that this aspect was the hardest area to comprehend during their Scholarship programme and the issue of appropriate provision is certainly one to consider in preparing players for the transition to professional status:

"At first I really didn't want to go because it was a Conference Team. But then I spoke to a few people [1st team professional and coaches] and they said 'it might

toughen me up.' So I thought why not? It makes you grow up. It is a hard league really. It is a very hard league so it makes you grow up a lot more." (I've learned) "How to look after yourself on the pitch really, and mentally, how to get focused for a game that means something. We are playing for points and because they are in the Conference they are only two outside the play-offs and they need to get in the play-offs really. So it's very competitive and it means a lot to everyone."

"At first I felt a bit...but the manager [Brent] said that he thought it would be good for me because I didn't have the best time at [previous loan club], so we're sending you out again to see. And obviously if they [club] want you to do something, not that you have got to do it, but in a way you have got to do it really."

Terry saw the loan deal in a positive light. It was a learning experience. Does he have a future back at his host club?

"I don't know, you don't know what people are thinking. So I don't know about seeing my future at the club really. I hope there is a future but I don't really know what it's going to be so..."

Overview:

Terry identified the high number of professional players that were employed at the club, along with the club status (i.e., needing to survive in the league) as factors that impinged upon his progression. Terry also identified the 'transfer window' as a further factor that influenced the manager's/club's recruitment philosophy, which again, was viewed as a further barrier to his progression. He suggested that the staff at Brent Town believed the loan deal was to 'toughen him up', a cultural specific term that refers to the psychological aspects of player development. However, the emotional troubles that were manifested in Terry by one ineffective and unorganised loan period highlight the importance of a systematic approach to the loan process. Terry's second loan period highlighted the fundamental importance of 'meaningful competitive football' that this player required as a young professional. This developmental component appeared to be markedly absent in the reserve team environment at his club.

Ryan's story: Meaningful competitive football and strategic management

In contrast to Terry's apparently dysfunctional post-Academy experience, another player, Ryan Priestly, also experiencing his first year as a professional player at a different club encountered a more positive transition period. Ryan's post-Academy experience was characterised by more 'meaningful competitive football.' During the year Ryan was exposed to a strategically managed loan period with one lower league club that was characterised with effective internal and external support systems (Richardson et al., 2004). Such support offered continual advice, guidance and feedback regarding Ryan's performance. The loan experience resulted from the good performances of players in the 1st team, which had prevented Ryan's further progression. He acknowledged the club's recruitment philosophy as something that he had to compete with:

"You know that, especially at Pennington Rovers, they're going to buy the best players that they can get. You know that if you're going to be young here, you know that you've got to be better than them sort of thing. Like you've got the best facilities and the best coaches to train to make you the best one so...if you're not making the grade they're going to buy someone in..."

Consequently, Ryan duly accepted the opportunity to go out on loan when asked and commented on his lack of meaningful competitive football that had generated thoughts of the loan move:

"Because I had been thinking about it. Some of the lads [young professionals] had been talking about going on loan and stuff because the reserve games weren't up to scratch and stuff, and the standard wasn't the best. So getting the chance to play against better players, every game will mean something when you play."

The fact that he was being loaned to a 2nd Division club was not seen as a problem:

"I was just happy to play 1st team football. It was my first taste of it. I had been on the bench a couple of times at Pennington, but not actually got on."

During the loan experience Ryan suggested that the preparation for games was *focused* and that there was a *purpose* attached to every game. I sensed that the experience was a productive step in Ryan's development as he explicitly emphasised the *learning component* of the loan spell. Ryan viewed the loan spell as an experiential learning process, whereby it could act as a step towards playing for Pennington Rover's 1st team upon his return. Whilst on loan, Ryan emphasised that he had received continual support from the Academy and professional staff at Pennington and was encouraged by them to stay for the season:

"He [reserve team coach at Pennington Rovers] has heard that there are good reports coming back from me and everything and I should try and stay there as long as I can this season. Because I will be benefiting a lot more by playing first team football than I would in the reserves here. Even if I was involved in the first team it would just be training and it would just be a bit part sort of thing."

Ryan believed that there were no barriers to his progression as long as people continued to watch him perform in games [for the loan club]:

"...as long as people keep watching my games and stuff, no, I should be okay coz I'm getting the chances in the first team."

Foreign Players: Enhancing the standards

The notion of foreign players was also a feature of the interviews and Ryan suggested that the foreign players that were employed at Pennington Rovers were all of a high standard. Again, Ryan expressed the belief that the foreign players within his club were not preventing him from progressing. Rather, he referred to the positive features of being able to observe the foreign players train. This experience was facilitated by the single site training complex at Pennington Rovers.

"I think they [foreign players] help, coz some of them, you get the international weeks and some will go away and you'll get the South Americans who'll still be here when the others are having like European qualifiers and stuff. So you get to train with them [foreign players] if you're with the reserves and that, so that helps you."

He felt that foreign players facilitated his development and suggested that the exposure that he had had with them meant that expectations concerning playing standards became transparent.

"It's just training with a better standard. You know what standard you've got to get to instead of just watching them on Saturdays and things. You get to be with them and stuff."

The only negative aspects that Ryan identified concerning the foreign players within the club were the language barriers. However, he did recognise that a lot of the players tried to learn the language. When asked about the motives for foreign players wishing to sign for English clubs, he suggested that:

"A lot of people would say that the Premiership is one of the best leagues and especially for the attacking players, because it is a really fast pace so you get loads of chances and everything. So it's a good chance for all the foreign players to make a name for themselves here...because the money is supposed to be bigger abroad, so I don't know."

4.4 Conclusion

The contrasting experiences of Terry and Ryan, two young professional football players attempting to 'find their way' in the domain of professional football, emphasises a critical period of transition (i.e., young professional to 1st team) that awaits young players following their academy experience. The conceptual issues raised in the two case studies resonate with the career transition literature on self-identify during transition (Lavallee & Wylleman, 2000). In this sense, the players appeared to engage in aspects of self-appraisal concerning their identities, which were shaped and influenced by their pre and post-transitional environments (see Figure 4.3 for detailed illustration). This highlights the important role that that club staff can play in ensuring that the environmental conditions are conducive to positive identity construction.

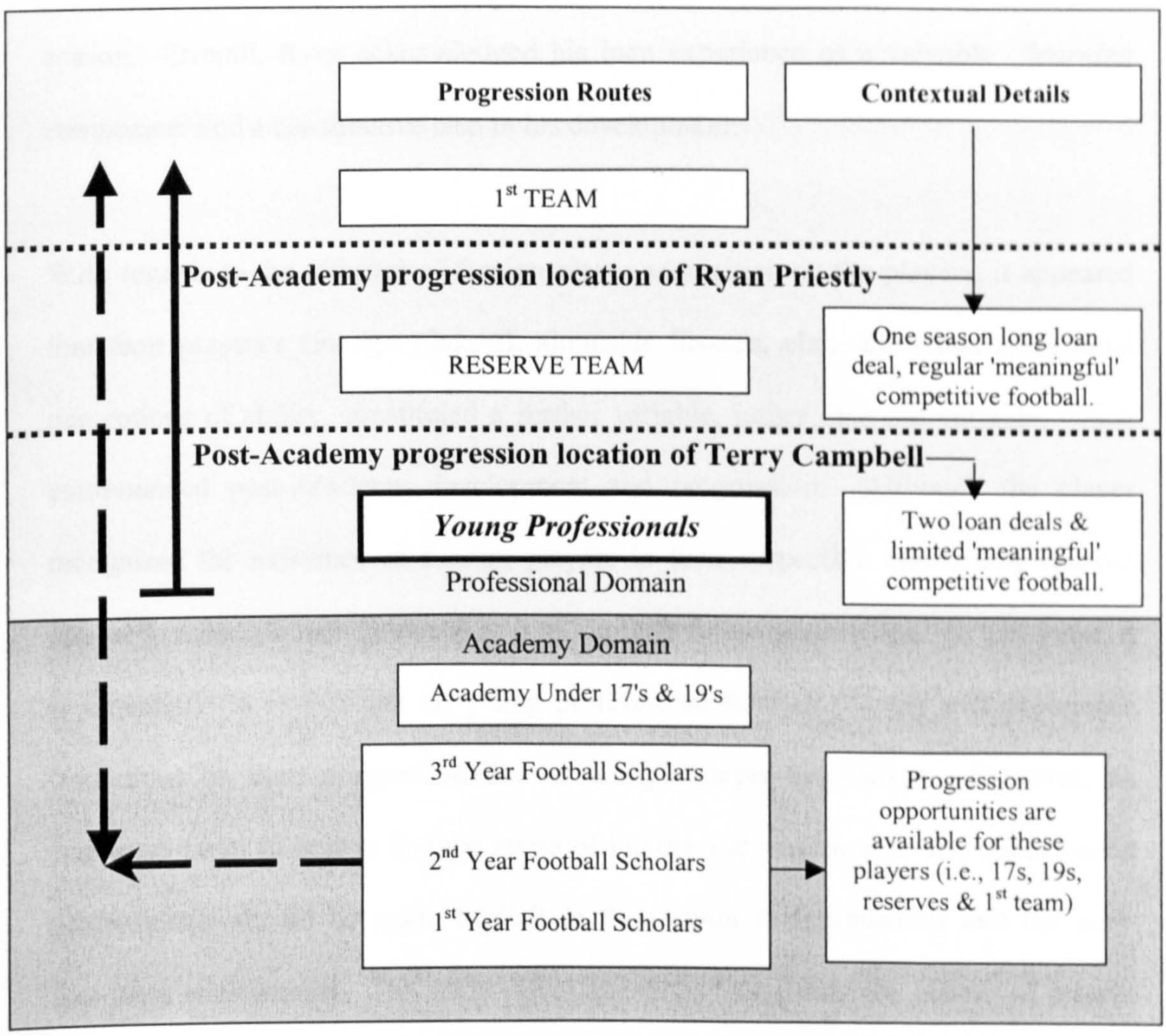

Figure 4.3: A *typical* club structure demonstrating post-Academy progression routes and experiences for Terry Campbell and Ryan Priestly.

In terms of specific themes that emerged from the study, Terry was exposed to two loan periods during the year and was bereft of support. Terry felt neglected by, and alienated from, his donor club, whilst Ryan experienced a continually positive association with his (donor club), gaining valuable experience of 'meaningful' competition. It was apparent that Ryan's loan periods possessed thoughtful, purposeful and inclusive decision-making (i.e., inclusive of the player, coaches, management and support practitioners from the 'donor' club in collaboration with the 'host' club). He also recognised the continual support from the Academy and professional staff at his 'donor' club as he was encouraged by them to stay for the

season. Overall, Ryan acknowledged his loan experience as a valuable *'learning component'* and a constructive step in his development:

With regards to the effect(s) of foreign player acquisition on the players, it appeared that their presence (foreign players), alongside finance, club status and managerial perceptions of ability, constituted a further variable, rather than *the* variable, which compounded post-Academy development and progression. Although the player recognised the existence of foreign players in their respective clubs, they did not appear to associate their presence as limiting their future progression. In that sense, it is unrealistic to expect that all young professional football players will experience limitations on their progression due to foreign player acquisition. However, an important point to note is that the range of factors and experiences that affect young professionals should be made explicit to them upon their transition into the post-Academy environment. The study raises questions concerning the benefit of reserve team football to the development of young professionals. It is felt that properly managed loan experiences, that have a *meaningful* purpose, can assist in fostering positive developmental opportunities for players that engage in the process.

In summary, a range of contextual factors determined the players' post-Academy carer experiences and trajectories. In the two case study examples presented here, it would seem that post-Academy player development and progression does exist and that each progression statistic should be understood on a player-by-player basis. Ultimately, it would seem that young professionals would benefit from a more structured and coherent approach to development (i.e., transition from Academy to

professional environment) to aid player understanding of the complexities concerning the progression dilemma that some players may experience.

Chapter Five

Discussion, Conclusions & Recommendations

5.1 Discussion

This chapter attempts to identify and critically discuss the main findings that emerged from the research and synthesise these with appropriate conceptual and methodological material, in an attempt to demonstrate how the thesis evolved over time. The chapter also revisits the philosophical location of the research(er), outlining the paradigmatic and associated epistemological changes that occurred during the adoption of various methods and methodologies, whilst also outlining my own development as a researcher. Connections between the various studies within the thesis are also made to provide a sense of how these fit together. A justification of the different research designs is included in the discussion. In summarising the chapter, conclusions are drawn and future recommendations are presented.

5.1.1 Study 1: Player Acquisition in Elite Level English Football

This study sought to better understand the trends and profiles of the player acquisition process in elite level English professional football. A quantitative research framework was deployed to enable a systematic analysis of a variety of player acquisition variables over a ten year time period (i.e., 1990/91-1999/00). The analysis revealed substantial player acquisition activity by English professional football clubs during this time. More specifically, this acquisition activity suggested a significant *inward migration* of professional football players principally from within the UEFA confederation (i.e., 92.2% of all acquisitions). Although the U.K. and Republic of Ireland (categorised as one sub-group of UEFA) had the largest acquisition frequency per season, the overall acquisition rate of this sub-group decreased over time. In comparison, and possibly as a consequence of the former group's decline, the acquisition frequency within the remaining sub-groups (i.e., Scandinavian, Western

and Eastern European) increased. Moreover, the acquisition frequency of players from non-European countries (i.e., CONMEBOL, CONCACAF, CAF and OFC) also increased throughout the time period. As noted earlier, these *inward migration* trends could be explained in both economic (i.e., inception of BSkyB and subsequent accrued revenue) and legislative terms (i.e., Bosman ruling), with the latter identified as a critical influence in the flow of sporting talent (Magee, 2002). In terms of the former of these points, the financial affluence of some English Premier League clubs (e.g., Chelsea F.C. and Manchester United F.C.) have enabled them to compete with many leading clubs in Europe for the acquisition of talented football players, and is commensurate with Moorhouse (1994), who claims that *economics* and *power* are at the heart of migration. England is also considered a powerful 'core' nation within the context of the global economy (Maguire, 1999; Darby, 2005) and the patterns of the acquisition process in Study 1 may be located in wider globalisation based debates that have been addressed by a range of commentators (see Magee, 1998, 2002; Maguire, 2004; Darby, 2005).

A further observation within Study 1 was the absence any Asian player acquisition throughout the time period. This finding may be associated with the literature on stereotyping and explained by the typologies that are held on individuals that reside from specific nations (Giulianotti, 1999). More specifically, Giulianotti (1999) discusses how people from powerful 'core' nations are considered to have a sound moral character and temperament, whilst peripheral nations are deemed to possess the opposite characteristics. For example, he notes that Northern European nations (Scandinavia, UK, Germany) produce calm, reliable individuals, whereas the Southern Europeans are described as 'emotional'; South Americans are 'fiery'; with

Africans being described as 'magical' and 'irrational'. Asian countries were noticeably absent within Giulianotti's discussion on stereotyping. Such an omission may be a reflection of the organisational and playing dominance of professional football within the Western world. The lack of acquisition data for individuals from Asian countries may also be an indication of sociological stereotypes that are possessed by the selectors of playing talent. However, further empirical inquiry is required to enhance this (perceived) link. It may also be the case that professional football is not considered as a 'core' sport within these nation states, thus limiting participatory opportunities for individuals. As a final point, the cultural values and beliefs that are prescribed to specific sports in Eastern nations (Chiba, 2004) may also be an issue that can be interweaved into the interpretation of this observation. In this respect, Giulianotti (1999) asserts that countries within East Asia promote the virtues of social solidarity and harmony, and that mental equilibrium takes precedence over bodily exertion. As Giulianotti suggests that Western nation states promote alternative merits, the appeal of football may be limited to the indigenous people that reside in these Asian countries. However, the hosting of the 2002 World Cup finals in Japan and Korea may be evidence to suggest that a cultural shift is occurring.

Study 1 also indicated an association between acquired players and primary playing position. The analysis revealed that defenders (33%, N=37) were the most prominent players acquired from within the Scandinavian sub-group of UEFA, with attacking players from the CONCACAF and CAF confederations of FIFA totalling 40.9% (N=9) and 43.8% (N=14). Again it may be possible to link these findings with the literature on stereotyping (Giulianotti, 1999). In this respect, the talent recruiters of the clubs within the present study may hold the belief that players from certain

regions of the world are more advanced in distinct performance related characteristics. As noted, Giulianotti (1999) referred to African football players as 'magical', a phrase akin to centre forwards, who possess skill, guile and speed that are perceived to score goals within games. The African confederation held the highest acquisition frequency (N=32, 2.4% of total) amongst the non-European FIFA confederations. Such migratory characteristics suggest the continent may be 'rich' in football talent. Darby (2005) also observed these patterns of football labour migration and links this to Africa's peripheral position in the world economy that promotes a dependency type relationship with core countries (e.g., England). This dependency occurs in terms of trade with the perceived powerful Western nation states. More specifically, Western nations can control the economic terms concerning the movement of sporting goods (i.e., football players) given the desire on the part of players to sign for clubs in Europe (Darby, 2005). In light of the conceptual and theoretical links that have been demonstrated, the positional findings in Study 1 appear to be aligned with the perspectives of imperialism and neo-imperialism, dependency theory, and world system theory (Darby, 2005).

Significant differences in acquisition age also emerged from the study (i.e., 21.7 to 25.6 years of age). This observation suggests that 'foreign' players (i.e., non-U.K. and Republic of Ireland) who are signed into English football at a younger age may be able to spend a greater amount of time within the professional game. In turn, this may enhance their longevity and subsequently may hinder developmental and progression related opportunities for 'young' home-grown players. The age of acquired foreign players was also evidenced when home-grown player acquisitions were examined. In this sense, an increase in non-U.K. and Republic of Ireland home-grown players was

evidenced by professional clubs throughout the time period. Although only relatively small in frequency these findings may constitute a further factor that may hinder home-grown player development and progression and emphasises the existence of talent migration at the pre-elite level (see Bourke, 2002)

The findings indicate that elite level English professional football clubs are now widening their geographical search to encapsulate both European and non-European nations in recruiting *talented* young football players. In highlighting this, there have been a number of measures that have been proposed by world football's governing body FIFA as an attempt to regulate the export of elite football talent. Much of this discussion however has focussed predominantly on the (perceived) de-skilling of Third World African countries. Sepp Blatter, the president of FIFA, has expressed his concern over the situation that has developed over the years and has suggested an age limit for the transfer of young African players to help alleviate the most damaging aspects of the talent drain (cited in Darby, 2005). The mean age of African players when acquired within the present study was 22.81 years of age. The situation has been facilitated by a number of (satellite) Academies that have been set up in African nations by European clubs (e.g., Ajax, Manchester United), which although provides benefits in terms of technical expertise, has also been highlighted as a vehicle to identify and recruit talent at an even younger age (Darby, 2005). The establishment of 'nursery' clubs is also a pronounced feature that acts to underpin the migration of 'young' football players (Bourke, 2002). Darby notes that these working practices serve to systematically de-skill the domestic African game and positions Europe as the primary contributor to both development and underdevelopment within the continent. Although these debates exist within the labour migration literature it must

also be noted that English clubs were only responsible for the acquisition of 32 African players throughout the ten-year time period of the study. Further investigation is therefore warranted to monitor this migratory trend.

The findings in Study 1 also revealed that English home-grown acquisition was stable during the time period (i.e., 100 in 1990/91 to 128 in 1999/00). However, when the data was examined further, it emerged that the acquisition trends were not reflected in *initial* 1st team appearances. The number of English home-grown players that *did not* make a 1st team appearance increased over the ten-year time period (i.e., 86% (n=68) in 1990/91 to 95% (n=81) in 1999/00) and points towards a view that initial progression (to the 1st team) was relatively small throughout the ten year time period. Although a direct causal relationship cannot be statistically established from the data set, the increased acquisition of non-UK and Republic of Ireland players throughout the study may form part of an explanation. One would also need to engage in a tracking process of the data to ascertain whether home-grown player progression occurred at a later stage in their careers. The finding indicated that, based on initial acquisition as professional players, chances and/or opportunities to progress within the context of a professional club's 1st team appeared to be somewhat limited. These findings suggest developmental implications and/or career enhancement opportunities need attention for those players that move into the professional domain of a professional football club's structure.

Consistent with the research of Maguire and Pearton (2000), the findings from Study 1 revealed large intra-confederational *inward migration* into English football over the ten seasons (i.e., 1990/91-1999/00), and highlighted the changing patterns associated

with the migration process. It was clear that football labour migration in elite level English football rapidly increased throughout the time period. Such migratory indicators resonate with the comments of Maguire and Bale (1994), who suggest that the migration process within the European continent is most pronounced in football. It may be claimed that the English Premier League possesses a multi-ethnic flavour (Lanfranchi, 1994).

