

## **Chapter 2**

### **Methodology**

This thesis is concerned with the relationships between social capital and sport, and particularly the exploration of the dynamics by which social capital can affect the career of South Australian elite women's football players. The role of social capital as a component of players' development is investigated in the light of its ability to contribute to (or interfere with) the passage of players from the bottom to the top levels of South Australian women's football. The key research question of whether social capital can facilitate or/and undermine the development of players is addressed through a systematic analysis of original data gathered mostly from primary sources and using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Methods include semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire survey.

This chapter details the methodology of the research project. In particular, it discusses the design of this research project, the definition of its field of investigation, and the collection and analysis of data to cast light on whether social capital pertaining to the South Australian women's football community can influence the development of local players.

#### **2.1 The project design**

The aim of the project is to explore the dynamics that characterise the relationship between social capital and women's football in South Australia, and that may influence the state's output of elite players. The project is designed as an intensive research project, as opposed to extensive research design (Sayer, 1992). Following the work of Sayer (1992), Valentine and Clifford (2003) point out the main differences between the two approaches. While extensive research design is suitable to uncover representative patterns or features of populations, intensive research design is about investigating the nature of a process. Intensive research design relies upon in-depth consideration and interpretation of a particular phenomenon, and generally implies qualitative analysis such as case studies, as opposed to large-scale surveys and statistical analysis. Consistent with Sayer (1992), the research questions of this project (see Chapter 1) do not seek to understand how much social capital

influences the development of South Australian players. Instead, they aim to answer how social capital can affect the career of players, and what type of social networks can favour accumulation of social capital able to affect players' development.

In the early phases of the project, a research plan outlining the various intended steps of the process was drafted, following the model illustrated by Monk and Bedford (2005). As anticipated by Monk and Bedford (2005), several components of the project overlapped in time, and the research plan proved an effective time management tool.

This study was not designed to fit any particular simplified approach to Human Geography and it was not conducted with strict adherence to a single school of thought (Kitchin & Tate, 2000). Nevertheless, referring to some key methodological categories is meaningful to underpin the theoretical framework of the project. This study presents several characteristics having reference to critical realism (Kitchin & Tate, 2000; Yeung, 1997). Features of this study that fall within a realist approach are a concern with the identification of causal mechanisms driving the effect of social capital on the career of women's football players, and its *a posteriori* method that reconstructs causal dynamics already knowing their effects (i.e. players who have/have not accomplished certain career achievements) (Yeung, 1997). Other common features of this research and critical realism include the use of both quantitative and qualitative data (Kitchin & Tate, 2000), several elements of the grounded theory method to analyse qualitative data (Bryman, 2004), and the use of triangulation to verify them (Patton, 1990).

### **2.1.2 Defining the field**

A critical part of the project's design involved defining and narrowing the field of investigation. There are two underlying problems with exploring the causal relationship between social capital and players' development. These are, on one hand, the lack of a pre-defined analytical framework due to the originality of the field, and on the other, the risk of confusion brought about by the abundance of different and sometimes contrasting conceptualisations of social capital existing in the literature (e.g. Glover & Hemingway, 2005). The innovative character of the field of investigation required considerable attention in narrowing the conceptualisation of

the relationship between sport and social capital to fit the project's objective (e.g. Atherley, 2006; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009b; Collins & Kay, 2003; Jarvie, 2003, 2006b; Seippel, 2006; Tonts, 2005). The project required also a meaningful definition of the contested concept of social capital (Healy, Hampshire, & Ayres, 2004), particularly in the light of the different 'resource' and 'civic' approaches (Woolcock, 2003, in Glover & Hemingway, 2005).

The first step towards the definition of the field of investigation has been a wide-reaching literature review (see Chapter 3). Over 400 sources were identified and organised by theme with the aid of *EndNote* bibliography software (Thomson Reuters, 2009). The second step consisted of the identification of the level at which the research should be carried out. This included the definition of a study area and the identification of the subjects of the study (i.e. interviewees and questionnaire respondents). This step has been accomplished using qualitative data gathered in preliminary interviews with two key figures of South Australian women's football. The use of qualitative data to define further research processes is typical of the grounded theory (Bryman, 2004) and it assisted the identification of interviewees and respondents, the design of the questionnaire, and the definition of the scope of the study. Preliminary interview data combined with the researcher's existing knowledge of local women's football due to personal involvement and previous research on the topic (Rosso, 2006, 2009b) to inform the spatial extent of the project (i.e. Adelaide and Mount Gambier regions). This technique was particularly suitable for this project, due to the lack of an obvious analytical framework provided by previous research.

Furthermore, studying social capital implied a degree of abstraction in the conceptualisation of the 'places' of the study. In particular, there was the need to identify the intangible web of social networks connecting women's football people and institutions across South Australia, where social capital resides (Portes, 1998). While South Australia can be defined as an actual sporting region (Bale, 2003) through preliminary interview data, identifying the intangible 'places' (i.e. networks) of social capital required the aid of some theoretical interpretation. The concepts that best informed the abstract milieu of this research are social network theory and social network analysis (Scott, 2000) (see section 3.1.5), and the theorisation of 'football

communities' as imagined communities bound by a strong sense of belonging together (see section 3.2.2).

### **2.1.3 Quantitative and qualitative research methods**

Research methods include both quantitative and qualitative methods (Hay, 2005). Apart from the literature review, the research methods of this study comprise database analysis, semi-structured interviews (Longhurst, 2003) and questionnaire survey (McLafferty, 2003). Both the interviews and the survey collected qualitative and quantitative data concurrently. Quantitative data provided a sense of scale to complement the more subjective value of qualitative data. For example, quantitative data provided frequencies and descriptive statistics of respondent opinion on various aspects of their relationships within their clubs and state teams. Quantitative data was mostly gathered by means of survey. Quantitative data on sport participation was also accessed through the database of the South Australian Women's Soccer Association (SAWSA) (South Australian Women's Soccer Association, 2007). However, since the study is concerned with the interpretation of the role of social capital as a component of players' development (as opposed to quantification of levels of social capital within given social groups), the analysis relies largely on qualitative data. Qualitative research is suitable to investigate the ways different people experience the same events and processes, trying to reveal the significance of their interpretation of reality (McGuirk & O'Neill, 2005). Qualitative data was mostly accessed by means of semi-structured interviews. Interviewing was especially suited for this project since the study implied the investigation of complex motivations and the collection of diverse experiences and opinions (Dunn, 2005).

While qualitative and quantitative methods could be seen as conflicting (Winchester, 2005), the strategy of combining methods can offer important advantages (Bryman, 2004; McGuirk & O'Neill, 2005; Patton, 1990, 2002; Winchester, 2005). For example, the use of mixed methods can offer different perspectives to the same issue, provide valuable examples, and increase the credibility of research. In particular, combining methods can enhance the credibility of qualitative research by making available analytical strategies to verify and validate qualitative data (Patton, 1990).

Strategies to validate and verify qualitative data include triangulation. Triangulation

can be defined as “a process by which the researcher can guard against the accusation that a study’s findings are simply an artefact of a single method, a single source, or a single investigator’s biases” (Patton, 1990, p. 470). Several approaches to triangulation can be identified, all consisting in checking different aspects of data analysis (e.g. testing the flaws of methods, theories or analysts) to enhance the process’ credibility. In particular, Patton (1990) discusses four types of triangulation, summarised in table 2.1. In this study, triangulation was especially useful to monitor the consistency of findings obtained through survey and interviews (‘methods triangulation’) and the consistency of sources of interview data (‘triangulation of sources’).

**Table 2.1: Four types of triangulation to verify and validate qualitative analysis**

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Data</b>
<i>Methods triangulation</i>	Check the consistency of findings generated by different methods	Mixed
<i>Triangulation of sources</i>	Check the consistency of sources within the same method	Qualitative
<i>Analyst triangulation</i>	Use of multiple analysts to review findings	Qualitative
<i>Theory triangulation</i>	Use of multiple theories/perspectives to interpret data	Qualitative

Source: Adapted from Patton, 1990

Arksey and Knight (1999) point out the importance of reliability and validity, particularly for interview-based research. Whilst absolute reliability is not achievable, it is fundamental that the researcher tries to reduce his/her biases to the minimum when designing and conducting interviews. This study has followed the principle of limiting as much as possible variations in interview practice to maximise reliability (Arksey & Knight, 1999). Following Arksey and Knight (1999, p. 52), interview validity was enhanced by: interview techniques building rapport, trust and openness with the informants; schedule containing questions drawn from the literature and fully covering all the key aspects of the research; prompts to encourage

interviewees to clarify and expand their responses; adequate length of interviews; and a carefully chosen sample representing all points of views of the research question.

## 2.2 Gathering and analysing data

Data were gathered from the SAWSA database, interviews with exponents of South Australian women’s football and other sport experts, and a survey of South Australian state players. Interview data were analysed with the aid of qualitative analysis software *NVivo* (QSR International, 2007), while questionnaire data were managed and analysed with *SPSS* (SPSS Inc., 2009). Table 2.2 details the various stages of data collection for this research.

**Table 2.2: Stages of data collection**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Period</b>
Draft preliminary interviews’ schedule	Adelaide	Sep-Oct 2007
SBREC approval for interviews	Adelaide	Oct 2007
Access SAWSA database	Adelaide	Oct 2007
Identify and access informants for preliminary interviews	Adelaide	Oct 2007
Conduct preliminary interviews	Adelaide	Nov 2007
Identify and access informants for other interviews and conduct interviews	Adelaide/Mt. Gambier	Nov 2007-Apr 2008
Draft questionnaire for survey	Adelaide	Mar 2008
Gain SAWSA endorsement for survey	Adelaide	Mar 2008
SBREC approval for survey	Adelaide	Apr 2008
Identify and access survey respondents	Adelaide	Apr 2008
Conduct pilot test for survey	Adelaide	Apr 2008
Conduct survey	Adelaide/Mt. Gambier	May 2008
Data entry (interviews and survey)	Adelaide	Dec 2007-Jun 2008

Data collection implied several phases, including accessing the SAWSA database, formulation of questionnaires, preliminary interviews, conduction of other interviews, pilot survey, administration of survey, and data entry in analytical softwares (Tab. 2.2). All data were gathered between October 2007 and June 2008. Data were gathered in both Adelaide and Mount Gambier, where two field trips were conducted in November 2007 and May 2008. A significant amount of data gathered in Mount Gambier produced a case study (Flyvbjerg, 2006). While Mount Gambier was not considered as a separate entity, the distinct attributes of the local women's football milieu and the richness of data collected were particularly useful to discuss in-depth the role of local community networks in the passage between recreational (e.g. school) and club football (see section 5.2.3).

Since the study involved the use of human subjects, both interview and survey processes required approval from the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Ethics Committee (SBREC) (Flinders University - Office of Research, 2009). Approval was granted in two phases, one for the interviews and the other for the questionnaire survey. Each phase required a separate application process.

The population of this research comprises South Australian women's football administrators, coaches, players and parents; the Australian national women's football coach; a long-experienced, high profile male Australian footballer; and a former Australian national cricket (men's) coach with extensive experience of top-level players. The research emphasises the social networks encompassing players, clubs, squads and institutions of South Australian women's football and the processes that may turn those networks profitable for the development of elite players. To obtain a diverse array of points of view on the topic, informants were selected from different categories. Attention was placed in selecting informants with key roles and positions and extensive experience within South Australian and national women's football. Particular emphasis was placed on informants with long experiences in players' development. These include key administrators, top-level coaches, and senior elite players who experienced all levels of competitions (i.e. from informal games to the national team). Key figures and sport leaders were chosen in both Adelaide and Mount Gambier, encompassing representatives of clubs, state squads and state institutions. Young players and their parents were also part of

the study population in both Adelaide and Mount Gambier. Top-level sport professionals unrelated with women's football were also chosen to provide insights on general social processes affecting the development of elite sport players.

