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“I...[was] plastered with electrodes while doctors jabbed me with pins for  
blood tests” (Armstrong, 2001:65).

Sporting Masculinities:

A comparison of Gramscian and Foucauldian concepts of power.

SLSP3041: Sociology Dissertation




## Abstract

Everywhere we look in society, men are in power, but closer inspection of their subjectivities indicates that they feel powerless (Kimmel, 1992). Within sporting contexts, this refers to the ways in which a cursory glance at sporting masculinities assumes these 'heroes' embody power as they attempt to embody hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1990), but a critical interrogation of their experiences reveals that they feel powerless (Johns, 2004). Through a semi-structured interview with a professional footballer and analysis of five professional sportsmen's autobiographies, this research will aim to draw upon Connell's concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' and Foucault's theorising of power to establish which may be most useful for explaining sporting masculinities and power relations within sport. Ultimately it will aim to amalgamate the two 'opposing' perspectives, revealing more illuminating and perhaps dynamic conclusions, inviting subsequent research to engage and synthesise different discourses and positions.

  
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## Introduction

There appears to be a disparity in the literature between the conclusions drawn from a cursory glance at the sporting male (as hegemonic) and from a critical analysis of their actual experiences. This paradox is captivating and forms the main inspiration for this research.

This dissertation attempts to situate men's subjective sporting experiences within two 'opposing' theories of power. The first, developed from the Gramscian concept of 'hegemony' has been popularised by Connell (see 1987; 1990; 1995) and asserts that the sporting male is an exemplar of a culturally celebrated form of being male, namely, 'hegemonic masculinity' which emphasises being heterosexual, competitive and strong. Power therefore is embodied in the professional sportsman and is hierarchical in nature as hegemonic masculinity is rarely ever achieved, even by such 'heroes' (Connell, 1987). The second, developed by Michel Foucault (1990) asserts that rather than power being a possession that some hold and others do not, it joins with knowledge and operates through discourse to create docile bodies; discourse transmits, produces, reinforces, exposes and undermines power. This raises questions about the true location and nature of power within sporting contexts.

The literature suggests that the theory of hegemonic masculinity serves to shape research findings to conclude that men either conform to or resist hegemonic masculinity. However, this is not a true reflection of sportsmen's

individual experiences (Miller, 1998) which encourages a turn to the Foucauldian perspective, allowing for a more fluid understanding of sporting masculinities, neglecting to locate power within them.

This perspective is particularly relevant to this research as sportsmen's individual experiences are central to the research strategy. Indeed, the methodology of this research is qualitative in nature and examines these subjectivities via an interview with a professional footballer and through an analysis of five autobiographies of professional sportsmen.

Through a critical analysis of these individual experiences, and guided by the theoretical perspectives of Gramsci and Foucault (tailored to sporting contexts), this research aims to discover which may be most convincing for explaining power relations. Additionally, it will aim to discover if and where the Gramscian and Foucauldian perspectives, however different, may be able to meet in order to produce dynamic understandings about sporting masculinities and power.

First, the existing literature in this area will be outlined before entering into a discussion of the methods and approaches this research has utilised. It will then present the main findings from the qualitative research methods employed, before critically discussing these in line with the theories and issues raised above.



## 1. Literature Review

### 1.1- Masculinity as a socially constructed phenomena

Connell (1990) argues that physical fitness is essential to the *construction* of (hegemonic) masculinity; it is not, therefore natural, or fixed. Indeed, masculinities can vary between cultures, in one culture over time, in a man's individual life and between and among different male identities (Kimmel, 1992).

In a similar way, Butler draws on Foucauldian concepts to argue that rather than masculinity being *constructed*, the gendered body *materialises* through the dynamics and processes of discourse and performance. These discourses produce that which they name and power is said to work within them (Osborne and Segal, 1994). Discourse has been defined as the ways in which we talk and think about the world which shapes how we behave (Johnson, 2000).

Studied empirically, Mac an Ghail (1994) argues that male heterosexual identity is socially constructed through schools as well as other institutions in material and discursive practices. Similarly, Swain (2000) found that sport at school offers boys a way of constructing and performing their masculinity.

Thus, whether masculinity is said to be constructed, or is said to materialise, the literature informs us that it is neither natural nor fixed, rather it is accomplished through social action and can differ according to the gender relations in particular social settings (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). This understanding of masculinity is a fundamental starting point for analysing the relationship between masculinities sport and power.

### 1.2- Hegemony and the 'natural' gender order

Despite these arguments that masculinity is constructed or materialises through discourse, the arena of sport is peppered with ideas about the 'natural' gender order. This refers to a pre-conceived idea that sport is something that men are 'naturally' good at (Shogan, 1988) and remains entrenched within the sporting arena. For example, Connell (1990) found in his interview with Steve Donaghue that Steve perceived his surfing success as a result of his 'natural' abilities.

Not only are ideas about the 'natural' gender order entrenched within sport but it has been argued, they are entrenched within society as a whole. Renold (1997) discussed the political implications of the 1995 government paper 'raising the game' which encouraged a return to traditional, competitive sports. This research found that within schools, not only did boys exclude girls from participation in sport based on their 'passivity' but official school practices also served to exclude the girls from the school football team. This research allows us to see that the 'natural' gender order in relation to sport is not only deep-



rooted in the eyes of the boys and girls in the playground, but importantly, it is ingrained in the various 'tiers of the state' (Rowe, 1998:246).

Linked to this debate is the concept of 'hegemony', which dominates the literature on masculinities and sport (Pringle, 2005). This concept, as developed by the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci (1971) is related to a possession of power and how certain groups in society come to exercise and maintain such power. It involves the organisation of social institutions in a way that portrays such hegemony as 'natural' (Miller, 1998). This concept has been used to understand sporting contexts as sport is said to transmit messages of male domination, through for example, girls and boys being introduced to sport in different ways that reinforce male hegemony (Bryson, 1990). Indeed, Humberstone (1990) found that different pupil-teacher communication with boys and girls in sport created varying dimensions between them, encouraging messages that boys were best at sport. Thus, it is boys who develop valued sporting skills and in the long run, men come to control virtually all areas of sport, reaping its rewards (Bryson, 1990). Indeed Shonan (1988) suggests that men are the gatekeepers of resources in sport which they mainly distribute to other men; one example could be the Football Association. Consequently, men have a greater ability to be successful in sport, reinforcing the belief that they are 'naturally' talented.

This is not to ignore the many women who are successful at sport, for example Ellen MacArthur and Kelly Holmes. However, by and large, the

literature suggests that it is men who are the main holders of talent and hegemony in sporting contexts.

### 1.3- Gramsci/ Connell

The concept of hegemony as developed by Gramsci in the 1930s was re-disposed by R.W Connell through the development of the idea: 'hegemonic masculinity'. To say that a particular form of masculinity is hegemonic means

“...that it is culturally exalted and that its exaltation stabilizes a structure of dominance and oppression in the gender order as a whole. To be culturally exalted, the pattern of masculinity must have exemplars who are celebrated as heroes” (Connell, 1990:94).

The use of this concept allows researchers to analyse sporting masculinities in a way that illustrates that sporting males are celebrated as heroes as they are the exemplars of hegemonic forms of masculinity due to their physical fitness and competitive drive (Miller, 1998).

As well as hegemonic, Connell (1995) argued that there are other patterns of masculinity, namely, subordinate, complicit and marginal. This suggests that not only women but other (inferior) forms of masculinity may be excluded from sport such as disabled and homosexual men who are subordinated in this hierarchy. The concept of hegemonic masculinity then, is a question of how particular groups of men inhabit positions of power and how they sustain such

dominance (Donaldson, 1993). This has already been referred to above in terms of the ways in which sporting males are seen as natural in their sporting abilities and therefore come to maintain hegemony in the sporting arena.

Subscribing to this framework for understanding masculinity and sport, Renold (1997) carried out a study on school-age boys and their experiences of football. It was found that the boys in the study were negotiating the hegemonic masculine ideal through their involvement in football in the playground and through their exclusion of girls from the game. Similarly, Whitehead (2002:182) argues that in adulthood, sport becomes a route men take in reaction to the “crisis of masculinity”; as women now participate in almost all arenas of social life, the “pursuit of muscle” has become one of the only arenas left open for men to embody masculinity. Thus, “...it is assumed that sports success *is* success at being masculine” (Willis, 1982:123).

Moreover, it has been suggested that men’s sense of masculinity is invested in *attempts* at conforming to hegemonic masculinity (Whitehead, 2002). Indeed, Connell (1990) points out that only a minority of men can reach the hegemonic masculine ideal, but simply by *attempting* to be successful at sport for example, men can still achieve a sense of masculinity (Willis, 1982). Therefore, attempts to conform to hegemonic masculinity allow all men to benefit from it as it serves to place men as superior in the gender order (Connell, 1987; Donaldson, 1993; Young and White, 2000). Thus, the concept locates power hierarchically and within ‘heroes’ like the sporting male who embody such power.

However, as pointed out by Donaldson (1993:647), when we actually examine these 'heroes', they "...seem scarcely up to the task...". This writer criticises the concept of hegemonic masculinity for its slippery nature in that what is seen to be 'hegemonic' such as enduring sporting injuries actually represents something more complex and contradictory than this. Discussing this aspect of sport, Sabo (2004) argues that rather than injuries being part of the social construction of masculinity, they are actually a way in which the sportsman is caught up in systems of domination. He argues that the 'pain principle' (the belief that the endurance of pain enhances one's character) disguises the power relations within sport within which, the athlete is disadvantaged.

Likewise, Miller (1998) questions the usefulness of the concept in accounting for ambiguous sporting subjectivities. He demonstrates this through the individual experiences of Ian Roberts; a homosexual, heavily muscled rugby player known for physical toughness on and off the field. Clearly then, there appears to be weaknesses to the concept of hegemonic masculinity as it fails to explain individual subjectivities, such as Ian Roberts'.

In response to such critiques of the concept, Pringle (2005) compellingly demonstrates that a Foucauldian framework may be more fruitful for analysing sporting masculinities and power. Before turning to this approach, some further aspects of the literature will be acknowledged which also serves to confirm the inadequacy of the concept of hegemonic masculinity.

#### 1.4- Sport as a 'total institution'

This part of the discussion will focus on the ways in which professional sportsmen become 'consumed' by sport and the implications of this for the nature of power.

Connell (1990) found that Steve Donaghue, a professional surfer, was entirely consumed by the sport in which he specialised, to the extent that he felt like he was "in prison" (pp:71). For example, Steve discussed his rigorous training regime, the reputation he had to maintain and the ways in which this prevented him from being able to participate in certain activities with his peers. Connell concluded that as a result, Steve had little experience of the world, predicting that this would hold negative implications for him once he retired from professional surfing. Yet, Steve chose to be in the position he described as like 'being in jail' because it had consumed his body and mind from a young age; "...Steve's whole person has become caught up in practices that centre on his body and its performances..." (pp:90). This experience raises doubt about the value of the concept of hegemonic masculinity for Donaldson (1993:647) who comments on Steve's experiences and asserts "this is not power".

Similarly, McGillivray et al., (2005:103) draw on Bourdieu's theorising to argue that football becomes "...inculcated into the very bodily capital of its participants so that it comes to possess them". What is meant by this is partially an issue of class; football is very appealing and looks to be one of

few options to those who possess similar dispositions (learned through socialisation) which correspond with the values of football (Musgrave, 1967).