The management of 'highly skilled' migrants has received less attention than migration of other groups (Koser & Salt, 1997). Specifically, the migration of highly skilled migrants is not normally regarded as a 'threat' to indigenous populations. In recent years a number of agencies (i.e., FIFA, UEFA) and commentators (Darby, 2005) have discussed the problems and consequences of highly skilled labour migration on indigenous talent. As previously noted, Sepp Blatter has expressed his concerns over the situation within Africa and has offered potential recommendations (i.e., increase age limit that clubs can sign African players), whilst UEFA have also proposed measures to promote the progression of home-grown talent (see section 1.7.5). With regards to this latter suggestion, EU legislation (i.e., freedom of movement) prevents UEFA from stipulating the specific nationality of home-grown players within their proposals. The general sentiments of the proposal postulates that home-grown players are 'more likely' to be home nationals. Richardson et al. (2005) note that UEFA's directives may offer 'donor' associations a chance to hold on to young talent. However, as the criteria within the proposal suggests that a home-grown player can be defined as *any* player registered for a minimum of 3 seasons with the club between the ages of 15-21 years, it would appear that an inadvertent outcome of UEFA's proposals would be to encourage clubs to begin the recruitment of

'promising' young talent (from across the globe) at a younger age. This process has already been witnessed in the findings of the present thesis and as a result of UEFA's recommendations donor countries may lose young talent even earlier in their development. In essence, Richardson et al. (2005) point out that young English (and British) players may face an even fiercer challenge to actually secure an Academy scholarship if UEFA's proposals are accepted.

From the analysis and subsequent discussion, it was felt that Study 1 addressed objectives 1 and 2 of the thesis. Objective 1 uncovered a range of trends in origins, ages and primary playing positions of players (i.e., U.K. and Republic of Ireland and Non-U.K. and Republic of Ireland players) acquired into elite level English football during the period 1990-2000. Objective 2 explored similar themes in home-grown players and revealed their acquisition trends. Whilst investigating these two research objectives, an associated question emerged regarding the research area, which subsequently shaped the direction (i.e., both conceptually and methodologically) of Study 2. This question sought to explore the 'actual' effect (i.e., experiential and perceived) of the (foreign) player acquisition process on the development and progression of home-grown players in elite level English professional football clubs. Throughout the remainder of the discussion for Studies 2 and 3, specific attention is given to these intentions that sought to identify *where* and *how* the effect of the inward migration trend(s) became *operational* and through what mechanisms and processes it was *manifested.*

5.1.2 Study 2 Part I: Fieldwork

Through the use of prolonged fieldwork observations, this study aimed to explore the daily realities of life as a Football Scholar in a single professional football club (i.e., Brent Town). The lived experiences were represented through the deployment of an eclectic writing style (Sparkes, 2002). Although the primary aim of the study remained the exploration of the foreign player phenomenon, a dominant theme that emerged (inductively) through the fieldwork process was that of *'relational issues'*. Relational-based issues existed between the players and coaches and illuminated key features of the players' lived experiences in the club domain. They also appeared to influence the players' perceptions on developmental and progression related issues (see Figure 5.1).

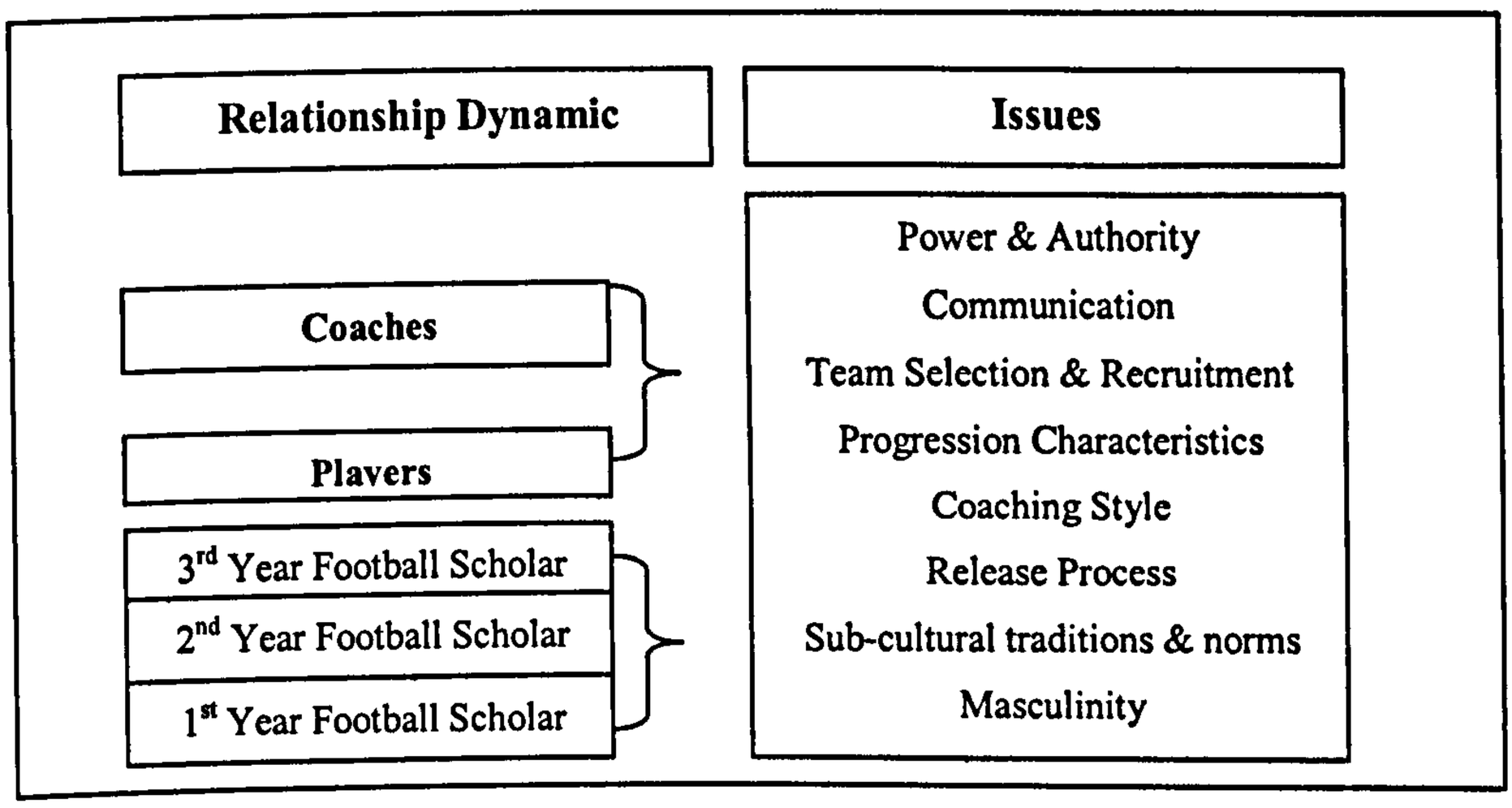

Figure 5.1: Prominent issues that permeated player-coach and player-player relationships.

The fieldwork observations underline the magnitude and dominant role that sociologically based characteristics play in the talent development process and more specifically, highlight the importance of the coach in 'nurturing' young football players. The literature documents that the coach is involved in the process of transferring knowledge (Macdonald & Tinning, 1995), which essentially involves

micro-level human interaction with players. The level of this human interaction (i.e., coach-player) varied across the coaching cohort at Brent Town. This was linked to the communication strategies that (some) coaches employed, which left (some) players feeling confused, angry and disillusioned. These emotions emanated (predominantly) from selection and recruitment based issues and resulted in the players independently trying to assess the reasons for their non-selection and/or progression. These observations serve to emphasise the need for players to receive transparent feedback on such issues if they are to engage in adaptive developmental behaviour. The interpretation of this finding can be linked to what Raven (1983) described as 'informational power', which is determined by the information, or logical argument, that a coach can impart to the athlete in order to influence a change in behaviour. The lack of such information can impinge on the 'respect' a coach can generate from players and is therefore essential to integrate this phenomenon into coaching practice (Potrac et al., 2002). Although the coaches in the study possessed a degree of 'legitimate power' (or respect) from the players, it was felt that this was by virtue of their position within the club structure (Raven, 1983) as opposed to how they interacted with players. Given the nature of the feedback received from some players in Study 2 Part I, a case could be made for coaches embracing the sentiments of Raven to enable progressive exchanges to occur. Such a move would help coaches to discuss issues with players so they fully understand the rationale for de-selection and performance related areas that they need to improve.

Although the 'method' and 'style' of feedback is important to player development, it has also been noted that cultural and contextual issues should be considered (Potrac et al., 2002). In framing this point, Potrac et al. (2002; p.194) state that "...a coach must

not only possess expansive knowledge of his or her particular sport, but must convey this knowledge in a manner deemed appropriate by his or her players and employers." Professional football clubs employ coaches and invariably they have to conform to the occupational practices that are characteristics of club life. In building on this view, Parker (2001) noted the distinct norms and traditions (inherent features of the professional football environment) serve to create and perpetuate a hegemonic masculine culture. These perspectives may help to explain the wider issues that appear to underpin coaching practice within Brent Town. In this sense, coaches may have been conforming to sub-cultural elements of occupational practice with regards to player feedback. Richardson et al. (2004) suggested that practitioners should embrace an 'inclusive' player support agenda (i.e., embracing elements of performance and personal development), in spite of coaches (perceived) concerns over the alleged 'softening' of the disciplinarian (and traditional) regime of professional football. This research highlights an example of good practice in terms of player support. Further empirical inquiry on the pedagogical behaviours of coaches within the same setting would extend this practice-based knowledge.

As excerpts from the fieldwork suggest, the players did not want to engage the coaches in conversation concerning non-selection for the youth team. This contrasts sharply to the coach interviewed in the research of Potrac et al. (2002), who emphasised that if he was to succeed as a coach then he needed to be regarded as easily approachable and be able to relate to his players. However, contextual differences may be able to explain the diverse viewpoints presented, as the coach in Potrac and colleagues' study was involved at the professional level within a club's structure.

Coaching style was a further issue that permeated the player-coach relationship and again concurs with the findings of Potrac et al. (2002). In some cases, players wanted an autocratic coaching style from the coach to facilitate their development, whereas other players required a more 'caring' and democratic approach. Arguably it is the responsibility of the coach to understand the individual needs of his/her players, which subsequently impacts on coaching style and behaviour. The adoption of flexible coaching styles must be associated with knowledge of, and implications of, such practices. It appears that the adoption of an adaptable coaching style is an important ingredient in the coaching process. Adaptability ensures that individual player learning styles and subsequent development are accommodated. Potrac et al. (2002) suggested that an authoritarian style of delivery acted to limit the input of the players into the decision-making process. This approach was linked to notions of power, as the coach in question did not want to be perceived by the players as being indecisive and/or lacking in knowledge. Coakley (1982) has also suggested that coaches might adopt an authoritarian style of delivery to avoid being perceived as weak and/or lacking in expertise by players.

According to Parker (1996a) and Giulianotti (1999) the institutionalised nature of life in professional football creates a distinct sub-culture that is peculiar to the football environment. These commentators have both highlighted the way in which players are able to use the distinct occupational practices that permeate the environment to construct hegemonic masculine identities; a position that is achieved as a result of collective and institutional practices (Skelton, 2000). The fieldwork observations in Study 2 provided examples to reinforce these occupational practices, which were manifested primarily in the form of verbal chastisements (i.e., 'ripping'). This

common element of the Scholars' lives was exhibited on a regular basis between a variety of players and age groups, although dominated by older players (see also Parker, 2001). It was a frequent occurrence during periods of 'downtime' (i.e., periods in the day that players did not engage in physical training) and surfaced around issues ranging from youth and reserve team selection, player recruitment and sexual encounters.

In line with Parker (2001), the behaviour of some players within their peer group appeared intentional and was used to generate and reaffirm group credibility. An inherent part of this group credibility process being a player's ability to 'give' and 'take' insults from other players. It seemed that possessing and successfully demonstrating this cultural specific mentality assisted in proving a player's masculine worth to their peers and so helped their position within the hierarchical 'peer' structure of the Academy. The narrative that depicts the experiences of Neil Dobson and Brian Matthews (pp.143-144) highlights the fierce nature of this occupational practice at work. There also appeared to be a process of initiation within the credibility process, whereby player 'status' and 'standing' was dictated by the time spent at the club and the people that one associated with. The pressure to conform to the behaviour of the majority in terms of 'ripping' was a visible undercurrent during the fieldwork and one that many of the 'younger' players engaged in.

On a wider conceptual basis, it may be possible to link these findings to Bourke (2002). Specifically, with respect to the socialisation difficulties that young Irish professionals encounter when joining an English club on a full-time basis. Bourke comments that individuals that enter a different cultural environment for the first time

may experience what she termed 'acculturation stress'. Acculturation stress is is associated with uncertainties inherent in changing or accommodating to a new culture. In light of the unique culture of the football environment, some form of cultural awareness training for those 'new recruits' entering the profession may be warranted to draw attention to specific occupational practices. From an educational and assimilation perspective, such a move may be viewed positively, however it may be somewhat difficult and problematic to embed this specifically into the Scholarship programme. It may also meet with resistance from some of the 'old school' coaches that work in the industry who possess institutionalised philosophies on player development.

Although the Scholars co-existed within the same domain, they also viewed their peers as potential barriers to their development and subsequent progression. At an extreme level, a lack of progression within the club domain resulted in moments of violence from Ian Earnshaw and Lee Brady (p146). However, it is worth noting that these players had both been released from the club. Such experiences raise questions concerning the support mechanisms (i.e., individual counselling) that were (and should have been) available to these players during the release process. Players that are released from professional football clubs typically continue training and playing with the club until their registration expires, or if they go on trial at other professional football clubs. The example outlined in the narrative raises questions concerning the consequences of keeping 'dissatisfied' players in the Academy system (e.g., discipline issues, lifestyle issues, motivational issues, disruption to the wider team/Academy dynamic). It appears vitally important that this period in a youth player's life is

carefully organised and managed, as the release process is a period of readjustment and (for some) an extremely emotionally demanding time.

The narrative also highlighted the difficulties for a specific member of support staff in terms of educating the players on psychologically based issues. As a non-traditional aspect of the player development process, the introduction and utilisation of sports psychologists in professional football is gaining momentum (Beswick, 2001; Forzoni, 2003). Such educationally based sessions are often conducted in the confines of a classroom. However, the difficulty of engaging young football players in educationally based tasks has been well documented (see Parker, 2000; 2001). The fieldwork highlighted the lack of engagement in psychologically based support by the Academy players. This may be due to their lack of understanding of the relationship between psychology and football (i.e., influence on development and progression) (Pain & Harwood, 2004), or simply the teaching and learning methods employed by the Academy sports psychologist. Viewed from either of these perspectives, literature exists that highlights examples of good practice in terms of sports psychology support (see Richardson et al., 2004; Gilbourne and Richardson, In Press). Rather than embrace an explicit mental skills training agenda (recognised as the 'core' element of sports psychology practice), which appeared to be the case at Brent Town, Gilbourne and Richardson (In Press) feel that successful practice is in the practitioner's ability to *care*. Within their work they highlight case studies to reinforce this perspective and assert that a performance and caring agenda are symbiotic, as they possess convergent properties rather than divergent philosophies. Richardson et al. (2004) also note how other support staff (e.g., coaches, Head of Education and Welfare) can manoeuvre sports psychology messages implicitly in their working practice and in doing so

demonstrate the effectiveness of this discipline within professional football. The coach interviewed in Potrac and colleagues' (2002; p.195) research also illustrates the psychologically based themes that the coach tries to embed in his coaching practice:

> "Players by and large want to be praised. Most people see them as spoilt overpaid whatevers. I see them everyday, most of them are insecure, and most of them are frightened to death 5 minutes before they go out for a game. So you've really got to be encouraging them Monday to Friday. You've got to tell them that they are good players, try and bring out the good points...make them feel good about themselves...I'm trying to boost the player's egos a little bit. I think it's all part of coaching. Plenty of encouragement always, whether you're a professional football player or a young kid, you need plenty of encouragement."

Potrac et al. (2002) further highlight *respect* and *credibility* as fundamental requirements in establishing a relationship with a player and it is felt that these principles need to underpin any form of practice when working in the football environment. For the Academy sports psychologist at Brent Town, it appeared that his methods were not appropriate to the players and the environment, which subsequently impacted on respect and credibility. Moreover, the suitability of individuals employed to educate young football players must be a consideration of the recruitment and selection procedures (see also Parker, 2000). Such individuals should be encouraged to understand, or (at least) be aware of the cultural dynamics that exist within professional football.

The fieldwork revealed that the effects of foreign players on the development and progression of home-grown players was not operational at youth level (i.e., Football Scholars) within Brent Town Football Club. Despite the large presence of foreign nationals that the club employed, discussions and naturalistic observations on this topic were limited. The club possessed a single-site training complex that enhanced observational opportunities for the players in the Academy, whilst also promoting

close interaction, observational learning and involvement in training. In spite of the (perceived) limiting effect of foreign player acquisition not being operational at youth level, it was felt that the research revealed an area within the club's structure where such effects were evidenced. The impact of foreign player acquisition was heightened during the post-Academy player progression and appeared to impact the 'young professionals' within the club's structure. The fieldwork illuminated the restricted opportunities for some of these young professionals to engage in 'meaningful competitive football'. As a consequence, it was felt that further development and progression was hindered. In a few examples, this group of players had to train with Academy players to accommodate their training needs. This observation formed the focus of the third study with two young professional football players to explore their post-Academy progression experiences.

In concluding the discussion of Study 2 Part I, it was felt that the fieldwork and subsequent representation of this process fostered the *full* achievement of objective 3. Specifically, Study 2 Part I explored and illuminated the 'lived experiences' and perceptions of home-grown players within an elite level English football club.

5.1.3 Study 2 Part II: Focus Groups

Study 2, Part II utilised the earlier fieldwork process to establish a number of structural themes that were then explored with Football Scholars from a variety of professional football clubs via a focus group methodology. This served to add breadth to the research design and allowed players to talk about the themes emerging from the fieldwork process. The findings from the study bear relevance to a range of

conceptual themes that have been outlined by a variety of commentators. The following section now attempts to synthesise this material.

Across all focus groups it was evident that the players felt the overarching aim of a Football Academy was to *develop* and *produce* players for a professional football clubs 1st team. To achieve this objective the Academy system had to develop a range of holistic practices (i.e., technical, physical, psychological/emotional, social and educational) consistent with the recommendations of the F.A. Technical Department's Charter for Quality (1997), and commentators from within the scientific community (Maguire & Pearton, 2000; Williams & Reilly, 2000; Reilly et al., 2000, 2003; Richardson et al., 2004). Although the philosophical sentiments concerning the roles of football Academies were clearly expressed in the focus groups, the *reality* of fulfilling these varied between clubs. *Club status* was identified as one of the factors that explained these differences. More specifically, certain clubs employed a (high) number of professional players (including foreign players), which serves to support the findings of Study 1. In these cases, players attributed this to the 'globalisation' that English football had undergone since its increased wealth from the television deal with BSkyB and the (relative) prestige of the club in terms of historical success. Such sentiments draw similarities to the work of Maguire (1999), who notes that economic factors have been involved in facilitating the global flow of sporting talent across continents. Although the aim of the Academy was transparent within and between the Football Scholars, their individual experiences shaped and influenced the degree to which this aim was achieved. In terms of initial expectations, players thought that more attention would have been directed on their footballing development, rather than other aspects (i.e., social, psychological) (see Parker, 1995). This observation again

strengthens the recommendations of both Bourke (2002) and Richardson et al. (2004) in highlighting the need for a more structured pre and post-player arrival awareness programme to be explicitly located in the induction and/or training process.

The study also found that players had mixed views about their specific roles and responsibilities as a Football Scholar. Some players accepted these as a 'right of passage' for their profession, whereas others were more opposed to these. Although official FFE and VTS documentation is clear in terms of the training requirements and structure of the Scholarship programme, it is reserved in specifying the necessity for players to engage in menial chores. These occupational related features of the training programme ranged from cleaning football boots and changing rooms, to the maintenance of equipment (i.e., bibs, cones etc.). The way in which the players in the present study talked about this aspect of their life resonates with the work of Parker (1995). For example, during an interview that Parker conducted, one of the players suggested that:

> "...football should be the main thing, the jobs seem to be the main thing and the football seems to fit in around the jobs you do. I know we've got a lot of jobs to do but we're primarily here to play football not to clean peoples boots or to clean the toilets or whatever."
>
> (Parker, 1995; p.116)

Although the structure of youth development has changed since Parker's research (i.e., the inception of Football Academies), the way that (some) players talked about their experiences have remained the same. It appears that players still question the link between engaging in jobs and their relationship with football development. The discussions on this theme also found that players had behavioural and lifestyle responsibilities that they had to adhere to. The philosophy and attitude of staff within a professional football club (including an Academy) are clearly responsible for the

culture that is created, which may either *facilitate* or *impede* the notion of players engaging in menial chores as part of their programme and period of development. Staff may feel that engaging in menial chores promotes a sense of discipline, but this tentative link warrants further inquiry.