Themes of the interview and survey schedules were derived from the social capital literature, with special attention to the interplay between social capital and sport (e.g. Collins & Kay, 2003; Jarvie, 2006b; Seippel, 2006; Tonts, 2005) and empirical strategies to assess social capital (e.g. Baum et al., 2007; Bullen & Onyx, 2000; Inkeles, 2000; Stone, 2001; Stone & Hughes, 2002; Western et al., 2005). Questions and themes were refined in the light of information gained in preliminary interviews. Questions aimed to gather information on the importance of social capital for players to take career steps between informal and school football, club football, state squads and the national teams. Different informants contributed more comprehensively to different aspects and different career steps, according to their personal experience. All participants were invited to provide information in the wider context of players' development.

### **2.2.1 SAWSA database**

Data from the SAWSA database (South Australian Women's Soccer Association, 2007) were accessed early in the data collection process (Tab. 2.3), and were useful to understand the make-up of the various state squads. They consisted of tables and lists detailing the names of players and officials and their clubs of belonging for all the state squads from 2001 to 2007. The information format was plain and easily readable and the analysis relatively straightforward. The database did not include any personal information on players or others (e.g. address) apart from what is publicly accessible through SAWSA, therefore its use did not pose issues of confidentiality.

The SAWSA database contained original information which is not otherwise obtainable unless by keeping record from each year at the time of the publication of the various squads' lists on official SAWSA media (e.g. SAWSA website and newsletters). SAWSA database information was used to compile comparative tables showing variation in production of elite players and provision of state officials (volunteers) by club and region. This led to a better understanding of which clubs are particularly involved with elite women's football. It served as a first base for the



development of themes of inquiry for the preliminary interviews and the questionnaire survey. It also contributed to the choice of clubs to target to develop the population sample for the interviews.

The SAWSA database was accessed by means of personal contact with the SAWSA executive officer. After an initial telephone conversation, an official request for access was made via formal e-mail accompanied by information about this research. The requested data was then prepared and sent to the researcher electronically.

### **2.2.2 Interviews**

The interviews provided the most important data to inform this research. They involved a diverse sample of population that provided precious insights to all aspects of the research questions. Most interviews were face-to-face, however two were conducted by telephone. Nineteen interviews were conducted. Although they varied in length, they were generally about one hour long. All interviews were recorded electronically on a microphone USB drive and stored in audio file format on computer and disk. Interviews were transcribed and entered as text into NVivo software (QSR International, 2007) for later management and qualitative analysis.

The interviews were conducted as ‘semi-structured’ interviews, as opposed to ‘structured’ and ‘unstructured’ interviews, following the definition of Dunn:

*The semi-structured interview is organised around ordered but flexible questioning. [...] The role of the researcher [...] is recognised as being more interventionist than in unstructured interviews. This requires that the researcher redirect the conversation if it has moved too far from the research topic (Dunn, 2005, p. 88).*

The semi-structured interview was the best choice for this study. Following Dunn (2005), the conversation in unstructured interviews is essentially led by the interviewee, while structured interviews tend to be somewhat inflexible. Instead, the conversational style of semi-structured interviews (even if the interviewer works with a list of predetermined questions) allows for open responses in the informants’ own words and offers the informants the possibility to expand on issues that they

perceive as important (Longhurst, 2003).

Typically, the interviews were conducted more as conversations, with general questions being posed and prompts being offered when informants seemed to be having difficulties. Key concepts underpinning the project (e.g. social capital) were also explained to informants, although the interviews were generally conducted with a minimum of 'technical' jargon. While all respondents were asked to address the same issues (where competent), they were allowed to explore specific matters in more depth, and the order in which questions were posed varied slightly from one interview to another. Attention was always placed on building a relationship with the interviewees. Efforts were made to make the informants feel at ease with the interviewer. Interviews took place at locations proposed by the respondents, for example their workplace or their football clubs. Overall, the interviewer-informant relationships leaned towards the 'creative' or 'empathetic' style (as opposed to 'professional') described by Dunn (2005), in an attempt to create an intimate and non-threatening environment for the conversation. However, a certain detachment from the interviewees was kept to prevent the personal involvement of the researcher with women's football from acting as a bias for the informants. While being involved with the sport helped the in-depth understanding of most informants' perspectives, it was important that the informants did not perceive the interviewer as having any preconception or prejudice on any of the topics being discussed. Generally, the informants appeared comfortable during the interview process and not suspicious at all of the nature of the study. This was also reflected by the minimal percentage of those who were contacted but declined to take part into the process.

Informants were identified and contacted on the basis of the researcher's personal knowledge of South Australian women's football and the indications that emerged from preliminary interviews. While some were already known to the researcher, others (especially those in Mount Gambier) were identified and contacted with the 'snowballing' technique, "*whereby one contact [...] is used to help recruit another, who in turn puts the researcher in touch with another*" (Valentine & Clifford, 2003, p. 559). Participants were contacted via e-mail and asked for their consent for an interview. The initial e-mail contained a summary of the topics that the interview aimed to cover. Participants also received a letter of introduction from the

researcher's supervisor, an information sheet outlining the project and the interview process, and a consent form for the interview (see Appendix). All participants were over eighteen years old.

Two preliminary interviews were conducted in November 2007 with Ms. Wendy Carter and Mr. Kevin McCormack, respectively Executive Officer of SAWSA and Women's Football Head Coach of the South Australian Sports Institute (SASI). They are both public figures, acting as state leaders for women's football in South Australia, and are actively involved in the development of local elite players. Both had been previously interviewed by the researcher on other women's football themes for a project on the spatial organisation of the sport in Adelaide (Rosso, 2006). The preliminary interviews aimed to identify a framework to understand the nature of social networks that could have an impact on the development of elite players. For example, the preliminary interviews focussed on the types of social networks that exist within and between teams, clubs and institutions in South Australian women's football, and the pull and push factors (Lee, 1966) that may encourage or discourage players to take part in development programs at various levels. In other words, the preliminary interviews touched upon a wide range of themes to identify specific aspects to uncover during the main block of interviews. They also aimed to identify suitable informants (or categories of informants) for the following investigation. The preliminary interviews were analysed immediately after being conducted. Data were coded and organised into preliminary categories that served to build the content of the following interviews.

Following the preliminary interviews, themes and possible participants for the second (main) block of interviews were identified, and participants were accessed. Respondents for this second block of interviews were chosen according to their abilities to provide insights on particular aspects and stages of the career path of players. Respondents were identified for the local (i.e. Adelaide and Mount Gambier) milieu, the South Australian state system and the national teams' system. They were selected to gain information on social aspects of players' development referring to networks encompassing families, schools, local communities, clubs, state and national squads, and sporting institutions. Information concerning personal experiences of young players (under 18) was related by their parents (e.g. parents

were interviewed on their daughters' experiences). Respondents in the main block of interviews comprised: the national women's football head coach; a former national cricket head coach; a former semi-professional male Australian player, currently Coaching Education Officer of the South Australian Football Federation (FFSA) and elite women's football coach; the president of one of the largest Adelaide clubs; four Adelaide based/grown players with experiences in the National League and/or national teams; four administrators of the South East Women's Football Association (SEWFA); the regional development coach; and four parents of Mount Gambier players who made it to the South Australian state teams/development squads.

Data from the interviews was analysed following the general principles of constant comparison and coding associated with grounded theory (Bryman, 2004). As Arksey and Knight (1999, p. 162) put it, this involved:

*[...] constantly searching, comparing and interrogating the first few transcripts to establish analytical categories that address the research question, that are mindful of the research literature, and which allow the greatest amount of the data to be coded without either forcing them into categories or having categories that are so sprawling as to be virtually meaningless.*

Coding was an essential part of the analysis of interview data. It enabled the search for patterns and relationships from the early stages of the project, while data was still being collected. It also enabled the reduction of large amount of qualitative data into manageable conceptual categories (Cope, 2005; Neuman, 2006). Neuman (Neuman, 2006, p. 460) highlights the importance of coding explaining that:

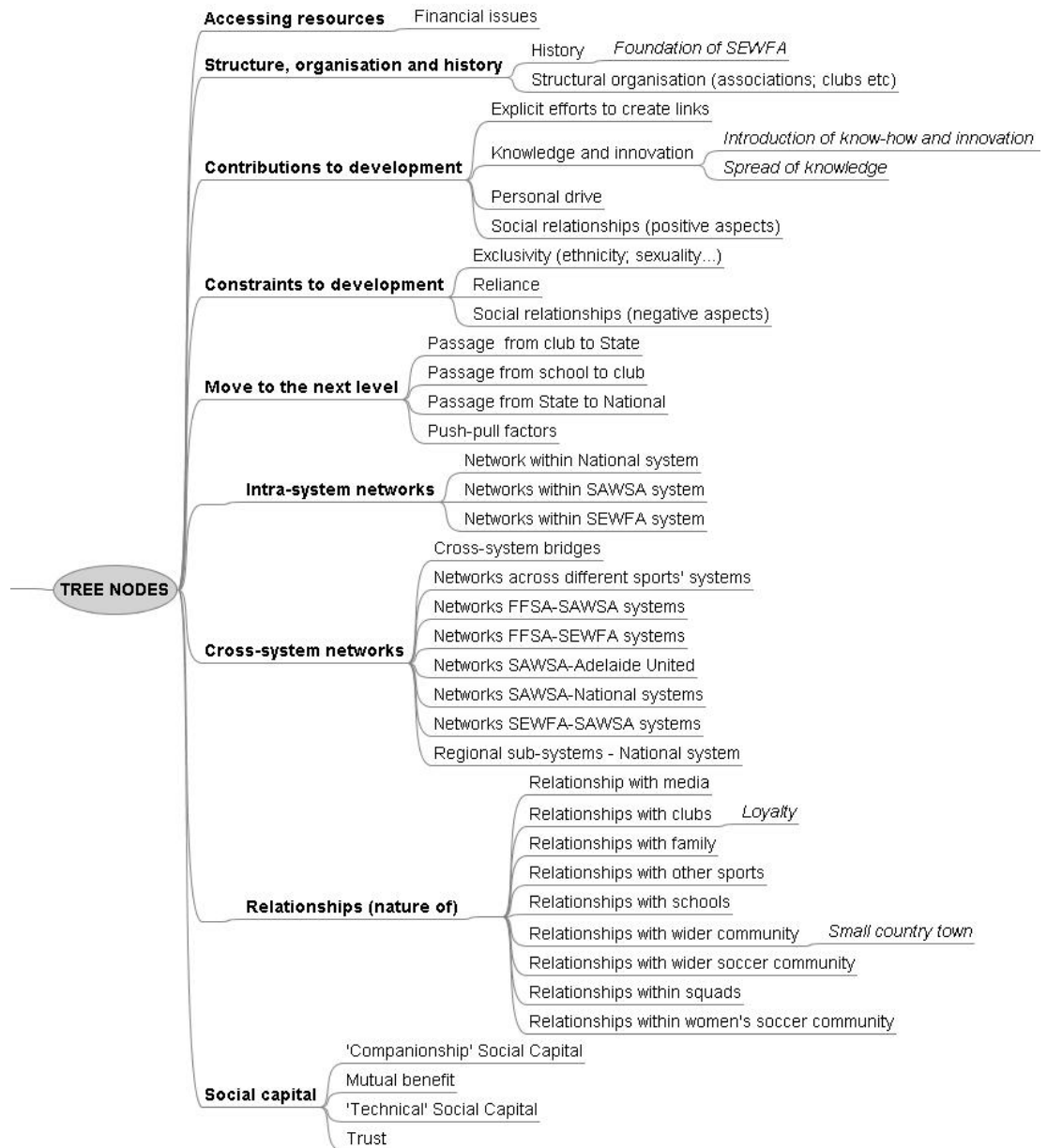
*Concept formation is an integral part of data analysis and begins during data collection. [...] A qualitative researcher analyses the data by organizing it into categories on the basis of themes, concepts, or similar features. [...] Eventually he/she links concepts to each other in terms of a sequence, as oppositional sets [...], or as a set of similar categories that he or she interweaves into theoretical statements.*

Following Neuman (2006), coding took place in three phases. The first one ('open

coding’) refers to the creation of preliminary labels to highlight themes contained in recently collected data. The second phase (‘axial coding’) implies open codes being organised and linked together to form key analytical categories. During axial coding the focus is not on the data, but on the codes themselves. The researcher looks for “*causes and consequences, conditions and interactions, strategies and processes, and looks for categories or concepts that clusters together*” (Neuman, 2006, p. 463). In the third phase (‘selective coding’) the aim is to examine previous codes to identify and select data to support the conceptual categories that were developed.

