Power, Discourse, and Symbolic Violence in Professional Youth Soccer: The Case of Albion Football Club

Christopher Cushion
Brunel University

Robyn L. Jones
University of Wales Institute, Cardiff

A sociological analysis was conducted into the collective nature of coaching as manifest in the triangular interaction between coach, athlete, and context within English professional youth soccer. The work of Pierre Bourdieu is predominantly used to interpret data collected ethnographically over the course of a 10-month season. Findings show how an authoritarian discourse is established and maintained, how it is structured by and subsequently structures the coaching context, and how accompanying behaviors are misrecognized as legitimate by both coaches and players. We conclude by reflecting on the limits of such work and its implications for future coaching education.

Nous faisons une analyse sociologique de la nature collective du coaching, telle qu'elle se manifeste dans l'interaction entre l'entraîneur, l'athlète et le contexte, au sein du soccer professionnel anglais. Les travaux de Pierre Bourdieu sont utilisés pour interpréter les données ethnographiques colligées lors d'une saison de 10 mois. À partir de nos résultats, nous démontrons comment un discours autoritaire est établi et maintenu, comment il est structuré par le contexte d'entraînement et comment ce dernier est subséquemment structuré par ce discours, et enfin comment les comportements sont faussement reconnus comme légitimes par les entraîneurs et les joueurs. Nous concluons en apportant des réflexions sur les limites de notre étude et sur ses implications pour l'éducation des entraîneurs.

Recent research has suggested that social interaction lies at the heart of the coaching process (Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2004). Such dealings are not limited to isolated conversations between coach and athlete (Jowett & Cockerill, 2002; Mageau & Vallerand, 2003) but involve a set of connections between them and many others within a wider web of complex cultural relations. Coaching is thus viewed as a social process, comprising a series of negotiated outcomes between structurally

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C. Cushion is with the School of Sport and Education at Brunel University, Uxbridge, UB8 3PH, UK. R.L. Jones is with the Cardiff School of Sport at the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff C23 6XD UK.

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influenced agents within an ever-changing environment (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003; Poczwardowski, Barott, & Henschen, 2002; Saury & Durand, 1998). In this respect, the activity is considered the result of dynamic interaction between coaches, athletes, and the socio-cultural context (Côté, Salmela, & Russell, 1995; Côté, Salmela, Trudel, Baria, & Russell, 1995; Cushion, 2004; Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2006; Langley, 1997; Saury & Durand, 1998; Smith & Smoll, 1993).

Despite increasing recognition of the collective nature of coaching and its vulnerability to many and varied related pressures (Cross, 1995a, 1995b; Lyle, 2002), a sociological analysis of it remains underdeveloped (Jones, 2000; Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2002; Schempp, 1998). Gaps remain in our understanding of the social dynamics that construct and affect the relationships between coach, player, and club (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2006; Potrac & Jones, 1999; Trudel, Côté, & Donohue, 1993). This neglect is confusing, particularly when one considers the time spent by both athletes and coaches in each other's company during daily practice and competition, particularly at the professional level (Cushion & Jones, 2001; Lyle, 2002).

The purpose of this paper is to address this inattention by investigating the complex web of interactions that exists within the professional youth soccer coaching context. In particular, the paper examines the coach–athlete relationship in terms of power, structure, and accompanying discourse within the existing social milieu. The interactions that take place are viewed as influenced by the setting and inextricably tied to "issues of power and power difference" (Snyder & Kiviniemi, 2001, p. 133). The aim thus extends to an examination the social bonds that tie coach to athlete, athlete to athlete, both coach and athlete to contextual practice, and the ways they are all interconnected (Jones, 2000; Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2002).

In this respect, the paper builds on the earlier work of Jones and colleagues (2004), who used the concepts of role (Callero, 1994), presentation of self (Goffman, 1959), and power (French & Raven, 1959) to better understand coaching as a complex social encounter. Since a detailed investigation of the interaction of individuals (agents) precedes the understanding of social practices (Kim, 2004), this study is based on in-situ coaching practice. This produces a contextually informed picture of coaching as a complex social encounter, with the resultant knowledge useful in improving practice (Côté & Salmela, 1996; Lyle, 1999). Here, we agree with Bourdieu's assertion that a detailed investigation of agents' interaction must precede the understanding of social practice (Kim, 2004). However, rather than being satisfied with descriptive self-understandings of such interactions, the paper critically examines current practice so that "agents can liberate themselves from the grip of legitimated social classification" (2004, p. 363).

We begin with an outline of the theoretical framework in which we situate this study, followed by a description of the study's context and method of data collection. The subsequent section contains a presentation and analysis of the data. We conclude with a summary of the main points and make recommendations for further research.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in this respect principally emanates from the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1990b). A field is a social arena in which individuals

struggle and maneuver within a structured system of social positions that defines their situation (Jarvie & Maguire, 1994; Jenkins, 1992). In these terms, Albion Football Club (a pseudonym) can be identified as a field—a system characterized by a series of power relations, where positions are viewed as more or less dominant, reflecting an individual's access to capital (Jarvie & Maguire, 1994; Jenkins, 1992). In turn, capital is the capacity to exercise control over one's own future and the future of others, thus constituting a type of power (Ritzer, 1996).