The core argument of McGillvray et al., (2005) is that football clubs position themselves at the very centre of young footballers' lives, inviting them to compromise their education for a *potential* career as a professional footballer, de-valuing formal education and offering them no secure prospects. Through the desire to maintain their involvement in football, they sacrifice other lifestyle behaviours to preserve their bodily strength. This was considered by Wacquant (1995:88) when discussing boxers: "[it] becomes their master to the degree that they have acquired a mastery of it, and thence their inability to desist from it". Therefore, from these arguments, it could be argued that professional sportsmen may be 'caught up in and by the beautiful game' (McGillvray et al., 2005). holding implications for their life outside of football, and indeed their life after sport.

The above arguments may therefore suggest that sport, while not an exact example of what Goffman called a 'total institution,' may be seen as a metaphor for it in some ways as sport captures

“...something of the time and interest of its members and provides something of a world for them...” (Goffman, 1991:15).

The implications that these encompassing tendencies can have on professional sportsmen's lives will be discussed next.

### 1.5- Contradictions and sacrifices

As previously discussed, McGilvray et al., (2005) point out that footballers are unprepared for a life outside sport due to their lack of cultural capital which further education would have provided. Subsequently, players exit their football careers unable to position themselves within an alternative field when they retire. Controversially, this article suggests professional sportsmen are disadvantaged as they neglect other areas of life as a result of their intense involvement in sport, for example, family life. In fact, Connell (1990) found in the interview with Steve Donaghue, a life changing event such as his partner becoming pregnant was referred to as something which would damage his sporting success. Such a comment seems surprising; usually a euphoric life event, the arrival of a child is to the professional sportsman a threat, danger or negative prospect.

Next, some sports may explicitly contradict the notion of the sporting male as the ideal form of masculinity. For example, male bodybuilders may be muscular and strong but the disciplining practices which shape their body are principally feminine. For example, to be successful, bodybuilders must have a regulated diet, shave, tan, wear costumes, rehearse poses in front of the mirror and take ballet classes in order to perfect their 'routines' (Ober, 2002). It is here that the literature shows how a Foucauldian perspective may be useful as bodybuilding demonstrates the ways in which disciplinary practices

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(such as dieting) of large institutions (sport) discipline and shape docile bodies, such as the male bodybuilder.

Returning again to the 'iron man' research, Connell (1990:86) concludes:

“...Steve, the exemplar of masculine toughness, finds his own exemplary status prevents him from doing exactly what his peer group defines as thoroughly masculine behaviour: going wild, showing off, drunk driving, getting into fights, defending his own prestige...”.

This encourages a search for an alternative framework for understanding sporting masculinities such as the Foucauldian analysis of power, to which the discussion will now turn.

### 1.6- Foucault

Although Foucault makes no mention of sport in his analyses of power, his focus on the body has encouraged many authors to show how Foucauldian concepts can be utilised for explaining power relations in sport (Johns and Johns, 2000).

The Foucauldian perspective moves away from a binary understanding of men's experiences in sport, that is, that men's participation or non-participation may be taken as conforming to or resisting hegemonic masculinity. Instead, looking through a Foucauldian lens permits more fluid



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understandings as it allows for the ambiguities that may characterise men's individual experiences (Pringle, 2005). Foucault talks about power as working through the calculated use of discourse aimed at individuals; individuals, therefore are docile to the discourses that shape and discipline them (Pringle, 2005; Rail and Harvey, 1995; Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983; Johns, 2004). Unlike the Gramscian inspired concept of hegemony, Foucault's analyses of power is not characterised by the dominators and the dominated, but as "...a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies" (Foucault, 1990:100). Therefore all actors are involved in power relations and discourses also offer a starting point for resistance:

"Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power". (Foucault, 1990:95).

Therefore, a Foucauldian understanding could help us to see that within sporting contexts, power may not be hierarchical in nature but rather operates through a discourse of expertise. This discourse legitimises the disciplinary practices, such as rigorous training and dietary regulation athletes are subjected to which ensures the production of the passive athlete (Johns, 2004). This author uses a Foucauldian understanding of power to argue that a cursory glance at sport may suggest that athletes are empowered by their success but if one looks closely at the discourses within such contexts, it is revealed that athletes may actually be subordinated.

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Already we can see the initial differences between the Gramscian-inspired concept of hegemony and the Foucauldian understanding of power and understandably so, while Gramsci developed his ideas in the context of his imprisonment, Foucault developed his in the context of modernising France (Pringle, 2005).

What is interesting about the Foucauldian approach is that it inspires researchers to detach from established knowledge rather than simply slot their findings into existing frameworks:

“There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, it is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all” (Foucault, 1992:8).

In this way, perhaps we can see a more vivid picture of the connections between masculinities, power relations and sport by looking at such issues through a Foucauldian lens.


### 1.7 The research questions

Inspired by Foucauldian tools to think differently in order to perceive new ideas, this research examines the subjective experiences of professional

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sportsmen in order to uncover and explain the ways in which although liberating in some respects, there exists a paradox in sport in that it has manipulative tendencies (Hargreaves, 1982). It is this paradox that is of particular interest and significance to this research.


The concept of hegemony and the Foucauldian framework of power will be used to explain these experiences separately and then collaboratively, in order to illuminate aspects of this paradox and to reveal the true nature of power in sporting contexts.



## 2. Methodology

This section is dedicated to discussing the methodology implemented in this research and its potential downfalls. Firstly it will discuss the ways in which theory and method are intertwined and specifically how the methods of this investigation aimed to research the ideas of Connell and Foucault in relation to sporting masculinities and power. The discussion that follows this will look at the nature of qualitative research designs, and specifically an evaluation of the semi structured interview and biographical research. Inevitably, this chapter will also consider key issues within methodology such as methods of analysing data, sampling, and ethical considerations.

As a starting point, it is important to acknowledge the ways in which theory and method are interrelated. The methods implemented in this research relate to the way the human being and the social order has been perceived, in terms of structure and agency. These are ontological considerations regarding 'objectivism' and 'constructionism' (Holdaway, 2000). Therefore, the qualitative methods in this research positioned the human actor (professional sportsman) as reflexive because it aimed to investigate their 'life worlds' (Stroh, 2000) through a semi-structured interview and biographical research. It was tested to what extent power relations within sport were negotiated or passively accepted.



## 2.1 The ideal and realistic research strategy

Without the constraints of time and finance it would have been favourable to undertake a longitudinal ethnographic study of professional sportsmen as this approach carries the benefit of being immersed in the practices of the group being researched (Bryman, 2008). In the context of this research, this would involve observing and being immersed within the practices to which the professional sportsmen engage and the disciplinary discourses they may be subjected to over time. In this way, a longitudinal ethnographic study would produce extensive data which could be applied to Gramscian and or Foucauldian theorising, or indeed be used to develop or extend such theories. As Bryman (2008) points out, an ethnographic study may be favourable as it holds implications for the depth and richness of the data that can be obtained.

Therefore, in light of the fact that time and finance were relatively restricted, the research progressed in the following ways. Following a deductive theory; the Gramscian and Foucauldian frameworks (see literature review for reminder), as applied to sporting contexts were subjected to empirical scrutiny through a qualitative research strategy. The research strategy involved a semi-structured interview with a professional football player as well as a detailed analysis of five autobiographies of professional sportsmen.

It was considered more relevant to examine the subjectivities of professional as opposed to non-professional sportsmen because they were perceived to be more likely to have experienced the power relations the research aimed to investigate due to their high levels of commitment.

## 2.2 The nature of qualitative research

It is important to note here that there is an argument about the simple application of quantitative terms such as 'reliability' and 'validity' being used in the same way for qualitative research. For example, Guba and Lincoln (1994) recommend the use of four criteria in qualitative research which each have an equivalent criterion in quantitative research. These four criteria, they argue, are more relevant to assessing qualitative research: *credibility* (internal validity) *transferability* (external validity), *dependability* (reliability) and *confirmability* (objectivity). These criteria will be expanded upon at the relevant points of discussion in this chapter.

Qualitative methodology is a phenomenological study which aims to investigate the complex meanings people attach to social phenomena by asking open ended questions that demand long answers (Stroh, 2000). Such studies obtain rich and detailed data (Holdaway, 2000), but are also characterised by small sample sizes, limiting the generalisability of the research findings; indeed, the sample size in this research was six. However, as Stroh (2000) points out in acknowledging this weakness, qualitative methods do not aim to produce such generalisations, rather, they aim to

understand people's 'life worlds'. In addition, qualitative research is often criticised for being too subjective in nature. In other words, the findings of qualitative methods can often reflect the subjective interpretations of the researcher who has decided what the results reveal (Bryman, 2008). This weakness was considered, especially when drawing conclusions from the interpreted tone of the interviewee that came to be defined as 'indifferent', to be discussed later. However, according to the arguments of Heritage (1984) this problem is somewhat removed within this research due to the availability of the data to the reader (in the form of interview transcripts and recordings) within which some conclusions are grounded.


Drawing on the influential work of Connell (1990) "The Iron Man", the first method used as part of the research strategy was a semi structured interview with a professional football player. The interview followed a semi-structured interview schedule, covering topics such as training regimes, disciplining practices and aspects of his life. While including specified topics to be covered, it left room for probing beyond the answers that were given in relation to these. This allowed for the interview to progress in unplanned ways, as advised in the methodology literature (May, 2001). Thus the interview contained opening questions as well as follow up questions to the potential answers of these (see appendix A for interview schedule). This semi-structured approach to interviewing was pursued in the hope that by engaging in a more conversational approach with the footballer, light would be shed on the research questions about sporting masculinities and power.

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In qualitative research methods like the semi-structured interview, the emphasis is very much on training the interviewer in how to conduct a successful interview (Rudestam and Newton, 2007). This relates to one of the four criterion suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1994), that of '*confirmability*'. This refers to the importance of the interviewer establishing an "intersubjective understanding" with the interviewee while at the same time, remaining at a distance in order to be able to objectively analyse the interview (May, 2001:127). Therefore, following Burgess (1991:101), attempts were made in this research to be "friendly but not over-sociable" with the interviewee in order to remain objective.

Burgess (1991) goes on to stress the importance of the interviewer being able to listen intently, resist interruption and monitor their own comments and gestures. Within the interview then, attempts were made to listen to what was actually being said in order that the conversation could flow, while at the same time thinking of the next area to be discussed, while at the same time still, ensuring the interviewee was not aware of the myriad of thought processes going on as he spoke which may have been distracting. Therefore, qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews are not without their difficulties which were of significant consideration throughout this research.





### 2.3 Data collection

This part of the chapter relates to the '*transferability*' criterion by Guba and Lincoln (1994): the research aimed to be descriptive in order that the data obtained may have revealed any possible transferability to other concepts. It also makes reference to the '*dependability*' criterion: all data was recorded and kept throughout all phases of the research process (such as interview transcripts) and kept safely, to be discussed below.

Throughout the interview, a digital audio-recorder was used as advocated by Heritage (1984) who points out that this method of data collection means that the interviewer need not rely on memory throughout the interview and that there may be constant re-examination of the data. This extends the range and precision of the conclusions that can be made and gives other researchers direct access to the data from which claims are being made, reducing the influence of analytical bias as the data is subject to public scrutiny, minimising such researcher-effects (Heritage, 1984). In this way, the conclusions made about the tone of the interviewee in this research can be subject to public scrutiny as the data from which such conclusions were drawn is available in the appendix for others to interpret.