To overcome several limitations posed by manual coding, especially in relation to the management of large and complex data sets (van Hoven, 2003), interview data were managed using *NVivo* (QSR International, 2007). As Peace and van Hoven (2005) explain, CAQDAS (computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software) such as *NVivo* offer significant advantages to qualitative analysis in terms of word searching, data coding, and concept building. In particular, *NVivo* is a ‘code-based theory building’ software, designed with “*capacity for retrieval, coding, annotating, memo making, and cross-questioning*” (Peace & van Hoven, 2005, p. 239). *NVivo* allows the researcher to place the same fragment of data under different categories, and analyse them through a sophisticated range of searching tools.

In this project, *NVivo* was extremely useful for coding data and establish categories and themes on which to structure the discussion. The interview transcripts were organised into ‘documents’ that, together with ‘memos’ (e.g. key issues to keep in mind while analysing the data), comprised the ‘sources’ of the *NVivo* project. For each interview respondent, a ‘case’ with personal information (e.g. age, location, role in women’s football) was created, to allow the software building case-based queries and searches. Information in the transcripts was coded and codes were organised at first into ‘free nodes’ (i.e. without logical continuity) and later into ‘tree nodes’ (i.e. hierarchal categories) (Fig. 2.1).



**Figure 2.1: ‘Tree nodes’ created with NVivo**

Figure 2.1 shows the ‘tree nodes’ and ‘child nodes’ used to develop themes and concepts for the discussion of this research. Each ‘tree node’ represents a theme of discussion and incorporates several ‘child nodes’ describing different aspects of the same theme. For this project, forty-three ‘child nodes’ were organised into nine ‘tree nodes’. NVivo also allows the researcher to build ‘relationships’ (describing connections between two project items, e.g. nodes or cases), ‘queries’ (questioning data by words and/or codes), ‘matrices’ (sets of nodes resulting from particular queries), ‘models’ (identifying emerging patterns and/or connections), and to

generate reports on several research tasks.

### **2.2.3 Questionnaire survey**

Questionnaire surveys are generally used to gather “*information about the characteristics, behaviours and/or attitudes of a population by administering a standardized set of questions [...] to a sample of individuals*” (McLafferty, 2003, p. 87). In this project, the questionnaire survey served to provide a degree of quantitative validation to the more subjective qualitative interview data and to test some of the key themes emerged from the interviews with a wider population. The survey gathered both qualitative and quantitative information. For example, it gathered information on the number of friends and acquaintances that players had in their squads, as well as the players’ feel of belonging with their team mates. Questionnaire surveys present limitations in terms of depth and extent of qualitative data that are capable to gather. They are, however, one of the most practical and flexible qualitative research methods, and combine effectively with more intensive methods (i.e. interviews) to reinforce the qualitative analytical framework (McGuirk & O’Neill, 2005). The questionnaire survey was designed to further explore research themes that emerged from the interviews from the point of view of current South Australian state players. For example, the survey aimed to verify the importance of social relationships involving players within families, schools, clubs, state squads, and the women’s football community.

The population of the questionnaire survey comprised 137 players who took part into state development squads (run by SAWSA and aimed to identify players for the South Australian state teams and the SASI program) in 2007/08. In other words, the survey targeted players who were performing (or attempting to perform) the career step from club to state football. In 2007/08, SAWSA, SASI and SEWFA ran eight development squads in South Australia. Seven took place in Adelaide (managed by SAWSA and SASI – Under 12; Under 14; Under 15; Under 17; ‘Rising Stars’; ‘Young Sensation’ and ‘Goalkeeper’ development squads), and one in Mount Gambier (managed by SEWFA – Regional Development Squad). In Mount Gambier, the Regional Development Squad involved players of different age groups (eligible for the U14, U15 and U17 state teams), whilst in Adelaide all squads were organised by age. They targeted players aged nine to eighteen, and admission was based on

formal trials. Trials took place in October 2007 and the programs were conducted between October 2007 and March 2008. The survey comprised 123 players from the Adelaide region and fourteen players from the Mount Gambier region. Players of the Under 12 development squad were excluded from the survey due to ethical implications relative to their young age.

Survey respondents were identified with the aid of the SAWSA Executive officer, who provided a list of all the players who participated in state development squads in 2007/08. SAWSA was asked to prepare a letter of endorsement for the survey to be included in the envelope to target participants. Participants were contacted by means of mailed envelopes containing a letter of introduction from the researcher's supervisor, a letter of endorsement from SAWSA, an information sheet on the study project, the questionnaire form, a pre-stamped self-addressed return envelope, and a parental consent form (see Appendix). Parental consent forms had to be returned signed with the questionnaire forms as the population of the questionnaire survey was under 18 years old. In Adelaide, envelopes were mailed to participants, while in Mount Gambier they were handed to the participants' parents/guardians by the researcher. The small size of the population surveyed in the Mount Gambier region determined this choice, in an attempt to maximise the return rate (the researcher handed and collected forms from the players' parents).

The questionnaire comprised 30 'fixed response' questions (McLafferty, 2003). As suggested by McGuirk and O'Neill (2005), the questionnaire included four types of question content, aimed at collecting information on attributes, behaviour, attitudes and beliefs of participants. The first six questions asked to provide attribute information (for example the age of players, the development squad they were involved with and the friends and acquaintances they had in their squads), while the others asked to indicate levels of agreement with different statements on a preference scale (1 to 5 – 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'). The choice of 'fixed response' question was motivated by the young age of participants coupled with the need to keep the questionnaire as simple as possible for ease of analysis and interpretation (McLafferty, 2003).

McGuirk and O'Neill (2005, p. 155) assert that it is "*vital to try out a questionnaire*



*before it is distributed [...] with a sub-sample of your target population to assess the merits of its design, its appropriateness to the audience and whether it does in fact achieve your aims*". A pilot test for the questionnaire was conducted on 14 April 2008 with six players of the Regional Development Squad, at the end of a training session during a trip to Adelaide. The Regional Development Squad coach was present and he handed the questionnaire forms to six players aged between 14 and 16 to read the form and indicate if any question was unclear.

Approximately one month from the administration of the survey (mid-June 2008), the return rate (approximately 35 per cent, yielding 47 completed questionnaires) was considered as final. The survey was not the main method of data collection, and the main findings of this work refer especially to the interviews. Nevertheless, the survey was overall valuable to validate information obtained from interviews, and to give weight to the experiences of young players. The questionnaire survey was managed and analysed with SPSS (SPSS Inc., 2009). Variables were coded and re-coded in two steps. The original data set was created by coding all questions and produced 49 variables. Most of these variables indicated responses of participants on a numerical scale expressing values of agreement/disagreement from one to five. In particular, 34 variables were originally created with values of 1='strongly agree'; 2='agree'; 3='do not agree nor disagree'; 4='do not agree'; 5='strongly disagree'. In order to produce easily readable data, several of the original variables were re-coded. Of the 34 numerical scale variables, twenty were re-coded with simpler values that expressed general lack of agreement (comprising the 'strongly agree' and 'agree' responses) and general disagreement (comprising the 'do not agree nor disagree', 'do not agree', and 'strongly disagree' responses). The variables chosen for re-coding were all dependent variables, the ones whose value can be influenced by the value of other causal (independent) ones. For example, variables describing the feeling of belonging or general trust may be influenced by others expressing the number of friends within a team.

Eighteen out of twenty dependent variables were organised into four groups, each representing different indicators of social capital. The four indicators of social capital into which variables were organised are: 'general trust'; 'feeling of belonging'; 'learning and circulation of information'; 'ease to reach out for help'. 'General trust'

indicated trust of players in their state/club coaches, team mates and officials, the women's football institutions, the women's football community, the wider community and their families. 'Feeling of belonging' referred to the players' development squads, their clubs and the women's football community. 'Learning and circulation of information' indicated the players' belief on their clubs and state squads as learning environments. 'Ease to reach out for help' reflected the attitudes of players' in seeking help within their club and state squads.

## **2.3 Summary**

This chapter has presented the methodology used to explore the ways in which social capital can affect the career of South Australian women's football players. It has discussed the project's design and timetable, its theoretical methodological framework, the theoretical approach to social capital, the definition of the field of investigation, the issues associated with the research methods involved, and the methods of data collection and analysis. This research is an intensive design project of Human Geography, with methodological foundations in critical realism and grounded theory. It refers to social capital as an element of sporting development (i.e. career development) whose conceptualisation is influenced principally by the 'resource' approach to social capital. It makes use of mixed qualitative and quantitative methods, although it has a marked qualitative approach. Research methods include interviews and a questionnaire survey, however the interviews provided the most important data framework to address the key research questions. The issue of validity and credibility of qualitative data analysis has been carefully considered, and it has informed the design of both questionnaire and interview schedules as well as the strategies to verify the data (i.e. triangulation).

## Chapter 3

### **Literature review: a theoretical framework for social capital and development in sport**

The thesis is informed by three main bodies of literature. The first group comprises work towards definitions, characteristics, applications, consequences and implications of social capital and includes social network theory and analysis. The second body of literature refers to sports studies and includes technical, historical and social aspects of sport. The third group brings together the previous two, and applies the concept of social capital to research on social aspects of sports. However, the relationship between social capital and sport has traditionally been seen mostly in terms of social capital as an outcome of involvement with sport. In this sense, sport is generally considered as a forum for the creation and the accumulation of social capital, implying opportunities to increase community identity and cohesiveness. In a different light, sport has also been looked at as a ground for the reproduction of social exclusion. While social capital has been recognised as a determinant of participation in sport and leisure, social capital as a factor of sporting development, and particularly technical development of athletes, has been overlooked by social scientists.

This chapter reviews the literature on social capital and sports studies that informed the theoretical framework of this research on social capital as a component of the development of South Australian women's football players. Its objectives are: the identification of sensible interpretations, implications and key applications of the concept of social capital for the purpose of this research; the review of key themes in the literature of social aspects of sports; and the review of the literature on social capital and sport, with particular attention to the establishment of a theoretical purpose for this research addressing current theoretical gaps in the literature.