Capital can occur in a number of forms: economic (that which can be immediately and directly converted to money), cultural (such as educational or professional credentials), social (such as social position and connections), symbolic (from honor and prestige; Calhoun, 1995; Ritzer, 1996), and physical (the development of bodies in ways recognized as having value; Shilling, 1997). The nature of social position then is defined in relation to one's access to the relevant form of capital, as defined by the particular context. Of importance here is not only Bourdieu's appreciation of both social structures and agency in delineating an individual's position but that such individuals may be acting without conscious realization and hence may be reproducing the very structures that limit them (Hunter, 2004).

Specifically, we use Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence to explain how order and restraint are established and maintained through indirect cultural mechanisms, as opposed to direct, coercive control (Jenkins, 1992). Symbolic violence refers to the imposition of systems of symbolism and meanings upon groups "in such a way that they are experienced as legitimate" (Jenkins, 2002, p. 104). It is "violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 167)—that is, individuals accept the dominant values and the behavioral schema currently utilized in the field. This legitimacy obscures the existing power relations, often making them unrecognizable to, and misrecognized by, agents (Kim, 2004). Of particular importance here is the contextual discourse used, with the imposition and enforcement of a "correct way" at the expense of limitless other ways (Schubert, 2002). We therefore draw on this concept of symbolic violence to explore the ways in which the discourses used in professional coaching help create and recreate the field, giving current practice an entrenched legitimacy.

Of additional importance is Bourdieu's notion of habitus that leads directly to practice. *Habitus* is defined as the "product of internalisation of the principles of a cultural arbitrary capable of perpetuating itself" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, p. 31). Thus, it links the decision-making of the individual to wider social structures. Although it is a concept that predates his work, Bourdieu's use of habitus reflects the human embodiment of generative dispositions and classificatory schemes; hence, it is considered to be "not just *manifest* in behaviour but an integral *part* of it" (Jenkins, 1992, p. 75). The embodiment of habitus is seen in an individual's deportment—in manner, demeanor, and generally "how they see and carry themselves" (1992). Habitus therefore disposes actors to behave in certain ways. Additionally, since it is the consequence of "imminent regularities and tendencies" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 135), habitus is often a process that exists beyond conscious control or awareness.

As the body acts as a social memory, where the basics of culture are imprinted and encoded in both a formal and informal manner (Jarvie & Maguire, 1994), the concept of habitus, in tandem with that of symbolic violence, is particularly useful

in the context of the present study. The occupation of a social position influences the development of patterns of behavior. The knowledge needed to occupy that position requires the development of a habitus (1994). Because habitus is acquired as a result of the occupation of a position within the social world, not everyone has the same habitus. Additionally, although those who occupy the same position tend to have similar habitus (Ritzer, 1996); "each person has a unique individual variant of the common matrix" (Wacquant, 1998, p. 221). Differences thus exist both between and within different forms of habitus, highlighting the inconsistent imposition of the social world and its structures on differing actors. Such an analytical framework holds the potential to capture the reality of different groups' unequal interactions and situations, such as those of coaches and players, while grounding that asymmetry socially (Calhoun, LiPuma, & Postone, 1995). Similarly, it offers insight into the development of internalized schemes (i.e., habitus) that produce and reproduce practices.

The actions of the participants under study are placed within a framework outlined by Bourdieu. This framework is useful in this case, as it can contribute to our understanding of the behaviors of coaches and players.

Context and Method

The national governing body of soccer in England, the Football Association, delegates to its member clubs the responsibility for developing professional players. In turn, the clubs delegate the function and detail of the process to their youth sections (i.e., players younger than 18–19 years). Such sections are generally tasked with providing a structured training program for their youth players that also includes educational and vocational dimensions comprising on-the-job training, access to further education, and work experience (Harrison, 1994; Parker 1996). The program is perceived as enabling the clubs to lay a foundation in terms of player (and ultimately financial) investment and development (Parker).

Although clubs throughout the four professional divisions in England (and Wales) vary in their requirements for youth development, those at the elite level charge such a responsibility to an associated academy. Players between 9 and 18 years of age compete for academy places that are generally considered a prerequisite for a professional career. Places within an academy are usually awarded on the basis of a successful invitational trial, arranged by club "scouts" who scour the region for talented young players, and competition is fierce. While a place at an academy grants potential "access" to the professional game, it remains a tenuous foothold, as the actions of young players (both on and off the field) are constantly reviewed and evaluated by the coaches. Subsequently, if a new player is found (by the academy coaches) to be a better prospect, he can replace an existing player, who is then released. Within the academy structure, players attend the club for evening training and weekend games until age 16. A select few are then invited to train full-time for 2 years, at the end of which they are either released by the club or offered a professional contract.

The club under study, Albion Football Club, is a medium-sized Premiership (the highest professional soccer division in England and Wales) soccer club that has been in existence for more than a century. Albion is structured like other clubs and like them, despite outward signs of optimism, has seen better days. The club

incorporates 1 of the 42 Football Association registered academies. Players in these academies are constantly scrutinized by coaches who are in turn predominantly judged, despite the official developmental ethos, on game results. Both coaches and players then are subject to a heavy climate of expectancy. Interactions between coaches and players in academies are predominantly limited to training sessions and games. During away fixtures, the coaches normally travel on the bus with the players, albeit in a different section.