However, interviewees may refuse the use of an audio-recorder if they feel concerned about their words being preserved or, if agreed upon, it may affect the responses of those being researched (Bryman, 2008). Although, as the

interviewee in this research was a professional footballer, it is likely that he had undergone some basic media training and was relatively 'media savvy'. Therefore, although potentially problematic, the effects of the use of an audio recorder in the context of this research were possibly of little significance.

Another point to mention here is the method of secure storage used in this research; all data (such as fieldwork notes, interview transcripts and data analysis) was backed up using the university secure storage system.

#### 2.4 Data analysis

Following advice from Burgess (1991), only the relevant parts of the interview were transcribed as transcribing the entire interview would have been highly time consuming: five to six hours of transcription should be allowed for every hour of speech (Bryman, 2008). Therefore, as advised, the interview was listened to multiple times in order to decide which parts were relevant before transcription began. As argued by Bryman (2008), transcribing this data brought with it the advantage of becoming more familiar with the data, enabling key themes and concepts to emerge and develop as the research progressed. In this way, this research took tools from both 'analytic induction' in that data which fitted with Gramscian and Foucauldian categories were searched for, and 'grounded theory', in that attempts were made to develop new ideas and concepts from data that did not fit with either category (see Bryman, 2008).



## 2.5 Sampling

The sampling method used could be described as 'purposive sampling' (Bryman, 2008) as the professional footballer was chosen on the basis of his relevance to the research. However, it should be noted that rather than he was 'chosen' he was able to be accessed via a friend and therefore this opportunity was taken due to its potential benefits for the research.

Due to the difficulty in gaining access to professional sportsmen, only one interview was carried out (however the research strategy also used biographical research, to be discussed later). Although this was a small number of participants, the method of interviewing can be very time consuming due to the transcribing of data (Miller and Brewer, 2003) and therefore this was not seen as a major downfall of this research. Access was gained to the professional football player through a friend to whom he is related.

## 2.6 Credibility

The following points of discussion come under the '*credibility*' criterion put forward by Guba and Lincoln (1994). For example, triangulation is a way that credibility can be established through more than one method being employed in order counter act the weaknesses that methods invariably carry (Rudestam and Newton, 2007; Burgess, 1991). Thus, this research strategy used a semi-

structured interview alongside another method; the small number of interviews carried out was compensated slightly by the additional data obtained through biographical research.

## 2.7 Biographical research

Biographical research "...uses stories of individuals...to understand the individual life within its social context" (Roberts, 2002:3). Autobiographies of professional sportsmen were analysed in a way which provided data to enable interpretation of sporting masculinities and power through Gramscian and Foucauldian lenses. This method was particularly useful within the context of the research strategy as it provided a way in which to investigate the lives of elite sportsmen without having to spend the time on lengthily interviews and their transcriptions. In addition, due to the fact that it is difficult to gain access to professional sportsmen, this method seemed particularly relevant here.

As the biographical research took interest in the individual subjectivities of elite sportsmen, it can be seen that the research method, as discussed previously, views the participants in a particular way: as creators and interpreters of meanings which constructs and reconstructs society (Roberts, 2002).

However, it must be acknowledged that there are a number of significant limitations to assuming autobiographies are a true reflection of the sportsman's life. Indeed, Eakin (1985) emphasises the fictions in

autobiographies and argues that such texts are a construction of the self by the author that is shaped by memory, imagination and intention. Moreover, an individual's judgment of their life could be subject to re-examination in the future, which the reader is unable to access. Thus, this work encourages scepticism in that it argues that if the self is the creator of the autobiography then its meaning should not be seen as a "...disciplined recovery of past consciousness" (pp:22). Finally, there may be a multiplicity of available interpretations of one story which must always be considered as a possible limitation of this kind of method (Roberts, 2002). Therefore, the shortcomings of this method may hold negative implications for '*credibility*' (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) because the data, within which conclusions were grounded, may not have been true reflections of reality in the first place.

## 2.8 Ethics

Before concluding, the chapter will turn to the ethical considerations that were taken into account when conducting the research. Bryman (2008) discusses the main ethical considerations put forward by Diener and Crandall (1978): harm, informed consent, invasion of privacy, and deception. These will be considered in turn.

Firstly, they argue that harm may refer to physical harm or psychological harm; therefore, the participant and the football club he played for remained anonymous in the findings (as advised by Bryman, 2008) in order that he would not incur any scrutiny from his football club for his participation.

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Additionally the interview took place at his address, in the presence of the friend to whom he was related due to issues of personal safety of both parties.

Secondly, they maintain that participants should be given as much detail as is appropriate in order that they can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. However, it has been discussed the ways in which revealing too much information about the research can alter the responses that may be given (Homan, 1991), therefore, information was revealed in a truthful yet concise manner in order to try to alleviate this risk. The interviewee was informed about the nature of the research questions, and his right to withdraw and that the interview would be recorded but kept anonymous.


Following his acceptance, the interview consent form was signed by the interviewer to confirm that these issues had been discussed with the participant as recommended by Groves et al., (2004, cited in Bryman, 2008) because it has been shown that the requirement to sign a consent form often reduces the willingness of participants to take part.

Thirdly, they make a case for the importance of the privacy of participants being carefully considered. Thus, asking personal questions regarding, for example income or personal relationships were avoided in the interview, the name of the player and his club were kept anonymous, and the information he disclosed confidential.

Finally, they assert the importance of the researcher presenting their work in a truthful manner in order to avoid deception. Therefore, the interview schedule (which included themes to be considered within the interview) was placed on the table for the interviewee to look at should he have wished.

## 2.9 Summary

This chapter has outlined the research strategy that was developed in order to respond to the issues in question surrounding sporting masculinities and power. It has acknowledged the advantages and disadvantages of the qualitative research design and of the methods that were used within this research process. In an attempt to confront some of the methodological weaknesses of the semi-structured interview, the research strategy included a second method, that of biographical research. This chapter has aimed to show how this research has considered the importance of 'training the interviewer' (Rudestam and Newton, 2007) and on remaining objective when analysing autobiographies (Eakin, 1985).



### 3. Findings

In order to avoid repetition, this section will retain a focus on setting out the main findings (mainly quotes) obtained from the interview and autobiographies, and what these illustrate; analysis of these data will take place in the following chapter. Not all findings are presented here due to limited space; however Appendix D provides a more detailed and broad range of illustrative quotes, some of which will also be brought out in the following chapter.

To set the scene, the findings fall under a number of themes relating to either concepts of a Gramscian or Foucauldian perspective. While the two remain separate and distinct in this chapter, the next chapter will attempt to find common threads within the two approaches in an attempt to decide where the two ideas may amalgamate.

#### 3.1 The nature of sport is linked to 'hegemonic masculinity'

*The nature of sport was found to be directly linked to qualities of hegemonic masculinity and professional sportsmen were found to be in some ways exemplars of the culturally approved form of masculinity.*



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Evidence:

“You are treated as something special, even when you’re playing for the youth team or the reserves” (Beckham, 1998:40).

and,

“...that’s all the coaches were concerned about: could I do the job? Was I man enough to get it done?” (Courson and Schreiber, 1991:6).

### 3.2 Hierarchical nature of power

*The hierarchical nature of power advocated by Gramsci was found in some of the professional sportsmen’s narratives.*

Evidence:

“...it’s a different world in the lower leagues and stuff like that...you just get treated really, as pieces of meat to be honest, you’re good for the clubs while you’re playing well...” (Interviewee, 04:49, Appendix E).

### 3.3 Normalisation of hierarchical power

*It was found that the hierarchical nature of power seemed not to be an issue to the professional sportsmen; it was ‘normal’ or accepted by them.*

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Evidence:

“We acknowledged and even accepted that there was a class system”  
(Courson and Schreiber, 1991: 35).

3.4 Gaze of experts over docile bodies

*The findings suggest that the docile body of the professional sportsman is subjected to the gaze (observation) of experts.*

Evidence:

“As soon as I got there, they hooked me up to an electrocardiogram machine, this time I was laid flat on a table while the nurse monitored the printout”  
(Courson and Schreiber, 1991:109).

3.5 Sacrifices to maintain Hegemony/ Power effects of discourse

*In line with Connell's (1990) theorising, the sacrifices professional sportsmen must make to maintain their powerful positions in sport were present in the men's narratives. These narratives could also be used to indicate the powerful effects discourses can have on the sporting male, in line with Foucault's theorising.*

Evidence:

“...while everyone else is having barbecues and picnics in the month of August, NFL players are sweating, and bleeding, and hurting. To an NFL player, August means training camp, and there’s nothing fun about it” (Green, 1996:11).

3.6 Docile Body disconnected from the self

*This evidence may suggest that the sporting male’s body has become docile to the extent that it no longer feels connected to the mind or self. When discovering he might need a heart transplant, Steve Courson did not link his body to his self and his life, he first and foremost considered his sport:*

Evidence:

“My entire life had been filled with physical motion, with athletic prowess and achievement. Most of what I lived for...was tied into my physicality...let me get this straight, Doc, those days are over?” (Courson and Schreiber , 1991:3).

### 3.7 Critique

*The following finding offers a critique of the finding above, suggesting that the sportsman's body is very much connected to the self in that the effects of injury impact on their soul.*

#### Evidence:

“...I've had loads the last few years it's just been a nightmare. It's basically ruined my career in England. So frustrating doesn't quite cover it, but frustrating is the right word...over time when its one after another...it's just... soul destroying I'd say...” (Interviewee, 27:36 min, Appendix E).

### 3.8 Total Institution

*The following indicates the implication in terms of power of sport infatuating its members. It also could be used to link the concept of the 'total institution' (Goffman, 1957;1991).*

#### Evidence:

“During the heart of my NFL career, I was not interested in getting married or even forging any long-term relationships. Football was my life, my wife and my mistress” (Courson and Schreiber, 1991:45).



### 3.9 Critique

*The following present a counter argument to the point made above. The sportsman interviewed seemed not to be infatuated with sport which came across in his tone of voice; he spoke of his career in a tone of indifference.*

#### Evidence:

“Erm but a lot of lads, a lot of footballers just, that’s the only thing they could do, or that’s the only thing they know. But ...it doesn’t particularly faze me to think what am I going to do now?” (Interviewee, 09:24 min, Appendix E).



## 4. Discussion

The aim of this discussion is to consider the findings of this research in light of existing theorising (by Gramsci and Foucault) and empirical research, some of which was discussed in the literature review. This chapter is separated into three subheadings: it will begin by examining the findings of this research which have been interpreted as linking directly to theory surrounding sporting masculinities and power. It will then turn to findings that may be 'in dispute' in that they may fit into both Gramscian and Foucauldian categories or their meaning may be unclear. Following this the chapter will compare and contrast the ideas of Gramsci and Foucault, aiming to synthesise (without ignoring their differences) the two 'opposing' views of power relations.

### 4.1 Evidence supporting theory

Some of the findings of this research are very much in line with the existing literature and theorising of sporting masculinities, for example, Connell (1990) identifies hegemonic masculinity to have characteristics embedded in competitiveness, risk taking and aggression. Similarly, in his autobiography, Lance Armstrong (2001), talks about the nature of professional cycling; it is competitive, tough and brutal. In the same context, Armstrong speaks of his own aggression, implying that through succeeding in professional cycling, he has come to embody the characteristics it is made up of. In order to illustrate

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this, the following quote indicates that Armstrong felt he could not be successful at cycling until he was a man:

*“...I wouldn’t be able to win a Tour de France until I had enough iron in my legs, and lungs, and brain, and heart. Until I was a man...I was still trying to get there” (Armstrong, 2001:71)*

Therefore, through trying to get enough iron in his legs and lungs and brain and heart, he was still trying to reach the point of being a man, and of winning a race. The interpretation of this evidence is in line with the literature on sporting masculinities, for example, Whitehead (2002) argues that men’s sense of masculinity is invested in *attempts* at conforming to hegemonic masculinity. Therefore through working towards winning a Tour de France, Lance Armstrong embodies masculinity through his *attempts*.