The sequence of this literature review is organised into three thematic groups: interpretations and applications of the concept of social capital; social implications of sports studies; and implications of the relationship between social capital and sport. The first part (3.1) reviews the main conceptualisations of and approaches to social

capital with particular attention to distinctions between the work of Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam. It also reviews and discusses some of the key notions associated with social capital relevant to this research, comprising ‘bonding’ and ‘bridging’ social capital, negative social capital, social networks and social network analysis, and issues related to measuring social capital. The second part (3.2) summarises the major sport-related academic research areas that contributed to the conceptual framework of this thesis, and discusses key contributing concepts from the fields of sport geography, sport and identity, and talent development in sport. The third section (3.3) reviews the body of literature on social capital and sport and discusses the most relevant themes to this research. Furthermore, it identifies the theoretical gap in the current literature that this thesis aims to address.

### **3.1 Social capital**

The concept of social capital has been well-known and accepted by sociologists dating back to the work of Durkheim and Marx, but gained new prominence in the 1980s and 1990s when attention was drawn to “*how such nonmonetary forms [of capital] can be important sources of power and influence*” (Portes, 1998, p. 2). In recent years, the notion has become one of the most popular sociological concepts (Fine, 2001) and it has been applied to a wide array of academic and policy fields and subjects (e.g. Baum & Ziersch, 2003; Glover & Hemingway, 2005; Portes, 1998; Seippel, 2006; Warde, Tampubolon, & Savage, 2005). For example, Woolcock and Narayan (2000, p. 229) identify nine primary areas of current work on social capital: “*families and youth behaviour; schooling and education; community life (virtual and civic); work and organisations; demography and governance; collective action; public health and environment; crime and violence; and economic development*”.

#### **3.1.1 Main conceptualisations**

There is no consensus on who has made the greatest theoretical contributions, however there is general agreement that the recent popularity of social capital is attributable to three writers in particular, namely Pierre Bourdieu (1986; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), James Coleman (1988, 1990) and Robert Putnam (1995; Putnam et al., 1993). Webb et al. (2002) ascribe the paternity of the term ‘social capital’ to Bourdieu, within his wider analysis of the foundations of social order (Field, 2003), while Johnston et al. (2000) note that its original use is often attributed to Coleman’s

research on the formation of human capital (Coleman, 1988, 1990). However, while the key concepts of social capital were originally formulated by Bourdieu and Coleman in the 1980s (Lin, Burt, & Cook, 2001), it was Putnam's work on civic engagement, trust and reciprocity in Italy (Putnam et al., 1993) and the United States (Putnam, 1995, 2000) that popularised the term (Johnston et al., 2000). In Australia, the Boyer Lectures presented by Eva Cox (1995) in the mid 1990s contributed to bringing public attention to social capital.

Social capital is clearly a contested concept (Healy et al., 2004; Seippel, 2006). Broadly speaking, social capital is a resource embedded in social relations that can be accumulated by individuals and groups and helps people to gain advantages and/or act collectively (e.g. Field, 2003; Giorgas, 2007b; Lin, Burt et al., 2001). However, the original definitions offered by Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam emphasised different aspects and produced significant conflicts about the meanings and the attributes ascribed to the concept (Baum & Ziersch, 2003; Glover & Hemingway, 2005; Portes, 1998; Warde & Tampubolon, 2002; Winter, 2000). Atherley (2006, p. 349) summarises effectively the different approaches of Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam, in that the first considers social capital as "*resources that provide access to group goods*", the second as "*aspects of social structure that actors can use as resources to achieve their interests*" and the third as "*trust, norms and networks that facilitate cooperation and mutual benefit*".

#### 3.1.1.1 Bourdieu

Bourdieu (1986, p. 248) defined social capital as:

*[...] the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit in the various senses of the word.*

Giorgas (2007b) explains that central to Bourdieu's interpretation is the emphasis on the various dimensions of 'capital', which he considers as economic, cultural and

social, and which (when combined), determine the social position of individuals. Social capital is seen by Bourdieu as a key factor in the production and reproduction of socio-economic differentiation (Holt, 2008). Bourdieu's discussion (1986, 1993; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), based on the idea of resources that individuals can obtain by means of social connections, suggests a parallel between social and economic capital, particularly in introducing ideas of investment, exchange and profitability. Social capital, for Bourdieu, resides with individuals who, by virtue of membership in a group, have social networks that can produce benefits for one or more members of that group.

Group members, in order to gain access to resources that would be otherwise problematic to obtain, engage in social relationships that presuppose the exchange of some form of favours and are based on the expectation of some kind of returns. For Bourdieu, the concept of profitability in social capital is so important that "*the profits which accrue from membership in a group are the basis of the solidarity which makes them possible*" (1986, p. 249). He explains that group members do not become such just naturally, but their social connections are the results (not necessarily conscious) of explicit investments in sociability. Individuals and groups make specific investments in time, attention and concern in order to build and preserve social networks. The social networks where social capital resides are therefore built and reproduced through "*investment strategies, individual or collective*", aimed at the creation, accumulation and maintenance of "*useful relationships that can secure material or symbolic profits*" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 249).

The profitability of social capital may vary according to the size and quality of the networks upon which it depends and their capacity to reproduce themselves (Bourdieu, 1986). The social capital held by an agent may increase in value if the networks to which it is linked connect that agent with a great number of other agents. Similarly, it may increase in value if the networks connect the agent with other agents in possession of great volumes of social capital. In other words, social capital may be more or less valuable according to the number of connections that an individual (or group) can count on, and the worth of those connection in terms of their ability to grant access of a desired resource. By the same token, the value of social capital is greater if the generating networks are durable and stable.

As Glover & Hemingway (2005) summarise, social capital is intended by Bourdieu as a purposive resource, aimed directly at gaining access to resources available within specific social networks. It can be created intentionally through the building of social connections between groups or individuals, and it implies the pursuit of profit for the social group where it belongs. The groups are defined and limited by mutual recognition and obligation, and the amount of social capital available to the groups depends upon the extent and the size of the members' social networks, the quantity of resources retained by other members of those networks, and the network durability.

Portes (1998) considers Bourdieu's as the most refined analysis among those of the three main social capital theorists. However, this is not mirrored by the influence it had on later uses of the concept, partly because he conducted his work in Europe while subsequent debates took place primarily in the USA (Warde & Tampubolon, 2002). Woolcock and Narayan (2000), for example, consider the work of the Americans Coleman and Putnam to be more influential.

#### *3.1.1.2 Coleman*

Coleman conceptualises social capital in the framework of education, as a useful resource to acquire human capital. According to Coleman (1988, p. S98)

*Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors – whether persons or corporate actors – within the structure.*

Coleman (1988) identifies three forms of social capital accruing to individuals from social relations and social structures: obligations and expectations, social norms and sanctions, and information channels. The first motivates people to invest in social relationships and is the basis of trust; the second provides incentives to act for the collective good; and the third allows individuals to gain access to advantageous information in possession of others. Coleman was also “*instrumental in determining that social capital may exist in the family unit*” (Stone, 2001, p. 9) apart from other

social networks. In particular, he maintains that social capital in the family facilitates the effects of physical and human capital on the children, and provides children with important resources (parents' attention and dedication) for schooling achievement.

Winter (2000) notes that, despite using different terms and working within a different theoretical tradition, Coleman essentially constructs the same theoretical concept conceptualised by Bourdieu. Social capital is still conceived as a resource useful to facilitate the acquisition of other resources or benefits. Moreover, it is still conceptualised as a resource accruing to individuals. According to Field (2003), instead, Coleman demonstrated that social capital is not limited to the powerful but can produce important benefits to disadvantaged individuals and communities.

Coleman's conceptualisation has been criticised for its vagueness and the fact that it tends to equate social capital with the resources acquirable through it, leading to issues of tautology (Portes, 1998). In particular, it is seen as responsible for opening "*the way for relabelling a number of different and even contradictory processes as social capital*" (Portes, 1998, p. 5). However, despite its limitations, Coleman's contribution remains significant (e.g. Baum & Ziersch, 2003; Field, 2003; Giorgas, 2007b; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). His thesis was further developed by Putnam (Giorgas, 2007b), who ascribes to Coleman "*primary credit for developing the "social capital" theoretical framework*" (Putnam, 1995, p. 77).

### 3.1.1.3 Putnam

Putnam made use of social capital to explain reasons for different levels of civic engagement (Field, 2003). Influenced by Coleman (1988) and Granovetter (1973), Putnam shifted the focus of social capital from the individual to the collective sphere, and widened awareness of the concept to writers in numerous disciplines including political sciences, public policy and geography (e.g. Cox, 1995; Grenier & Wright, 2004; Hall, 1999; Hofferth & Iceland, 1998; Holt, 2008; Li, Pickles, & Savage, 2005; Lowndes, 2000; Mohan, Twigg, Barnard, & Jones, 2005). He defines social capital as "*features of social organisations such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit*" (Putnam, 1995, p. 67). Putzel (1997, p. 941) points out that in Putnam, and in Fukuyama (1995) after him, social capital ceases to be an identifiable resource accruing to individuals or specific



social groups and becomes instead a “*property of society as a whole*”, accruing to entire communities “*for the public good*”.

Central to Putnam’s conceptualisation are voluntary organisations, which are seen as a key to strengthening social bonds. In particular, leisure-based voluntary organisations (e.g. social and sport clubs) are seen as fundamental sites for the creation of social capital, necessary to establish trust within communities and foster social cohesion (Glover & Hemingway, 2005). For Putnam, social capital fosters collective action by “*increasing the potential costs to defectors; fostering robust norms of reciprocity; facilitating flows of information [...]; embodying the success of past attempts of collaboration; and acting as a template for future cooperation*” (Putnam, 1993, in Field, 2003, p. 31).

Despite the popularity of his interpretation, in particular within policy (Bryson & Mowbray, 2005) and geographical debate (Holt, 2008), Putnam’s account has attracted criticism for the lack of clarity between individual and collective social capital (Portes & Landolt, 1996), for producing reductive practices of empirical measurement of social capital (Harris & De Renzio, 1997), and for the lack of a critical conceptualisation of space (Holt, 2008). Moreover, Portes (1998) identifies tautology as an even more important problem in Putnam’s interpretation of social capital, and explains that describing social capital as a property of communities and nations, rather than individuals, leads to considerations of social capital simultaneously as a cause and an effect (logical circularity).

### **3.1.2 Approaches to social capital**

The variety of fields and purposes to which the concept of social capital has been applied generated diverging approaches to it. Moreover, the broad interest generated by social capital and its broad use across different disciplines often leads to confusion about its nature, origin and effects (Woolcock, 1998). In particular, Field et al. (2000) and Portes (1998) highlight that the original meaning of social capital risks losing significance due to the diversity of contexts to which it is applied. Bullen and Onyx (2000, p. 24) maintain that social capital remains a “*slippery*” and “*poorly defined*” concept often left open to interpretation. Some social scientists even argue that the concept lacks the attributes of capital and that a different term should be used

(Robinson, Schmid, & Siles, 2002). Robinson et al (2002), however, argue that most criticisms arise from the fact that scientists have manipulated the social capital concept to the point of including in its definition notions of its possible uses and sources, and defend the legitimate use of the capital metaphor.