Instrumentation

Data were collected within an ethnographic framework that included participant observation and interviewing (Patton, 1990). This approach ensured that the participants' behaviors, interpretations, and meanings, and the changes that occurred within them during the course of the 10-month season-long study, would be captured and thus offer insight into the varying and evolving perceptions of coach–player interactions.

Observations were conducted over periods ranging from 2 to 4 days of each week during the season in question and were of varying length, from 2 hours to day-long, depending on the given player's schedule of games, training, and education. A distinguishing feature of this observational strategy is that, to some extent, the researcher is also a participant. The degree of participation varies from complete immersion to complete separation and can change over time (Patton, 1990). In this study, I (C.C.) never actively coached a group of players but only assisted in organizational matters, for example, marking out the boundaries for practices. More often than not, I was a spectator. Over time, my presence as an observer became part of the practice context. Initially, I spent much of the time with Greg, the under-19 coach. This created a rapport that allowed me to be accepted by the coaching staff. This rapport was enhanced by my own history in the game and my ability to engage in "shop talk" and related topics with the coaching staff.

This connection with the coaching staff initially created a distance between me and the players, since they perceived me to be part of the "staff camp" and thus someone who uncritically supported the coaches' agenda. My genuine interest in the players changed this perception.

The observations resulted in comprehensive written field notes and transcripts of audio-taped interviews. All field notes were dated and included contextual information such as location, those present, physical setting, type of social interactions and who composed them, and activities. The field notes were reviewed and expanded continually, especially after coaching sessions.

In addition, a series of in-depth semi-structured individual interviews was conducted with a number of the coaches at Albion at season's end. More specifically, the 5 coaches who were predominantly involved with the academy were interviewed, with each interview lasting between 1.5 and 2.5 hours. These interviews took place in the coach's respective office before or after a training session. The interviews were structured around issues related to the coach's working behaviors, his justification for coaching, and his interactions with the players. Additionally, two group interviews were conducted with the players, both of which lasted approximately 2 hours and were conducted at the club's training ground. Here, similar issues were explored from the players' perspective. All of the interviews followed the observations

and were, to a certain extent, informed by them; hence, the interviews were valuable in providing collaborative evidence or triangulation for the data already collected, adding a new dimension to existing issues, and identifying new issues (Miller & Glassner, 1997). The interviews were considered of particular value in the study's context because of their potential to yield rich insights into people's experiences, opinions, aspirations, and feelings (May, 1999).

Participants

Five coaches and 24 players from the club were observed during training sessions and games over the course of a season. Like other academies, Albion fielded two competitive teams on a Saturday: an under-19 team (also known as "the youth team" and coached by Greg and Andy) and an under-17 team (coached by Pete and his assistant Bob). In general, the under-19 team was composed of full-time academy players, aged 17–18 years, while the under-17 team largely consisted of players, aged 15 and 16 years, who were still in school and who only trained part-time. Andy was the director of the academy. The education and welfare of the players was the responsibility of Dean, who also served as technical advisor. Andy, Greg, and Pete had been professional soccer players. Bob had been a full-time youth coach at other clubs for almost 20 years, while Dean was a former physical educator and semi-professional soccer player and coach. All the coaches therefore had a great deal of experience in the sport. (All coaches have been given pseudonyms.)

There were also 4 players who, although eligible to play for the under-17 team ("first years"), had already left school and were therefore incorporated into the under-19 squad ("second years" and "third years") for day-to-day training. The terms *first years*, *second years*, and *third years* refer to the time elapsed since the players left school. Pete worked with Andy, Greg, and Dean during the week. Pete and his assistant Bob worked with a separate group (the under-17 squad) in the evening and during school holidays.

The participants in the group interview were randomly sampled to represent a cross-section of academy players in terms of age, experience, and career stage. Eight players were assigned to two groups. The first group consisted of two first-year players and two second-year players, and the second group consisted of one first-year player and three second-year players. Focus groups were used with the players. Such groups provide an "audience" and enhance the use of a variety of communication avenues compared to other interview forms. Such variety taps into a wide range of understanding while providing a supportive environment for open conversation about sensitive subjects (such as those under investigation) that could easily be left underdeveloped in individual interviews (Kitzinger, 1994).

Data Analysis

The data analysis involved a gradual shift from data collection and analysis to analysis and description to write-up and theory (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). The process involved three overlapping levels. First, the data from the interviews and field notes were organized following the general principles of grounded theory. The objective was to build a system of themes that emerged from the unstructured data representing coach–player interactions within an active, unfolding coaching

context. These themes were conceptually grounded both in the ideas and objectives informing the research and in the empirical observations.

Second, the classification of themes was used to produce a descriptive account of coach–player interaction at Albion. Although these descriptions highlighted the various relationships under study, they did not capture the true complexity of social interactions. Consequently, a third level of analysis was employed to situate data within a theoretical framework that enable us to move from concrete description to abstraction. Doing so increased our understanding of the behavioral range and variability of the social actors (coaches and players) and structures (the professional club environment) under study and how they interacted to create problematic coaching practice. Importantly, this was not a prejudgment about how to read the data but a process of supporting analysis and interpretation.