The third structural theme explored the players' perceptions towards the typical player characteristics of a Football Scholar (i.e., technical, physical, psychological, social and intellectual) (Williams & Reilly, 2000). Talent (i.e., viewed from a technical perspective) was considered a core pre-requisite of attaining and maintaining the status of Football Scholar, and it was generally noted that technical expectations increased once players were in the club on a full-time basis. In building on the fieldwork experiences previously discussed within Brent Town Football Club, the psychological element of the development package was recognised as important, but also one of the most difficult areas to comprehend. It appeared that *some* players did not expect psychology to be part of their world within professional football. Given the lack of expectation with regards to applied sports psychology, pre-Scholarship educational awareness programmes could be embedded more firmly within Academy curricula to aid understanding on this issue prior to the transition to full-time Football Scholar. The psychological component is a crucial aspect of the developmental process and the benefits of exposure to systematic long-term psychological training has been recognised (Morris, 1997; Jones et al., 2002). Whilst not only increasing player awareness to the role of psychology in football, there is also a need to increase the awareness of Academy staff (i.e., predominantly coaches) towards the benefits of the psychological dimension to player development (Gilbourne & Richardson, In Press). Richardson et al. (2004) comment specifically on this issue and how the Head

of Education and Welfare in a football Academy initiated a degree of cultural change within the setting through an action research cycle. The practitioner within the action research promoted a player support agenda that embraced both caring and performance based issues that were underpinned with sound psychological assumptions (i.e., see Corlett, 1996). They suggest that, "...such a supportive package is critical in enabling players to cope with the demands of elite youth soccer, and hence enabling a more effective transition through the Academy into professional soccer" (Richardson et al., 2004; p.211).

The fourth theme explored the players' perceptions on support mechanisms that existed in the Academy (i.e., Academy staff, professionals), whilst environmental and individual factors were also considered. Again, both generic and localised issues emerged from the focus group discussions. The prominent issues with regards to the Academy staff are represented in the Player-Coach Relational Dynamic in Figure 5.2.

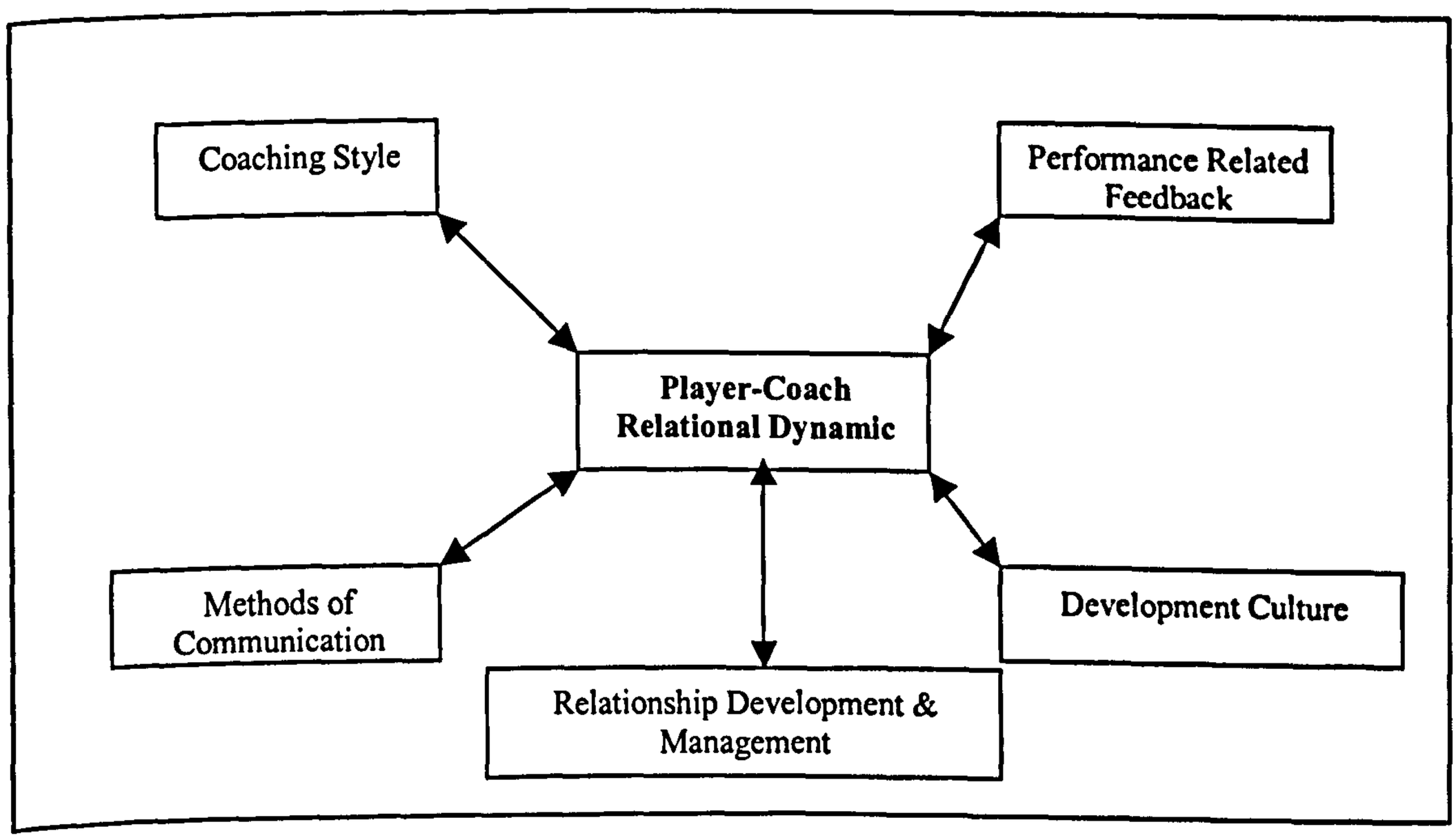

Figure 5.2: A diagrammatic illustration of the Player-Coach Relational Dynamic

The sub-components of the Player-Coach Relational Dynamic are inextricably linked. In this regard, the notion of coaching style emerged from the players' descriptions of their coaches' characteristics, which ranged from 'strict' and 'disciplined' to 'relaxed' and 'informal'. An individual's philosophy of coaching (i.e., beliefs and principles) invariably influences their coaching style (i.e., a descriptive categorisation of the individual's aggregated coaching behaviours) (Lyle, 1999). It has also been reported that both philosophy and coaching style are unique characteristics to the individual (Cross, 1999) and that individuals will respond in different ways to various coaching styles (Lyle, 1999). This literature may account for the players' recognition of differences in coaching style *within* and *between* clubs and resonates with Chelladurai's (1990) multidimensional model of leadership. This model suggests that it is important to accommodate an individual's (i.e., player) preferred learning style in an integrated coaching style. However, from the discussions within the focus groups it was found that different coaches and Academies possessed a particular ethos to guide their coaching style and remained consistent to the approach, rather than flexible to the needs of the task or individual(s).

It is also recognised that coaching style influences and shapes the coaching environment (Lyle, 1999; Potrac et al., 2002), and may play a more significant role in the development of expertise than heredity (Salmela, 1996). In the context of the present discussion, the coaching environment is termed 'development culture'. It was felt that the development culture that the players described appealed differently to some of the players. In addition, it was felt that the culture that was created within their respective Academy environments impinged upon their ability and/or inability to gain performance related feedback from the coaches. In this sense, feedback is an

essential feature that facilitates development and progression. For example, players at some clubs felt that their coaches were openly accessible in terms of seeking advice and providing support and guidance, whereas other players felt that coaches did not provide enough positive feedback on a consistent basis. The players' suggested that this latter point was to ensure that they remained 'grounded' (i.e., did not think they had 'made it'). Yet again, this issue was also a feature of the fieldwork process where some players felt that they did not receive 'quality' (i.e., prescriptive, informed, constructive) feedback from coaches. Nevertheless, clear and effective lines of communication are essential components of the coaching and development process and problems invariably arise if these lines of communication are ineffective (Cox, 1999). In this respect, a player's development (i.e., technical/tactical, physical, physiological, psychological/emotional, social) may suffer as a consequence of a lack of quality developmental feedback. It is felt that the methods of communication and performance related feedback should form the cornerstones of the player-coach relationship.

A further component of the Player-Coach Relational Dynamic was the notion of relationship development and management. The players felt that 'trust', 'honesty' and 'respect' were fundamental elements that were required to establish a relationship with their coaches (also see Potrac et al., 2002). This process was further influenced by coaching style, development culture and methods of communication, and emphasises the inextricable features of this dynamic. It was apparent that the coach was the principle member of the Academy staff to whom the players identified as being the significant stakeholder in their development, and subsequent progression to the professional ranks. This latter point may help to explain why some players

suggested that they were reticent in approaching coaches for feedback if it was not initially forthcoming. These points reflect the sentiments of various commentators (i.e., Carlson, 1993; Richardson & Reilly, 2001; Reilly et al., 2000, 2003) who emphasise the significant impact the coach has upon elite level youth player development. As a concluding point on this issue, it would appear vital that coaches (and other development stakeholders) involved in the development of youth football players are fully aware of the influence(s) that they have upon shaping youth player perceptions, attitudes and beliefs within their environments.

Further inductive development themes highlighted the importance of the 'training ground' (i.e., a facility where players engage in training) as an environmental factor. In this respect, two Academies had a single-site training complex (i.e., youth and professional players trained at the same venue), whereas two clubs had separate sites (i.e., youth and professional players trained at different venues). This contextual variability manifested a range of both positive and negative issues that represent a significant finding within the context of the present inquiry. It was apparent that all players from the four clubs recognised and valued the benefits of exposure to professional players (i.e., predominantly those regarded as *established* 1st team players). More specifically, this was perceived to have a beneficial impact on development for the players with a single-site training complex (i.e., observational opportunities, participation in training sessions, interaction with players). In contrast, the separate-site training complex was perceived as a barrier to development and engendered negative emotional states (e.g., nervousness and anxiety) for some players when they were required to mix with senior professional players in reserve team games or if required at the 1st team-training complex. This point bears relevance to

the transitional based literature that emphasises the importance of effectively preparing and managing (intra) career transitions of this nature (Lavallee & Wylleman, 2000). In this regard, transitions are recognised as critical periods in an athlete's career development and if managed incorrectly, can have potentially damaging psychological and/or emotional effects (Lavallee & Wylleman, 2000).

A further inductive theme that emerged from the study was the reference by some players in separate-site training complexes to the 'institutionalised' nature of the Academy environment. Players compared their Academy facility and accommodation and made analogies to 'prison', and suggested that it created feelings of 'boredom' and 'mental tiredness'. The findings parallel Parker's (1996a) observations of his ethnographic work inside Colby Town Football Club, where he framed similar observations around Goffman's (1961) interpretations of total institutional life. He discussed the restrictive, disciplined and authoritarian features of club life and the way that these influenced the lives of the youth trainees in the club. Players in the present study discussed ways in which their lives had changed as a result of becoming a Football Scholar (i.e., lifestyle choices, physical appearance, restrictions in privacy, lack of personal responsibility), all of which resemble the features of total institutions as presented by Parker (1996a). In taking this conceptual debate further, the links to Parker's (1995) research are again evident in terms of the housing of young players. For example, a respondent during Parker's fieldwork talked about the 'boredom' that the trainee hostel (i.e., accommodation for the youth trainees) produced for some of the players, which Parker inferred to as the mundane nature of their new lifestyle. It appears that, despite the developments that English professional football has witnessed with the inception of Football Academies, the findings of the present

inquiry outline the negative features of the development programmes and concur explicitly with the past research by Parker. Based on these observations it is felt that further attention in terms of social and/or psychological provision should be made transparent and available to all players entering into an Academy system.

The issues noted thus far have emphasised the importance of the club environment in shaping the experiences and perceptions of young players. Although many professional football clubs have invested considerable financial sums into their Academy infrastructure (i.e., facilities and support services), it appears that the localised environmental issues outlined here should be recognised and embedded into working practice. This would encourage a more humanistic approach to player development and could (potentially) alleviate some of the concerns and frustrations that young players possess during their period of development in Academy systems. (see Richardson et al., 2004)

The findings from the final focus group theme revealed that attitude, understood by the players as being linked to dedication, discipline and the ability to make sacrifices, was considered a core progression characteristic. This was further conceptualised in both a performance and non-performance context in the sense that some players felt that their coaches believed a good attitude was reflected in their off-field duties (i.e., cleaning boots and behaviour). However, as noted earlier, its association to performance and progression is a tenuous one and has been questioned by respondents in similar research studies (see Parker 1995). This finding would undoubtedly benefit from a closer inspection of coaches' perceptions to identify their views on progression related characteristics at youth level.

Coach favouritism and coach relations were further inductive themes that emerged from the focus group discussions and add additional dimensions to the fieldwork observations. More specifically, some players felt that selection for reserve team squads was influenced by players' relationships with coaches and provided examples to illustrate this point. This observation was partly attributed to a lack of communication between coaches and players or an inability (or unwillingness) to communicate, which, as noted previously may be linked to the cultural aspects of the environment that influence coach behaviour (Potrac et al., 2002). Players in Parker's (1995) study also suggested that this practice existed in their club.

The environment was also an issue that was thought to influence progression given that some players' had the opportunity to learn and acquire knowledge from observing 1st team professionals in their shared training complex. This environmental factor appears to be of paramount importance for players within Academy structures and close attention should be given to this issue by those agencies (i.e., PFA, FAPL, FA, FFE & VTS, professional clubs) and/or individuals (i.e., coaches, sports practitioners) that are involved in organising and managing youth development programmes in (English) professional football.

With regard to individual player characteristics, some players felt that personality, maturity and self-confidence were required to progress. Although it has been suggested that these characteristics are innate (Morris, 1997; 2000), Reilly et al. (2003) suggest that they are influenced by the significant others that players come into contact with, and specifically highlighted the coach as the principle stakeholder. However, it may be felt that developing these psychologically based principles is

beyond a coach's area of expertise. Player progression is fundamentally important in the wider area of talent development and selection, but there is a paucity of academic research that has specifically explored this area. Difficulties in terms of research design, sampling and testing procedures, analysis and interpretation have been attributed to the lack of scientific inquiry from this perspective (Morris, 1995).

In terms of barriers to player progression, a dominant theme that was consistent across all focus group discussions was the acquisition of players for the 1st team. This finding provides the empirical support to the quantitative findings observed within Study 1. Moreover, the notion of foreign players emerged from the focus group discussion with *some* players suggesting that the acquisition of 'new' players restricted progression opportunities. In developing this point, it was implied that this acquisition process promoted a (downward) 'distribution effect' (i.e., the increase in professional players meant that numbers for the reserve team increased) within the structure of some clubs that further *restricted* opportunities to gain reserve team appearances. The reserve team is part of a professional football club's structure and is seen as a natural progression route for youth players (Sulley, 2004). These sentiments highlighted further the barriers for elite youth player development and progression. The (young) age that clubs had acquired foreign players was also reported and mirrored the findings of Study 1. On this issue, some players felt that Academy systems should be focussed on developing home-grown players of the country's respective association (i.e., England). UEFA's new proposals on the local training debate also support this view in terms of home-grown player production, but refrain from specifically stating specific player nationality due to employment law (see Richardson et al., 2005). The continued acquisition of 'young' foreign players may

therefore be a continued feature within recruitment practices of professional clubs that home-grown players, from home nations, may have to accept, and ultimately compete against for a future within a club.

The findings from the focus groups have demonstrated player understanding on the (foreign) player acquisition process in elite level English football and resonate with the comments of Morris (1999), Maguire and Pearton (2000), Heighway (2001) and Atkinson (2003) who have all alluded to the negative aspects (i.e., limiting chances/opportunities for home-grown player development and progression in English clubs) associated with increasing numbers of foreign nationals in English football. Generally, the players recognised the benefits of observing and interacting with established foreign players, but paradoxically, some associated their continued presence as a barrier to their progression. The nationality of the 1st team manager was identified as a factor that influenced a club's recruitment philosophy at both senior and youth level. Players in club C (see pp.214) commented on the noticeable shift to foreign players with the arrival of a foreign manager. However, players appeared to recognise that the football industry is extremely competitive, and although it was suggested that opportunities to progress were limited, there are a number of additional factors that may have contributed to this perception. At a macro level, a club's financial situation (i.e., revenue), its domestic league position (i.e., competing for honours versus competing for survival) and the availability of targeted players may all play a part in a manager's decision to either acquire and/or select players (including young home-grown talent). At the micro level, the perception of whether a youth player is 'ready' for selection for a club's 1st team (and reserve team) will also be considered and subsequent decisions taken.

In summarising Study 2 Part II, the Football Scholars within the focus groups expressed and alluded to the problems associated with the acquisition of foreign players, which appears to concur with the earlier findings of Study 1. However, it was felt that players still had opportunities to engage in competitive matches in their respective Academy systems (see Figure 3.1), which enabled players to develop their performance based attributes in the context of a competitive climate. As such, it was felt that the effects of the inward player migration process did not become (fully) operational within the clubs featured in this study.

5.1.4 Study 3: A case study approach to examine the specific career experiences (and trajectories) of (young) professional footballers in English football.

Study 3 built upon the earlier findings of Study 2 to examine the specific career experiences (and trajectories) of two 'young' professional footballers in elite level English football. The findings indicated that their post-Academy experiences were characterised by a lack of what has been termed 'meaningful competitive football.' This was a theme that was shared by both players and attributed to the diverse mix of players that made up the reserve team (i.e., young players, 1st team). Due to contextual differences that existed in the study it appeared that Ryan Priestly's progression difficulties were operational at a higher level within his club when compared to Terry Campbell. It is important to note that once an Academy player progresses through to the professional environment, and are classed as 'young professionals', they are not permitted to represent Academy teams. This constitutes one of the reasons why young professionals might be more exposed to the effects of foreign player acquisition. Specifically, there are more players (potentially) available for the reserve team, but limited starting places.

It appeared that the existence of contextual factors (e.g., philosophy of staff to player development, club status and player position), a notable feature of the collective case study approach (Stake, 1998), explained the differences between the two players. A generic theme that both players experienced, and possibly as a result of limits to their (further) progression in their respective clubs (i.e., progression to 1st team for Ryan Priestly and progression to the reserve team for Terry Campbell), were the loan deals that they experienced at other professional football clubs. The main issue to note from this finding concerned the 'overall' management of the experience. Differences were clearly evident in terms of communicating the rationale for the loan period, whilst subsequent communication between donor club staff, host club staff and the player, also differed. Again, contextual factors (e.g., knowledge of player/youth development principles and player learning) may be attributed to these findings. Potrac et al. (1999) suggested that coaching (including the management of players) has been presented as an unproblematic process and has often ignored the problems and realities of human interaction. Study 3 highlights the complexity of human interaction (i.e., player-coach interaction) and raises questions concerning the facilitation and management of the loan deal experience.

The study also revealed the players' perceptions on the foreign player issue. It became apparent that both players viewed the existence of foreign players within their respective club domains as unproblematic in terms of their individual progression. However, both clubs had a large presence of foreign players within the professional ranks and both players had been sent out on loan to other professional football clubs, albeit for different reasons. One could argue that the existence of foreign players did have an effect on the progression opportunities of these two players, but it became

operational at different levels within the club structure. Ryan Priestly's post-Academy progression difficulties occurred as he tried to progress from reserve team to 1st team, whereas Terry Campbell's was evidenced as he tried to progress into the reserve team. However, it was felt that the acquisition of foreign players was not an explicit progression barrier for the players as they viewed them (i.e., foreign players) as 'just players', which ultimately heightened competition for places.

It is most appropriate at this juncture to draw on the literature that was presented earlier concerning UEFA's proposals on the integration of home-grown players. Richardson et al. (2005; p.5) note that "...whether UEFA's (philosophically) sound intentions are to be embraced, or not, and whilst large squad sizes remain, member associations and clubs need to consider the critical transition of home-grown players (whether foreign or home nationals) during their post-academy (or post-training) experience." It is felt that the players in Study 3 wanted to be selected on merit, and in this regard, there is a need to equip players with meaningful competitive experiences to achieve this objective. This could be achieved through a more strategically co-ordinated loan experience that incorporates suitable support mechanisms, sound decision-making processes and communication strategies which better match the heightened competitive quality of 1st team expectation.