Common and contrasting features of social capital can be noted throughout the extensive literature dedicated to it. Among the most widely accepted notions are the facts that: social capital is generally associated with membership in social networks, social norms, trust, reciprocity, and the enhancement of groups' members' ability to gain access to external resources (Glover & Hemingway, 2005); that through connections with one another "*people are able to work together and achieve things that they would not achieve by themselves*" (Field, 2003, p. 1); and that social capital is generated by sharing experiences and establishing trust (Glover & Hemingway, 2005).

Major differences in approaches to social capital have been described by several authors (Glover & Hemingway, 2005; Healy et al., 2004; Lin, 2001; Seibert et al., 2001; Woolcock, 1998, 2003; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). Seibert et al. (2001) provide an account of the 'weak ties' (Granovetter, 1973, 1983, 1995), 'structural holes' (Burt, 1992), and 'social resources' (Lin, 1990; Lin, Burt et al., 2001) approaches taken by social network researchers. Lin (2001) highlights two 'individual' and 'group' perspectives based on the level at which benefits accrue to social actors. Healy et al. (2004) review three approaches – 'neoclassical', 'communitarian', and 'synergy' – about the role of institutions in building social capital. Similarly, Woolcock and Narayan (2000) evaluate three – 'communitarian', 'networks', and 'institutional' – perspectives of social capital in the field of economic development, stressing the importance of: local organisations such as clubs and associations ('communitarian' view); macroeconomic policy-making bodies (institutional view); and social structures (network view). Woolcock and Narayan (2000) propose a fourth approach, the 'synergy' view, integrating concepts from the 'institutional' and the 'network' views.

The most important distinction in approaches to social capital is provided by Woolcock (2003). He points to two main different approaches to social capital,

influenced by the theoretical approaches of Bourdieu and Putnam and distinguished by the nature of its desired outcomes: the ‘resource’ and the ‘civic’ approaches. The ‘resource’ approach is more closely influenced by Bourdieu and is mainly concerned with social structures like networks and social roles. It interprets social capital as access to resources within a social network, to be used to establish or maintain individual or group advantages. The ‘civic’ approach, on the other hand, is closely influenced by Putnam. It focuses on the extent of individual involvement in social networks. It is concerned with cultural norms like generalised trust and reciprocity, and it tends to aim at the assessment of the “*civic health*” of social groups, communities and regions (Glover & Hemingway, 2005, p. 395). While the ‘civic’ approach tends to be the most common within the social capital literature, several authors agree that Bourdieu offers the most theoretically sound conceptualisation of social capital (Edwards & Cheers, 2007; Fine, 2001; Glover & Hemingway, 2005; Portes, 1998; Warde & Tampubolon, 2002). Table 3.1 summarises the principal differences between the ‘resource’ and the ‘civic’ approaches to social capital.

**Table 3.1: ‘Resource’ and ‘civic’ approaches to social capital**

Approach	Main influence	Main concerns	Conceptualisation
‘Resource’ approach	Bourdieu	Social structures (e.g. social networks) Resources (e.g. knowledge; support; financial resources) available within structures	Social capital seen as a resource aimed at establishing and maintaining advantages for social groups
‘Civic’ approach	Putnam	Levels of involvement in social relationships Social norms (e.g. generalised trust; reciprocity)	Social capital used to assess the ‘civic health’ of social groups

Source: Adapted from Woolcock, 2003, in Glover & Hemingway, 2005

### 3.1.3 ‘Bonding’ and ‘bridging’ social capital

Within the social capital literature, considerable emphasis is placed on two

fundamental aspects of social capital: its ‘bonding’ and ‘bridging’ forms. While it was Gittel and Vidal (1998) who introduced the terms (Giorgas, 2007b), their use is generally associated with Putnam (2000). Giorgas (2007b) notes how these concepts refer to the classical work of Durkheim on social integration and the ‘weak ties’ theory of Granovetter (1973). As Tonts (2005) puts it, ‘bonding’ social capital refers to relationships of trust and reciprocity within dense or closed networks, while ‘bridging’ social capital refers to relationships between people from different networks. Heterogeneity of members of social groups can be seen as a factor enhancing the bridging properties of social capital (Stone & Hughes, 2002). Putnam (2000) refers to ‘bonding’ social capital also as ‘exclusive’, while terms ‘bridging’ social capital also ‘inclusive’.

These two types of social capital are thought to work in different ways: while ‘bonding’ social capital is “*inward looking and reinforces exclusive identities and homogeneous groups*”, ‘bridging’ social capital is thought to make resources available to one network accessible to the members of another (Tonts 2005, p. 138). In particular, ‘bonding’ social capital facilitates the mobilisation of solidarity and reinforces self-identity within specific social groups, whilst ‘bridging’ social capital is valuable to generate broader identities and reciprocity and to facilitate the flow of information (Putnam, 2000). ‘Bonding’ social capital is associated with the concept of ‘getting by’ in life, while ‘bridging’ social capital is thought to help people to ‘get ahead’ (Putnam, 2000; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). “*Bonding social capital constitutes a kind of sociological superglue, whereas bridging social capital provides a sociological WD-40*” (Putnam, 2000, p. 23).

Despite the apparent differences between ‘bonding’ and ‘bridging’ social capital, it is important to note that they should not be considered as separate entities. Contrarily, social capital may have bonding and bridging attributes, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive (Warde & Tampubolon, 2002). Woolcock and Narayan (2000) suggest that positive or negative outcomes for individuals and groups, and in particular economic development outcomes, are often the results of the combination of ‘bonding’ and ‘bridging’ social capital, and that the desirable ‘recipe’ combining these two ingredients varies over time. Also Granovetter (1995) maintains that development presupposes both ‘bonding’ and ‘bridging’ social capital. Putnam

himself underlines that “*bonding and bridging are not “either/or” categories to which social networks can neatly divided, but “more-or-less” dimensions along which we can compare different forms of social capital*” (Putnam, 2000, p. 23).

#### **3.1.4 Negative social capital**

Portes (1998) and Putzel (1997) lament that literature on social capital places excessive emphasis on its positive consequences, while it tends to forget that sociability have also less desirable outcomes. These refer in particular to possible negative external effects that excessively strong bonds among members of a given social group can have on others, including racism, sectarianism, corruption and social exclusion (Field, 2003; Tonts, 2005). A common criticism of social capital, especially Putnam’s interpretation, is that it leads to overly positive assumptions about its real contribution to functioning societies (Johnston et al., 2000). This is particularly true for those who share a ‘communitarian view’ of social capital (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000) and tend to consider it as an ever positive notion. Putzel (1997, p. 940) warns that while “*social capital has become the latest elixir*” within policy discussion about development, it is important to avoid its idealisation as a necessarily good entity.

In recent years, however, there is growing recognition that social relationships based on trust and reciprocity can lead to undesirable outcomes (Tonts, 2005). Giorgas (2007b) notes that Putnam himself recognises that social capital has a ‘dark side’, which can cause negative consequences for both the members of a given social network and for society at large (Putnam, 2000). Ostrom (2000, p. 176) argues that “*there is a dark side to social capital as well as to physical and human capital*”, and that the Mafia, for example, uses social capital as a fundamental feature of its organisational structure. Woolcock and Narayan (2000, p. 321) point out that the ‘network’ view of social capital recognises its potential negative component, and describe social capital as a “*double-edged sword*”, that can place considerable demands on network members’ sense of obligation. Harris and De Renzio (1997, in Putzel, 1997, p. 941) maintain that while social capital can facilitate certain actions, it can be “*useless or even harmful for others*”.

Among those who contributed to theorising the negative consequences of social

capital, Portes and Landolt (1996) and Portes (1998) make the best arguments. After discussing common faults of social capital theory (misuse of original concepts; confusion between causes and effects of social capital; and considerations of social capital as ‘always good’), Portes and Landolt (1996) identify several ‘downsides’ of social capital, including ‘conspiracies against the public’; ‘restrictions on individual freedom and business initiatives’; ‘undermining of business initiatives’; and ‘downward levelling pressures’. Drawing on Portes and Landolt (1996) Portes (1998, p. 15) emphasises the importance of recognising that community networks, social control and collective sanctions are not necessarily “*unmixed blessings*”. He underlines four main consequences of negative social capital. The first, ‘exclusion of outsiders’, occurs when excessive exclusivity results from strong bonds within a network. The second, ‘excessive claims on group members’, refers to free-riding problems, “*as less diligent members enforce on the more successful all kinds of demands backed by shared normative structure*” (Portes, 1998, p. 16). The third consequence of negative social capital is ‘restriction of personal freedom’ resulting from high levels of social control fostered by excessively strong social bonds. The fourth negative consequence arises from circumstances in which group bonds are reinforced by shared adversity to mainstream society. In this case, ‘downward levelling norms’ operate against individual success, which is seen as undermining group cohesion.

### **3.1.5 Social networks**

The concept of social capital intrinsically relates to social networks. Social networks are the “*invisible bonds which are knitted together into a criss-cross mesh of connections, much as a fishing net or a length of cloth is made from intertwined fabrics*” that link individuals within society (Scott, 1988, p. 109). In other words, they represent the structure of social relationships. Several authors recognise the importance of social networks for the mobilisation of social capital (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000), and social capital is often seen as a resource embedded in social networks (Lin, 2001). Social networks, therefore, can be considered the structural element (or the infrastructure) of social capital (Baum & Ziersch, 2003).

An important body of literature that informs how network structure affects mechanisms underpinning the functioning of society relates to social network

analysis (Gretzel, 2001; Scott, 1988, 2000; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Social network analysis draws on graph theory and is specifically concerned with the measurement of network attributes such as density, fragmentation and centralization. It makes use of visual and mathematical models to map relationships between people and/or social groups (Cotterell, 2007; Cummings & Doh, 2000; Scott, 2000). Some social network analysts are specifically concerned with personal networks (personal network analysis) (Plickert, Côté, & Wellman, 2007; Wellman, 2007). Along with other central principles to the network perspective, Wasserman and Faust (1994) include the concept that links between actors are the channels for the flow of resources. In other words, network structures affect the availability of resources (e.g. information) to individuals and groups. This relates to the thesis of Granovetter (1973, 1983, 2005), who argues that social networks affect the flow and the quality of information. In particular, weak ties (acquaintances) are seen as critical for the acquisition of information not commonly available within networks characterised mostly by strong ties (close friends) (Granovetter, 1973, 1983). Social networks are also seen as important sources of trust as well as punishment and reward (Granovetter, 2005).

Social network scholars have focussed on different characteristics of networks to identify the key to social capital (Lin, Burt et al., 2001). Burt (2001) highlights two major network perspectives on social capital, the 'open network' perspective (focussed on ties outside a social group) and the 'closed network' one (focussed on internal ties) and argues that they are in fact complementary. The 'open network' argument is valid if the ties outside the social group increase the resources of that group, while the 'closed network' argument is valid when the resources inside the group are enough to guarantee members' gain. Burt (2000) argues that certain specific network structures (i.e. 'closure' – networks with actors closely interconnected, often also referred to as dense networks – and 'brokerage' – opportunities to exchange information between actors who are not closely interconnected) are directly responsible for social capital (Burt, 2000). 'Closure' is deemed to facilitate the spread of information throughout a network, while 'brokerage' connects actors across structural holes within social networks that act as buffers between different flows of information (Burt, 1992). Actors who are able to create bridges across such holes can establish advantages to access new information

(Burt, 2000).