Analysis of Results

Discourse, Pedagogic Action, and Symbolic Violence

In constructing the notion of symbolic violence, Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) drew heavily upon Weber's (1968) work on legitimate authority and domination. This reflects a concern about the ways strategizing agents act from a variety of structured and structuring positions to more or less reproduce existing configurations of privilege (Schubert, 2002). Within the academy at Albion, these positions included traditional sociological designations based on not only perceived power, powerlessness, roles, and access, but also various ways of "truth-telling" as manifest in coaches' speech (Bourdieu, Passeron, & de Saint Martin, 1994). This speech was heavily authoritarian in nature, while the general context was almost exclusively coach-led. Such language shaped the contours of the observed coaching process and affected how the coaches and players behaved toward each other. Consequently, the interaction and subsequent relations of domination between the parties were made, unmade and remade in and by this discourse (Bourdieu, 1977; Krais, 1995).

Such a finding is generally consistent with earlier work highlighting the use of authoritarian behavior as a long-featured and highly pervasive facet of professional soccer coaching (e.g., Butcher, 1987; Farmer, 1987; Nelson, 1995; Parker, 1996). For example, Robson (1982) and Parker (1996) have argued that, although often recognized as aggressive, such methods reflect traditional institutional discourse within the sport and hence have been accepted as a kind of occupational hallmark. Such beliefs are deeply rooted in the culture of professional soccer, with harsh, authoritarian, and often belligerent coaching behavior viewed as a necessary aspect of preparing young players for the rigors of the game (e.g., Parker, 1996; Roderick, 1991). This was confirmed by the coaches interviewed:

> "It's the tradition really; it's things they have experienced in the past. I think that's the bottom line." (Pete)

Pete's assistant Bob agreed.

> "I think it's the easiest way to do things when you feel under pressure and I know that I've done that. I think that's part of the culture we all come up in as well. It was certainly done to me in my life as a player."

While Dean commented on the conservative tradition within coaching.

"Coaches or coaching departments are very conservative [and] not really open to change. Threatening people has been the traditional way of doing it. In a lot of clubs the relationship between the manager and the players isn't what you get in industry. It's not sort of management and staff, it's management and quite school-boyish, 'do as you are told' stuff."

At Albion, this authoritarian behavior manifested itself through a combination of abusive language, direct personal castigation, and threats of physical exercise by the coaches toward the players. Although explicit outbursts varied in frequency and intensity, harsh personalized language was present at every training session. The following examples, taken from the field notes, are typical of the interactions:

The players are sitting at the edge of the pitch in a semi-circle around Andy and Greg, who remain standing. The game has ended in a draw, and the goalkeeper's (D) mistake has led to a late equalizing goal:

Andy (to the group): "Well I was about to say well done, I mean there was only a minute left to go. (To D) You should have taken his fuckin' head off from that corner, just fuckin' knocked his head off. You know, I'm not being funny but you can use your fucking hands. He can only use 'is fuckin' head and he's got there before you. His 'ead should have been flying off somewhere. (To the group, raising his voice further) We should have won that game but we all went to sleep, it [the ball] bounces in the fuckin' box, (to D) you don't come off your line, fuckin' three points out the window. And I don't know what you're arguing with Greg about, you know you need to come (to get the ball) with two hands."

Greg (to D, shouting): "Before you start, don't ever fucking answer any of the staff back, ever! I saw it going in from way back."

D: "I misjudged it."

Greg (still shouting): "Misjudged it? So why do you fucking answer back?" Before D has a chance to answer. "I couldn't give a fucking shit! We've told you what to do loads of times. Right!!!!! Too many of you are fucking answering the staff back. Pack it in now or else you can fuck right off and I couldn't give a shit. We aren't that fucking good and I have been saying it for too long now. You lot answer him back, me back, the physio back. Bunch of fuckin' tarts, that's what y'are, all of ya. That was a game we should have won 4–0, easy. Oh no, not us. No fuckin' great player among them but they made it hard for us because they stuck at what they were good at. Not us, all we want to do is fuck about with it and do little fucking nutmegs (putting the ball between an opponents legs and collecting it on the other side)."

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A coaching session is just starting in the sportshall. The players have begun to pass the ball amongst themselves in a circle. Greg arrives and formalizes the practice by nominating two players to act as defenders in the circle with

those on the outside expected to keep possession. The players who make the circle's rim frequently miss-place passes.

Greg stops the practice, "Circle shit, 5 minute warm up shit. . . . No, shit's too kind. . . . Game Saturday against United, if we start like this against them, then fuckin' god help us."

Greg then organizes a passing practice where the ball is passed via the four corners of the hall. One of the players controls the ball badly, loses possession, and then jokes about it with another player.

Greg stops the practice, "E, if you want to fuck about, get into the car park, I couldn't give a shit. Go on, fuck off, out."

E says nothing and trudges, head down, out of the hall. The rest of the players get press-ups and 'shuttle' sprints as punishment for 'their' mistakes.