To summarise, it was felt that Study 3 identified where the effect of foreign player acquisition became operational. The study has added to and extended the understanding of the 'realities' concerning football labour migration and complements the previous findings of Study 1 of the present thesis. However, it was also felt that the existence of foreign players simply constituted a further factor (rather than the

only factor) that toughened the progression membrane for the young professionals (predominantly Terry Campbell) within the study. A variety of further contextual issues (i.e., finance - impact of relegation and winning honours, managerial decisions and philosophies) also hindered the progression opportunities for young players within the post-Academy transition zone. Ultimately, it was felt that the study pointed to the existence of a 'glass ceiling' that may exist within all professional football clubs (but more prominent in certain clubs), which given the small number of players interviewed, warrants further exploration. In addition, it is felt that an exploration of the perceptions of individuals closely involved in the progression process (i.e., coaches, managers) is also required in order to extend and add to the current levels of understanding regarding post-Academy development and progression.

5.2 Reflections on Methods

This section revisits the philosophical location of the research(er) and aims to define, expand and critique the paradigmatic and associated epistemological changes that occurred during the utilisation of various methods and methodologies. This process also details my personal feelings towards the change in research methodologies, philosophical locations and representational writing styles that were employed during the research and integrates the author's perceptions (i.e., using the "I") into the writing.

5.2.1 Study 1

The nature of the research objectives, design and subsequent analysis reflected the positivistic position of Study 1 and reflected my training as a researcher. The study

embraced the judgement criteria of *validity*, *reliability* and *objectivity* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) as it was felt that these conventional benchmarks of technical rigour controlled and accounted for any form of researcher bias. Bale and Maguire (1994) suggest that the wealth of quantitative data within the area of sports labour migration now enables researchers to examine and make generalisations based on their research findings, and highlights the importance of ensuring validity in the research process. As previously noted, the data collection process involved the coding and categorising of 24 variables, which reinforces the positivistic approach to Study 1. To emphasise the depth of data collection and analysis that I engaged in for Study 1, all players that were acquired over a ten-year time period for any club within the top division in English football is contained in the database and was analysed. It is felt that such extensiveness and thoroughness of data collection and analysis has enabled a significant and valuable picture of football labour migration in English professional football to be represented.

On reflection, I have now come to understand that whilst engaging in the research in Study 1, I occupied an ontological stance of *realism*, which assumed that an apprehendable reality existed, and that the research question had an objective existence (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). My epistemological position was one of modified dualist/objectivist whereby my capabilities as a researcher meant that I could study the issue of foreign player acquisition without influencing the research process or being influenced by it (Guba & Lincoln, 2000). To re-affirm this epistemological stance, I felt that the technical rigour that was inherent within the study prevented my values and biases from influencing the research outcomes.

Moreover, the experimental methodology that was embraced in the study acted to facilitate the manipulation and analysis of a range of quantitative data.

In summary, the positivistic position of Study 1 had clear benefits in terms of investigating the research question. For example, objective trends concerning the acquisition of foreign players was apparent from the analysis and inferences concerning the effect of this process were made by comparing and contrasting the findings to other trends and player profiles. Study 1 extended the knowledge and understanding of the (foreign) player acquisition process within elite level English professional football and suggested an impact on home-grown player progression. The questions that emerged from the study required a shift in the paradigmatic location of the research in order to better understand the 'lived experiences' of young players.

5.2.2 Study 2: Qualitative Fieldwork and Focus Groups

In Study 2 a shift in philosophical location of both the research and researcher was evidenced as ethnographic principles were utilised to transcend the paradigmatic landscape from a positivistic to constructivist position. These principles formed the basis of the prolonged fieldwork and observation that aimed to explore the day-to-day realities of life as a Football Scholar. In addition, fieldwork engagement enabled the researcher to place specific encounters, events and understandings into an extensive, more meaningful context (Tedlock, 2000). I assumed a *relativist* ontological position that presumes realities are apprehendable in the form of multiple, intangible constructions, socially and experientially based whilst being local and specific in nature (Guba & Lincoln, 2000). In the context of the research, I needed to explore the constructions of home-grown players in order to fully understand the reality

concerning the effects of foreign player acquisition. This ontological position was inextricably linked to a subjectivist epistemology, which involved the close interaction and association with players. As such, the heuristic nature of the research enabled knowledge and understanding to be created as the study progressed (Guba & Lincoln, 2000). In line with this paradigmatic shift, Study 2 embraced the notions of *trustworthiness* and *authenticity*, which parallel the traditional positivistic criteria of validity and reliability (Sparkes, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). I embraced the assumptions of constructivist inquiry, which hold prolonged engagement, persistent observation, reflexivity, and peer debriefing as the core assumptions within this paradigmatic location (Manning, 1997).

Within qualitative research it is important that researchers recognise the biases and requisite knowledge that they bring into the research environment (Krane et al., 1997). I was aware that the prior knowledge that I possessed of the football environment (i.e., understanding of the football culture and working environment) influenced the level of inductiveness within the research activity. Given my requisite 'personal' knowledge, the fieldwork process of the inquiry was *predominantly* inductive. I feel that it is unrealistic to expect researchers with prior *personal* knowledge of an environment to conduct purely inductive research (Biddle et al., 2001) and in this sense researchers need to be aware of how their requisite personal knowledge influences the research process (Krane et al., 1997). I felt that my requisite knowledge (also referred to as contextual understanding) enhanced my ability to engage in the fieldwork and facilitated the familiarisation period, as it served to assist respondent acceptance, respect and trust.[12]

[12] See Dandelion (1995) for further insight into insider research.

As evidenced earlier, Study 2 Part I embraced an eclectic writing style to document the players' experiences within the context of Brent Town Football Club, and draws on the literature concerning confessional and realist tales (Van Maanen, 1988; Sparkes, 2002). One of the purposes of engaging in this writing style was to invite the (active) *reader* into the text by integrating fieldnotes that conveyed the notion of feeling tone (Sparkes, 2000) and sought to promote a sense of authenticity (Lincoln, 1993). Although the narrative aimed to capture the lived experiences of the players (and the author) within the environment, I was also distinctly aware that the integration of the self (i.e., "I") within the text does not necessarily transform the writing into another genre, or alleviate the crisis of representation (Tierney, 2002). Tierney suggests that writing is a craft and that one cannot simply just transform writing (say from the scientific traditions) without the appropriate level of training, guidance and support. Prior to engaging in the writing process and the representation of the players' (and my) experiences, I questioned myself on numerous occasions on a number of issues. For example, I asked myself how I would transfer my writing style to capture players' experiences from an ethnographic perspective, as well as how it would be judged by my academic peers. Josselson (1993) expressed similar concerns as he asked how do we, as researchers, derive concepts from stories and then use these concepts to understand people. On reflection, I now accept that these moments might have constituted my own crisis of representation, possibly as a result of my traditional post-positivist training within Sports Science. These representational and legitimisation issues have been addressed by a range of commentators (see Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Mitchell & Charmaz, 1998; Richardson, 2000; Sparkes, 2000, 2002; Tierney, 2002) and proved to be invaluable texts in the writing process. The writing process enabled me to develop and produce a series of narratives to illuminate the

players lived experiences (Van Maanen, 1988). This process aided my own understanding of inward player migration and the player development process. It also acted as a period of discovery (i.e., of self and other) as the constant re-working of the narrative scripts (Richardson, 2000) made me reflect on my own experiences as a former Youth Trainee footballer. For example, I empathised with both Lee Brady and Wayne Cullen as they were released from the club, whilst I have also come to better understand the dynamics of the player-coach relationship. Again, this formed a feature of my personal experiences within professional football and may constitute and element of researcher bias (Biddle et al., 2001). However, methodological procedures such as investigator triangulation (Patton, 1990) and peer debriefing were utilised in an attempt to buffer any such biases and to enhance the credibility of the research process and my inferences. As a concluding point, I felt that the writing phase developed understanding of both the self and other, which may have not been possible by utilising other forms of representation (Richardson, 2000).

Consistent with the assumptions of constructivist research, the findings and presentation of the focus group data in Study 2 Part II reflected its paradigmatic location. The integration of verbatim citations was presented within the text to enable perceptions (and voices) of the players in the focus groups to be heard (Opie, 1992). This procedure promotes thick description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), whilst also allowing multi-voice perspectives to be presented (Krane et al., 1997). The interactive nature of focus group methodology (Frankland & Bloor, 1999; Bloor et al., 2000) meant that the players' perceptions were clarified through discussion with other players and with the researcher. The focus groups were approached with a predominantly deductive agenda, accompanied by my prior knowledge of the

environment. However, elements of an inductive nature were also allowed to emerge (Krane et al., 1997), which helped to consolidate a thematic perspective. Again, these features are consistent with the assumptions of constructivist research (see Schwandt, 1994). The aim of Study 2 was to construct a deeper level of understanding concerning the foreign player issue in the context of professional football. Although some players might have initiated an element of change as a result of the research, it was not the intention of the research(er) to start and/or facilitate this process.

Bain (1989) notes that validity in constructivist research depends not only on the trustworthiness and credibility of the interpretation, but also the effectiveness of the research process in empowering the participants. In that sense, Manning (1997; p108) suggested that:

> *"The insights and interpretations gleaned from the inquiry product should facilitate and stimulate action...constructivist research cannot only be an intellectual exercise, but must be worthwhile to, among others, the respondents who shared their knowledge..."*

In evidencing Manning's comments, I disseminated reports of the focus group findings to the respective individuals that had granted access to the club and its players, which acted as a form of respondent validation (Silverman, 2001). This process served to further enhance the authenticity of the qualitative research in Study 2.

To conclude the critique of the methodological discussion of Study 2, Guba and Lincoln (1994; p.113) suggest that the aim of constructivist research is to "...understand and reconstruct the constructions that people (including the inquirer) initially hold, aiming towards consensus but still open to new interpretation as

information and sophistication improve." On reflection, it was felt that this aim was made transparent within both Study 2 Part I and II, as the fieldwork process illuminated key features of the Football Scholars daily existence, which were then further explored using a series of focus groups.

5.2.3 Study 3: Case Studies

This study deployed a prolonged qualitative case study methodology and used in-depth semi-structured interviews (Dale, 1996) as the core methodological approach. Although the interviews were predominantly semi-structured in nature, any new issues that emerged during the course of the interviews were explored and probed. This flexibility was required during the interviews as any form of restrictions would have narrowed the scope of the inquiry and restricted the elucidation process.

As previously noted, the research(er) was located within the constructivist paradigm, whereby the notions of trustworthiness and authenticity again provided the tenets of technical and procedural rigour. The constant checking with the participants on the meanings attributed to certain responses within the interviews evidenced this notion and acted as a form of respondent validation (Silverman, 2001). In addition, prolonged engagement was a feature of the research process, which Lincoln and Guba (1986; p77) describe as the:

> *"...lengthy and intensive contact with the phenomena (or respondents) in the field to assess possible sources of distortion and especially to identify saliencies in the situation."*

In addition, frequent peer-debriefing meetings (Patton, 1990) with experienced qualitative colleagues were also integrated within the research process. On reflection, it was felt that this exercise, which was constant throughout the qualitative component

of the thesis, added richness to the research process. A similar procedural feature to Study 2 Part I that was embraced in Study 3 was concerned with its representational component. The integration of verbatim citations was again positioned within the text to highlight the players' perceptions and to promote thick description (see Opie, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1995). In line with Coffey and Atkinson (1996), disciplined, principled choices and strategic decisions about how to represent and reconstruct the social world of the players were made prior to starting Study 3. As a sign of researcher development, these decisions were closely aligned to the researchers philosophical positioning (a relativist ontological stance & a subjectivist epistemology) (Guba & Lincoln, 2000), which I feel have aided the research process.

In summarising this reflective piece of writing, I feel that the research journey has enabled me to fully understand the complexities of mix-methodological research that seek to explore a research question. In line with Sparkes (1998), a diverse methodological approach has enabled a different way of understanding to emerge with regards to football labour migration and its effect(s) on the development and progression of home-grown talent. A range of judgement criteria have been embraced throughout the thesis to ensure technical rigour and authenticity, which are commensurate the associated paradigmatic shifts and provides further evidence of personal development. With the methodological overview now presented, the conclusions and significance of findings are offered.

5.3 Conclusions and Significance of Findings

This section synthesises the findings of the thesis in relation to the research aim and attempts to capture their significance. The statement by Maguire and Bale (1994; p.283) activated the focus of the research as they suggested that, "...the presence of overseas players could deny indigenous [home-grown] players access and thus lead to personal and a national underdevelopment." This was not the only source that formed the basis of the rationale, but it helped to develop and frame the research question. The research aimed to investigate foreign player acquisition and its subsequent effect(s) on the development and progression of home-grown players in elite level English football. A mixed methodological and mixed-paradigmatic approach was utilised to explore the research question and is illustrated in the following diagnostic.

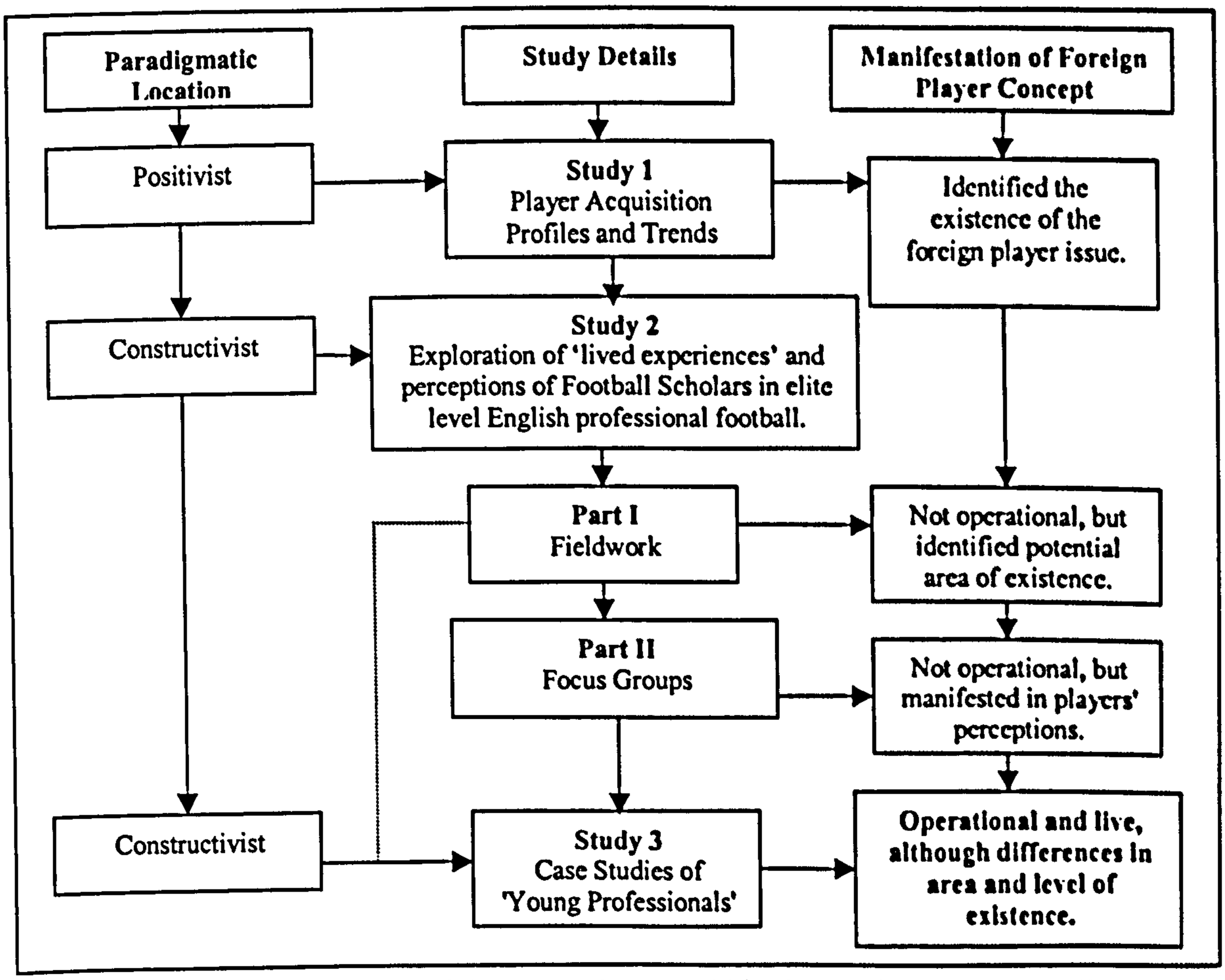

Figure 5.3: The development of the research area within the thesis through paradigms and studies.

The following piece of writing attempts to demonstrate how the findings from Study 2 (Part I and II) and Study 3 serve to challenge, support and enrich the suggestions that emerge from Study 1. To achieve this, it is pertinent to firstly outline the major findings from Study 1.

In examining the research question of the thesis, Study 1 attempted to explore the *presence* of foreign players in English football by examining acquisition data on a longitudinal basis. The database that was produced for this study was extensive, and following the analysis, I was able to unequivocally state the patterns and trends of football labour migration in English football. These clearly suggested that the *presence* of foreign player acquisition increased throughout the ten-year time period, whilst the overall number of acquired U.K. and Republic of Ireland players decreased. An important feature of this finding was the young age that foreign players (specifically African born players) were being signed. This may serve to enhance the period of time that those players reside in English professional football. Moreover, this finding illustrates Maguire and Bale's (1994) perspective that the presence of foreign players could lead to what they term "...personal and national underdevelopment" (p283). In terms of synthesising the primary qualitative data alongside this point, (some) players during the focus groups (in Study 2 Part II) from clubs A and C also highlighted the age of foreign player acquisition as a feature of their clubs recruitment strategy. Players at the latter club discussed this point and suggested that their (foreign) managerhad increased the number of foreign players within the club. However, further empirical inquiry is required to enhance our understanding of this point.

An additional significant finding of Study 1 was the *limited* 1st team appearances that 'young' home-grown players made after initially progressing from the Academy setting. The findings from Study 3 provide the contextual detail to this observation. The two 'young' professional football players that were interviewed both alluded to the difficulties of breaking into their respective 1st teams, (predominantly) due to the large squad sizes (inclusive of foreign players) present within their respective clubs. This particular phase of progression in a young football player's career would therefore seem to be more susceptible to the foreign player acquisition and inward migration process.

In terms of broader theoretical and conceptual explanations of the migratory trends, the findings in Study 1 are commensurate with Darby (2005) who aligns similar patterns of migration to world system theory, imperialism and neo-imperialism, and dependency theory. The Bosman ruling and the increased economic wealth that clubs have accrued from the television deal with BSkyB have also facilitated the flow of football talent into the English league (Giulianotto, 1999; Maguire, 1999; Magee & Sugden, 2002). As Study 1 clearly documented the existence of foreign players in the context of elite level English professional football, and the possibility of restricted player progression, Study 2 sought to build upon the quantitative observations by utilising a qualitative approach to explore the daily realities of those classified as 'home-grown' players. Study 2 also aimed to reveal further evidence to support Maguire and Bale's (1994) comment regarding the underdevelopment for indigenous players.

Study 2, Part I embraced a prolonged fieldwork element and illustrated the complexity involved in the development and progression process in an English professional football club. It became apparent that the notion of foreign players, and their (limiting or restrictive) effect on home-grown player development and progression, was not operational at the Academy level in this club. A range of other, and more meaningful issues, impinged on the players pursuit of a professional contract. As detailed in Figure 5.1, these issues were associated with the notions of power and authority, coach communication, team selection and recruitment, progression characteristics, coaching style, release process, and the sub-cultural elements of the football environment. More specifically, they revolved around the players' relationships with their Academy coaches and peers in the club environment. These issues captured the 'reality' of the occupation. Although the relevance and intensity of these issues varied amongst the players (dependant on age and standing in the Academy hierarchical structure), it was felt that, at some point, they played a meaningful role in their lives. In the context of the research question, the presence of foreign players did not act as an impediment to home-grown players 'personal development', due to the range of localised and contextual specific barriers that the players experienced. The findings that emerged from the fieldwork are discussed in line with the observations of a range of commentators (see Parker, 1995; 1996a; 1996b; 1998; 2000; 2001; Potrac et al., 1999; 2002; Bourke, 2002; Richardson et al., 2004) that provide the theoretical and conceptual backdrop to the study.