While some scholars privilege the location of individuals within networks (Burt, 1992, 2000, 2002), others consider the nature of social capital as a resource embedded in networks to be critical (Lin, 1990, 2001; Lin, Fu, & Hsung, 2001). The argument of location within networks is based on the idea that social capital derives from proximity to strategic positions within social networks (e.g. a bridge). The ‘embedded resource’ approach, instead, analyses social capital in terms of “*the amount or variety*” of valuable resources (e.g. knowledge and power) “*in others with whom an individual has direct or indirect ties*” (Lin, 2001, p. 13). Interaction and networking facilitate information flow; exert influence on agents (e.g. people in charge of important decisions); provide social credentials; and reinforce identity and recognition (Lin, 2001). According to Lin (2001), privileged network positions can facilitate, but not determine, access to better embedded resources.

### **3.1.6 Measuring social capital**

The ideas put forward by social network scholars contribute to providing a framework to analyse and measure social capital. However, there is no widely held agreement on how social capital should be measured. Western et al. (2005) summarise the most common strategies to measure social capital, and make a point for the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods. While a variety of studies have measured social capital quantitatively (Baum & Ziersch, 2003), quantitative measurements are particularly complicated. On the other hand, qualitative measurements of social capital can be particularly useful to examine the context in which it operates and to appreciate its multidimensional nature (Baum & Ziersch, 2003). Western et. al. (2005) identify two traditional measures of social capital, referring to measuring network physical structures (e.g. size and density) and network normative attributes (e.g. trust and reciprocity). Both measures are valuable and useful to identify indicators of social capital accruing to both individuals (Coleman, 1988) and communities (Bullen & Onyx, 2000). Nevertheless, regardless of the approach and method employed, social capital is not easy to observe and measure (Ostrom, 2000). The abstract and multidimensional nature of the concept poses important questions about its empirical worth (Giorgas, 2007b) and its different conceptualisations add further difficulties to the establishment of



universally accepted indicators and measurement strategies (Pope, 2003). While this study is not concerned with the quantification of social capital, empirical studies on social capital help to identify indicators useful to inform its analytical framework.

Stone and Hughes (2002, p. 4) assert that it is important to measure network structures because “*the nature of social capital varies according to certain characteristics of the structure of the networks in which trust and reciprocity inhere*”, including the networks’ scope or extent, the density of ties within networks and the diversity of relationships. Examples of measurement of networks physical characteristics include Paxton’s (1999) assessment of American declining social capital, Coleman’s (1988) research on human and social capital, and Krishna and Uphoff’s (1999) empirical study of collective action in India (Stone & Hughes, 2002). Western et al. (2005) explain that measuring the physical structure of networks implies measuring network size (number of people in a network and their geographical dispersion); capacity (ability to draw resources from people within a network); homogeneity (e.g. in terms of class, religion, gender and wealth); openness (as opposed to closeness, when network members are closely linked with each other); and density (overlapping of networks: extent to which members of a network have memberships in other networks).

Measuring network normative attributes implies measuring trust (generalised trust towards strangers and institutionalised trust towards ‘the government’); unity (feeling of belonging to a network); and reciprocity (‘giving back’ something to a network) (Western et al., 2005). This method is often employed to assess social capital indicators in relation to community strength (Bullen & Onyx, 1998, 2000; Chaskin et al., 2006; Inkeles, 2000; Stone, 2001; Western et al., 2005), civic participation (Wilson & Mayer, 2006), identity (Brough, Bond, Hunt, Jenkins, & Schubert, 2006) social inclusion (Wilson, 2005), and public health (Baum & Palmer, 2002; Baum et al., 2007; Population Research and Outcome Studies Unit, 2005; Taylor, Williams, Dal Grande, & Herriot, 2006).

### **3.1.7 Applications of social capital**

The concept of social capital has been applied to numerous research fields not only restricted to the social sciences. While this work is concerned especially with the

relationship between social capital and sport (studies on social capital and sport are considered as a separate entity in section 3.3), it is useful to summarise other applications of social capital that contribute to inform this thesis.

#### *3.1.7.1 Community*

One of the most common applications of social capital refers to community studies, and generally applies Putnam's perspective on social capital. In this case, social capital (intended as trust and reciprocity arising from increased interaction between citizens and governments) is seen as a means to reverse processes of social and economic community decline and distrust in society and government institutions (Stone, 2001). The concept of community is important for this thesis and the community level is one of the milieux in which dynamics of social capital are considered for the development of women's football players. Jarvie (2006b) summarises nicely several different points of view on the term 'community', making clear that it refers to groups of people with common characteristics beyond their geographical location. "*Community is central to social capital because social capital may vary between and within communities and the physical, social, and economic characteristic of community may affect the levels of social capital within it*" (Baum & Ziersch, 2003p. 321). On the other hand, levels of social capital within a community can affect its social and economic characteristics (Gittell & Vidal, 1998).

Social capital often applies to communities in terms of 'community strength'. It refers to strategies of 'community building' and 'community development' through increasing levels of social capital among (socially and/or economically depressed) local communities, and applies to both urban (Boyd, Hayes, Wilson, & Bearsley-Smith, 2008; Brough et al., 2006; Lilley, 2005; Randolph & Judd, 2000; Ziersch, Putland, Palmer, MacDougall, & Baum, 2007) and rural (Alston, 2002; Boyd et al., 2008; Giorgas, 2007a, 2007b; Hofferth & Iceland, 1998) settings. Some studies have a distinctively local community approach (Wilson & Mayer, 2006), while others are concerned with broader meanings of community, encompassing ethnic identity (Brough et al., 2006), sexual preferences (Edwards & Cheers, 2007), and nations (Hall, 1999).

The relationship between social capital and communities is often discussed for urban

policy (Bryson & Mowbray, 2005; Champlin, 1999; Randolph & Judd, 2000), and is one of the foundations of the debate on social exclusion (Arthurson & Jacobs, 2004; Lilley, 2005; Randolph & Judd, 2000; Wilson, 2005; Wilson & Chiveralls, 2005). “*Social exclusion refers to the societal and institutional processes that exclude certain groups from full participation in the social, economic, cultural and political life of societies*” (Narayan, 1999, p. 4). Baum and Ziersch (2003) note that social exclusion is relevant to social capital because it focuses on the dynamics of marginalisation linking poverty to the social elements of exclusion.

Another dimension to the literature on social capital and communities relates to virtual social networks (Blanchard & Horan, 1998). Computer-supported social networks make possible the development of virtual communities (Smith & Kollock, 1999; Wellman et al., 1996) with their own sense of identity (Koh & Kim, 2003). Dubè et al. (2006) and Porter (2006) develop a typology of virtual communities, and Hinds and Lee (2008) maintain that their success depends on the structure of their social networks. Virtual communities are important places for the accumulation of social capital and can contribute to increase the social capital of physically based communities (Blanchard & Horan, 1998).

### *3.1.7.2 Public health*

Social capital attracted significant attention both in Australia and overseas as a means of improving health status (Edwards & Cheers, 2007; Mohan et al., 2005; Population Research and Outcome Studies Unit, 2005; Taylor et al., 2006; Ziersch, Baum, Dougall, & Putland, 2005). The idea behind this is that health is influenced by the people’s perception of the places they live in and their ability to participate with their communities, which in turn are influenced by social capital (Baum & Palmer, 2002). For example, participation in voluntary groups can create health through increasing social capital (Osborne, Ziersch, & Baum, 2008). Baum et al. (2007) studied levels of health and social capital (measured by trust, social networks, reciprocity, civic activity and help available to people) in different urban Adelaide neighbourhoods. Zeirsch et al. (2009) found that social capital and its relationship to health differs between rural and urban areas in South Australia, and Boyd et al. (2008) note that community youth services have great potential to improve the mental health of rural adolescents. Osborne et al. (2008) found that women's

participation in voluntary groups is significantly associated with not working full time, living in a married relationship, and having a university education.

#### *3.1.7.3 Education and learning*

The relationship between social capital and learning has attracted considerable attention since Coleman's seminal work on social capital and the acquisition of human capital (Coleman, 1988, 1990). Coleman (1988) showed that ties between teachers, parents, and community had a positive impact on children's performance at school. Field (Field, 2005a, 2005b) suggests that there is a positive association between social capital and lifelong learning, and that people who hold more social connections tend to have more constructive attitudes about learning in adult life. Balatti et al. (2006) maintain that the process of learning together produces social capital among adult learners, which in turn favours the accumulation of human capital. Schuller (2002) notes that social capital not only can encourage people to acquire and use knowledge, but also to validate it. However, social capital can also constitute a barrier for learning and social networks can undermine the acquisition of knowledge. For example, Field (2005a) suggests that networks' members can place excessive trust on their existing networks rather than concentrating on new information or ideas.

#### *3.1.7.4 Economic development*

Social capital has been studied extensively in the field of economic development (Woolcock, 2001). Woolcock and Narayan (2000) outline the evolution of social capital research in this context. Johnston et al. (2000) bring back the origin of this debate to Putnam's argument that social capital underpinned differences in economic success among different Italian regions (Putnam et al., 1993). Regional development outcomes can be influenced by social capital, which facilitates co-operation between the various economic actors within a region (Beer, Maude, & Pritchard, 2003). Granovetter (1995) argues that development presupposes both bonding and bridging social capital.

Some writers (e.g. Putnam) emphasise the importance of horizontal connections fostered by local (and especially voluntary) institutions to facilitate economic development. Others recognise that a significant aspect of social capital as a component of economic development is the role of the state in influencing outcomes

of social capital between individuals and groups. Gertler (1997), for example, recognises the importance of macro-regulatory institutions in exerting significant influence on the degree to which firms engage in co-operation. The attitude of governments can have profound impacts on how groups interact with each other (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). This concept is captured by the 'institutional view' on social capital, which, however, fails to recognise the role of microeconomic components in the social capital framework (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000).

Woolcock and Narayan (2000) propose a framework in which development is seen as dependent upon the collective action in the pursuit of common goals by members of the state, the corporate sector and civil society. Social capital is shaped by 'investments' of both private and public institutions, and is intended as a 'mediating variable' of development. They recognise social capital as a personal (and collective by extension) asset, in the form of relationships with family, friends and associates. A varied stock of social networks is seen as an advantage for groups and individuals in overcoming poverty and vulnerability, resolve disputes, and gain benefits from new opportunities. Social capital is also recognised to have costs as well as gains, and to be a potential liability as well as a potential advantage.

Woolcock (1998) suggests that social capital as an element of economic development should be explored in four different dimensions encompassing the community and regional levels. At the micro level (the community), social capital refers to intra-community ties and extra-community networks, while at the macro level (the region) it refers to state-society relations and institutional competence, coherence and capacity. This framework of analysis recognises both top-down (macro level) and bottom-up (micro level) dynamics of the relationship between development and social capital.

#### *3.1.7.5 Career success*

An interesting body of literature refers to how social capital can influence career success. Networking and 'knowing the right people' are seen as able to provide significant help to a person's career achievements (Bolles, 1992; Kanter, 1977). Similarly, very successful managers tend to spend a much larger amount of time networking than their less successful colleagues (Luthans, Hodgetts, & Rosenkrantz,

1988). Starting from these perspectives, Seibert et al. (2001) develop a model to research the impact of social capital (defined as network structure and social resources) on careers. Their conceptualisation derives from the integration of three apparently competing theories of social capital: the ‘weak tie theory’ (Granovetter, 1973, 1983), the ‘structural holes theory’ (Burt, 1992, 2000, 2002), and the ‘social resource theory’ (Lin, 1990). While the weak ties theory and the structural holes theory focus on the structure of networks, and the social resource theory focuses on the content of the network, they all use concepts of access to information, resources and sponsorship. Seibert et al. (2001) suggest that social capital should be thought as both the network structures that favour or impede the access to resources, and the nature of the social resources embedded in the network itself. They suggest that research questions should address ‘what network structures help a network member to access useful social resources’. The structure of networks determines the quantity of social contacts between members, and the contacts themselves are the social resource. Social contacts then impact career success in function of three ‘network benefits’, which are access to information; access to other resources; and career sponsorship.