Bourdieu (1989, 1990a) argued that in "advanced" societies, the principle mode of domination is more symbolic than actual. Although it could be argued that the violence apparent in the coaches' discourse here was as much real as symbolic (in a verbal sense), it certainly held the players within a realm of obedience. This is because the language employed was underpinned by a coaching culture saturated by symbols of domination that in turn permitted such interaction to take place. Not only was this evidenced by personal castigation of perceived inadequacies but also by questioning the players' masculinity (e.g., "Bunch of fuckin' tarts, that's what y'are, all of ya"). Such gendered, autocratic, and hierarchical discourse reflects the notion of hegemonic masculinity within soccer (Parker, 1996) and is both the outward manifestation of the culture and its primary survival mechanism.

The fact that this domination was consistent and almost omnipresent ensured that a process of inculcation, or habitus, occurred (Bordieu & Passeron, 1977). Here, the culture became embodied, as those involved saw and understood their actions as "sensible" and thus carried them out as a matter of routine. Consequently, certain principles were internalized within the cognitive structures of the group that in turn ensured the construction and reproduction of a current social order. In addition to reflecting it then, the discourse legitimized such behavior by ensuring that the players accepted the existing hierarchies of distinction (Bourdieu, 1977; Swartz, 1997).

The primary medium for this imposition of symbolism and meaning (culture) at Albion was the behavior of the coaches during sessions and games. Bourdieu termed this cultural enforcement *pedagogic action* (Jenkins, 2002), and it was not only responsible for reproducing an arbitrary culture but also the power structures reflecting the interests of the dominant group (i.e., the coaches). Pedagogic action is considered to be achieved through pedagogic work, defined as "a process of inculcation which must last long enough to produce [an] internalization of the principles of cultural arbitrary capable of perpetuating itself after pedagogic action has ceased" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, p. 31).

Such "work" was constantly in evidence at Albion, where the players were continually berated for their performances and attitude with no right to respond. For example, they were given little autonomy on a daily basis while being treated

as members of an undifferentiated group. Consequently, the players usually moved as a group, both during training and in their spare time (e.g., during meal times), with individual activity directed by specific instruction—for example, to carry out allocated "jobs" or when rehabilitating from injury. Alongside a curtailment of individuality was a lack of privacy; changing, showering, and eating were communal experiences. Thus, few opportunities existed in their daily work routine for personal escape from the collectivity of the squad. Although the squad gave them a sense of security and support, it also served as an automatic functioning and disindividualization of the regime's power (Smart, 2002). Furthermore, the players had no input toward, or choice about, their schedules, as the coaches determined training routines and durations.

On the rare occasion when it did occur, consultation with the players was characterized by coach-led team "talks" that only occasionally included seemingly perfunctory requests for player input. Unsurprisingly, this was met more than often by silence. The following excerpt illustrates a typical scenario:

> The players are sitting, gathered around a wall chart that has been brought outside. Greg and Andy are standing.
>
> *Andy:* "All the staff here have equal authority, anyone talks back when they are asked to do something then they will be gone that day. I don't care how good a player they are, they will be gone."
>
> Andy draws the players' attention to the chart.
>
> "Looking at this we would have 9 points that is about mid-table, which is about where we are. I think I would give us about 5 out of 10 so far, is that about right?" None of the players respond.
>
> Andy goes on to talk about the reliability of players; "You E, leaving the game with 20 minutes to go, I'm fining you £15 by the way, double the next time it happens. We need players to be reliable. N, the only reliable thing about you is that when you get the ball I already know that you're going to miss. I just turn my back now. Unreliable players get coaches the sack. We want you to follow instructions. G, I tell you to pass the ball forward and right in front of me you pass it back twice. Why? What does that say about you as players? I don't mind if you say to me 'Andy, I did it because of this and this' but none of you do. Am I right or what?" The players look down avoiding eye contact with the coaches and say nothing.

In essence, the control exercised by the coaches and the club resulted in the players being denied all choices about their professional and occupational experience and, while within the confines of the club, their social experience.

"Good Players," Favorites, and Rejects

Although individuals may believe in the power of their own agency, they are only "actualizers of the potentialities that are socially instituted" (Kim, 2004, p. 367). Success in realizing this potential subsequently contributes to the accruement

of symbolic and cultural capital, and involves developing a habitus that meshes with that of the organization to which the individual belongs. Such capital then, being grounded in acceptance and an endorsement of wider cultural values, is converted to the individual's advantage in his or her struggle for resources in the social space. In turn, this space, together with the concept of capital, acknowledges the value of something held (and distributed) by some members. Within the current context, occupying the space of "good player" was seen to depend on an individual's acceptance of a habitus similar to that established by the coaches. Such an acceptance was viewed by the coaches as legitimate and valued behavior, and was suitably rewarded by their attitudes toward those players as well as by their perception of those players' chances of "making it" (as professional soccer players). Thus, the coaches were central figures in assigning capital valued by the field amongst the players. Similarly, an examination of the discourse surrounding this space of "good player" reveals how the doxa, or assumptions, about occupying the space were legitimated and complied with.

Such a position supports existing work in affirming that coaches have a positive bias towards players who are "conforming, co-operative [and] orderly" (Martinek, 1983, p. 65). Similarly, players displaying professional ideals were most favorably looked upon by the coaches and personified the coaches' desire in relation to the fulfillment of "professional values." The significance attributed to such behavior by the coaches was considerable and more often outweighed any innate talent possessed by the players, as these excerpts from the data suggest:

> "The first thing I look at is the attitude of the player, not only on the pitch but in training and even off the pitch. That's the first thing I look for. Then skill and athletic ability." (Bob)

> Pete agreed.