The next phase of the inquiry was to utilise the fieldwork process as a platform to further understand the complex features of player development and progression. In this respect, Study 2 Part II employed a focus group methodology and revealed a

number of both deductive and inductive themes across four separate Academies. Similar to the fieldwork process, the findings in the focus groups highlighted the complexity of the talent development process. For example, although players generally understood the primary objectives of the Academy system, in some cases, the perceived importance of engaging in the non-traditional (i.e., social and psychological) aspects of development were questioned, and not fully comprehended. Such views highlight the importance of pre-Scholarship awareness training for players entering football Academies (see Bourke, 2002). The findings were aligned with the work of Parker (1995) with regards to the players' views on off-field responsibilities (e.g., jobs). In the sense, players questioned the relevance of 'jobs' to football related development. The level of support (social, psychological) players received varied and suggested that different clubs and/or support staff appeared to place a greater or lesser emphasis on particular developmental components. This may be a reflection of their philosophy and understanding of the talent development process. Similar to Part I, a diagnostic was produced from the focus groups that positioned the coach as the major 'stakeholder' in terms of player development. This specifically highlights coaching style, performance-related feedback, development culture, relationship development and management, and methods of communication as core tenets of the dynamic. These observations again emphasise the complex nature of talent development and highlight the important role that sociologically based considerations play during the developmental process.

There was also an important finding with regards to where the players trained (i.e., single versus separate training sites), which was found to act as both a facilitative and debilitative component to talent development. Specific attention is required on this

issue by those responsible for overseeing talent development in order to ease the transition process from the Academy to the professional domain. In terms of findings on foreign player acquisition, some players viewed their presence in English football as a potential barrier to their progression. As noted earlier, reference was also made to the (young) age that they were acquired. Whilst these findings evidence an awareness of the existence of foreign players as a (potential) progression related barrier, it was felt that the research question was not operational within this study. In this sense, academy players were still afforded competitive playing opportunities (alongside a progressive and detailed academy curriculum) for further development and progression to occur. After completing the focus group analysis and interpretation, it was felt that further exploration was needed to identify the effect(s) of the findings in Study 1. From the themes that were presented from Study 2 (Part I and II) it was felt that players in the post-Academy environment might be more exposed to the foreign player acquisition process. This formed the direction of the final study.

Study 3 evidenced a shift in focus and sought to establish whether or not the findings of Study 1 *were* operationalised within this different contextual location. The study examined the specific career experiences (and trajectories) of two currently serving young professional footballers in their respective professional football clubs. The findings suggested that both players explicitly recognised the existence of foreign players in their clubs, but they did not view their presence as a direct barrier to their progression. Instead, a variety of contextual factors were identified that influenced their post-Academy experiences. For example, they had successfully progressed from their respective Academy structure to become a professional player and therefore

demonstrated a range of (performance related) criteria considered characteristics of future success. However, their subsequent experiences in the professional environment appeared to inhibit further development and progression. This was largely attributed to the poor quality of reserve team football within the club, as players commented on the lack of 'meaning' associated with pre-match preparation, performance and outcome. There was a mix of young, senior and rehabilitated players that featured in the reserve team. It was felt that this eclectic mix of players represented a disparate band of professionals all coming to the game with a differential mix of histories, motivations and aspirations that ultimately created an essentially inappropriate, even non-competitive, environment. These environmental conditions appeared not to be conducive to further development that young professional players need in order to progress to the next level in their careers. If professional football clubs are to invest heavily in their Academy structures to develop their 'future' players, then there is a greater requirement to support players when they progress into the context of the professional environment. There is also a greater need to foster more 'meaningful competitive football' during this phase of a young players career, as it serves to facilitate the talent development process. As a result of the negative features of reserve team football, both players experienced a period on loan at another (lower division) professional club. It was during these periods that both players felt that they had experienced more 'meaning' in terms of preparing (i.e., physically, psychologically) and playing football for the loan clubs. Such experiences highlight the beneficial (if managed correctly) nature of this experience.

To conclude, the effect(s) of foreign player acquisition appears to be high on the agenda at a macro-level for the administrators in professional football. This has been evidenced in the recent campaign by UEFA concerning home-grown player development and progression (see Richardson et al., 2005), and the comments by Sepp Blatter, the President of FIFA, in relation to the de-skilling of African countries by Western nations (see Darby, 2005). Calls from the academic community also exist in terms of the impact of sports labour migration on indigenous talent (see Maguire & Bale, 1994), which has seen a plethora of migration based studies conducted in a range of sports, including professional football (see Magee, 1998; Maguire & Pearton, 2000; Magee & Sugden, 2002). In attempting to explore the impact of foreign player acquisition on the development and progression of home-grown players in elite level English professional football, this thesis adopted a multi-method and multi-paradigmatic approach. What it has found is that English clubs have demonstrated an increased propensity to acquire foreign players over a ten year time period. In terms of locating the effect(s) of such migratory trends, it appears that (predominantly) those young home-grown players involved in youth development systems in a sample of English Academies did not view their presence as a direct threat to their development and future progression. However, one cannot escape from the fact that such foreign players occupied places in the 1st team environment, an aspiration for young players entering the profession. Once players progress to the professional environment, they may be faced with further contextual and environmental barriers that impede subsequent progression. During an interview with Terry Campbell in Study 3, he made a clinical assessment of his situation, and one that other home-grown players aiming to have a future in English professional football may possess:

"...I've got English players ahead of me...if you're better than them [foreign players], you're better than them. That's it at the end of the day really."

5.4 Recommendations of the Thesis

This final section of the thesis draws on the most notable findings of the three research studies and aims to offer some recommendations. These are specifically aimed at the academic community, administrators of professional football, and those people involved in the talent development process (i.e., manager, coaches, sports practitioners etc.). In making these recommendations, it is pertinent to note that the area of football labour migration and its effect(s) on the development and progression of home-grown (indigenous) talent is still viewed to be in its relative infancy in terms of academic research (Maguire, 2004).

The present thesis has explored the area of football labour migration and demonstrated that foreign player acquisition was a significant feature of elite level English professional football from 1990 to 2000. A continuation of such migratory-based research in this context would be beneficial to allow the features of this process to be monitored. Building on the findings of Study 1, it emerged that players within Football Academies were faced with a number of localised and contextual specific issues that permeated their developmental experiences. Sociologically based talent development considerations (i.e., player-coach dynamic) were found to be crucial aspects of the qualitative research. In this sense, it is felt that those individuals involved in developing young football players should devote specific attention to such considerations within their (everyday) practice. To supplement this point, it may also be beneficial to locate these issues more explicitly in coach (sports practitioner) education programmes, which may be implemented by clubs' themselves or the national association (i.e., The Football Association).

The research also found that development and progression based difficulties existed in the post-Academy transition phase. Specifically, this centred on the lack of 'meaningful competitive football' within the reserve team environment. It appears important therefore; that clubs, and their respective personnel, need to consider *how* they can further develop players when they enter the professional environment. Heightened levels of expectation invariably exist within the professional domain in football. This requires a more structured and coherent approach to post-Academy player development to equip players with the necessary competencies to further their careers. Indeed, whilst at a macro-level, administrators have discussed *generic* policies to enhance home-grown talent (see Richardson et al., 2005), it is felt that there needs to be a more of a critical recognition of the *specific processes* of player development (i.e., nature of human interaction). This places an increased responsibility on the football authorities (i.e., The Football Association, The Football Association Premier League, Professional Footballers Association) within England to ensure the continued progression of players after leaving the Academy structure.

As a final recommendation, we cannot neglect the findings concerning foreign player acquisition that the research has clearly demonstrated. However, it may be unwise to devote too much time discussing policies to restrict the number of foreign players that a club can acquire. Instead, more specific attention may be required on the actual processes that clubs engage in to develop players to enable them to compete for a position within a clubs 1st team. Ultimately, players need to learn *how* to compete with players that are acquired direct for 1st team duties. Such practices may facilitate the post-Academy player development phase in English professional football.

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Appendices

Selection Data -

	Name	Type	Width	Decimals	Label
1	forename	String	15	0	
2	surname	String	15	0	Surname
3	m	Numeric	8	0	Month Born
4	y	Numeric	8	0	Year Born
5	birthpl	String	15	0	Birthplace
6	pt	Numeric	8	0	Player Type
7	national	String	15	0	Nationality
8	as	Numeric	8	0	Age Player Signed
9	ad	Numeric	8	0	Age Player Sold
10	p	Numeric	8	0	Playing Position
11	acquired	String	15	0	Club bought from
12	cost	Numeric	8	0	Price (£)
13	sold	String	15	0	Club Sold to
14	cost1	Numeric	8	0	Price (£)
15	ap	Numeric	8	0	Season Appearances
16	ta	Numeric	8	0	Total Number of Appearance
17	tg	Numeric	8	0	Total Number of Goals
18	c	Numeric	8	0	Name of Club
19	lp	Numeric	8	0	Final League Position
20	s	Numeric	8	0	Time Period
21	cofo	Numeric	8	0	Nationality
22	select	Numeric	8	0	Selection
23	fifa	Numeric	8	0	Regional Affiliates of FIFA
24	uefasub	Numeric	8	0	Sub-groups of UEFA & FIFA

Selection Data -

	Values	Missing	Columns	Align	Measure
1	None	None	6	Center	Nominal
2	None	None	8	Center	Nominal
3	None	-1	2	Center	Scale
4	None	-1	2	Center	Scale
5	None	None	9	Center	Nominal
6	{1, Homegrow	-1	4	Center	Ordinal
7	None	None	7	Center	Nominal
8	None	-1	3	Center	Scale
9	None	-1	3	Center	Scale
10	{1, Goalkeepe	-1	2	Center	Ordinal
11	None	None	7	Center	Nominal
12	None	-1	8	Center	Scale
13	None	None	7	Center	Nominal
14	None	-1	8	Center	Scale
15	None	None	3	Center	Scale
16	None	None	3	Center	Scale
17	None	None	3	Center	Scale
18	{1, Arsenal}...	None	7	Center	Nominal
19	None	None	3	Center	Scale
20	{1, 1990/91}...	None	7	Center	Scale
21	{1, English}...	-1	9	Center	Ordinal
22	{0, Transferre	-1	7	Center	Nominal
23	{1, UEFA}...	None	8	Center	Scale

Appendix A

Table 6.1 Sub-groups of U.E.F.A. including respective countries

Sub-groups of UEFA	Countries Included & S.D. Coding	S.D. Coding
British Isles and Republic of Ireland	**England (1)** **Scotland (2)** **Wales (3)** **Northern Ireland (4)** **Republic of Ireland (5)**	**1**
Scandinavian	**Iceland (7)** **Denmark (8)** **Sweden (10)** **Norway (24)** **Finland (46)**	**2**
Western	**Netherlands (9)** **Spain (17)** **France (18)** **Israel (20)** **Germany (21)** **Cyprus (29)** **Italy (30)** **Switzerland (33)** **Belgium (34)** **Portugal (42)** **Greece (45)** **Austria (56)**	**3**

Eastern (former Eastern Bloc Countries)	**Russia (14)** **Hungary (15)** **Yugoslavia (23)** **Poland (25)** **Czech Republic (26)** **Bulgaria (27)** **Romania (35)** **Croatia (38)** **Georgia (40)** **Estonia (43)** **Ukraine (47)** **Slovakia (49)** **FYR Macedonia (54)** **Slovenia (55)** **FYR Kosovo (58)** **Bosnia & Herzegovenia (62)** **Latvia (64)**	**4**
CONCACAF	**America (12)** **Canada (22)** **Jamaica (28)** **Barbados (41)** **Costa Rica (44)** **Bermuda (52)** **Trinidad & Tobago (57)** **Honduras (66)**	**5**
CONMEBOL	**Uruguay (6)** **Argentina (36)** **Columbia (37)** **Brazil (39)** **Bolivia (48)** **Chile (60)** **Peru (61)** **Paraguay (67)**	**6**

CAF	**Nigeria (13)** **Zimbabwe (19)** **South Africa (31)** **Ghana (32)** **Liberia (50)** **Ivory Coast (51)** **Algeria (53)** **Cameroon (59)** **Morocco (63)** **Guinea (65)** **Uganda (68)** **Sierra Leone (69)**	**7**
AFC		**8**
OFC	**Australia (11)** **New Zealand (16)**	**9**

Table 6.2 Playing Season (i.e., Time Period) & S.D. Coding

Playing Season	S.D. Coding
1990/91	**1**
1991/92	**2**
1992/93	**3**
1993/94	**4**
1994/95	**5**
1995/96	**6**
1996/97	**7**
1997/98	**8**
1998/99	**9**
1999/00	**10**

Table 6.3 S.D. Coding for the Clubs

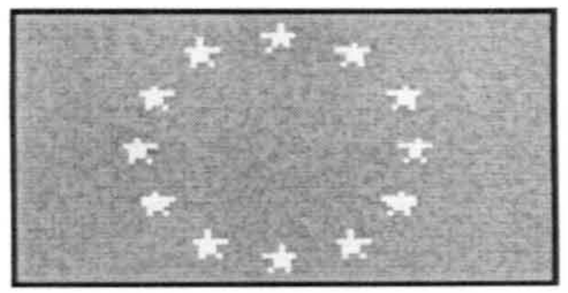
Code	Club Name
1	**Arsenal**
2	**Liverpool**
3	**Crystal Palace**
4	**Leeds United**
5	**Man City**
6	**Manchester United**
7	**Wimbledon**
8	**Nottingham Forest**
9	**Everton**
10	**Tottenham Hotspurs**
11	**Chelsea**
12	**Queens Park Rangers**
13	**Sheffield United**

14	**Southampton**
15	**Norwich City**
16	**Coventry City**
17	**Aston Villa**
18	**Luton Town**
19	**Sunderland**
20	**Derby County**
21	**Notts County**
22	**Oldham Athletic**
23	**Sheffield Wednesday**
24	**West Ham United**
25	**Blackburn Rovers**
26	**Ipswich Town**
27	**Middlesbrough**
28	**Newcastle United**
29	**Swindon Town**
30	**Leicester City**
31	**Bolton Wanderers**
32	**Barnsley**
33	**Charlton Athletic**
34	**Bradford City**
35	**Watford**

Playing Position * Sub-groups of UEFA & FIFA Confeds Crosstabulation

			Sub-groups of UEFA & FIFA Confeds								
			British Isles & Rep Ireland	Scandinavian	Western	Eastern	CONCACAF	CONMEBOL	CAF	OFC	Total
Playing Position	Goalkeeper	Count	76	12	13	4	8	0	2	10	125
		Expected Count	83.4	10.4	16.7	4.7	2.0	2.4	3.0	2.3	125.0
		% within Playing Position	60.8%	9.6%	10.4%	3.2%	6.4%	.0%	1.6%	8.0%	100.0%
		% within Sub-groups of UEFA & FIFA Confeds	8.5%	10.7%	7.2%	8.0%	36.4%	.0%	6.3%	40.0%	9.3%
		% of Total	5.7%	.9%	1.0%	.3%	.6%	.0%	.1%	.7%	9.3%
	Defender	Count	277	37	52	14	0	11	7	4	402
		Expected Count	268.3	33.5	53.8	15.0	6.6	7.8	9.6	7.5	402.0
		% within Playing Position	68.9%	9.2%	12.9%	3.5%	.0%	2.7%	1.7%	1.0%	100.0%
		% within Sub-groups of UEFA & FIFA Confeds	30.9%	33.0%	28.9%	28.0%	.0%	42.3%	21.9%	16.0%	29.9%
		% of Total	20.6%	2.8%	3.9%	1.0%	.0%	.8%	.5%	.3%	29.9%
	Midfielder	Count	287	34	66	20	5	10	9	9	440
		Expected Count	293.7	36.7	58.9	16.4	7.2	8.5	10.5	8.2	440.0
		% within Playing Position	65.2%	7.7%	15.0%	4.5%	1.1%	2.3%	2.0%	2.0%	100.0%
		% within Sub-groups of UEFA & FIFA Confeds	32.0%	30.4%	36.7%	40.0%	22.7%	38.5%	28.1%	36.0%	32.7%
		% of Total	21.4%	2.5%	4.9%	1.5%	.4%	.7%	.7%	.7%	32.7%
	Forward	Count	257	29	49	12	9	5	14	2	377
		Expected Count	251.6	31.4	50.5	14.0	6.2	7.3	9.0	7.0	377.0
		% within Playing Position	68.2%	7.7%	13.0%	3.2%	2.4%	1.3%	3.7%	.5%	100.0%
		% within Sub-groups of UEFA & FIFA Confeds	28.7%	25.9%	27.2%	24.0%	40.9%	19.2%	43.8%	8.0%	28.1%
		% of Total	19.1%	2.2%	3.6%	.9%	.7%	.4%	1.0%	.1%	28.1%
Total		Count	897	112	180	50	22	26	32	25	1344
		Expected Count	897.0	112.0	180.0	50.0	22.0	26.0	32.0	25.0	1344.0
		% within Playing Position	66.7%	8.3%	13.4%	3.7%	1.6%	1.9%	2.4%	1.9%	100.0%
		% within Sub-groups of UEFA & FIFA Confeds	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	*****	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	66.7%	8.3%	13.4%	3.7%	1.6%	1.9%	2.4%	1.9%	100.0%

EU Expansion



1952 EU 6

1973 EU 9

1981 EU 10

1986 EU 12

1990 EU 12

1995 EU 15

Applied plus Cyprus

Applied plus Turkey

Sweden
Finland
Norway
Estonia
Latvia
Lithuania
Denmark
United Kingdom
Ireland
Byelorussia
Netherlands
East Germany
1990
Poland
Belgium
Luxembourg
West Germany
Czech Republic
Ukraine
Slovakia
Austria
France
Hungary
Switzerland
Moldavia
Romania
Slovenia
Croatia
Bosnia & Herzegovenia
Yugoslavia
Bulgaria
Italy
Macedonia
Albania
Portugal
Spain
Greece

P.G.Cubbin, FBCart.S. - 2001

Appendix BI

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Telephone: 0151-231-4341 (w)
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Dear

I am a former Youth Trainee of Leeds United F.C. (1992-1994) and I am currently undertaking a PhD examining *'player acquisition in professional football'* at Liverpool John Moores University. My research team consists of Dave Richardson, Dr. Dave Gilbourne, Professor Adrian Lees and Dr. Benny Peiser. To date our research has highlighted a number of trends concerning player acquisition (see appended *"Insight"* article), the most prominent of these being the propensity of Premier League Clubs acquiring non-U.K. and Irish players. The aim now is to identify the perceptions of Football Scholars towards the player acquisition process, with a particular emphasis on foreign player acquisition. A further aim is to explore the Football Scholars views towards progression and development issues. This will enable both yourselves and the research team to gain a deeper understanding of the processes of development. To take our research forward we require access to a number of Premier League clubs in order to conduct small focus group interviews with the following groups:

1. Football Scholars (U'19s)
2. Academy Coaches
3. 1st Team players, preferably non-U.K. & Irish players

Obviously, we feel that this is a very exciting opportunity for all concerned (i.e. clubs involved, P.F.A. and the research team) and we would be extremely grateful if we could arrange to meet in order to discuss the project in more detail. We must emphasise that all group discussions and contact with any club and its players will be kept **strictly confidential.** Furthermore, on completion of the research we will provide a comprehensive report to both yourselves and the clubs on our findings.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Littlewood

Centre for Sport and Exercise Sciences
Liverpool John Moores University
Henry Cotton Campus
15-21 Webster Street
Liverpool
L3 2ET

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1. A longitudinal research placement in your club (1-2 days/week for 12weeks) to observe cultural practices, accompanied with short focus group discussions or;
2. The option of short focus groups only with the Football Scholars.