### **3.2 Sport studies**

There is a vast literature of academic studies of sport. Apart from studies on the relationship between social capital and sport and/or leisure, other sport-related research has contributed to the theoretical framework of this thesis. It is not the purpose of this review to assess in detail the whole academic literature on sport, however it is important to highlight the fields from which some key ideas underpinning this thesis were taken. In particular, research on sports geography, sport and identity, and talent development and identification in sport played a part in shaping the theoretical perspective of this work. Contributions from those fields are summarised in sections 3.2.1, 3.2.2, and 3.2.3.

Table 3.2 summarises several other sport-related research areas that were also explored. Although they do not directly inform the theoretical framework of this thesis, they contribute to the appreciation of the location of sport within academic inquiry.

**Table 3.2: Summary of sport-related research fields**

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<b>Research field</b>	<b>References</b>
History and social implications of women's football around the world	Bourke, 2003; Brus & Trangbæk, 2003; Caudwell, 2004; Cox & Thompson, 2003; Fasting, 2003; Hall, 2003; Harris, 2004; Hjelm & Olofsson, 2003; Hong, 2003; Hong & Mangan, 2003a, 2003b; Jinxia & Mangan, 2002; Koh, 2003; Majumdar, 2003; Mangan, 2003; Markovits & Hellerman, 2003; Marschik, 1998, 2003; Pfister 2001; Pfister, 2003; Saavedra, 2003; Votre & Mourão, 2003; Williams, 2003
History and social implications of women's football in Australia	Harlow, 2003b; Rosso, 2007
Social and cultural history of sports around the world	Bale & Cronin, 2003; Blecking, 2008; Cronin, Doyle, & O'Callaghan, 2008; Dimeo & Mills, 2001; Favero, 2008; Frenkiel & Bancel, 2008; Hofmann, 2008; Kennedy & Kennedy, 2007; Little, 2002; Mason, 1989; Mills, 2002; Oriard, 2002
Social and cultural history of sports in Australia	Adair & Vamplew, 1997; Andrews, 2000; Booth & Tatz, 2000; Cashman, 1995; Collins, 2000; Cottle, 1998; Embery, 1997; Ferguson, 2006; Hay, 2006; Hughson, 1997; Kickett-Tucker, 1997; Lynch & Veal, 1996; McKay, 1990; Phillips & Magdalinski, 2003; Rowe & Lawrence, 1990; James Scott, Cashman, & Gibbs, 1991; Vamplew & Stoddart, 1994
Issues of gender in sport	Aitchison, 2003; Caudwell, 2004; Kay, 2003; Sleaf, 1998; Taylor & Toohey, 1997; Theberge, 2000; Wearing & Wearing, 1990
General social issues in sport	Jarvie, 2006b; Kremer, Trew, & Ogle, 1997; Mason & Wilson, 1988; McKibbin, 1998; Sleaf, 1998; Snyder & Spreitzer, 1989
Sport and globalisation	Andrews & Ritzer, 2007; Armstrong, 2007; Dimeo, 2002; Donnelly, 1996; Duke, 2002; Foer, 2004; Giulianotti & Robertson, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; Houlihan, 2003, 2004; Milanovic, 2005; Miller, Lawrence, MvKay, & Rowe, 1999; Nash, 2000; Rowe, 2003; Smart, 2007
The commercialisation of sports	Slack & Amis, 2004; Thibault, Kikulis, & Frisby, 2004
Governance of sporting organisations	Amis & Slack, 2003; Henry & Theodoraki, 2000

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In particular, the literature on women's football around the world and on gender

issues in sport provides an important insight on the challenges that female participants and women's sporting organisations face. Despite women's participation having grown greatly worldwide since the 1960s, sport has historically been a vehicle for the reproduction of masculinity, and the achievement of rights and recognition has normally been the result of significant power struggles with the dominant male element of sport culture (Theberge, 2000).

### **3.2.1 Sport geography**

Sport geography literature informed this thesis by providing key theoretical concepts underpinning spatial considerations of sports. Although sport provides the background for numerous fields of academic inquiry (see section 3.2), sport geography remains a neglected field of investigation (Bale, 2003). Examples of sports geography studies include research on: the migration patterns of Hungarian footballers (Molnar, 2006); the social and geographical composition of English football crowds (Mellor, 1999); territory and football fandom in Northern Ireland (Bairner & Shirlow, 2000); football and politics of place in Catalonia (Shobe, 2008); and more general compendia on the geography of sport and leisure (Terrell, 2004; Witherick & Warn, 2003). In Australia, interest in sport geography is slowly growing. Examples of Australian research include Forster's (1986, 1988) work on early South Australian cricket; Jones' (2002) study on local identities and football venues in Perth; Clarke's (2005) research on home advantage in Australian football; Tonts' and Atherley's research on the impact of economic restructuring on Western Australian rural sporting clubs (Atherley, 2006; Tonts, 2005; Tonts & Atherley, 2005); and Rosso's (2008, 2009b, 2010a) work on the spatial organisation of Adelaide's women's football. However, Tonts and Atherley (2005) make the point that sport geography should attract wider interest in Australia, especially considering the attention the nation places on sporting activities.

The works that made the greatest contribution to this thesis comprise the studies of Rosso (2008, 2009b, 2010a), Tonts and Atherley (Atherley, 2006; Tonts, 2005; Tonts & Atherley, 2005), and Bale's (e.g. 2003) essential writings on the theory and practice of sport geography. Tonts (2005) and Atherley (2006) provide a sound theoretical framework to study the association between sport and social capital in rural Australia (sport and social capital is dealt with in detail in section 3.3.). They



show how sport can play an important part in fostering community cohesion and viability, and consider how wider processes of economic restructuring put at risk the contribution of sport to community life. Rosso illustrates the geographical evolution of women's football in Adelaide (2010a) and analyses its changing spatial organisation in the last three decades (2006, 2008, 2009b). He notes that different urban areas are characterised by different engagement with and approaches to the sport, especially in terms of production of top-quality players and participation in networks linking with global women's football (Rosso, 2008). He also associates social capital to women's football as a factor of development and growth of the sport (Rosso, 2010a). He refers to a terminology of 'achievement' sports, used by Bale (Bale, 1994, 2003) to describe sports characterised especially by the purpose of production (i.e. of players and sporting results). Bale is indubitably the writer who has made the greatest contribution to sport geography worldwide (1982, 1988, 1994, 1996, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2001, 2003). He resumes the debate between traditional positivist analysis and post-modern interpretative approaches to the discipline pointing the way towards a "*trialectic of body culture*" (Bale 2003, p.9), which results in three different values associated with sports (fun and play, fitness and recreation, and achievement of results) and affects the ways in which sports are consumed. In particular, the work of Bale is concerned with 'achievement' sports. 'Achievement' sports are often but not necessarily professional, and are underpinned by specialisation of roles, "*competition, quantification, record-keeping, record-breaking and bureaucratisation*" (Guttman, 1978, in Bale, 1994, p. 6). Women's football in Adelaide, for example, is a non-professional sport with a marked 'achievement' approach to it, evident in the concern with production of potential national players repeatedly asserted by its key state representatives (Rosso, 2008, 2009b, 2010a).

Another important concept 'borrowed' from sports geography refers to sporting regions. A sporting region is, in general, any region in which it is observable an involvement with a given sport (Bale, 2003). Rooney (1974) identified sporting regions in the USA on the basis of the number of high school players produced by each state. Bale (1982) studied the production of players of different sports in the UK and identified sporting regions mapping per capita regional outputs of individual sports. However, 'athletic production' is not the only criterion to define sporting

regions. Sporting regions can be identified as regions of interest, involvement, and/or participation and present structures of cores and domains, beyond which sports exist with less marked local involvement (Bale, 2003).

### **3.2.2 Sport and identity**

The relationship between sport and the formation, maintenance, reproduction, and reinforcement of community identities at various levels constitutes an important contribution to the conceptual framework of this thesis. Among the ideas deriving from this body of literature, the identification of imagined communities (Anderson, 1983) based on their members' interest and involvement with sport (Andrews, 1998, 1999; Lechner, 2007; Nadel, 1998) are particularly important. Other important concepts include the relationships between ethnic identity and football in Australia (Charles, 1994; Danforth, 2001; Hay, 1994; Jones & Moore, 1994; Mosley, 1994; Mosley & Murray, 1994; O'Hara, 1994; Rosso, 2007), and between racism and sport (Back, Crabbe, & Solomos, 2001a; Jarvie, 2000; King, 2004).

The construction and maintenance of identities through sport is exemplified in works on football in colonial (Bandyopadhyay, 2003) and modern (Dimeo, 2002) India; on the creation of a football-based regional identity in southern England (Phelps, 2001); on the Norwegian football culture (Goksøyr, 1998); on the role of Glasgow Celtic F.C. for the reproduction of 'catholic Irishness' (Boyle, 2004; Bradley, 2006; Foer, 2004); on kinship and heritage of football identity in Argentina (Gil, 2002); on the challenges posed by commercialisation on historical English rugby-based identities (Falcous & Rose, 2005); on cultures and identities in American football (Nauright, 1996); and on the role of the national football J League in shaping regional identity in Japan (Light & Yasaki, 2002).

Jarvie (2006b) summarises key points about the ways in which identity in sport has been thought about thus far and states that sport contributes to social and symbolic processes of the construction of identities. Identity in sport implies both promoting and concealing particular differences between people and groups, and it normally entails the construction of social categories of 'us' and 'them'. This can at times lead to fundamentalism and racism (Jarvie, 2006b). Back et al. (2001a) examine issues of racism in English football within institutions and within the general sporting culture

of the English football community. Jarvie (2000) reviews some of the main arguments about sport and issues of race and identity and argues that often intellectual constructions of racism are applied to sport studies with highly damaging effects. Examples of ethnic and/or national identities reinforced by involvement with sports and leading to undesirable outcomes are considered by Vamplew (1994) and Hughson, who studied the media coverage of 'ethnic football riots' in Australia (2001), the social practices of Australian 'ethnic football hooligans' (2000), and difficulties for multiculturalism evinced by football supporters in Australia (1997).

Sport, however, is also seen as an important forum for the maintenance of positive ethnic and national attributes that would be otherwise vulnerable, as it was the case for ethnic football clubs in Australia in the 1950's and 1960's (La Fiamma, 1963; Mosley, 1997a; Mosley, Cashman, O'Hara, & Weatherburn, 1997). Moreover, ethnic identity can be seen as an important force driving sporting development. On one hand, ethnic football clubs facilitated the reproduction of a sense of ethnic communities and the access to community networks that facilitated the settling process of migrants (Mosley & Murray, 1994), and on the other, ethnic football communities have been responsible for the development of the sport in Australia (Mosley, 1997b; Mosley & Murray, 1994). Studies on ethnic identity in football in Australia include: Portuguese football identity in Perth (Jones & Moore, 1994); Mosley's work on Balkan identity (1994), the Italian football community (Mosley, 1997a) and the general role of migrant communities in football (Mosley, 1997b); football ethnic identities in Victoria (Hay, 1994); the multicultural character of Australia reflected by its football heritage (Danforth, 2001); conceptions of nationalism among ethnic football clubs in Wollongong (Hallinan & Krotee, 1993); the growth of Adelaide's ethnic football clubs after WWII (Charles, 1994); the English heritage of Perth Glory F.C. (Brabazon, 2000); and opportunities for immigrant community participation in football in post-war Western Australia (Evans, 1997).