> "Their attitude is everything, attitude definitely."

> Andy . . . the Academy Director expands on this.

> "I like to see a boy with a good attitude, and I mean everyone would say that, good attitude to work, to his peers, the way he conducts himself off the pitch, the way he conducts himself on the pitch in terms of work rate. They're the things I look for."

Thus, by living out everything that the coaches advocated, some players increased their level of relational intimacy with the coaches (Parker, 1996). They did so by buying into the game and by accepting the coaches' values, and thus were perceived as "on the team" (Hunter, 2004, p. 181).

At Albion, many instances of coach partiality and selectivity demonstrated that only lip service was being paid to the stated club policy of equality and cohesion. Thus, it was possible to identify player subgroups distinct from the official academy's hierarchical year groups. These subgroups were themselves hierarchically organized and could be termed as the "favorites," the "peripherals," and the "rejects." The ups and downs of team and player performance, along with injury status during the course of the season, meant that the status of the "peripherals"

and "favorites" remained reasonably fluid. The "rejects" group, however, was less susceptible to change. Membership in each group meant a different relationship with the coach and a different experience in the practical coaching context. To be a "favorite" brought positive conditions and rewards. These manifested themselves chiefly through repeated selection for the team, virtually irrespective of personal performance, so long as the team was winning. The players also clearly perceived differences in the way the coaches, Greg and Andy in particular, addressed them in and around the training ground during sessions and games. For example:

> T: "The way some people are spoken to is different."

> M: "Off the pitch as well as well as on it."

> A: "I've noticed that Andy will say 'alright' to everyone, but to some players it'll be a bit more, it will be 'alright, and how's the leg,' and 'will you be back for Saturday?'"

> T: "In games and training too, if X makes a mistake no problem, but if Y makes one, then he's (Andy) all over them."

In direct contrast to the "favorites," the "rejects" engendered what Parker (1996) describes as a negative coach outlook that at times bordered on hostility. Greg and Andy perceived them to be limited in soccer ability and, crucially, in "attitude." This resulted in the "rejects" being frequently and publicly chastised for making minor mistakes. The following extract from the field notes illustrates the point at hand:

> Greg is organizing the physical space for the upcoming practice whilst reflecting on Saturday's game.

> "We were fuckin' awful first half. Did you see RB? I didn't! We might as well have had 10 players out there. I sat 'em down at half time and saw RB, and couldn't fuckin' remember him playing. He might as well not have been out there."

> Pete joins the conversation as they watch the players troop towards them.

> Greg calls the players over and divides them into groups of 4. He explains the practice and demonstrates; "nice and light, play it in, OK."

> The exercise commences.

> "Well done, now change the 2 in the middle, well done."

> Pete joins in, while Greg stands at the side, watching.

> Greg stops the practice, changes the rules and demonstrates. The players start and make a mistake.

> "RB, you're not fuckin' listenin'."

> To the group: "Punch it in, move towards the ball, have 2 touches."

"Sort out that touch, RB it's crap."

To the group: "Well done, change the 2 in the middle."

"RB, c'mon run straight to the ball."

"Stop. Hold it there. I don't want to pick on you RB, but that fuckin' movement is crap. C'mon son."

Greg demonstrates the required movement.

"Anyway, OK, that'll do boys, have a stretch, well done."

The players stretch, some drink.

In addition to being subjected to hostile training conditions, the "rejects" were also prone to much greater levels of criticism during games. Indeed, in one instance, as demonstrated in the extract below, such a player was even substituted shortly after the game had started:

> IZ has been given a chance in the starting line up. The game is a close one with both sides creating chances to score. After only 20 minutes IZ is substituted. He walks away and sits next to the bench; he does not speak to anybody. None of the coaches speak to him. At half-time the teams go to the dressing room, but IZ stays out and sits alone on the bench, no one speaks to him.

According to Hunter (2004), distinctions among individuals are necessary for some to accrue capital and be positioned to maintain the game. Certainly, the data unearthed in the current study demonstrated that the coaches and players, both between and within their respective groupings, did not face an undifferentiated social space. This space resembles a battlefield, where the basis of identity and hierarchy are endlessly disputed (Wacquant, 1998). Such antagonistic social collectives are thus seen as being continually engaged in a struggle to impose the definition of the world that is most congruent with their particular interests (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1996). Within this context, differentiation among the players was used as an instrument of domination; hence, the coaches determined the requirements of a "favorite," who would progress and, consequently, how the social world of the coaching process should be perceived. Similarly, by virtue of their position and logic, the coaches were able to promote and impose upon the players wide-ranging behavioral requirements in relation to the membership of varying groups. Unsurprisingly, those who were labeled "rejects" possessed less access to capital, less influence on the construction of the field, and less chance of being offered a professional contract. The players' positioning within the hierarchical group structure then, based upon their accrued symbolic capital within the field (i.e., "favorites," "peripherals," "rejects"), led them to acquire a certain habitus on the given scale of social differentiation.

