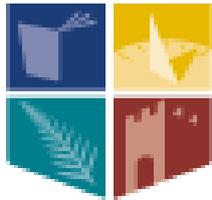


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An exploration of the impact participation in elite soccer has on the education of 12 to 15 year old boys



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Abstract

This research was carried to explore the impact that participation in elite soccer by twelve to fifteen year old boys has on their education. Using a mixed methods approach of semi structured interviews and participant observation, the findings of both of the research methods were analysed in conjunction with the literature review. The context in which this research was carried out was class education and career choice.

The evidence that emerged showed that all interviewees had decided on a career in professional soccer from an early age. Although some still have ambitions for a career in professional soccer, to date none have been successful in achieving their goal. The findings also showed that prioritising participation in elite soccer over education has had a negative impact on their formal education leaving most ill prepared for the wider labour market.

Chapter one

Introduction

This research will explore the relationship between education and the participation in elite soccer of boys between the age of twelve and fifteen. The research will be limited to boys who played soccer during this period of their life in the Dublin District Schoolboy League (DDSL).

The criteria that was used to define elite football was the boys selection to play representative football for the DDSL in the Kennedy Cup. This is a competition for boy's age fourteen and under. The teams that participate in the competition are representative teams from the 32 affiliated leagues that constitute the Schoolboy Football Association of Ireland (SFAI). This competition is played each year under the jurisdiction of the SFAI. "The competition is the largest of its kind in Europe and has been the spring board for some of Ireland's best international players such as Robbie Keane, Damien Duff, John O'Shea, Shane Long and Wexford's own Kevin Doyle" (Wexford People 2013).

In relation to the DDSL this is a soccer league that caters for 18,000 boys and girls who play soccer in the greater Dublin area each week. The selection process for the DDSL Kennedy Cup team which this research is primarily concerned with begins at under thirteen at which point the players age varies between twelve and thirteen. The process takes a number of months and concludes with the selection of the best eighteen players from the DDSL being selected to represent the league in the Kennedy Cup.

The Kennedy cup is attended each year by football scouts representing all the major soccer clubs in the UK as well as the Irish underage international soccer managers both of whom are

seeking to identify potential future talent. As a result the players see this as a competition for elite players, a description given by one interviewee was.

“Like the Kennedy Cup once you start reaching them ages you kind of start smelling yourself to be honest. Ye do its only natural They pick a squad of say fifteen to eighteen so you feel like the elite out of the league” (Interviewee B1).

As the age range of the boys that this research is concerned with was between the age of twelve and fifteen, they were therefore attending secondary school and would have been in what is known as their junior cert years of study which encompasses 1st, 2nd and 3rd year in secondary school.

To conduct this sociological research a mixed methods approach was adopted. The first of these methods was semi structured interviews. The participants for the semi structured interviews were aged between eighteen and twenty four; all have played soccer at an elite level between the relevant ages of twelve and fifteen. One further semi structured interview was also carried out with a secondary school principal. The second method used was participant observation this was carried out with two English Premier League club scouts. This approach has been used to ensure an enriched understanding of the data surrounding the research question (Schutt 2009).

The research sought to explore the relationship between education and the participation in elite soccer from a number of perspectives this include class, education and career choice. One sociological perspective that this tripartite of perspectives can be viewed through is Bourdieu’s theory of habitus and field. Bourdieu sets out his theory on habitus “as a set of dispositions that generate, practices- innovation, adaptations, tastes- that roughly coincide with those of others sharing the same habitus, these typically being members of the same social class” (Calhoun, Rojek and Turner 2005:256). With regard to field in true sporting

metaphors and therefore apt for this research Bourdieu uses the term field or social field to describe the “a social arena within which struggles or manoeuvres take place over specific resources or stakes” included in this are both education and employment. This can be a system of social positions that is occupied by individuals or institutions. The individual’s position in the field dictates their access to goods or resources (capital). Capital can then be divided into four categories, social, economic, cultural and symbolic (ibid).

Another theory examined in the literature review is rational choice theory. This is described as tracing social activity back to acts that were made because of rational calculation and decision making that are said to have produced. One of the earliest examples of this is Homans exchange theory this saw “all human activity as motivated by the desire to gain rewards and avoid costs” (Marshall and Scott 2009:627).

Aims

The aim of this research is to give a sociological understanding of the relationship between participation in elite soccer between the age of twelve and fifteen and the education of the player during the same period. It is intended that this will add to the already large body of work currently available nationally and internationally. Although research has been done in relation to Irish players seeking careers in professional soccer in England, none has specifically looked at the effect of this on the player’s education between the age of twelve and fifteen. It is therefore hoped that this research will go some way towards filling this gap.

Objectives

The specific objectives that has been set for this research are

- To explore the impact of class in relation to elite soccer and education at a young age

- To explore how formal education is approached by all the principle stake holders. This includes players, parents, professional soccer clubs and soccer's administrative bodies.
- To explore the reasons why player's make the choice of a career in professional soccer at a young age.

Rationale

The rationale for embarking on this piece of research stems from my involvement in underage soccer for the past twenty five years. My initial contact was as a coach. However over the years I moved through a number of different roles both coaching and administrative. Currently I am both treasurer of a schoolboy soccer club and a member of the board of directors of the Dublin District Schoolboy League. During the twenty five years I have had occasion to deal with numerous elite players, their parents, their prospective English Premier League employers and the various governing bodies in soccer. Throughout all my dealings in this regard I have noticed limited or no discussion in reference to the formal education of the player. Another concern has been that of the players that I have dealt with, who have moved to England without having completed second level education, the vast majority have returned within two years not having secured a professional career. It is therefore intended that this research will afford a sociological understanding of the relationship between elite soccer participation and education.