A further and very important contribution to this thesis from the body of literature dealing with identity in sport is made by the work of Nadel (1998) and Andrews (1998; Andrews, 1999) on Melbourne football communities. They use Australian Rules football as a case study and offer interesting cues for the conceptualisation of

'football communities', including the South Australian women's football community. Andrews makes clear that sense of belonging and identity are key aspects to the definition of communities (1998) and suggests that in Melbourne a whole series of football communities coexist with one another with differences in size, form and unifying means. Furthermore, each Australian Rules club caters for more than just one community, as they may have different geographical and social dimensions, and as individual club members may belong to several communities at once (Andrews, 1999). Nadel (1998) shows how most Melbourne clubs represent communities that transcend clear social, cultural and spatial boundaries, and refers to Wild's emphasis on the feeling of belonging together (1981) and the concept of 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983) to move toward a theorisation of 'football community'.

### **3.2.3 Talent development and identification in sport**

Talent development is one of the key aspects of this thesis. The main contribution of this body of literature refers to the facts that talent is not a stand-alone aspect of skills development in athletes and that non-technical factors of development can affect the success of football players.

Williams (2000) reviews key components of perceptual skill in football. Helsen et al. (2000) consider the roles of talent, physical precocity and practice in the development of football players, and examine how coaches perceive and select potential talent. They suggest that what is often described as talent is in fact a combination of physical advantage and advantages obtained through practice. Reilly et al. (2000) suggest that the identification of talent in football players is especially affected by the players' agility, sprint time, ego, orientation and anticipation skills, aerobic power, tolerance of fatigue, and body build. Hoare and Warr's (2000) research on talent identification in Australian women's football suggests that selecting potential players should take into account both innate and acquired attributes, and discuss the concept that more talented athletes may have higher motivation and, therefore, practise more. Timson-Katchis and Jowett (2005) consider the importance of coaches-parents-athletes relationships and their impact on the athletes' sporting experiences and suggest that social networks influence these relationships by providing access to opportunity, information and support.

Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1993) show that young athletes' perseverance and commitment to success is affected by their immediate social environments and that motivation is one of the key aspects to the development of talent. Among the factors that influence motivation of young talented people, there are family members and schools and the quality of the experience associated with the development of their talent (i.e. practice). Successful talent development tends to occur when people "*enjoy the hardship and the challenges of their task*" (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993, p. 8). Williams and Reilly (2000) integrate the main research findings on talent identification and development in football and note that no single characteristics can be confidently isolated. Both biological characteristics and learnt abilities are very important, as is the quality of learning environments available to players. To produce top-quality players, sports scientists, coaches, scouts and administrators must cooperate to identify key elements of the talent development process. Although Morris (2000) highlights the lack of clear patterns of particular psychological characteristics and performance in football, Williams and Reilly (2000) include psychological characteristics of athletes in the factors affecting the development of talent. Other important factors are the influence of their families, the socio-economic environments in which they live and develop as players, the relationships with their coaches and the access to training facilities, and supportive learning environments. These factors can affect motivation, commitment and willingness to work hard, which are prerequisites for top-level performance (Williams & Reilly, 2000).

### **3.3 Social capital and sport**

The relationship between social capital and sport is the central subject of this thesis. This field of investigation is a recent one, and the literature representing it is relatively limited. Compared to other applications of social capital, its relevance to sport has not been studied extensively. However, a growing body of literature concerned with various implications of this relationship is developing, with examples in the U.K., Europe and Australia. The central concept of these contributions is that sport, with particular reference to voluntary organisations, is an important forum for the creation and reproduction of social capital (Seippel, 2006). Central themes of studies on social capital and sport include the relationship between sport and social

inclusion/exclusion (Atherton, Turner, & Russel, 2001; Back, Crabbe, & Solomos, 2001b; Bailey, 2005; Collins, 2003, 2004; Collins & Kay, 2003; Kay, 2003; Wagg, 2004b) and the importance of sport for civil society and community strength (Atherley, 2006; Donovan, Bowler, Hannenman, & Karp, 2004; Jarvie, 2003, 2006b; Seippel, 2006; Sharpe, 2006; Tonts, 2005).

In the field of social capital and sport, the ‘achievement’ dimension of sports (Bale, 2003) is often overlooked and engagement with sport is often equated to physical activity (Collins, 2004; Stratton, Conn, Liaw, & Conolly, 2005) or leisure (Collins, 2003). The general association between social capital and leisure is reviewed by Glover and Hemingway (2005). Leisure networks have been proven to favour access to resources at the community level (Glover, Parry, & Shinew, 2005). At the same time, strong social ties within local communities can favour participation in recreational activities (Warde et al., 2005).

In Australia, a recent federal government report examined the interplay between participation in sport and physical recreation and social wellbeing (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009b). The report states that “*it is not possible to quantify how participation in sport and physical recreation directly contributes to social capital, nor how social capital promotes participation in sport*” (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009b, p. 2) and considers the association between sport participation and a series of social indicators (e.g. socio-economic disadvantage) that can be used to assess social capital. The report considers the involvement of sport participants in the community, feelings of safety and trust of sport participants, and the social networks of participants. Playing sport and taking part in other forms of physical recreation can help participants to make friendships, develop extended networks, relate to family or friends, and enjoy a greater ability to obtain support in times of crisis than non-participants (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009b).

Sport favours social interaction and social mechanisms such as reciprocity, trust and recognition (Seippel, 2006) that in turn can help overcoming cultural and social differences (Tonts & Atherley, 2005) and enhance civic pride (Jarvie, 2006b). Participation in sport is seen as favouring community identity (Jarvie, 2003); community cohesion (Atherley, 2006); generalised trust (Seippel, 2006); self esteem

(Jarvie, 2003); public health (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2006); and playing a vital role in the regeneration of deprived communities (Jarvie, 2006b) and in the creation/reinforcement of both 'bonding' and 'bridging' ties and networks (Atherley, 2006; Seippel, 2006; Tonts, 2005).

Fløysand and Jakobsen (2005) illustrate how sporting clubs can contribute to rural restructuring projects. Atherley (2006) argues that, by favouring the accumulation of social capital, sport is important in maintaining the cohesion of Australian rural communities and favour social mechanisms that can mitigate the negative effects of rural economic restructuring. She maintains that sport can favour the creation of both 'bonding' and 'bridging' social capital, uniting rural communities and linking them to one another. However, according to Atherley (2006) and Tonts (2005), 'bonding' social capital can at times inhibit the creation of 'bridging' social capital at a broader regional level. Social capital formed around sporting clubs with particularly strong self-identities could undermine the formation of connections across a wider range of clubs (e.g. of different towns). Moreover, competitive sport can also contribute to social inequality and social exclusion (Tonts, 2005).

Seippel (2006) maintains that sport favours the enhancement of generalised trust as it helps building self-confidence, morality and interaction, but notes that its contribution to civil society could be overshadowed by its focus on competition and success. Nevertheless, participation in sport is often central to policies of social capital and community regeneration in the U.K. and it is seen as a particularly valuable element to favour social inclusion (Jarvie, 2003, 2006b). Jarvie (2003), however, suggests that it is unrealistic to expect sport to contribute to civic engagement and communitarianism without addressing issues of ownership and stakeholding in sport. The relationship between sport and social exclusion goes beyond policy implications of the positive social effects of sport and several authors consider the process of social exclusion from sport (Back et al., 2001b; Bailey, 2005; Caudwell, 2004; Collins, 2003, 2004; Collins & Kay, 2003; Crabbe & Brown, 2004; Harris, 2004; Kay, 2003; King, 2004; Slaughter, 2004; Thorpe, 2004; Wagg, 2004a). Collins and Kay (2003) identify categories of people particularly vulnerable to social exclusion from sport in the U.K., including women, older people, the disabled, members of ethnic groups, rural communities, and the poor. Exclusion from sport

can also affect those less ‘technically gifted’ (Thorpe, 2004) or physically endowed (Wagg, 2004a) to play.

While the relationship between sport and social capital is generally seen in terms of sport contributing to social capital, Rosso (2010a) points out that it could also be considered from a different perspective altogether. Social capital can be seen as a factor facilitating or undermining the development of sports and the achievement of sporting success at a regional level (Rosso, 2008, 2010a). From the point of view of sporting organisations, social capital can facilitate access to players, training facilities, qualified coaches (Rosso, 2008), and external resources including knowledge and expertise (Rosso, 2010a). On the other hand, drawing on Portes and Landolt (1996) social capital within sporting organisations may have negative implication for the development of sports, for instance by inhibiting the opportunities to participate of outsiders (Rosso, 2010a).

### **3.4 Summary**

This review has discussed major contributions to the concept of social capital and its most important implications and applications that inform the conceptual framework of this thesis. It has also identified key areas of academic work on sport, with particular attention to issues of identity, sport geography and talent development. Finally, it has provided an overview of the themes emerging from the body of literature concerned with the relationship between social capital and sport, and a discussion of the most significant individual contributions to the conceptual framework of this thesis.

The conceptualisation of social capital to study its role in the development of women’s football players is informed by a wide body of literature ranging across a diverse array of academic fields. The thesis belongs particularly to the field of sport and social capital, however the general social capital literature (theory and applications of social capital) remains important. Even if it does not necessarily link to specific themes of concern of this thesis always easy to pinpoint, this body of literature played an important part in shaping the appreciation and interpretation of the concept of social capital and the ways in which it works to facilitate access to



resources. In other words, it informs the theoretical background on which key notions of this investigation rest (i.e. ‘bonding’ and ‘bridging’ social capital, social networks, social capital measurements, social capital as a factor of learning and development).

The literature on social capital and sport, even if it is growing, is still quite limited. Moreover, it mostly considers the relationship between sport and social capital in terms of how sport can affect social capital outcomes, and not *vice versa*. The traditional concern of this area of research is to understand the value of sport as a forum for the creation and accumulation of social capital. Important contributions, in this sense, are the work on Western Australian sporting clubs of Atherley (2006) and Tonts (2005), and studies on the relationship between participation in sport and civil society and/or community strength (Jarvie, 2003, 2006b; Seippel, 2006). However, other contributions are significant for the theoretical framework of this study on social capital as an element of development of South Australian women’s football players. In particular, the idea that strong social ties within communities or social groups favour participation in recreational activities (Warde et al., 2005) and sport (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009b), and that social ties within sporting organisation can cause social exclusion from sport (Collins, 2003, 2004; Collins & Kay, 2003; Wagg, 2004b) are important.

This thesis aims to fill a particular gap in the knowledge relative to social capital and sport as identified by Rosso (2008, 2010a). This refers to the relationship between sport and social capital seen in terms of social capital as a factor contributing to sporting development. For example, social capital played a role in the development of women’s football in South Australia favouring inter-regional connections that contributed to the growth of the sport, but its role in fostering technical development and regional production of results calls for further investigation (Rosso, 2010a).