Next, the findings which highlighted the ways in which professional sportsmen are subjected to the ‘gaze’ of experts enabled the utilisation of a Foucauldian framework. Johns (2004) comments on the observation of athletes by sporting ‘experts’ as a technology of power which was found in the following quote from the interview in this research. Here, the interviewee speaks about the managers and their decisions about who will play the matches:

*“They just watch you during the week and if you’re playing well and performing well in training then erm, you’re more likely to get picked.” (Interviewee, 16:38 min, Appendix E).*

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This could be said to form a technology of power because the interviewee described the matches as something which made sacrifices due to sport worthwhile:

*“...the games though, make it all worthwhile you see...” (Interviewee:  
14:38 min, Appendix E)*

Thus, power in this context appears to be hierarchical in nature, as Gramsci (1971) advocated, in that the football managers have the power to include and exclude players, either making their sacrifices worth while or futile. The discussion of this finding has used both Gramscian and Foucauldian concepts which may hold positive implications for their ability to be synthesised at the end of this chapter.

Finally, the way Foucault’s theorising places the body at the centre of the research question (Johns, 2004) was found to be relevant in the research findings. Foucault (1991:136) argues that “A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved”. The following finding then, seems appropriate to cite here:

*“I...[was] plastered with electrodes while doctors jabbed me with pins for blood tests” (Armstrong, 2001:65).*



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In other words, the discourses within sport and the disciplining practices in which sportsmen are involved, result in the focus on and creation of the 'docile body' which is observed by the 'experts' and 'jabbed with pins' by those who want to improve its performance. This suggests that power exists within the discourses of which the experts engage that serve to create the subject of which they speak.

#### 4.2 In Dispute

This section will first look at some of the findings from the research that could be explained using both Gramscian and Foucauldian theoretical tools which lead the discussion onto the argument about the ambiguities surrounding the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Following this, attention will be paid to the suggestion that the power effects of discourse may not only produce docile bodies but docile minds. This will draw upon findings from the interview and from the autobiography of Lance Armstrong (2001) and in so doing, will enable the discussion to show how the power relations in sporting contexts can be both repressive and productive. Finally, it will be asked whether the contradictions to sporting masculinities experienced by Lance Armstrong and the interviewee may even offer the professional sportsman a way of resisting powerful discourses.

Within sport, some contend that men who endure pain are conforming to the hegemonic masculine ideal by ignoring bodily signals of weakness (Young

and White, 2000). Sabo (2004) refers to this as 'the pain principle' and argues that injuries caused by such a belief are actually a way the athlete becomes caught up with systems of domination. Both Connell and Foucault's ideas are relevant here: 'the pain principle' and the injuries it creates can either be viewed as embodying the hegemonic masculine ideal, or a way the body is inscribed with power. Indeed, both could be used in the same way to explain the following finding from this research:

*"...I've got marbled scars on both arms and discoloured marks up and down my legs..." (Armstrong, 2001:2).*

In addition, sportsmen must undergo various operations on the body, as Donaldson (1993) discusses when he makes reference to the subjective experiences of Wally ('the King') Lewis who had both knees replaced as a result of sport injuries. The concept of the 'pain principle' would situate these men close to the hegemonic masculine ideal, Donaldson (1993) however, questions the extent to which injuries can be part of the social construction of hegemonic masculinity as Young and White (2000) advocate.

The debate this raises then, concerns the ways in which different perspectives can be applied to the same finding when analysing power relations within sport. This is one of the reasons that Donaldson (1993:644) refers to the concept of hegemonic masculinity as "as slippery and difficult as the idea of masculinity itself". Indeed, when discussing sporting injuries it inspires him to question "...how powerful is a man who mutilates his body, almost as a matter

of course, merely because of his job...” (pp:647). In this way, perhaps sporting masculinities, rather than interpreted as hegemonic, should be interpreted as subordinated (Fogel (2011)).

In order to illustrate the ambiguities that surround the concept of hegemonic masculinity using a finding from this research, the following quote from a very powerful, iconic man seems appropriate here:

*“...Now there are times when my life isn’t my own, and that scares me a bit...” (Beckham, 1998:146)*

Thus it is tempting to repeat Donaldson’s question and ask, how powerful is a man whose life is no longer his own, merely because of his job? This evidence, therefore, offers a challenge to the concept of hegemonic masculinity in sporting contexts and illustrates that this concept may not be entirely useful in explaining certain aspects of an individual sportsman’s experience. At the same time, this evidence may be offered as an example of Foucault’s conception of power in that due to the powerful effects of discourse, David Beckham’s life is no longer his own.

Another way the inadequacy the concept of hegemonic masculinity can be seen is in the following finding:

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“...you’re competitive anyway, your nature. You have to be I think to be...a...professional sportsman, you have to have that competitive edge...it’s all about winning at the end of the day...that’s what it comes down to, people lose their jobs, managers get sacked every day of the week for losing...yeah it’s just about winning games.” (Interviewee, 24:04 min, Appendix E).

Interpretation of the above quote could turn to a Gramscian perspective and use it to argue that sport draws on notions of the hierarchical ‘natural’ gender order in that it emphasises male qualities of competition and winning. On the other hand, closer scrutiny of these words could encourage an understanding of sport as similar to that of a business. To be clear, perhaps the emphasis on winning and being competitive in sport is not a reflection of the nature of hegemonic masculinity, but rather, it is required because if games are not won, men lose their jobs. Sportsmen, in being competitive may not be attempting to embody hegemonic forms of masculinity; they may be merely fighting to save theirs and others’ livelihoods.

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) acknowledge such criticisms but argue that the ambiguity that surrounds the concept of hegemonic masculinity should be regarded as a *mechanism* in hegemony. By this they mean that although exemplars of masculinity inevitably experience contradictions, even so they are important for upholding desires and fantasies, reinforcing hegemony. This suggests that criticisms of the concept of hegemonic masculinity in terms of ambiguity are partially inconsequential.

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Moving on, Foucault's theorising has been used to show how the sporting male is disciplined through discourses rendering his body docile (Denison, 2007). Similarly, from the interview and autobiographical analysis, evidence was found that could be used to suggest that the power effects of discourse in sport, not only affect the body but the mind and the self:

*“...Oh, my God, I'll never be able to race again. Not, oh my God, I'll die. Not, oh, my God, I'll never have a family...” (Armstrong, 2001:14)*

Here, Armstrong recalls his reaction to the realisation that he had cancer. He comments on his first thoughts and the fact that these were not concerned with his life and his sudden lack of potential to have a family, but rather about his professional cycling. This could be used to suggest that not only do sporting discourses produce a docile body, but that this docile body is disconnected from the mind and the self; the quote above suggests that Lance Armstrong's body was not connected to his mind or his life it was only connected to sport. Thus, the power effects of discourse are very real and highly pervasive yet discreet in that they materialise through sport discourse without the sportsman knowing as is shown in Armstrong's shock at his own reaction.

On the other hand, the following important quote, highlighted previously in chapter 3.7 would suggest that actually, the body and self are tightly bound in

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sporting contexts. When discussing the impact of his injuries in the interview, the professional footballer comments:

*“ ...frustrating doesn’t quite cover it, but frustrating is the right word...over time when it’s one after another...it’s just..soul destroying I’d say... (Interviewee, 27:42 min, Appendix E).*

Thus, evidence from this research supports the idea that power operates through discourse to create docile bodies and minds, yet also provides evidence that sport may in fact connect the body to the mind and the soul quite closely.

This links to another significant finding which evolved from an analysis of the autobiography of Lance Armstrong (2001). This analysis revealed that the disciplining discourses that render the professional sportsman ‘docile’ could actually have been a contributing factor to Armstrong’s recovery of cancer:

*“The more I thought about it, the more cancer began to seem like a race to me...they shared gruelling physical aspects, as well as a dependence on time, and progress reports every interval, with checkpoints and a slavish reliance on numbers and blood tests. The only difference was that I had to focus better and harder than I ever did on the bike...The idea was oddly restorative: winning my life back would be the biggest victory” (Armstrong, 2001:89).*

From this evidence perhaps it could be argued that disciplining discourses became so entrenched within Lance Armstrong that they enabled him to apply these learned techniques used to win a race to fight cancer. Perhaps his mind, disciplined by discourses, encouraged the recovery of his body, emphasising a connection between the two. Therefore, sport may not only be soul destroying, but life saving. This analysis links to Foucault's theorising in that it acknowledges the productive nature of power; no regime simply represses: every regime creates a form of life as a positive phenomenon (Fraser, 1989). This aspect of Foucault's work is the area in which Rail and Harvey (1995) feel the sociology of sport has much to gain.

Next, the discussion will turn to an interpretation of the tone of the interview conducted with the professional footballer:

*“Erm, sort of when I was a younger teenager I wasn't that fussed...[hesitates]...it wasn't sort of life or death if I made it, but as it turned out it's been a bit of a bonus that I did...” (Interviewee, 09:05 min, Appendix E)*

It will be suggested that actually, his passion for football may have been more than he was disclosing. This conclusion stems from the discrepancy between his tone of voice which seemed indifferent in nature, and his claim that his soul had been destroyed as a result of injuries preventing him from playing (see above). Thus, if this process had the capability to destroy his soul, it

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must be a fairly important or well regarded aspect of his life, yet, this part was played down throughout the interview.

Denison (2007) interpreted the apathy and poor performance of a cross country runner in Foucauldian terms to argue that the disciplining practices to which he was subjected had resulted in his sense of indifference throughout the race. He believed that this indicated a stage between docility and resistance to disciplining practices on the part of the athlete. This stage involves their reluctance to willingly accept the practices they are subjected to in order to achieve their aspirations.

Indeed, the interviewee in this research had recently terminated his contract at the time of the interview, partly due to injury, partly because he and the manager were not getting along. Therefore, perhaps the interviewee's tone of indifference could be interpreted as a form of resistance from the disciplining discourses involved in sport, much like Lance Armstrong when he had first returned to cycling after recovering from cancer:

*"I sat...and thought about how much I didn't want to be there...In the past 'I'd thrived on being able to stand conditions that made everyone else crack. But not on this day" (Armstrong, 2001:190).*

This evidence could be used to suggest that the contradictions to sporting masculinities such as cancer for Armstrong and injuries for the interviewee brought about a stage between docility and resistance as they showed signs



of refusing to accept the 'sport ethic' which emphasises sacrifice for the 'game' and exceeding limits to display dedication (Hughes and Coakley, 2001). In attempting to uphold their ambitions, athletes begin to tire of the disciplining practices they are subjected to, resulting in the athlete giving up and resisting such discipline (Denison, 2007). This work uses a Foucauldian line of argument which is particularly vivid here as it recognises the possible resistance of power.

#### 4.3 Synthesis

Finally, the aim will be to attempt to examine the intricate details of the perspectives within this research in order to establish where Gramsci and Foucault may be synthesised. Firstly, however, it is important to make clear that this attempt to synthesise the two is not to say that the two are wholly compatible. After all, although they are similar in that they both acknowledge that power is not distributed equally, they disagree on how the inequalities in power relations are formed (Pringle, 2005). The importance of identifying such differences is rooted in the warning from Barnett (1989) that those who do not identify differences or seek to understand the place of ideas in their social contexts risk theoretical pillaging.