Obviously, we feel that this is a very exciting opportunity for both parties and we would be extremely grateful if we could arrange to meet in order to discuss the project in more detail. We would like to take this opportunity to emphasise that all group discussions and any contact with your club and players will be kept **strictly confidential**. Furthermore, on completion of the research we will provide a comprehensive report to your club on our findings.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

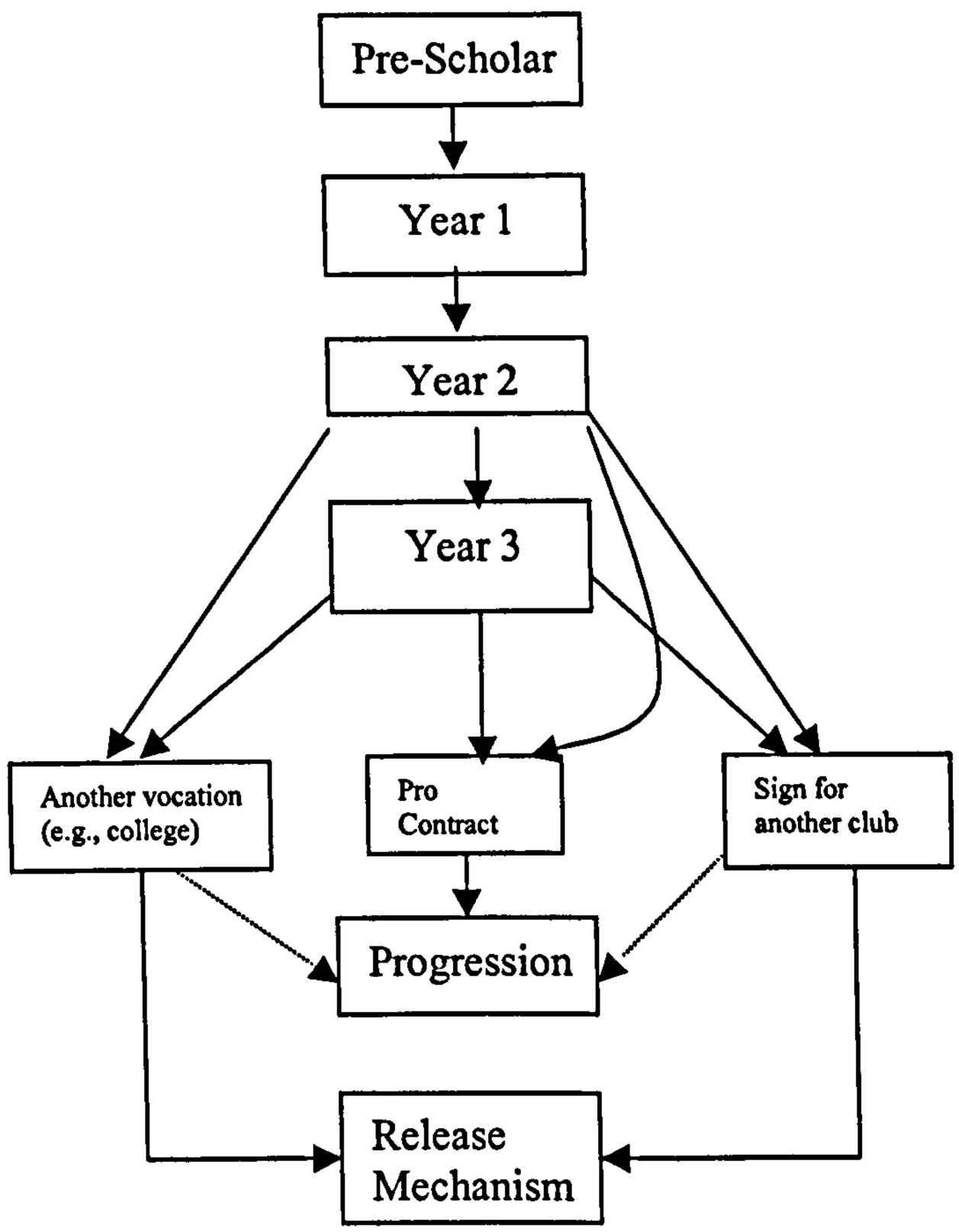
Martin Littlewood

Appendix BII

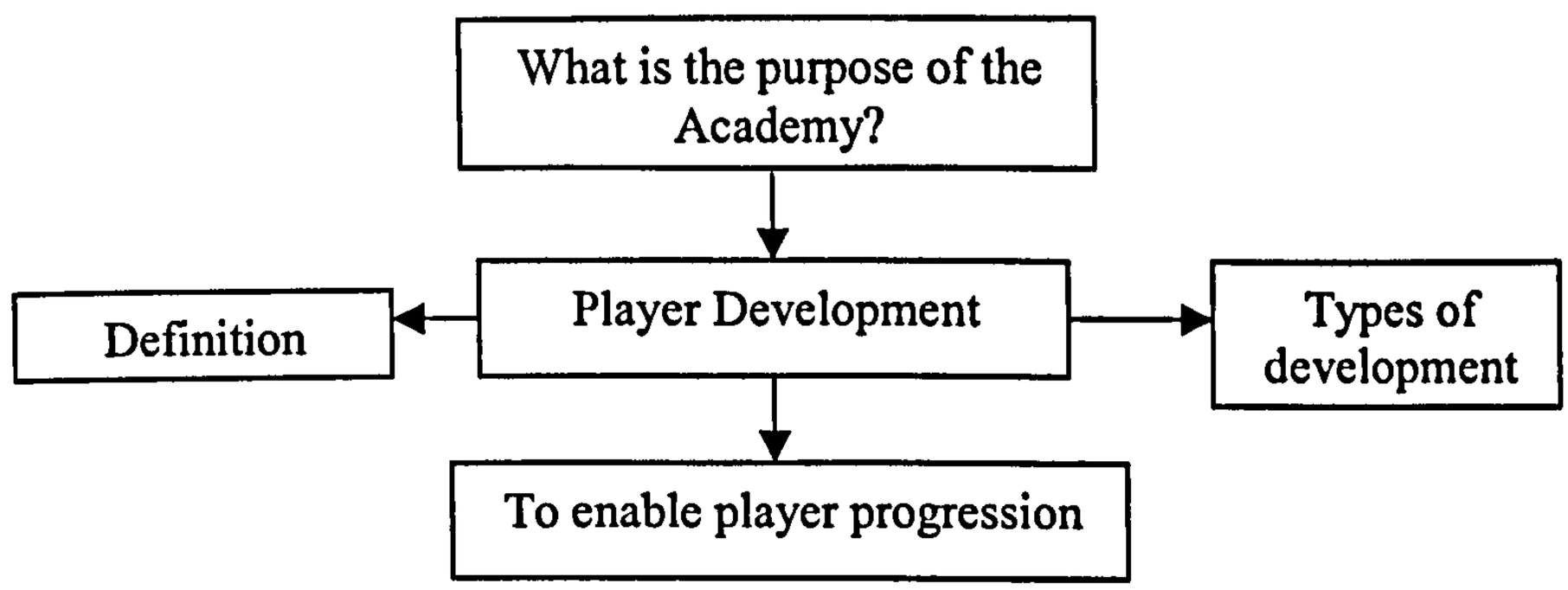
Focus Group Slides for Football Scholars

General Themes for Focus Groups:

1. Purpose of the Academy
2. The Role and Responsibilities of the Football Scholar
3. Player Development
4. Player Progression
5. How do they link together?

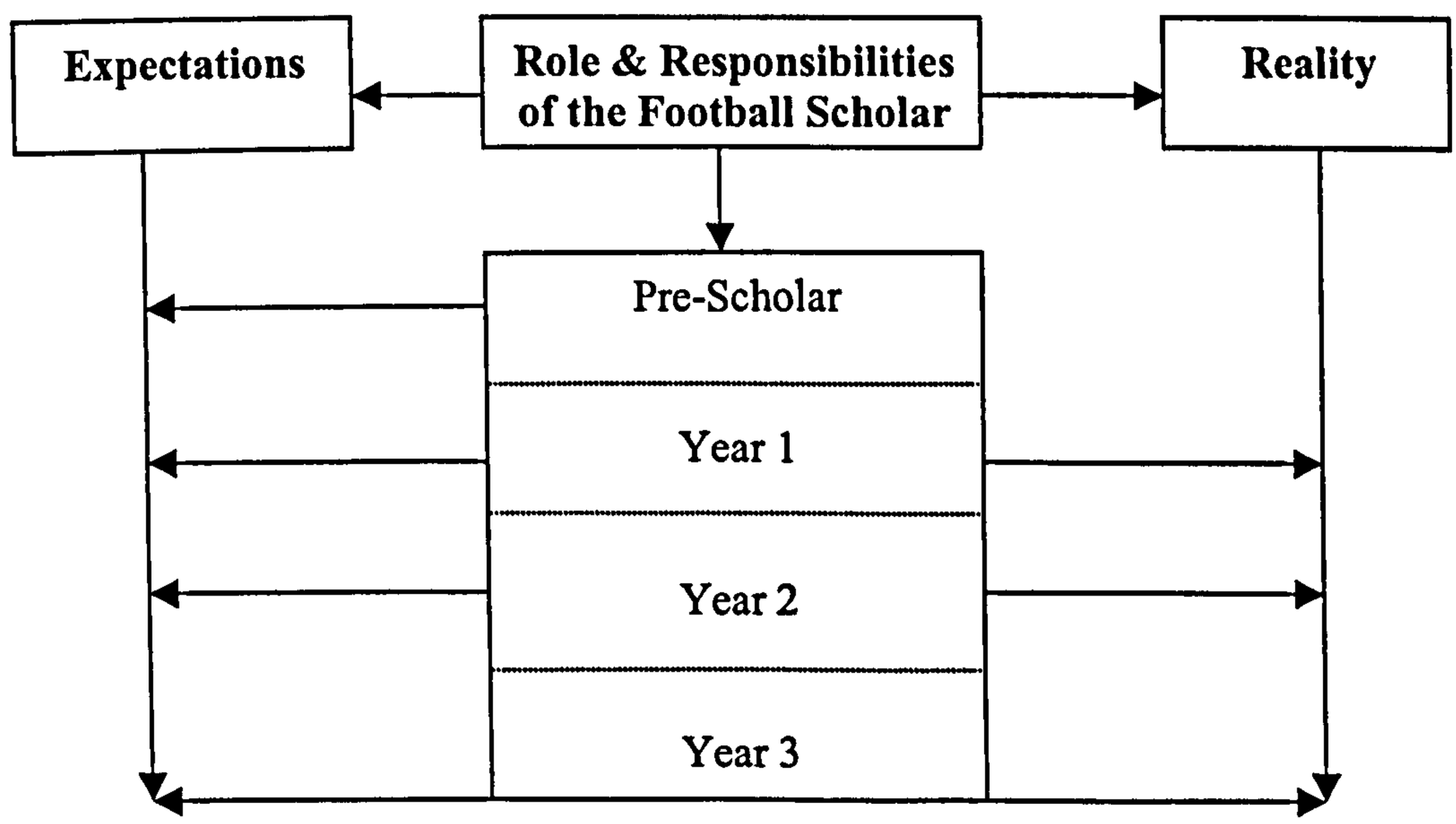


Slide 1: To explore the players' perceptions with regards to the purpose of the Football Academy.



Providing quality experiences - what are the players' perceptions (opinions) about their experiences as Football Scholars.

Slide 2: To explore the players' **expectations** with regards to the ROLE and RESPONSIBILITIES of the Football Scholarship and to examine whether these have been met in **reality.**

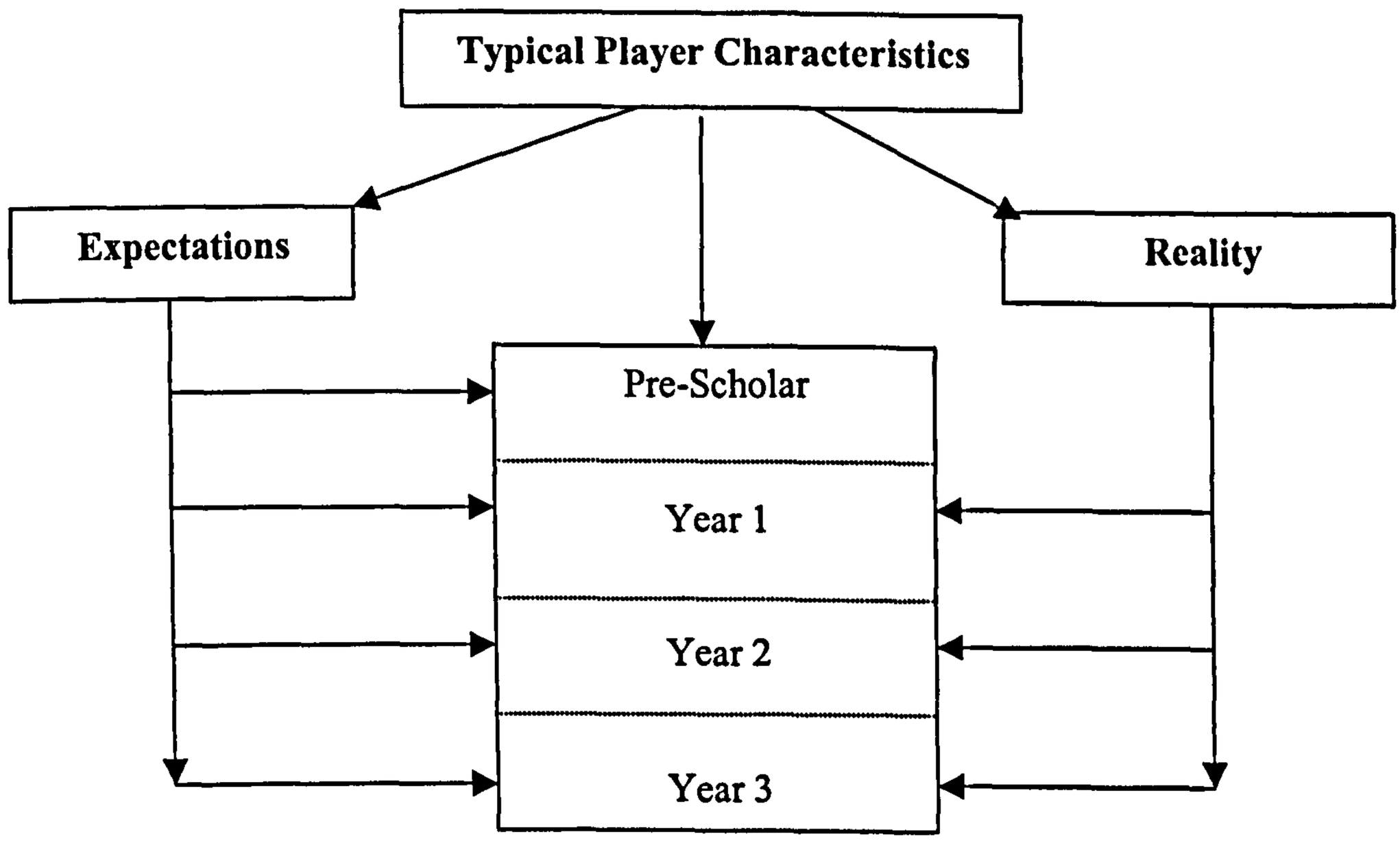


Identify the players' positive and negative expectations to see whether these have been met in reality. Issues to consider are:
Training, games, outside the club (in public), at college, jobs - ATTITUDE
How did/have you found the transition from schoolboy to full-time FS?
Physically
Mentally
Socially - living away from home

Slide 3: Player Recruitment or is this Player Progression?

Explanation of the slide to the players:

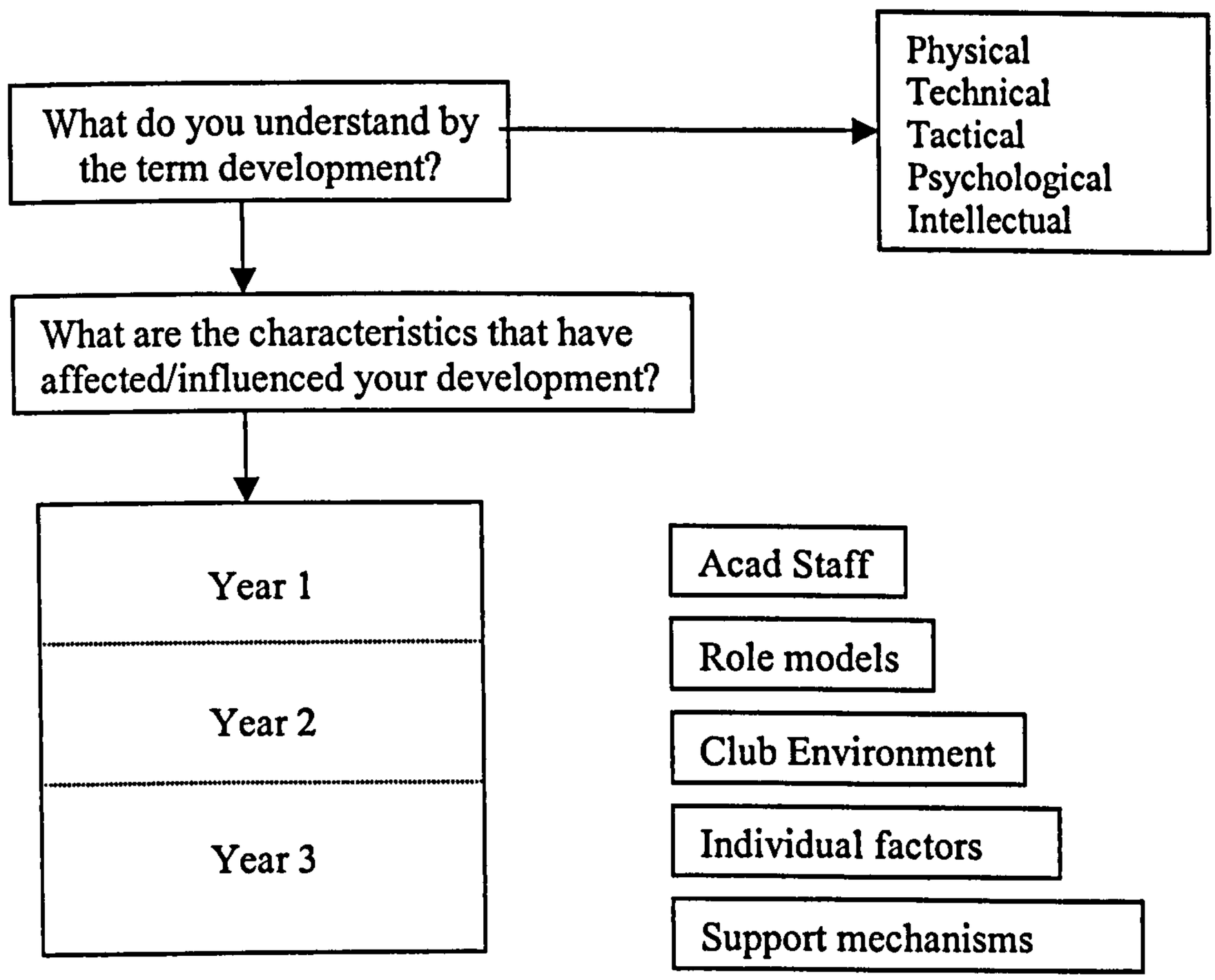
1. What are/were the **typical playing characteristics** that you thought were required of a Football Scholar?
2. Have these changed during your time at the club?



Player Characteristics to consider:
Technical, Tactical, Physical, Psychological, Social, Educational, Other

Factors that may have affected reality:
Club status - increased wealth,
Relationship with staff

Slide 4: Player Development



Staff (Coach) Issues:
Communication (e.g., team selection, progression)
Perception of favouritism, credibility, respect, trust – does this differ in your roles, transition in staff, support you offer?