A Collective Deception and Players' Agency

Krais (1995), in interpreting Bourdieu's work, has argued that every mode of domination presupposes a "doxic order" (p. 169): a system of practical beliefs,

shared by the dominated and the dominating. In other words, the doxic order reflects the interest that individuals have in maintaining the game and, as such, requires the complicity of all involved, with the belief in their own agency stemming from their social misrecognition. Here, "power relations are perceived not for what they objectively are, but in the form that renders them legitimate in the eyes of the beholder" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, p. xiii). The actions of the dominant group come to reflect a "taken-for-granted view of the world that flows from practical sense" (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 68). Such a misrecognition, being shared by the dominated and dominating, is a "collective deception" (without a particular deceiver), as "it is embedded in the habitus of [all of] the participants" (Kim, 2004, p. 366).

Similarly, both the coaches and the players at Albion bought into the legitimacy of the working climate. Indeed, Greg saw his harsh, aggressive, and sometimes threatening discourse as being in players' best interests, a specific strategy to improve their respective performances. It was a view typical of the coaching team:

> "I do it coz I know they've [the academy players] got a great chance of making a great living at a great job. And I think that I'm puttin' the right attitude in them, coz if they don't show the right attitude they're not gonna be at any football club never mind this one. So when I say things like that I don't mean them personally, but if they can't take it then they aren't going to be a footballer. So, I think I'm that way coz I want them to be still in football and to enjoy the life that I had. That's probably why I do it, to give them a chance at it." (Greg)

When questioned further, Greg did not think his behavior was negative but a challenge to the players to respond in a positive manner, to prove their worth and strength of character:

> "I pushed him and pushed him, it could have made him or broke him, and at the moment it has made him. He's sorted himself out, and decided 'I am going to get through this.' He's come through and I thought 'good lad.' And I like that, it would have been easy for him to go back home and say 'fuckin don't like that.' So that is one definitely that has changed, and I'm pleased that it's worked." (Greg)

The above quote illustrates the misrecognition and legitimation of power by the coaches at Albion. It is this acceptance of legitimacy that obscures power relations and permits the imposition to be successful (Jenkins, 1992). Thus, it is a form of intimidation that is unaware of its nature (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Certainly, the coaches at Albion viewed their actions as legitimate and justified their dominating discourse as being in the players' interests. Indeed, the players did not perceive the actions of the coaches as overly abusive or discouraging but instead saw them as motivational tools. The players were then expected to react appropriately, as dictated by their place within the cultural interaction.

In examining the players' responses, it was evident that, despite the severity of the discourse to which they were subject, their resistance was minimal. Bourdieu (1991) believes that the complicity of the dominated is necessary if symbolic subjugation is to be realized and explains that "one is only hooked if one is in the pool" (Bourdieu, 1984b, p. 89). Similarly, his notion of "submission [as]

liberating" (1987a, p. 184) is useful here, as the players who succumbed to the regime and followed its values received a more positive experience in return. Success in the struggle for symbolic capital therefore requires "an inclination to honour and abide by the rules of the game" (Kim, 2004, p. 366). This shared understanding encompassed what to value, what to avoid, what to desire, and so on. Those players who participated in the "game" then, were seen to accept and endorse the legitimacy of the dominant values and classification schema associated with it, as imposed by the most powerful (i.e., coaches; Kim, 2004). Indeed, the data revealed that the players at Albion arrived every day and took part in the sessions as required. In this respect, the players bore the indisputable imprint of their habitus that was formed in the context of their social position at the club. Subsequently, it inculcated them into a worldview based on, and reconciled to, such a position (Bourdieu, 1984; Shilling, 1997).

A form of symbolic violence was thus evident at Albion that kept the players "in their place," as they "misrecognized their role as unquestioning of authority" (Hunter, 2004, p. 180). This misrecognition was fed by the players' desire to become professionals ("becoming a pro") and a perception of the coaches as the "gatekeepers" to such a future that overrode any dissatisfaction with the established working climate. In pursuing their own goals then, the players engaged in social practices that contributed to the existing structure and helped to reproduce it. In this respect, the complicity of the dominated becomes obvious as an essential element within symbolic violence that can only be exerted on a person predisposed through the habitus to feel it. The players were therefore willing to forgo a critique of their position to follow the instructions of coaches whom they respected as former professional players and as the means for becoming professionals themselves.

J: "I quite like Pete, because of where he's been and what he's done really. He's been there and done it."

N: "Yeah he's someone who's played before, who knows what it's like. I respect that."

R: "Yup. He's got to be someone who knows what he's talking about, worth listening to. He's someone who can do what he's saying."

In this respect, the cultural capital or the "weight" possessed in the structure of power relations by the coaches enforced a complicity on the academy's players. The coaches' discourse was viewed as the legitimate culture of the field, as an axiom that the players were unwilling to criticize. In this way, pedagogic action can be seen to produce dispositions that generate "correct" responses from those subjected to it (Jenkins, 1992). It is a concept also alluded to in the work of Michel Foucault (1977, 1979) who concluded that power is not simply imposed on the powerless but rather "invests them, [and] is transmitted by and through them" (Smart, 2002, p. 77). In this respect, the players became, and affirmed their roles as, "docile bodies" (Foucault, 1977), positions that were manifest through obedience to the coaches' normalizing power.