Firstly, the Gramscian concept of hegemony and the Foucauldian concepts surrounding discursive power share a negative undertone when applied to sporting contexts. For example, a number of writers (Johns and Johns, 2000; Sabo, 2004) draw on a Foucauldian perspective to argue that in sport, the

athlete body is subject to discursive power and disciplining practices which maximise the autonomy and power of the 'experts' (managers and coaches) and minimise the autonomy of the athlete. The athlete is no more than a docile body subject to the gaze and scrutiny of the experts. Evidence of this can be seen in the following findings from this research:

*"We wanted to determine what my maximum effort was, and how long I could sustain it...we went into a velodrome to look at my position on the bike and determine where I was losing power" (Armstrong, 2001:66).*

In the same way, the literature surrounding the concept of hegemonic masculinity and the ways in which this is embodied by athletes, also points out the significance of contradictions and the exploitative nature of sport. For example, it has been suggested by Fogel (2011) that the sporting male may actually be better understood as having a type of subordinated masculinity due to the damage that sport causes to the body through embodying power. Indeed:

*"...I've just had a back op[eration] and you think well, what's more important you know, playing another year or two at football and not being able to walk for the next 60 years or, enjoy the rest of your life..." (Interviewee, 28:14 min, Appendix E).*

Here, the interviewee explores the damage that sport has already inflicted on his body and questions to what extent it is worthwhile.

However, Tomlinson (1998) suggests that resistance to power is a form of power itself and that if actors have a degree of capacity to shape outcome, they have the ability to or are exercising some degree of power. Similarly, Rail and Harvey (1995) draw attention to this aspect of Foucault's work and emphasise that much is to be gained from considering the positive aspects of the Foucauldian perspective. Therefore, perhaps Foucault's theorising may not be considered pessimistic as it allows for the presence of power in resistance.

Secondly, as already outlined, Connell argues that in order to maintain hegemony in sport, men must make certain sacrifices:

*"...Steve, the exemplar of masculine toughness finds his own exemplary status prevents him from doing exactly what his peer group defines as thoroughly masculine behaviour: going wild, showing off, drunk driving, getting into fights, defending his own prestige..."*  
(Connell, 1990:86).

Within this research too, similar sentiments about sacrifices were made:

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*“...I wouldn’t go out shopping or, playing golf or doing anything from, probably, Wednesday, Thursday onwards before a game because I’d think it’s taking energy out my legs...you just get told don’t you know don’t be spotted out shopping literally don’t even walk through town”*  
*(Interviewee, 10:50 min, Appendix E).*

An interesting finding from this research was that it was revealed in the professional sportsmen’s narratives that such sacrifices simply did not matter:

*“...the sacrifices you have to make, everything else far outweighs them...you know you're going in for that career...it's never particularly bothered me though you know missing out, going out a lot.”* *(Interviewee, 11: 45 min, Appendix E).*

Thus, it appears that the power that professional sportsmen embody and their enjoyment in their sport are far too great to consider any sacrifices that have to be made in order to maintain these experiences. This could be because “...the beautiful game essentially becomes inculcated into the very bodily capital of its participants so that it comes to possess them” (McGillivray et al., 2005:103). These authors argue that despite the bleak labour market prospects in football, players simply cannot envision a life outside of it so they come to accept the negative consequences attached to it. Indeed, David Beckham in his autobiography comments:

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*“...the club had taken a hold over me. That fascination remains today...” (Beckham, 1998:11).*

Such sentiments share similarities with the qualities of what Goffman (1957; 1991) calls a ‘total institution’ (see literature review for a reminder). Although this is not a Foucauldian concept, perhaps this idea could be used to make links to his ideas of power: perhaps the ‘total institution’ of sport serves to infatuate its members and subtly subject them to power without their realisation, making any sacrifices insignificant. Certainly, power for Foucault was subtle and discreet (Eskes et al., 1998).

Thirdly, using evidence from the research it will be suggested that rather than power relations (in sporting contexts) being diffused in that they exist through the use of discourses as Foucault (1990) maintained, they may actually be quite distinct and hierarchical, as Gramsci (1971) argued. However, infatuation with the sport and techniques of normalisation employed by the discourses that the ‘experts’ engage, mean that the sportsman interprets such power relations as neutral. Techniques of normalisation refer to behaviours which would ordinarily be considered extreme but are accepted in the context of sport (Johns, 2004).

It is here that we can begin to see the ways in which a synthesised perspective joining Gramsci and Foucault may be useful for understanding

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sporting masculinities and power within sporting contexts. The following will attempt to illustrate this argument.

David Beckham recalls an interaction he shared with his manager, Alex Ferguson:

*“...but the manager suddenly came in, stood a couple of inches from my face and gave me the blast to end all blasts. I was standing there, quivering, hardly knowing where to look” (Beckham, 1998:30).*

Yet, later on in this autobiography, Beckham speaks very highly of Alex Ferguson and commented that such ‘blasts’ were necessary:

*“We learned all of our good habits from him. There were times when he would give you the most fearsome rollickings, but it was all done because he wanted us to be the best that we could be.” (Beckham, 1998:71)*


Therefore, it could be suggested that in fact, power relations in sporting contexts are hierarchical in nature, however, the discourses surrounding sport that are focused on shaping players into the best they can be, ultimately result in the professional sportsman interpreting such power as neutral.

This analysis, although beginning with a Gramscian perspective of hierarchical power, ends with a Foucauldian one in that it suggests that

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techniques of normalisation mean that power ultimately is interpreted as neutral. This is discussed by Johns and Johns (2000) who argue that a cursory glance at sport indicates that athletes embody power. However, a critical interrogation of the discourses within sporting contexts reveal that in fact, athletes are shaped into passive participants by discursive practices.

The following chapter will bring the main conclusions (discussed above) of this research together and reflect on its strengths and possible downfalls.



## 5. Conclusions

The methods employed here have facilitated this research to observe examples of the theories and literature surrounding sporting masculinities, such as the ways in which the nature of sport is linked to the qualities of hegemonic masculinity. Not only this, but they have made possible the critical interrogation of such concepts as hegemonic masculinity and encouraged a search for alternative explanations of sporting masculinities and power relations using the work of Foucault. This critical interrogation involved an evaluation of the key concepts related to both perspectives and found a number of important conclusions.

First, it was found that the findings of the research could be successfully explained using both the concept of hegemonic masculinity and the theorising of Foucault. This signalled the potential compatibility of the two perspectives, but also illuminated the problems associated with the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Indeed, not all men can achieve this ideal and even those who are said to embody it appear to be “scarcely up to the task...” (Donaldson, 1993:647).

Secondly, the discussion saw that the power effects of disciplining discourses that shape professional sportsmen can be both ‘soul destroying’ (for the interviewee whose injuries had negatively impacted on his career) and ‘life saving’ (for Lance Armstrong who used techniques to be successful at sport




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to help his body fight cancer). This finding therefore spoke in Foucault's tone as it gave an example of the repressive and productive effects of power. Indeed it was this paradox within sport which initially inspired this research: sport can be both rewarding and manipulative (Hargreaves, 1982).

Thirdly the findings opened up a way of thinking about resistance to powerful discourses in that they were used to suggest that the contradictions to sporting masculinities may actually enable the professional sportsman to see the true manipulations of sport more clearly, enabling resistance to disciplining discourses that Foucault discussed. This was found in that the injuries for the interviewee and experiencing cancer for Lance Armstrong resulted in their tone of indifference towards sport and lack of enjoyment in racing respectively. Thus, when discussing the similarities between the Gramscian and Foucauldian analyses of power, it was suggested that they share a pessimistic undertone in that the concept of hegemony points to hierarchical power, while the Foucauldian perspective points to the creation of docile bodies. Yet clearly this research has confirmed that resistance to power is possible, raising doubts about the pessimistic nature of Foucault's theorising.

Finally, the fact that the personal sacrifices of involvement in sport were insignificant to the professional sportsman in this research enabled it to be suggested that perhaps, while power relations are clearly hierarchical in sporting contexts, such power may be perceived by the professional sportsman as neutral, enabling their consistent conformity to its values. It is



this final point that confirmed that the two 'opposing' perspectives considered in this research may be amalgamated to allow for different interpretations of sporting masculinities and power relations within sporting contexts.



## 6. Reflections

On reflection, the research findings in theory are not able to be generalised to all sportsmen because of the small sample and qualitative nature of the research. This links to time and economic constraints dictating such methods and indeed the difficulty in gaining access to professional sportsmen. Thus, it was necessary to turn to their autobiographies as a way of expanding the research population. However, as one problem is overcome, another is created: through their autobiographies, it is likely that the sportsmen in this research were engaging in a particular construction of their identity. This casts doubt on the validity of these texts and the confidence we can have in them in informing us about the subjectivities of successful sportsmen.

Nevertheless, it may be fair to argue that although the sample small and findings questionable, what has been discovered is a new way of viewing sporting masculinities and power relations through synthesising 'opposing frameworks'. Therefore, this research has aimed to invite future engagement and synthesis of different theoretical positions that on the surface may seem incompatible. It is suggested that such an analysis could serve to bring more dynamic and illuminating conclusions to the forefront.

As discussed in chapter two, the ideal research strategy would have been longitudinal in nature which was confirmed in a number of the research findings. For example, within the interview, the professional footballer

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acknowledged that although a footballer's career may be exhilarating at the beginning:

*"...it gets to an age where people just play for money..." (Interviewee, 28:49 min, Appendix E).*

Therefore, it is possible that had the interview taken place ten years earlier or over a longer period, different subjectivities and experiences of sport and power may have been reported inducing entirely different conclusions.

In terms of the interview, the ways in which interviewer skills are fundamental for affecting the success of the interview came to the forefront. For example, unexpectedly, the interviewee seemed quite nervous at the beginning of the interview, thus it seemed important to deflect some attention from him by making (unnecessary) notes on a note pad which seemed to make him feel more comfortable. It was considered very important that the interviewee felt at ease so that his responses were communicated as intended. This issue was noted by Miller and Brewer (2003) who highlight the importance of the interviewer being reflective in assessing the interaction during the interview in terms of factors which may influence responses. While this unforeseen problem was accounted for, others could have been prepared for and avoided.

Reflecting on the interview, a moment of surprise was noted on behalf of the interviewer when the interviewee was expressing how his injuries affected him (see Appendix E, 27.57 min). This gasp may have created tension as it

indicated the lack of initial understanding the interviewer had of his subjective experiences of injuries. This could have been overcome by being familiar with the emotional consequences of injuries for professional sportsmen prior to the interview so that his responses would not have been surprising. Another technique that could have been improved upon was letting the interviewee speak rather than interrupting, possibly affecting the depth of the responses obtained (see Appendix E :05:04 min).

Next, one of the findings from the interview involved making conclusions from the *interpreted* tone of indifference with which the interviewee spoke. The implication of this is that such a tone is open to multiple interpretations; therefore the conclusion made from this may be guilty of being subjective. As a result, Kvale (1996) recommends using several interpreters to provide the reader with more material for evaluating the influence of the researcher's perspective on the analysis. However, as Heritage (1984) notes, the use of audio recording could counteract such problems as it enables interpretations to be scrutinised by other researchers. Therefore as the interview was tape recorded this means that the interpretations made, may be checked by others for validity. Thus, future research in this area would ideally be longitudinal in nature and would involve more than one researcher to enable multiple interpretations of data.