Role Models:
Foreign players - barriers to progression at the club or help to develop as a player

Club Environment:
Culture of professional football - competitiveness amongst peers

Individual factors:
Motivation to succeed as a FS

Support Mechanisms:
Within the club - fitness conditioner, sports psych, HoEW, parents

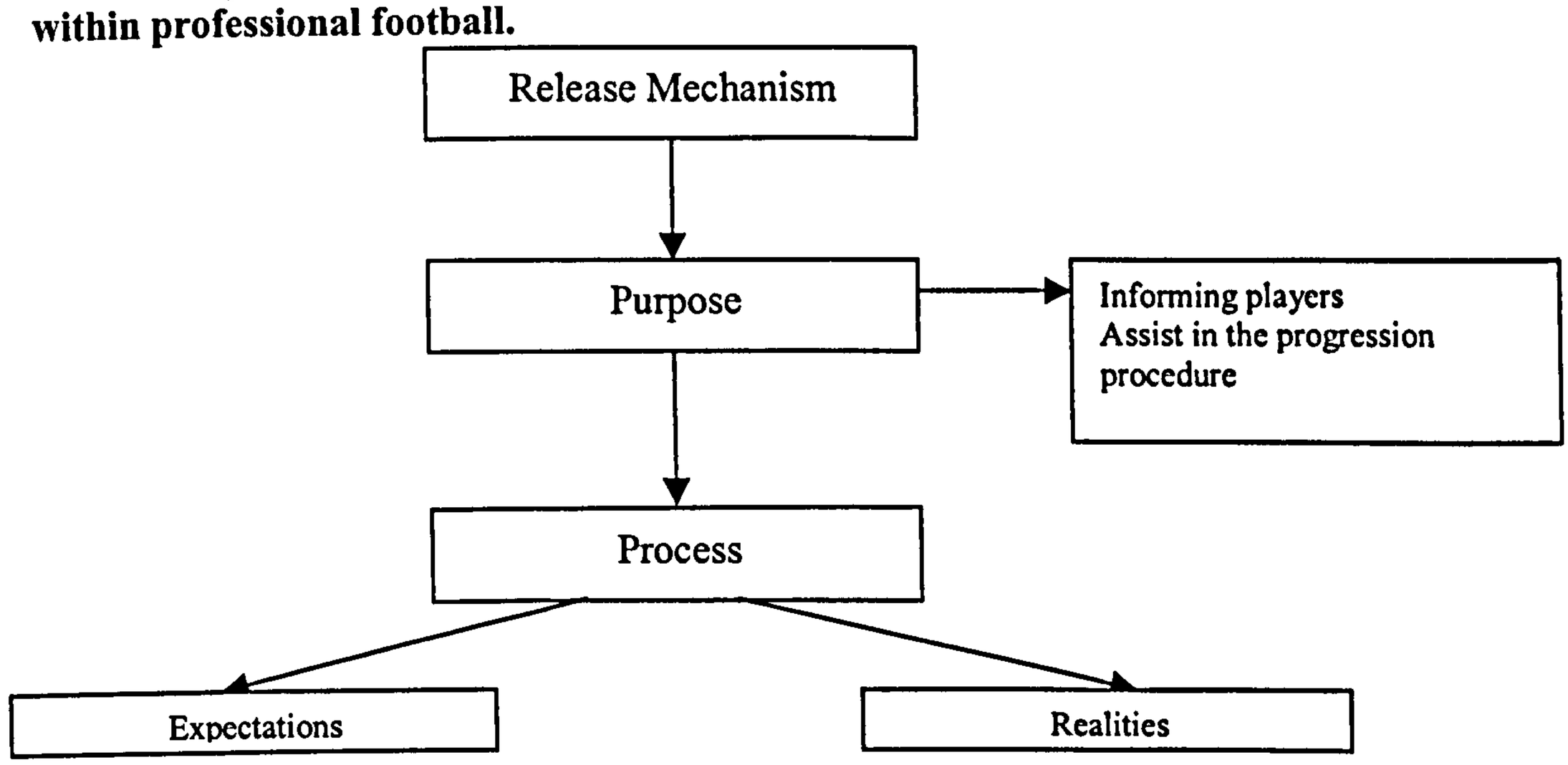
Slide 5: Player Progression

Issues to note for the facilitator:

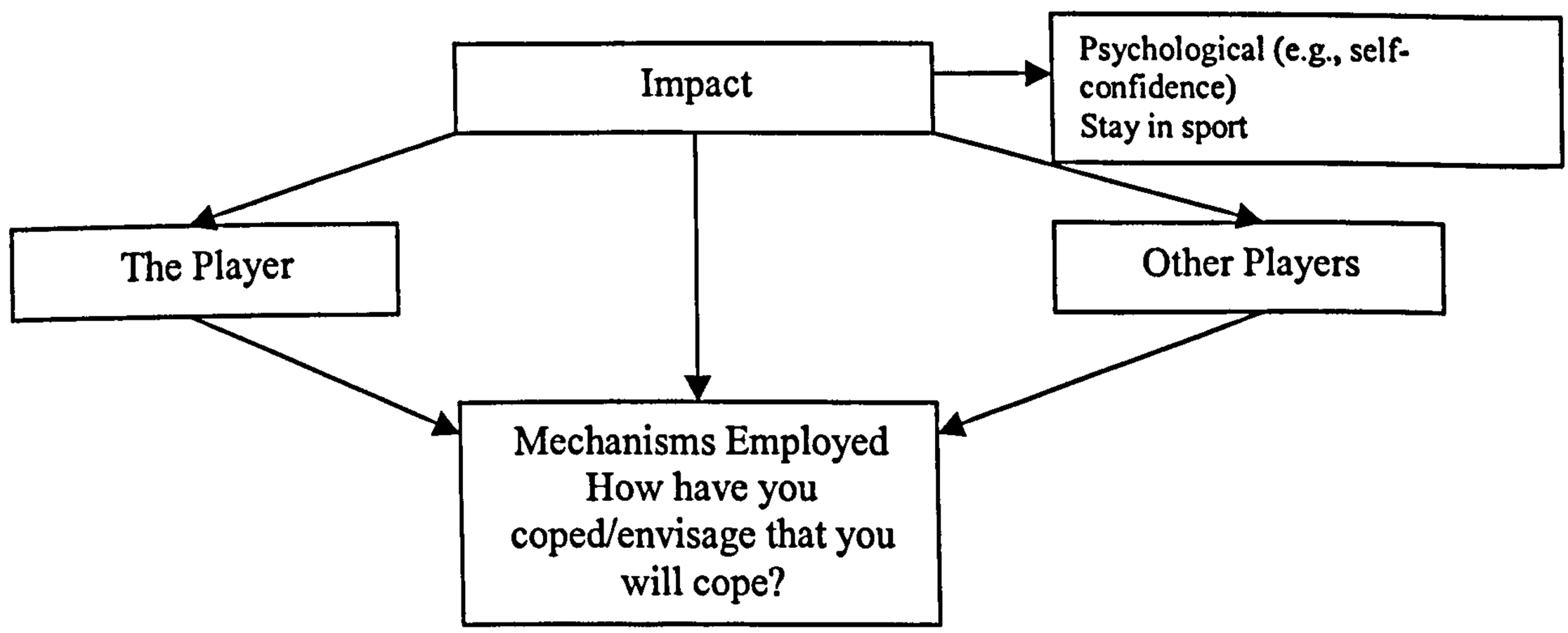
Jobs
Attitude – identified by the coaches as an important factor in the progression and development of players.
Culture – how adapted to this?
Motivations to succeed – what are they and what are they influenced by?
Transition from schoolboy to FS – how have you adapted to the changes (i.e., away from home, physiologically)?

Slide 6: Release Mechanism/Process

Aim: To explore the players' perceptions of the release mechanism/process within professional football.

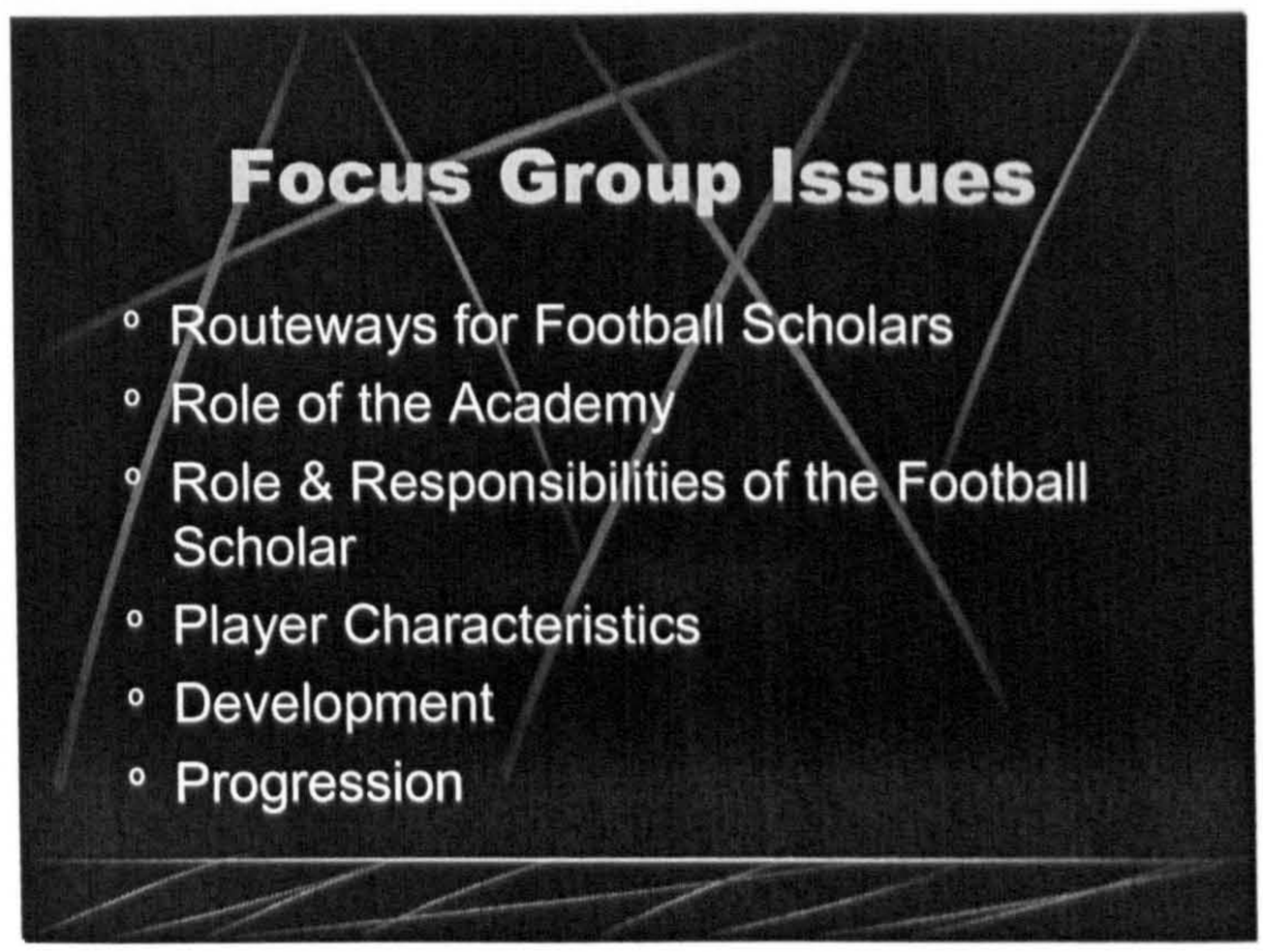


NEW SLIDE OR CONTINUE?



Appendix BII

Slide 1



Topic guide:

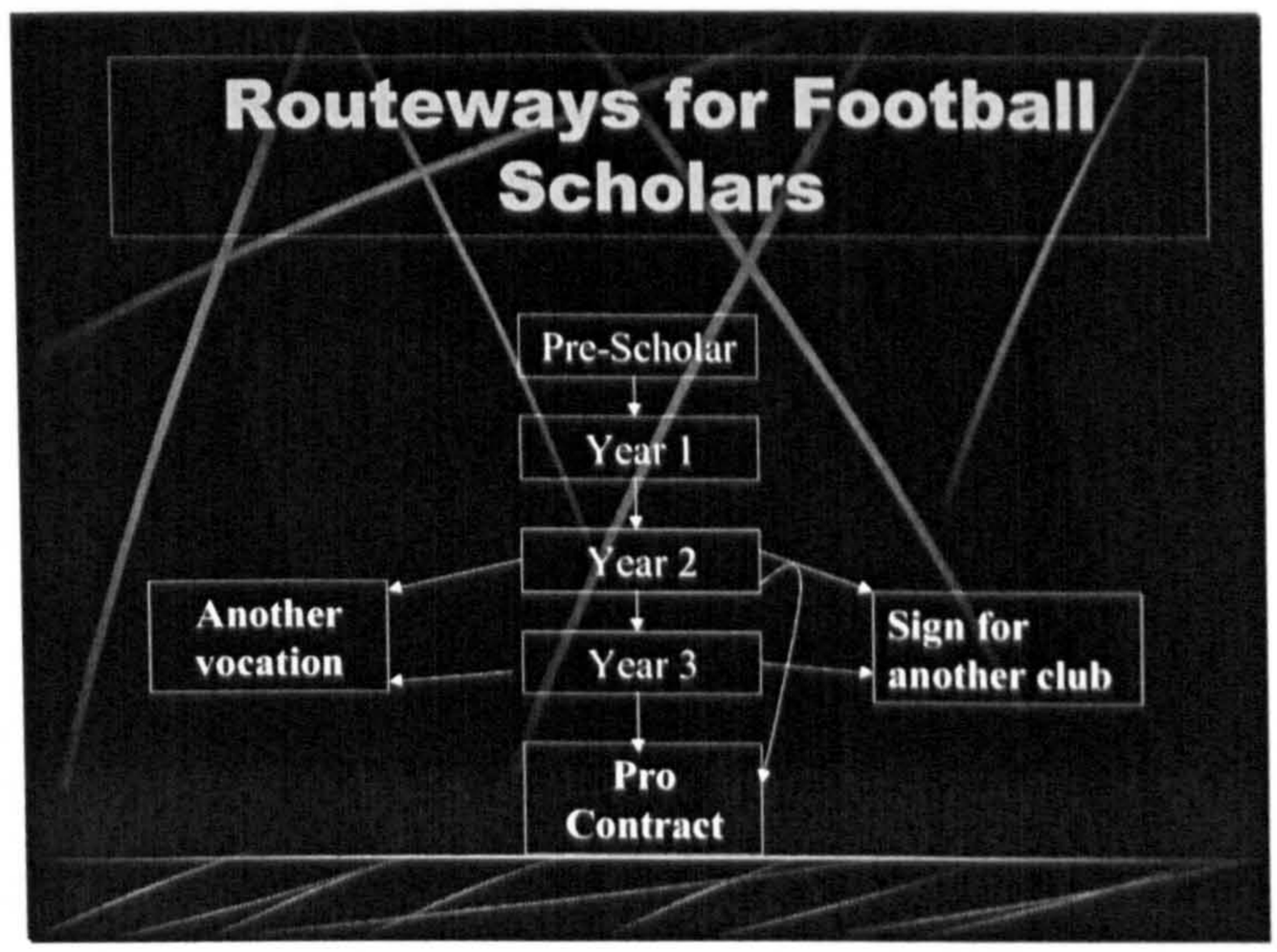
You are the **EXPERTS** - I want to know about your views and thoughts to these issues, which may be based on your experiences at the club.

Duration - I don't want to exceed more than 1hour 30mins

How it will work:

1. I will introduce the topics for discussion.
2. I would like you to talk about your thoughts & views towards these issues with the other players - TRY NOT TO SPEAK DIRECTLY TO ME.
3. One person to speak at one time.
4. Do not speak over the top of one another.
5. I will manage the session
6. If you don't understand anything then please ask questions

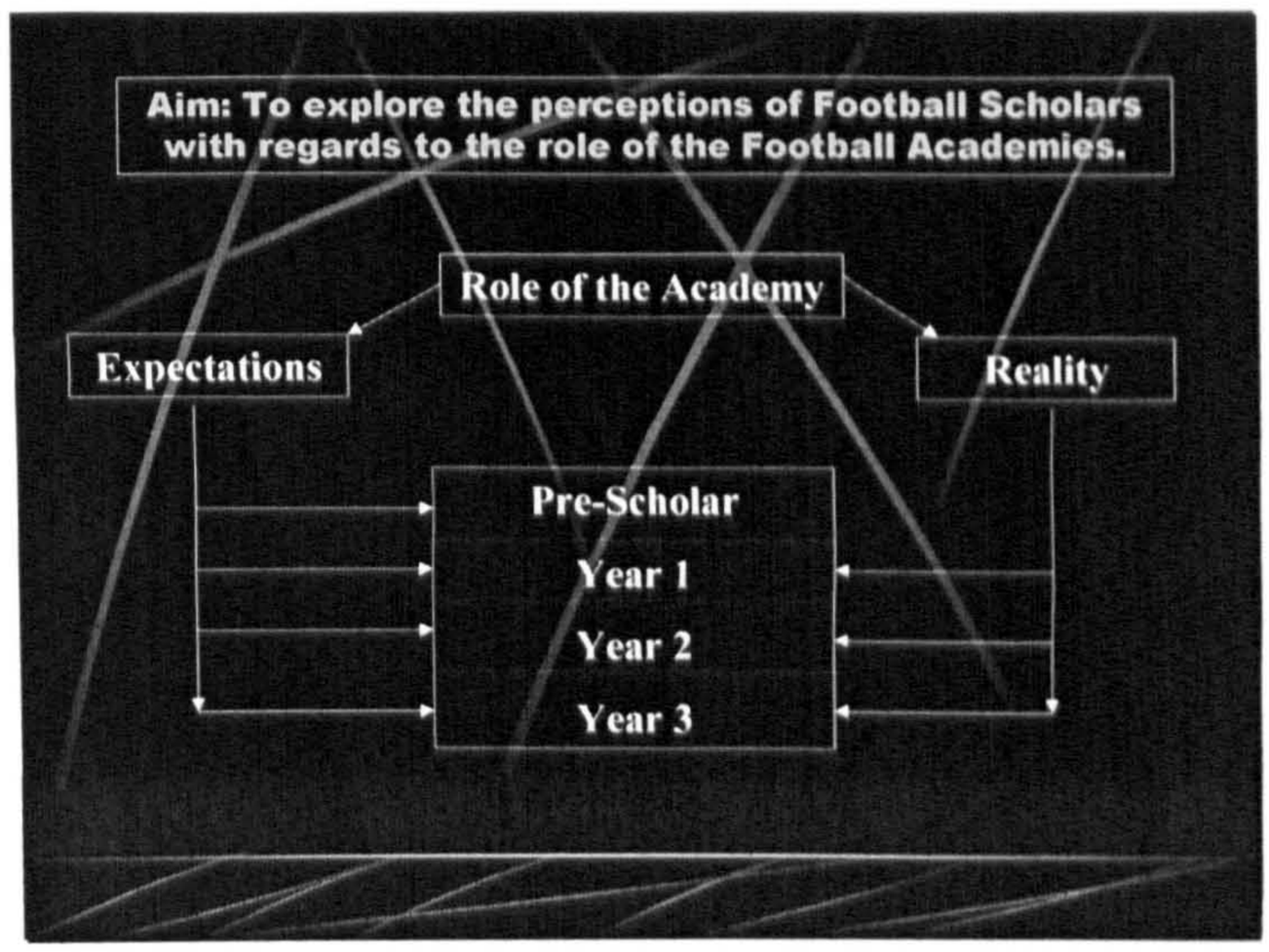
Slide 2



- Issues around this theme: when you first entered the club from being a pre-scholar up until the stage that you are at now.
- The routes may not apply directly to you, but are routes that are available within the Football Scholarship, which will in turn guide your views towards the issues that we will talk about.
- You will all have different thoughts and experiences throughout your time at the club and it is these that I want to learn about - you are the EXPERTS and I am here to learn from you.
- So, anything that you say is very important, nothing that you say will be seen as stupid or irrelevant.

Could I please ask you all to just introduce yourselves (tell us a little bit about you) and to identify the level that you are at in the club.

Slide 3



Introductory question: Expectations first then move on to Realities

- What are/were the general expectations with regards to the Role (expected function/purpose) of the Academy?
- What did you expect?
- Generic V's Club Specific?
- Have these expectations been met throughout your time at the club?
- Differences between subjects (i.e. Year 1-3), why?
- Have your expectations changed over time?
- Why do you think that your expectations differed?

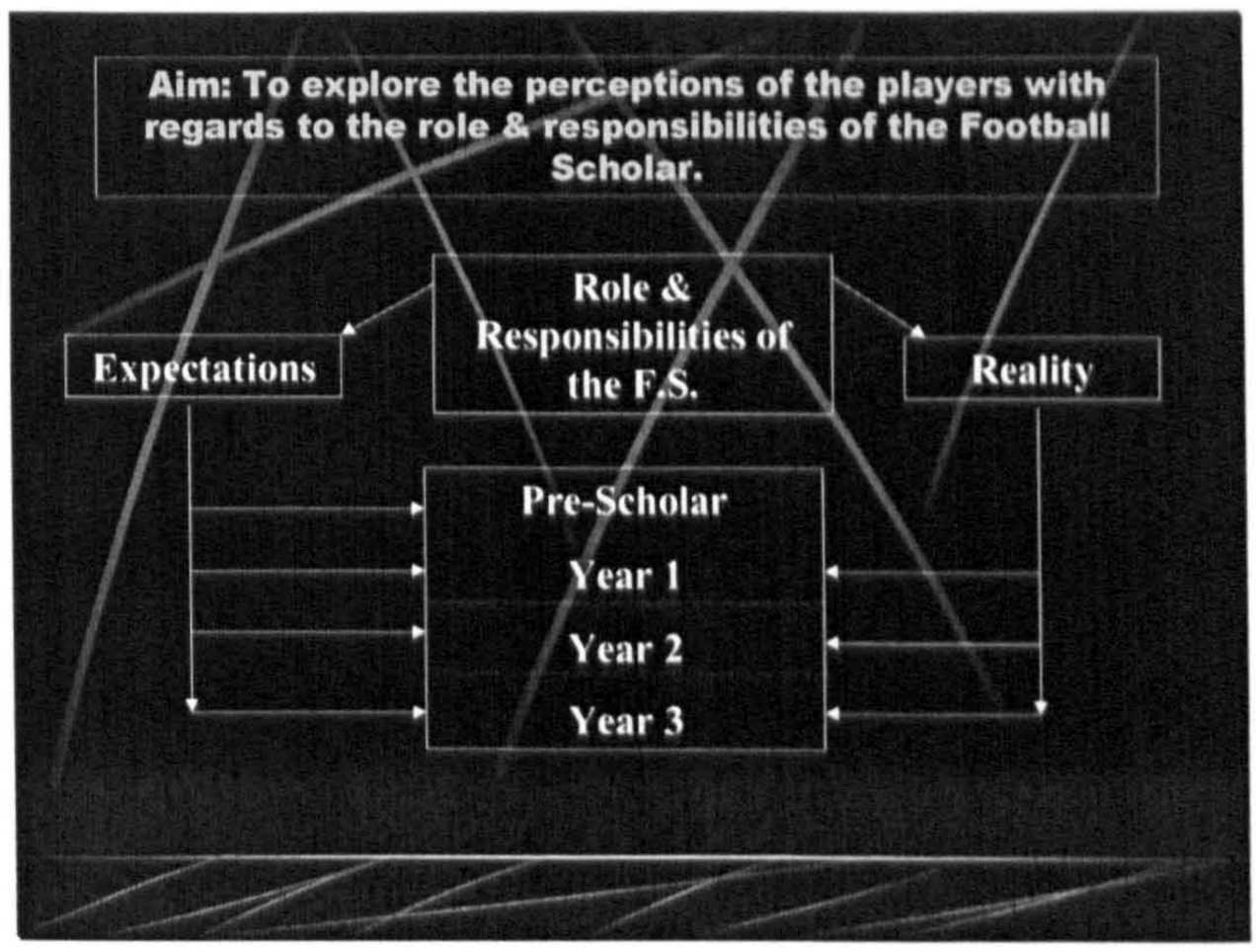
Issues to consider for the Role of the Academy:

Football Specific:		Non-football specific:	
To develop the skills of the players		Develop the player from a holistic perspective	
Produce players for the club's 1st team		Education	
Save club money		Prepare players for life outside football	
Provide quality coaching		Other skills (motivation, self-confidence etc)	

Questions for the players:

Why have your expectations not been met?
Can you give me an example?
How was this for you?
Can you elaborate?