Not solely helpless or at the mercy of social forces, an individual in this situation can resist in various ways (Foucault, 1977; Giddens, 1984). The players in the current study obeyed the coaches but did not look to endorse their behavior or

agree with them. This resistance often took the form of impression management (Goffman, 1959). The majority of academy players presented themselves as submissive and compliant workers while at the same time partaking in both physical and verbal forms of resistance to the regime to which they were subjected. A simple example of this was skipping their college classes (for which they were punished by the coaches):

> *Greg:* "They all bunked off their core skills, Dean's turned up and the United boys are there but none of our lot. He's called me at home, so I've said get them in for 5 o'clock. Dean said what shall we do. I said nothing. He spoke with them at 5:30 and said that Greg will be down in a minute, 7:30 I went down, just to really inconvenience them, piss 'em off like. Told 'em they've let the club and themselves down, that it shouldn't fuckin' happen again. You've never seen a dressing room empty so fuckin' quick."

The players also used being "busy" as a form of impression management. For the players, this meant secretly conserving effort during training: The data from the focus group interviews showed that any player who acted "too eager" or did "too much" (player focus group) was labeled as "busy" and hence had the potential to be marginalized by his peers. To maintain good relations with each other, players tried not to appear over-keen, thus engaging in a degree of "output restriction" (Collinson, 1992; Parker, 1996). Such action was also viewed as a means of collective resistance against Greg's control, as it stopped players from volunteering and asking questions during coaching sessions.

The coaches' concern about peer group influence indicated that they were aware of it and that some of the players' desired "impressions" were transparent. Dean explains:

> "Peer pressure is a problem, anyone who asks for help with their game or even does demonstrations for the staff is labeled as 'busy'."

Playing ability, and the expression of that ability in games and training, had a property-like nature amongst the players and coaches. In this respect, playing ability was a form of cultural capital, symbolic capital, or both, and was perceived as easily transferable to economic capital (Cicourel, 1995). Consequently, the apparent lack of such capital encouraged the players to continually maneuver to improve their position and status in relation to each other, despite not wanting to be labeled as busy. The players then appeared to be caught in a complex web of behaviors driven by conflicting motivations to both impress their coaches and avoid marginalization by the peer group:

> "We're in together like, a team, so you know I ain't 'busy'. But at the end of the day if I make the other guy feel like crap, it will affect their game, then no threat. It's dog eat dog here, you've got to look after yourself." (Player, A)

Such jockeying was a planned calculation on the part of the players. It was a strategy whereby they tried to "safeguard or improve their position and impose the principle of hierachisation most favorable to their own products" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 101). In this respect, it appeared to counter any "collective

peer-group action," thus helping to maintain the hierarchical status quo within the academy.

Despite some attempts at resistance, the dominant picture of player participation in the academy was one of compliance to the regime. With Academy places being so highly valued, fear of exclusion and of being labeled a "reject" surpassed any meaningful questioning of, or resistance to, the coaches' actions. Such relative passivity was justified by a belief among the players that they could not afford to get the coaches "off-side" (i.e., angry with them) and that the coaches generally "know what they're doin' really. After all, they've been there and done it" (player N). Such complicity was reinforced by the coach-delivered "discourse of right" (Foucalt, 1979) that was a constant presence at the academy. Such a discourse served to articulate the power invested in the coaches' position and in the players' obligation to obey.

Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to provide an insight into the youth coaching culture evident at a professional English football club. The work of Pierre Bourdieu was used to understand and critique coaching practice. Such a concept aims to generate understanding about systems of domination and the power relations that create and sustain them. Certainly power relations, in their extent and severity, were a dominant feature of the coaching context under study. Here, the coaches used authoritarian actions to define and categorize the players as "good" or "bad." The players accepted these definitions; the coaches were the unquestioned and unquestioning gatekeepers to the players' aspirations for success within the game.

The coaches' practice appeared to be a product of their habitus, an often unconscious process related to the internalization of a cultural arbitrary. Far from being actively resisted, such actions were perceived (sometimes grudgingly) as natural by the players, who entered into the collective deception. Consequently, the power exercised at the Albion academy elicited the consent of *both* the dominant and the dominated, and was therefore perceived as legitimate from both perspectives (Swartz, 1997). Such a misrecognition of power is central to Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence, as it refers to an "invisible" mode of domination that prevents it from being recognized, even by the dominated (Krais, 1995). In addition, this process of inculcation was cumulative (Jenkins, 1992), so the players understood the actions of the coaches. Consequently, the habitus acquired by the players acted as the basis for their perception of an acceptable, and in many ways expected, coaching "message."

These results do not mean that we are able to capture the entire coaching process or that which occurs at other Academies. The coaching process is obviously contextually defined. The results can be used however as a basis for other research that examines the culture of professional youth soccer and the discourse that both creates and sustains it (Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2003). The use of a theoretical framework based on Bourdieu's work can provide researchers in this area with a set of tools to conduct such studies. This framework recognizes the agency of players, incorporates issues of both knowledge and power, and could be used by coaches regardless of sport to critically explore and reflect upon their

own practice. Coaches however must be given the opportunity to engage in this reflection. Interrogating practice in this way could impact the nature of symbolic violence within the coaching process, thus ensuring that decisions are made with careful consideration, not due to uncritical, culturally laden inertia.

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