Finally, this research has emphasised the importance of closer scrutiny of perspectives and while acknowledging their fundamental differences, looking for ways they connect. In doing this we are doing what Foucault advised, to

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think differently from already established knowledge, and to perceive differently in order to truly reflect (Foucault, 1992).

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## Appendix A: Interview Schedule

This was used as a guide to enable the interview to progress smoothly.

<u>Topic</u>	<u>What I am trying ask</u>	<u>What I might say</u>
<u>Background</u>	Sporting Career from childhood to date.	<p>“Can you tell me about your footballing career from when you <i>started</i> to become interested, right up to now?”</p> <p>“Of the <i>clubs</i> you have played for, which has stood out or had the strongest influence on you?”</p> <p>“Who or what would you say has had the greatest <i>influence</i> on your career growing up or throughout your career?”</p>
<u>Academic Background</u>	Whether Sport ever affected academic achievements	<p>“So, this interest in sport/football, did you choose to focus on this or were you still quite interested in <i>school</i>?”</p> <p>”Did you go to 6<sup>th</sup> form/college/University?”</p>
<u>Training</u>	Disciplining practices	<p>“What kind of <i>training</i> practices do you do say, on a weekly basis/leading up to a match?</p> <p>“Who else might you <i>practise</i> football with other than team mates?”</p> <p>“Is there a sort of, no pain no gain <i>attitude</i> in training? As in, playing through the pain of injuries etc...?”</p>
<u>Individual coaching</u>	Technologies of the self	“Do you have any ways of <i>tracking</i> progress/monitoring



		your dietary intake/training regime”
<u>Coaches</u>	Agents of Normalization?	“How many <i>coaches</i> are involved in your training?”  “What is your <i>relationship</i> like with them?”  “What kind of <i>knowledge</i> are you able to gain from them?”  “Who do you turn to for <i>advice</i> and what kind of advice might you be seeking?”
<u>Dietry intake</u>	Disciplining practices	“So, at a time like this (Christmas), do you find your training <i>prevents</i> you from eating/drinking certain things?”  “Do you have a dietician or do you <i>regulate</i> your own diet?”  “Is this <i>difficult</i> ?”
<u>Coaches/Managers</u>	Conformity/resistance	“Do you and your team mates find that you <i>listen</i> to what coaches/managers advise you or is it sometimes important that you stick to your guns?”  “When you ‘get in the zone’, is this with the help of coaches or just yourself?”  “People often comment on Football managers in terms of their desire for success, their hold over



		the players, their pep talks and the players respect for them, how would you describe the <i>managers</i> you have experienced?"
<b><u>Feelings</u></b>	Discomfort that discipline can create	"How do you feel about your rigorous training regime? Does it ever get <i>tiresome</i> ?"  "Do you <i>enjoy</i> your training"
<b><u>The game</u></b>	Focus on winning/ focus on individual rather than the disciplining practices	"I suppose playing games all over and playing for different clubs means a lot of <i>travelling</i> , do you enjoy this?"  "Do you get <i>nervous</i> before matches/ any of your team mates get nervous?"  "How do you cope with this?"  "Before a match, what are you thinking/ focused on?"  "How do you feel when you <i>score</i> a goal?"  "How do you and your team feel when you have <i>lost</i> a match?"
<b><u>Culture</u></b>	Contradictions in Masculinity	"Can football ever come in between you going out with your <i>mates</i> "  "When you <i>socialise</i> , are your friends mainly ones you have made through football?"
<b><u>Alternative Careers</u></b>	Caught up in the game?	"Many footballers talk about their <i>dreams</i> and aspirations being fulfilled"

		<p>once they have made it as a footballer, do you feel that way?”</p> <p>“If say, football wasn't an option for you (for example if you were injured and couldn't play), <i>what else</i> do you think you would like to do in life?”</p>
<u>Injuries</u>	Contradictions Masculinity	<p>in</p> <p>“What kind of <i>injuries</i> have been a set back for you?”</p> <p>“How has this <i>affected</i> your training/football?”</p> <p>“How has it made you <i>feel?</i>” (Frustrated/sad?)</p>
<u>Natural abilities</u>	'Natural' Gender order	<p>“How much training would you say a young boy, for example, would need to be doing a week in order to be successful at football or is it more about <i>natural</i> talent?”</p>
<u>Culture</u>	Homo social culture (Connell)	<p>“David Beckham has said that <i>aggression</i> plays a part in being a successful player, what do you think?”</p> <p>“What kind of relationship do you have with your team mates? Do you all go out <i>socialising</i> together?”</p> <p>“When you go out do you get a lot of <i>attention</i> like the stereotypical footballer?”</p> <p>“Do you feel you have a <i>reputation</i> to uphold as a footballer when you are out in the <i>public</i>”</p>

		eye?"
<b><u>Idols</u></b>	Hegemonic masculinity	<p>"Lots of boys <i>look up</i> to the professional sporting male, why do you think that is?"</p> <p>"Who did you <i>admire</i> as a child?"</p> <p>"Do they represent the <i>ideal male</i>?"</p>
<b><u>Personal Life</u></b>	Contradictions	<p>David Beckham has said in his autobiography that sometimes he feels like <i>his life isn't his own</i> because football dictates everything; have you ever felt that way?</p> <p>"Do you feel you have ever had to make any <i>personal sacrifices</i> for the good of your football career?"</p> <p>"Is your <i>fiancé</i>' interested in football?"</p> <p>"What would you say are the most <i>difficult</i> aspects of being a footballer?"</p>
<b><u>Closing question</u></b>		<p>As a way of ending then, if you had to sum up your career so far in terms of reaching your goals and how football has shaped you as a person, what would you say and what is your next step in your career?</p>

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## **Appendix B: Consent form**

My name is ██████████ and the purpose of this consent form is to tell you of your rights as a participant in this study and of the procedures involve in the collection and keeping of data about yourself. This research is being undertaken as part of my Sociology degree at the University of Leeds. I would be very grateful of your participation in this research.

The research aims to investigate contradictions in sport and the idea that professional sportsmen have to discipline themselves in various ways that most men do not. For example, not drinking too much, training regimes and regulation of diets.

It is your right to not answer any questions that you are asked and you may ask me any questions you may have at any point. You are free to end your participation in the interview at any time without giving a reason and without any consequences. Your name and identity will be changed so no one will be able to recognize you in the study and you are guaranteed confidentiality in any discussions and publications in agreement with the Data Protection Act (1998).

No information will be passed onto anyone connected with you; the only information I would have to disclose to the appropriate persons would be related to any criminal activities or unlawful behaviour by or towards yourself. The interview will be recorded using an audio tape recorder and all data will be kept in a safe place. You have the right to access the data about yourself and to ask for it to be returned to you at any time.

This consent form will be signed by myself, confirming your willingness to be a participant in this study, following your confirmation that you have read this consent form in full and have asked any questions you may have.

If you want to confirm that I am a research student at the University of Leeds, Department of Sociology and Social Policy, please contact ██████████  
Senior Lecturer in Social Policy and Sociology ██████████  
██████████

Signed:

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Print name:

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Date and time of Interview:

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## **Appendix C: Interview Transcribed**

The text in [brackets] indicates the topic of conversation; text in **bold** indicates the interviewers questions, responses and reactions.

### **[Education provided at Derby County- B-tec in sports science]**

**1:19-** So you've got something to fall back on

### **[Moved to Another club in England]**

**1:57-** It wasn't ideal because I'd just bought a house, in [hometown]...

### **[Just terminated contract at current football club]**

**2:59-** ...We weren't really getting along, erm, with the manager and stuff...

### **[Bosman ruling- speaking of Robin van Persie]**

**4:14-** Arsenal will have to either cash in and sell him...and make, say, half of what he's worth...

**4:30-** So really, with the Bosman ruling, the players hold quite a lot of the power.

### **But usually, would you say that they didn't?**

**4:38-** It depends, if you're good and you're playing well and you're fit etc, then the player definitely holds all the cards really.

### **And if not?**

**4:47-** But if not, it can be, it's a different world in the lower leagues and stuff like that...you just get treated really, as pieces of meat to be honest, you're good for the clubs while you're playing well etc, but if you're not doing it or you've been unlucky with injuries and stuff then you know, they're quite happy to...

### **[interrupted]**

### **So not in the lower leagues would you say that you weren't treated like that, you've got more power?**

**5:11-** I think if you're playing well and you're being successful then...and if you're fit, you're not injured, because it's a big thing really they don't want any players that have got a lot of injuries, then erm... [drifts on]

### **[Speaking of older brothers]**

8:52- I was really...living the dream really as far as they were concerned...

**Is it literally all you have ever wanted to do or have you ever thought there was anything else that you would do?**

9:05- Erm, sort of when I was a younger teenager I wasn't that fussed...[hesitates]...it wasn't sort of life or death if I made it, but as it turned out its been a bit of a bonus that I did. Erm but a lot of lads, a lot of footballers just, that's the only thing, they could do, or that's the only thing they know. But ...it doesn't particularly faze me to think what am I going to do now?

**So now, if you were not to play football anymore would it upset you or?**

9: 37- Not particularly. No. I mean er it's the realities it might happen. You know because of the amount of injuries and operations iv had and stuff. Erm, it could, it could happen than I don't play. That's the...grim reality really.

**[Training regimes]**

10:30- Some clubs have you come in for a warm down on the Sunday morning basically to stop people going out on the piss on a Saturday night.

10: 46- Say if you take it from a Saturday to a Saturday week...so there's no mid week games, I wouldn't go out shopping or, playing golf or doing anything from, probably, Wednesday, Thursday onwards before a game because id think it's taking energy out my legs, it's probably just erm all, psychological but...you just get told don't you know don't be spotted out shopping literally don't even walk through town.

**Who tells you to do that?**

11: 12- Just the managers and the coaches and stuff

11:28- ...In your contract you're not allowed on licensed premises 48 hours before a game

**Really?**

11: 33- Yeah

**So does that bother you at all, did it bother you, does it bother other players?**

11:42- ...Not really...the sacrifices you have to make, everything else far outweighs them...you know you're going in for that career...it's never particularly bothered me though you know missing out, going out a lot.



**Do you like, practise football outside of the training?**

**12: 47-** No.

**13: 17-** Because football's amazing when you're a kid but when you play every day, you know, it just gets, quite monotonous really

**So are you saying that every day you might not exactly enjoy you're training?**

**13: 28-** Oh no you don't. I don't. But some players might. But I love the matches when there's thousands of people watching, that's why you train really. Erm, but I think if you speak to a lot of thirty, thirty one year old footballers you'd probably get 75% would say they'd rather not train, just play.

**Do any of your team mates say 'ah yeah I love training'?**

**13:53-** You get the odd ones that do. Yeah. Some people just sort of live and breathe it... and fair play they're lucky I guess...for me it's never been like that. Ever.

**Would you say from the people you have come in contact with, more are like you or more are like they live and breathe the game?**

**14: 13-** Oh more are like me

**Really?**

**14: 15-** Yeah

**Gosh that's surprising**

**14: 18-** I think early on its different, but after then sort of 15 years...

**Anything would get boring**

**14:31-** I wouldn't say, probably boring's the wrong word, but slightly er, monstrosus really, erm, the games though, make it all worthwhile you see. So when you're get a lot of injuries but you're training everyday anyway but you're not playing, you don't get you're reward you see at the end of the week, that's when it becomes difficult.