Slide 4



Introductory question: Expectations first then move on to Realities

- What are/were the general expectations with regards to the role & responsibilities of a FS?
- Have these expectations been met throughout your time at the club?
- Differences between subjects (i.e. Year 1-3), why?
- Have your expectations changed over time?
- What do you think of your responsibilities?
- How did you find the transition from schoolboy to full-time Football Scholar?

Issues to consider for the Role & Responsibilities of the Football Scholarship:

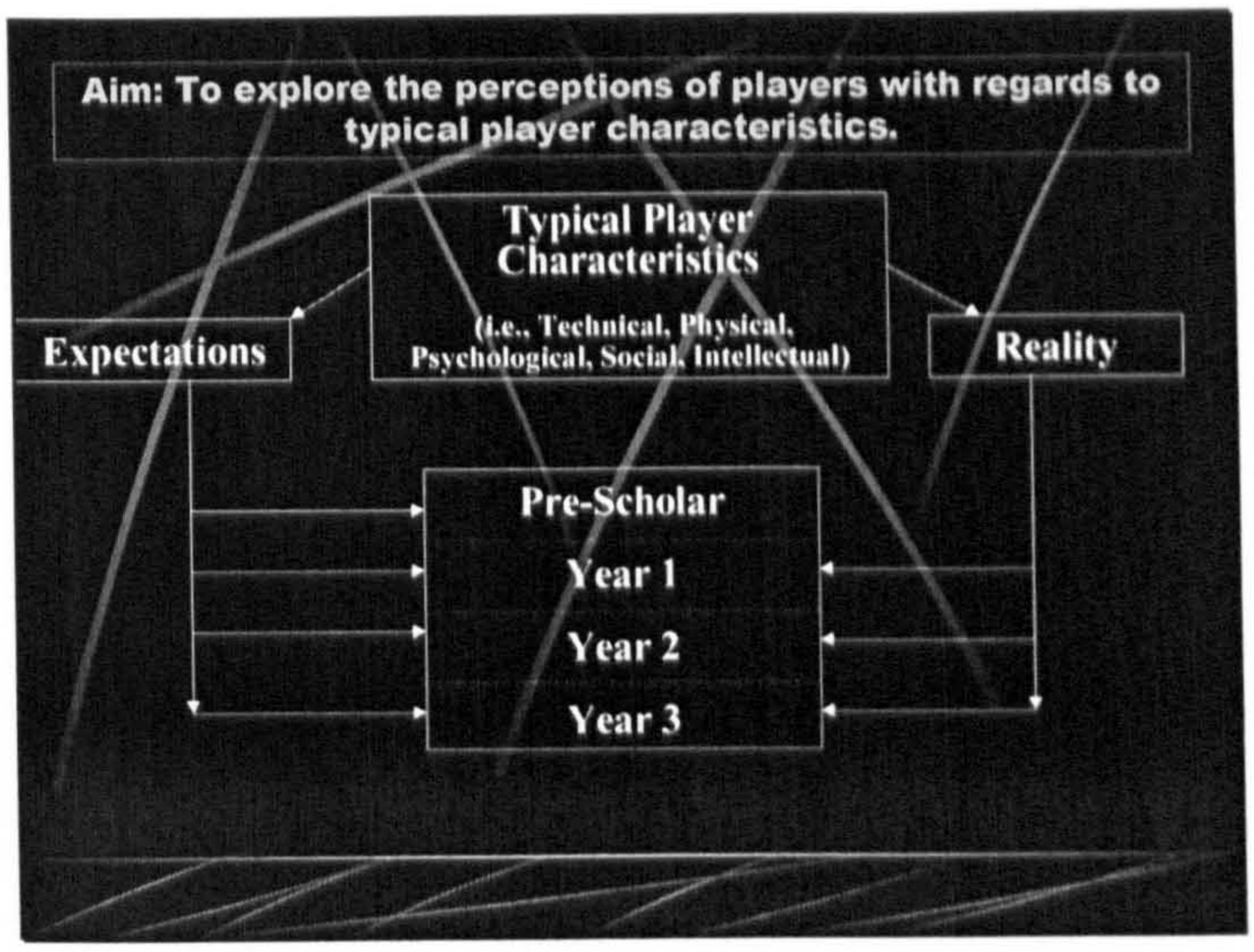
	Football Specific		*Non-football Specific*
	Training	*Games*	*Outside the Club (i.e., college)*
Behaviour			
Attitude			
Nutritionally			
Jobs			
Commitment			
Personal Appearance			

How adapted to the role of the FS?
Physically
Psychologically
Technically
Socially (living away from home (digs), social networks (friends))
Intellectually

Questions for the players:

Why have your expectations not been met?
Can you give me an example?
How was this for you?
Can you elaborate?
Is that the same for you (same age group) and does this differ between age groups? Why?

Slide 5



Introductory question: Expectations first then move on to Realities

- What were your **general expectations** with regards to the typical player characteristics of a Football Scholar (i.e., to be recruited as a FS)?

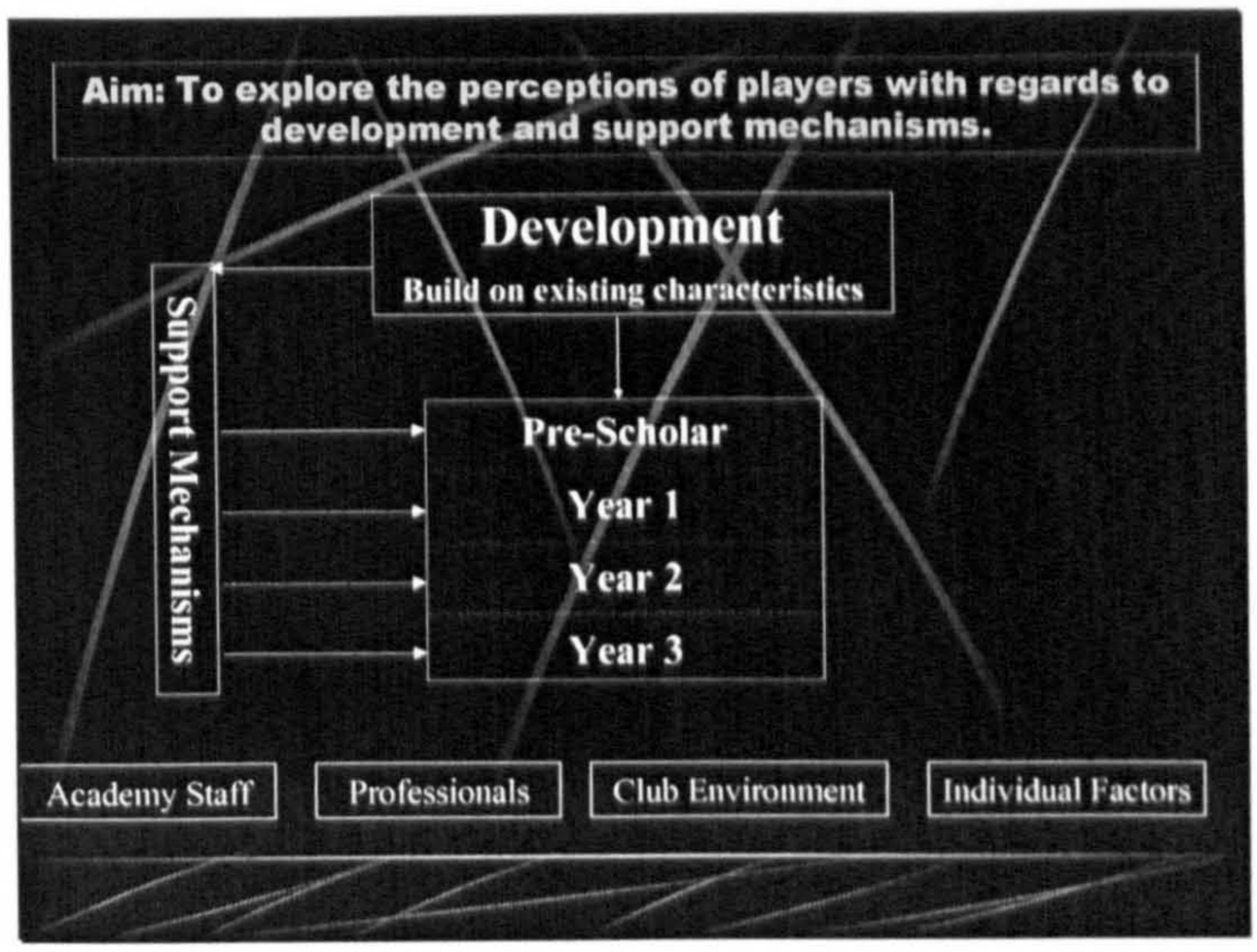
TPC's	Skills
Technical	Passing, tackling, 1st touch, heading, vision, awareness,
Physical	Strength, work rate, speed, height, weight,
Psychological	Mental toughness, concentration, self-confidence, motivation
Social	Attitude, communication, teamwork, concentration, listening,
Intellectual	Football knowledge?, tactical intelligence, retention of information, ability to learn,

- What about the philosophy at the club?
- Have your views changed over time?
- Why have expectations differed?

Club status - Premiership - more emphasis on technically gifted players
Academy status
Bosman ruling
Streamline players for the 1st team

Do you all agree?
Can you explain why? - DO NOT FOCUS TOO MUCH ON DEVELOPMENT
Can you provide an example?

Slide 6



Introductory question:
I would like you to think about the support mechanisms that exist within the club that affect development? (See previous slide characteristics)

1. Academy Staff:
Do they affect your development? How? Can you provide examples? Is this the same for everybody?

Academy Staff	*Technical*	*Physical*	*Psychological*	*Social*	*Intellectual*
Coaches					
Sports Psych					
Physio					
HoEW					
Fitness Conditioner					

2. Professionals
Do they affect your development? How? Role models
Can you provide examples? - Technical skill, attitude, determination, passion etc.
What are your views towards foreign players with regards to development? Generic V's Club Specific
Barrier to progression V's Facilitator of development?

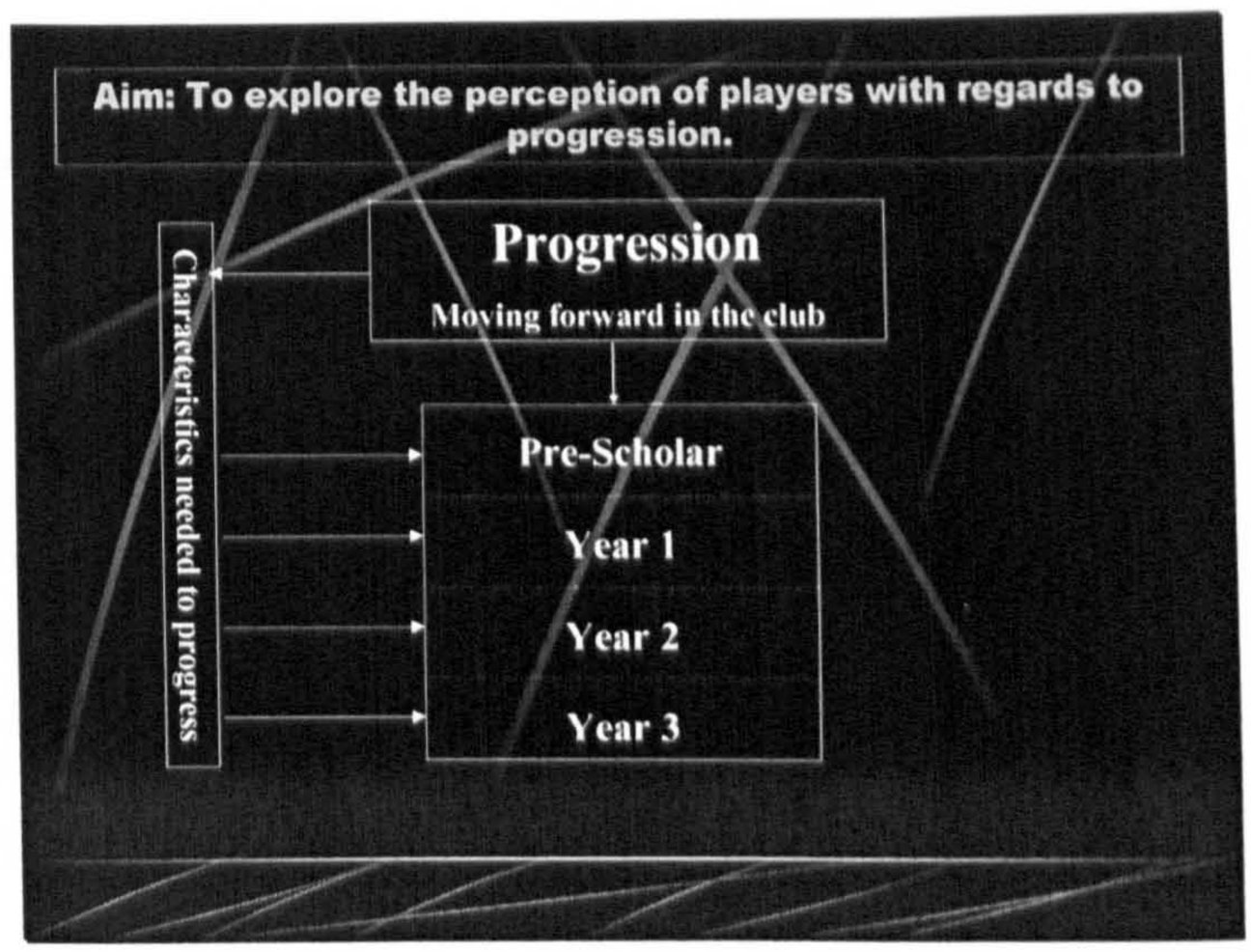
Who is the most influential to your development? Why? Examples?

3. Club Environment
What is the club environment like? (i.e., enjoyable, intimidating, pleasant, stressful)
Who creates this environment?
What affect does this have on your development?
Ability to cope with the competitive pressures within football, competition amongst peers?

4. Individual Factors
What about individual factors?
Motivation, determination,
How have you developed these characteristics?

ARE THERE ANY OTHER SUPPORT MECHANISMS THAT AFFECT DEVELOPMENT?

Slide 7



Introductory question:
I would like you to think about the characteristics that enable progression?

Technical
Physical
Psychological
Social
Intellectual

Why?
What are your perceptions based on (i.e., personal experiences)?

Release Process:
What are your views of the release mechanism?
Purpose
Process
Impact - how have you coped/envisage that you will cope?

Appendix C

Example Interview Protocols (Baseline & 2nd Interview)

Phase 1 - Introduction & Familiarisation **(1st interview only)**

1. Introduce purpose of the research

I want to follow your experiences at this stage of your development and chart your progression over a four-six month period and the factors that affect (both +ve & -ve) it.

2. Introduce the past research that I have done - 16week ethnography, 4 focus groups
3. Own playing background/experiences - establish rapport/generate relationship with the player

Player's Background & Demographic Details

1. Identify player's personal details (i.e., DOB etc.).
2. Sports Background questions (i.e., age started playing football?)

Phase 2 - The following questions are concerned with the club environment (re-visit support mechanisms in next meeting).

1. What do you think about the facilities (training) at the club?
2. How do you feel about the shared training complex at the club?
3. What support mechanisms exist within the club to assist in your development?
4. How do you feel about these support mechanisms?
5. Is there an area that you think could be improved on with regards to the support mechanisms?

Phase 3 - The following questions are related to the relationships that you currently have within the football club. (the follow up interview will examine if these relationships have changed & explore reasons why & potential consequences)

1. Can you please identify the people within the club that oversee your development at the present time and outline their position? - Help player commit these to paper.

2. Can you comment on the strength of your relationship with these individuals

3. And the importance of this relationship to you (not very important to very important).

   EXPLORE PLAYERS RESPONSES HERE:

4. What are the factors that have helped to make your relationship with this person strong? (trust, honesty, feedback - explore these issues in greater detail)

5. Why is this relationship important to you?

6. How important is your family to you within your football?

Phase 4 - For the following set of questions can you reflect on your development (i.e., from start of Football Scholarship to present day).
(Re-visit perceptions of individual development at next meeting)

1. Main qualities that made the club decide to take you on?
2. Who do you think was mainly responsible for taking you on?
3. In what ways do you think that you have developed as a player since your time at the club?
4. Who has been the most influential person in your development?
5. Is there anything that you think you need to develop at this stage of your career?
6. Who has told you to concentrate on these things?

Phase 5 - the next series of questions are concerned with your perceptions towards your progression at the club.
(Re-visit the player's perception of progression issues at the next meeting).

Progression:
1. How do you think you have progressed since your time at the club?
2. Are you pleased with your progression?
3. Can you reflect on the transition process from the academy to professional ranks:

   What are the main differences?

   Do you have any concerns at the present time?
4. Can you identify the main barriers to your progression at the club?
5. Do you think these exist at other clubs? - Why?
6. What are your views towards the foreign players that have been acquired by Premier League clubs?
7. What are your perceptions of the foreign players at your club?
8. Do you think that foreign players are a barrier to your progression?
9. If so, when did this become relevant to you?
10. Can you identify advantages and disadvantages associated with their acquisition?

Do you have any further comments about your progression?

Do you wish to clarify anything that you said within the interview?

Are you happy with the things that you have said within the interview?

Thank you for your time, arrange next meeting - 3 weeks time.

Interview Protocol for 2nd Interview

Interview Schedule:

Outline the aim the interview:

1 - To revisit some of the issues that we discussed in the 1st interview and to see if your views have changed since the last time we met.

2 - To allow you the opportunity to talk about anything that has happened over the last three weeks since we last met.

General Feelings:

Is there anything that you want to talk about since the last time we met?

How would you describe the way that you feel at the present time?

Why is this?

Has this changed from the last time we met?

Individual Development:

Review the issue of consistency that you talked about in our previous conversation.

Playing Consistency:

What games have you played in since the last time we met? Focus on the reserves.

What do you think you have done to get into the reserves?

How did you do in the games?

Feedback from the coaches?

Performance Consistency:

Last interview you talked about wanting to achieve a consistency in your performances (movement, holding the ball up, not taking too many touches).

How do you feel about your performances, have you achieved the consistency that you talked about previously?

Have you scored any goals?

How do you feel about this?

Progression:

Are you pleased with your progression since the last time we spoke?

Comments on your barriers to progression?

Have you identified any 'new' barriers to progression?

Since the last time we met have you thought about your loan spell at the start of the season?

Have you had any opportunities to go out on loan since we last met?

What are your thoughts about going out on loan again this season?

Have you any concerns at the present time?

Foreign Player Acquisition:

Have you any comments about the foreign players at the club or in football in general?

Who do you think can be classed as a 'foreign player'?

What do you think motivates the foreign players to come to English football?

Why do you think managers of clubs acquire foreign players?

What characteristics do they possess that are different to what players in this country possess?

Why do you think that is?

Are there certain nationalities of players that are most suited to English football?

Relationships:

Explore how any relationships may have changed & reasons etc.

Opportunity for clarification or discussion of any further issues.