**[Managers and coaches]**

**16:38-** They just watch you during the week and if you're playing well and performing well in training then erm, you're more likely to get picked.

**17:01-** ...there's definitely a massive element of pressure in football, definitely.

So what would you say the relationships like between like the footballers and the managers and the coaches. Are the coaches like the people who know everything and the footballers just listen or is it a negotiation?

17: 15- Again it varies...it's funny you should ask me that because I've just er, [hesitates] yeah, the manager at [football club] and stuff we don't particularly get on... Sometimes the coaches will be brilliant and welcoming and erm very approachable and just, sort of one of the lads really. You have a little bit more respect...

### **[Managers]**

18: 10- But with managers, it's slightly different; you don't really negotiate as you put it at all...what they say goes really.

### **Do you have to regulate what you eat and drink?**

18: 36- Yeah...they make you aware of it when you're sort of 16 17 what you should and should be eating...

### **Does that bother you or do you quite like eating healthily?**

18: 50- No it doesn't bother me. I do it anyway. It doesn't bother me at all really.

### **And what about drinking, especially at like Christmas...**

18:58- You just don't...or you just pick your nights...

19: 59- ...they don't go without but they can't just go out on a Thursday on Friday down the local pub like normal lads type thing.

### **So you'd say you're not particularly bothered about your freedom being restricted?**

20:09- No not at all.

### **[Talking about influential managers and coaches]**

20.34- ...I think when you're young you just er, you're easily moulded aren't you, by people...anyone influences you in a sort of, place of power type thing...especially when you're young it massively impacts on you...

### **So would you consider yourself quite lucky to be where you are?**

22: 37- Oh. Ridiculously lucky yeah. Very very lucky indeed.

### **[Talking about the game]**

23: 33- It's built into you to be a winner...you don't like losing at anything, and that's something you have to be mindful of when you're sitting playing, you know, cards at home, because you just want to win at everything you play at...

**Do you think that you know 'built in you to be a winner', do you think that's, you learn that from your football experience or do you think that's, being a man?**

24:01- Erm I think it's a bit of both you definitely...you're competitive anyway, you're nature. You have to be I think to be...a...professional sportsman, you have to have that competitive edge...it's all about winning at the end of the day...that's what it comes down to, people lose their jobs, managers get sacked every day of the week for losing...yeah it's just about winning games.

**So you know when you're socialising and you do go out with your friends, are they mainly friends you've made through football or are they, you know, school friends or family?**

25: 18- Both really...a lot of the time football because sort of...you're all in the same boat really you all have the same available nights to go out...but at the same time I've kept in touch with a lot of the lads from school...still my best mates now...

**A lot of footballers talk about 'their dreams have been fulfilled' when they become a footballer, is that how you feel?**

26: 02- Erm, I don't know, probably. Again though it was weird when I started playing football it wasn't the be all and end all, probably that helped me in a way...

**[Asking why some of the lads in his year didn't make it as footballers?]**

26: 58- I don't know...I think its luck of the draw as well you get one guy or whatever who likes you and you and he can sort of, it can happen that way, you're youth team coach or whatever is the person who makes or breaks you so if he doesn't like you then you're screwed really.

**How does it feel when you're in a contract and you've got an injury?**

27: 36- ...I've had loads last few years it's just been a nightmare. It's basically ruined my career in England. So frustrating doesn't quite cover it, but frustrating is the right word...over time when its one after another...it's just er, soul destroying id say...

**[gasp] God**

27: 59- ...Soul destroying yeah you just give up...another operation, and in the end you think, actually I want to be able to pick my kids up when I'm 35, you

know I've just had a back op[eration] and you think well, what's more important you know, playing another year or two at football and not being able to walk for the next 60 years or, enjoy the rest of your life...

**Do you think a lot of footballers would think that way?**

**28: 29-** Erm [hesitates], no. I think a lot of footballers just, play at all costs...injections and stuff...don't get me wrong iv had my fair share of injections and played through things that you probably shouldn't...it gets to an age where people just play for money...it's your job at the end of the day...retirement age is thirty five...it's not a long career.

**[Talking about what he might do if he doesn't continue playing]**

**30:01-** Yeah I think you need to have a plan as well, I mean I haven't really got one. I've thought about it loads but I don't know.

**You don't know what you'd do?**

**30: 07-** No. Still don't know...I think it happens organically...I think you just fall into something...I'm a big believer in that sort of thing, keep all your doors open type thing.

**[Talking about sponsorships in football and influence on behaviour]**

**30:49-** You're expected to conform to certain rules and regulations...off the pitch you...have to lead by example in the community...I think if you're just a normal lad you don't have any real problems, there...

**I've read in David Beckham's autobiography that he said sometimes he feels like his 'life isn't his own' because football just dictates everything...do you feel that way?**

**32: 30-** I think...obviously I'd like to say to start with me and David Beckham are *worlds* apart in terms of that sort of thing so it's different and I can understand it'd be all consuming for him...sometimes I guess it can be a bit annoying if er you just want to go out...and grab some food or you want to go to the garden centre or you want to go shopping or you want to go on a night out, you just, you just want to blend in if you know what you mean...but I can understand it would be a nightmare if you were sort of a well known professional...then again, he seeks it so you can't really complain...

**Is your Fiancée interested in football?**

**33: 48-** Yeah she is yeah she likes it, she gets excited and stuff...[drifts on]

**34: 15-** ...but yeah she loves it...not quite loves [laughs]...but she hasn't got, I say she hasn't got a lot of choice, that's a bit of a macho thing to say but I always have it on and it would be a bit of a problem I think if ...she absolutely hated football because its...a big part of my life.



## **Appendix D- Further findings**

See below for further evidence to support the findings of this research. Quotes from the autobiographical research have been placed under the finding to which they are relevant. Relevant parts have also been extracted from the interview; for the full interview see Appendix E and for the interview transcription see Appendix C.

### **Brief background of sportsmen's career type:**

- 1) Interviewee- professional footballer
- 2) Bobby Charlton- professional footballer
- 3) David Beckham- professional footballer
- 4) Lance Armstrong- professional road racing cyclist
- 5) Steve Courson- American footballer.
- 6) Tim Green- American footballer.

## 1) The 'Natural' gender order

Interviewer: Is your Fiancée interested in football?

Interviewee: Yeah she is yeah she likes it, she gets excited and stuff...[drifts on] (33: 48 min).

Interviewee:...but yeah she loves it...not quite loves [laughs]...but she hasn't got, I say she hasn't got a lot of choice, that's a bit of a macho thing to say but I always have it on and it would be a bit of a problem I think if ...she absolutely hated football because its...a big part of my life (34: 15 min).

Bobby Charlton,(2009)

"...she likes the game enough to talk about it knowledgeably, though she doesn't get dogmatic or opinionated about it" (pp 169).

## 2) Nature of Sport linked to 'Hegemonic masculinity'

Interviewer: So would you consider yourself quite lucky to be where you are?

Interviewee: Oh. Ridiculously lucky yeah. Very very lucky indeed (22:37 min).

Interviewer: Do you think that you know 'built in you to be a winner', do you think that's, you learn that from your football experience or do you think that's, being a man?

Interviewee- Erm I think it's a bit of both you definitely...you're competitive anyway, you're nature. You have to be I think to be...a...professional sportsman, you have to have that competitive edge...it's all about winning at the end of the day...that's what it comes down to, people lose their jobs, managers get sacked every day of the week for losing...yeah it's just about winning games (24:01 min)

Bobby Charlton (2009)

"Honestly, I didn't contemplate defeat for even a single moment" (pp 139).

Beckham (1998)

"You are treated as something special, even when you're playing for the youth team or the reserves" (pp: 40).

"I think I've always had a bit of aggression in my make-up, you need it to succeed" (pp: 51)

Armstrong (2001)

"If there is a defining characteristic of a man as opposed to a boy, maybe it's patience. In 1995, I finally gained an understanding of the demanding nature of the Tour and all its extraordinary tests and dangers" (pp: 67).

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Courson and Schreiber, (1991)

“...that’s all the coaches were concerned about: could I do the job? Was I man enough to get it done?” (pp: 6).

“They’re constantly yelling at the players to ‘hit harder’ or ‘be more aggressive” (pp: 49).

Green (1996)

“...players admire peers who take a shot of xylocaine before a game. It is a certain sign of toughness and lets everyone know that the player can be counted on to ‘do whatever it takes” (pp: 125).

“Football players are spoiled with attention and special treatment...” (pp: 191).

### **3) Hierarchical nature of power**

Interviewee: It depends, if you’re good and you’re playing well and you’re fit etc, then the player definitely holds all the cards really (04: 38 min).

Interviewer: And if not?

Interviewee: But if not, it can be, it’s a different world in the lower leagues and stuff like that...you just get treated really, as pieces of meat to be honest, you’re good for the clubs while you’re playing well etc, but if you’re not doing it or you’ve been unlucky with injuries and stuff then you know, they’re quite happy to...(04: 47 min).



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[Interrupted] Interviewer: So not in the lower leagues would you say that you weren't treated like that, you've got more power?

Interviewee: I think if you're playing well and you're being successful then...and if you're fit, you're not injured, because it's a big thing really they don't want any players that have got a lot of injuries, then erm... [drifts on] (05: 11 min).

Interviewee: But with managers, it's slightly different; you don't really negotiate as you put it at all...what they say goes really (18: 10 min).

Interviewee- ...you're youth team coach or whatever is the person who makes or breaks you so if he doesn't like you then you're screwed really (27: 12 min).

Beckham (1998)

“When someone like him takes the time to take you to one side, you have to listen” (Speaking of Glen Hoddle, pp: 37).

“Like all of us in the squad, it was a matter of buckling down, working hard, doing what you were told and not listening to anyone but the people that mattered, the coaching staff and your family” (pp: 26).

“I was learning at his shoulder even then. Wide eyed and innocent maybe, but I was taking it all in.” (Speaking of Alex Ferguson, pp: 20).

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“...but the manager suddenly came in, stood a couple of inches from my face and gave me the blast to end all blasts. I was standing there, quivering, hardly knowing where to look” (pp: 30)

“In January, I was invited, though Manchester United, to go to Milan to see a Versace clothes show, and I said I wanted to go. Even though it was a day off, I checked with the manager that it wasn’t going to affect any of my responsibilities for the club. If it had, I wouldn’t have gone, simple as that. There’s no way I would let anything get in the way of my professional life” (pp: 151-153)

Armstrong (2001)

“...since I was a student, not in the classroom, of course, but on the bike.” (pp: 46)

Courson and Schreiber (1991)

“...my mission, is a compulsion to tell the truth about the...venality in organized sports; about the multitude of abuses in college and pro sports; and about what I perceive to be a conspiracy of silence by all these powers...in order to maintain the status quo (and protect their collective rears)” (pp: 5).

“...if the coaches wanted me to run sprints, I sprinted. If they wanted me to run drills, I drilled. And if they wanted me to play defensive tackle, I’d tackle anyone they put in front of me” (pp: 5).

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“Chuck Noll may have treated all of us like dogs, but some of the kennels were a little classier than others. The Steelers, like most NFL teams, did have different sets of rules for different castes of players. But I always felt that most of us on the lower rung rarely let our resentment get out of hand”. (pp: 35).

“I have never heard one word- encouraging or otherwise- from Chuck Noll since I left the Steelers...It was as if I ceased to exist once I departed from the Steelers. This from a man who preached time and again about team loyalty” (pp: 95).

“We should be able to see that the coach’s need for us is temporary. Let’s face it: All they really want to know is ‘what can you do for me *now?*” (pp 95).

“I had gone to war for this man, and he was prepared to discard me like an old uniform. I looked at him and saw nothing. No feeling, no concern, no discernible emotion at all. I knew that my days as a Steeler were numbered” (pp: 102).

“I walked into Chuck’s office...He wasted no time with amenities...He shook my hand and showed me the door” (pp: 103).

“But back then nothing could have prepared me for the mini firestorm of controversy that engulfed the professional football world and my little place in it” (pp: 111).

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“I learned how the system derived its power- from young, naïve men who wholeheartedly believed in it, and who would do anything their leaders told them to in order to triumph” (pp: 11).

Green (1996)

“There are certain guys, superstars like Emmitt Smith...who can afford to sit on the sideline because of pain. Most guys aren't in that situation though.” (pp: 84).

“If you're winning, and you're making big plays, you can ride the energy of that crowd like a wave” (pp: 3).

“You stop and think about how no one has called you by your name so far today, but instead by the number that matches the one on...your official NFL shirt...You don't just feel like a number, you've become one” (pp: 7).

“Even big stars don't just 'retire'. They're called sometime during the off-season upstairs to the team offices where it is explained to them that they have outlived their usefulness or become too much of a financial burden to justify any longer.” (pp: 191).

#### 4) Normalization of hierarchical power

Interviewer: So does that bother you at all, did it bother you, does it bother other players?

Interviewee:...Not really...the sacrifices you have to make, everything else far outweighs them...you know you're going in for that career...it's never particularly bothered me though you know missing out, going out a lot (11: 42 min).

Beckham (1998)

"We learned all of our good habits from him. There were times when he would give you the most fearsome rollickings, but it was all done because he wanted us to be the best that we could be" (pp: 71).

"I can honestly say that Alex Ferguson has never done anything to me unless it's in my best interest, it just takes a player a little time to understand and appreciate things" (pp: 33).

Courson and Schreiber (1991)

"We acknowledged and even accepted that there was a class system" (pp: 35).

## 5) Gaze of experts over docile bodies

[Speaking of the managers and coaches]

Interviewee: They just watch you during the week and if you're playing well and performing well in training then erm, you're more likely to get picked (16:38 min).

Armstrong (2001)

"I was constantly sitting on a stationary bike with electrodes all over my body looking for different positions on the bike that might gain mere seconds, or a piece of equipment that might be a little bit more aerodynamic" (pp: 65).

"I...[was] plastered with electrodes while doctors jabbed me with pins for blood tests" (pp: 65).

"We wanted to determine what my maximum effort was, and how long I could sustain it...we went into a velodrome to look at my position on the bike and determine where I was losing power" (pp:66).

Courson and Schreiber (1991)

"It's a major no-no for any player to think too much on his own. They prefer the player to be a violent monster on the field, but a docile dog...off it" (pp: 102).

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“As soon as I got there, they hooked me up to an electrocardiogram machine, this time I was laid flat on a table while the nurse monitored the printout” (pp: 109).

Green (1996)

“...men in their forties and fifties sit stuffed into high school desk-chairs jolting furiously as the lab-coated technicians bark out the exact heights and weights of their suspects...finally; you step up onto a raised platform for all to see. The glaring men handling you like a quartered slab on a hook are pencil-necks in lab coats...after they announce your specific measurements, you are told to step down off the meat scale and proceed to the next station” (pp: 5-6).

“After you’ve jumped and twisted and hurried and scurried like a rat in a cheese maze, it’s time for...your physical examination. You are mercifully loaded up with the other players...and transported to a local hospital that has the necessary gizmos to...scrutinize what you once thought was your own body” (pp: 6-7).

**6) Sacrifices to maintain Hegemony/Power effects of discourse**

[Speaking of move to another club]

Interviewee: It wasn’t ideal because I’d just bought a house, in [hometown] (01: 57 min).

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Interviewee: Some clubs have you come in for a warm down on the Sunday morning basically to stop people going out on the piss on a Saturday night (10: 30 min).

Interviewee: Say if you take it from a Saturday to a Saturday week...so there's no mid week games, I wouldn't go out shopping or, playing golf or doing anything from, probably, Wednesday, Thursday onwards before a game because id think it's taking energy out my legs, it's probably just erm all, psychological but...you just get told don't you know don't be spotted out shopping literally don't even walk through town (10: 46 min).

Interviewer: Who tells you to do that?

Interviewee: Just the managers and the coaches and stuff (11: 12 min).

Interviewee: ...In your contract you're not allowed on licensed premises 48 hours before a game (11: 28 min).

Interviewer: Do you have to regulate what you eat and drink?

Interviewee: Yeah...they make you aware of it when you're sort of sixteen, seventeen, what you should and should be eating...(18: 36 min).

Interviewer: And what about drinking, especially at like Christmas...

Interviewee: You just don't...or you just pick your nights...(18:58 min).

Interviewee: ...they don't go without but they can't just go out on a Thursday on Friday down the local pub like normal lads type thing (19:59 min).



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[Speaking about Injuries]

Interviewee: ...I've had loads last few years it's just been a nightmare. It's basically ruined my career in England. So frustrating doesn't quite cover it, but frustrating is the right word...over time when its one after another...it's just er, soul destroying id say...(27:36 min)

Interviewer: [gasp] God

Interviewee:...Soul destroying yeah you just give up...another operation, and in the end you think, actually I want to be able to pick my kids up when I'm 35, you know I've just had a back op[eration] and you think well, what's more important you know, playing another year or two at football and not being able to walk for the next 60 years or, enjoy the rest of your life...(27: 59 min).

Interviewer: Do you think a lot of footballers would think that way?

Interviewee: Erm [hesitates], no. I think a lot of footballers just, play at all costs...injections and stuff...don't get me wrong iv had my fair share of injections and played through things that you probably shouldn't...it gets to an age where people just play for money...it's your job at the end of the day...retirement age is thirty five...it's not a long career (28: 29 min).

[Talking about sponsorships in football and influence on behaviour]

Interviewee: You're expected to conform to certain rules and regulations...off the pitch you...have to lead by example in the community...I think if you're just a normal lad you don't have any real problems, there...(30: 49 min).

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Beckham (1998)

“I wanted to be a professional footballer for United...It didn't matter to me what the personal sacrifice was” (pp: 39).

“I love being a professional footballer. From the moment I first kicked a ball I never wanted to be anything else. Now there are times when my life isn't my own, and that scares me a bit...” (pp: 146).

“A night in front of the television on your own might not be everyone's idea of a good time, but that's one of the down sides of being who I am with the profile I have. I can't go out too much, because there are people out there who are just waiting to trap someone like me” (pp: 47).

Armstrong (2001)

“We stayed on in a beach house for a few days, but it wasn't the ideal honeymoon, because I was so intent on training after my Boone experience” (pp: 204).

“The timing was important, because we'd have to plan the arrival of the new baby along with my cycling schedule if I wanted to win the Tour de France” (pp: 209).

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“...I’ve got marbled scars on both arms and discoloured marks up and down my legs, which I keep clean-shaven. Maybe that’s why trucks are always trying to run me over; they see my sissy-boy calves and decide not to brake.”  
(pp :2)

Courson and Schreiber (1991)

“I regret...selling myself out to the system by using drugs to compete” (pp: 196).

Green, (1996)

“One thing for certain is that almost every guy I know in the NFL will play with pain” (pp: 83).

“...there is a dark side...that take[s]...its toll on the human body and spirit” (pp: 4).

“...while everyone else is having barbecues and picnics in the month of August, NFL players are sweating, and bleeding, and hurting. To an NFL player, August means training camp, and there’s nothing fun about it” (pp: 11).

“Taking the needle in the NFL...lets everyone know that you’d do anything to play the game. It demonstrates the complete disregard for one’s well being that is admitted in the NFL between players” (pp: 125).

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“He was finished with the NFL and the NFL was finished with him...The team mate who spoke to him told me that he was having trouble just playing on the front lawn with the kids...I wonder if his purple heart leaves him feeling proud or despondent” (pp: 129).

## **7) Docile body disconnected from self**

Courson and Schreiber (1991)

Upon finding out he might need a heart transplant he first and foremost considered his sport:

“My entire life had been filled with physical motion, with athletic prowess and achievement. Most of what I lived for...was tied into my physicality...let me get this straight, Doc, those days are over?” (pp: 3).

## **8) Critique**

Interviewer: How does it feel when you're in a contract and you've got an injury?

Interviewee: ...I've had loads last few years it's just been a nightmare. It's basically ruined my career in England. So frustrating doesn't quite cover it, but frustrating is the right word...over time when its one after another...it's just er, soul destroying id say...(27: 36).

## 9) Total Institution

Interviewee: "...the games though, make it all worth while you see..." (14:38 min).

### Beckham (1998)

"All of my dreams, well almost all of them, fulfilled..." (pp: 10).

"...the club had taken a hold over me. That fascination remains today..." (pp: 11).

"I was in love with the place. I still am" (pp: 21).

"...they never wasted an opportunity to try to make an impression on a budding young player" (speaking of Manchester United, pp: 19).

### Courson and Schreiber (1991)

"Sports, it seemed to me then, had been elevated into some newfangled fundamentalist religion...I did not understand then, and I still don't understand, why athletes and coaches feel compelled to compete for Christ (or Allah). I don't recall the Bible mentioning anything about winning and losing" (pp: 16).

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“During the heart of my NFL career, I was not interested in getting married or even forging any long-term relationships. Football was my life, my wife and my mistress” (pp: 45).

“As a young boy, I bought into the myth of football” (pp: 195).

“I regret being so overwhelmed by the game that I became a creature of it” (pp: 196).

“I learned relatively late in life that there’s an entire world beyond the hash-marks and I want to see it all” (pp: 198).

Green, (1996)

“When you run onto the field of an NFL stadium, that energy from the crowd surges into your veins with a jolt like it came from a giant capacitor. It feels like you might just get lifted right up off your feet and zip off into the sky like a spinning Chinese bottle rocket” (pp: 3).

“I wish I could live that dream for the rest of my days” (pp: 4).

“...a lot of football players think that life without football is death...” (pp: 76).

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“...a player looks around and sees his non-playing peers...They have established lives...But the player? It’s time for him to start from scratch” (speaking about when players retire, pp: 193).

“They say that football players die two deaths. The first death comes when their career finally ends” (pp: 263).

## **10) Critique**

Interviewer: Is it literally all you have ever wanted to do or have you ever thought there was anything else that you would do?

Interviewee: Erm, sort of when I was a younger teenager I wasn’t that fussed...[hesitates]...it wasn’t sort of life or death if I made it, but as it turned out its been a bit of a bonus that I did. Erm but a lot of lads, a lot of footballers just, that’s the only thing they could do, or that’s the only thing they know. But ...it doesn’t particularly faze me to think what am I going to do now? (09: 05 min).

Interviewee: Because football’s amazing when you’re a kid but when you play every day, you know, it just gets, quite monotonous really (13: 17 min).

Interviewer: Do any of your team mates say ‘ah yeah I love training’?

Interviewee: You get the odd ones that do. Yeah. Some people just sort of live and breathe it... and fair play they’re lucky I guess...for me it’s never been like that. Ever (13: 53 min).

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Interviewer: Would you say from the people you have come in contact with, more are like you or more are like they live and breathe the game?

Interviewee: Oh more are like me (14: 13 min).