Chapter two

Literature review

Introduction

A substantial amount has been written in relation to participation in elite sport and its effect on children. However this piece of research is to some degree unique in that it is specifically looking at the effect of participation of children in elite soccer in Ireland and the effect this has on their education between the age of twelve and fifteen. To achieve this, the literature reviewed concentrated on four primary themes. That is, the relationship between education and elite sport, career choice, labour market and class. A summary and syntheses of the literature has been carried out in a thematic way thereby giving an insight into the most pertinent and relevant material.

Education and elite sport

However we understand the connection between education and sport the one undeniable fact is that they are connected. This literature review will show that this can have both a negative and a positive impact. The 'Fair Play? Sport and Social Disadvantage in Ireland' (Lunn 2007) research in particular states that sport is a major contributor to levels of physical activity within the population, which is a concern of public health policy. In addition, sport forms an important part of the school experience. "Any impact of social disadvantage on school children's participation in sport therefore demands attention from education policy" (ibid). If this is the case then we should equally be concerned if participation in sport has a negative impact on social disadvantage for children in education.

The negatives associated with this intense participation in sport can be found in the limitations that it imposes on the participant in relation to their developmental experience as a

whole (Cahill and Pearl 1993:72), included in this development is education. Donnolly and Petherick (2006:20) point out numerous negative consequences of participation in elite sport, including the child's detachment from larger society, psychological as well as physiological stress and most relevant to this research impaired intellectual development. Here they claim educational achievements are earned in spite of the sport and school system not because of them. This was reinforced throughout the interviews with the elite young players where education was side stepped while on international duty at fourteen years of age, with the Irish under 15 team and the leniency shown by teachers in relation to school.

“I was missing school but they had no problem with that and I think more teachers would come up and talk to ye much more ye get more attention from pupils and the teachers then because of it like” (Interviewee A1).

A counter balance to elite sport participation can be found in previous research which concluded that students who compete in elite sports need to have their motivation in relation to schooling monitored, alongside grade related information. This should be done to ensure that the student is not put at a disadvantage in relation to future career prospects. (Burden et al 2003). The need for elite athletes to take a more balanced approach to life forms part of the conclusions in the journal article ‘Preparing to not be a Footballer: Higher Education and Professional Sport’. Here they draw on Foucault’s theorising about ‘caring for the self’, stating that “individuals might be encouraged to restrain their passion and instincts to establish a balanced and prudent identity” (Hickey and Kelly 2008). An argument that the children dislike school and would not have done any better at school irrespective of their choice of professional soccer as a career is not borne out. Research has shown that the presumption that boys who pursue such a career dislike school is not true (Bourke, 2002).

This again was supported by some interviewees who stated that they did not dislike school but has simply relegated it to second place behind soccer in their priorities. When one participant was asked if school took a back seat to soccer his reply was “it was in the booth” here the participant shows education was not even in second place. Another stated,

“To be honest about it education to me at that time was coming second it was always football I seen what the different opportunities I was getting in football and education was coming second” (Interviewee B 2)

This disaffection with education is compounded for the players who get a contract with an English club. Initially by the fact that they leave Ireland prior to completion of their education and subsequently from the fact that “apprentice footballers learn little from the educational programmes they are given to train them in a back-up career if they do not get a professional contract, a new study shows” (British Sociological Association 2010).

In the book, *Intensive Participation in Children’s Sport* Cahill and Pearl (1993) discusses the sociological issues around children’s participation in elite sport. Here they state that the decisions we make as children affect what happens throughout our lives. Although we do not always have control over the conditions in which we make these decisions and the results of these decisions are not always what we expect them to be, there may be unintended consequences. In this regard, to a great extent children live under the control of adults and although children in general decide themselves to participate in intensive and elite sport, the decision is generally influenced by adults in their life. Here the book advises caution on adults when encouraging children to participate in elite sport (Cahill and Pearl 1993). In particular education should not be neglected, (ibid) considering the high failure rate associated with attempts to pursue a career in professional soccer.

Donnolly and Petherick state that to solve the problems that are thrown up by early intensive participation and specialisation in sport calls for a balance. However they see this balance as being a difficult one due to the vested interest of numerous adults in the success of the child. This includes “parents, coaches, sports administrators, educators, sports scientists, sports medicine staff, agents and even media personnel” (2006: 21).

In summary although sport is intrinsically linked to education and has an undoubtedly positive part in both the development and health of the child. It must be recognised that unchecked it can also have a damaging effect on the child and his or her future. One area of concern raised in this section of the literature review is the influence of adults with a vested interest on the decision making process of the child.

Career choice

Relevant to this whole research is how children decide on this particular career choice at such a young age and the resulting impact on their education. One sociological explanation given as to how career choices are arrived at can be found in careership. This theory draws heavily on Pierre Bourdieu theory of self and his theory around habitus (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997). This theory of careership rejects theory of rational choice alone as it does theories of socialisation on its own. It moves away from simply looking at rational choice on the one hand or social dimensions on the other hand. Instead looking at the combination of rational choice based on habitus of the person, the interaction with others in the field with consideration for the structural inequalities that different people experience and finally serendipity and the unpredictable turns that we experience during the life course. In relation to habitus, in this regard habitus can be seen as the values and dispositions that we get from our cultural history (Webb et al 2002).

Careership theory identifies a place for both structure and agency in relation to career choice. This is supported by Carsaro in the 'Sociology of Childhood' where he describes interpretive reproduction theory as children "contributing to cultural production and change" on the one hand while at the same time "being constrained by the existing social structures and by societal reproduction" (2005:19).

In reality the process of promoting and facilitating a career path for children begins with the parents enrolling their children in soccer clubs. Research has shown that parents play a part in the influencing of the career path of children (Schulenberg et al.2005). This is further supported by Ann Bourke where 65% of respondents in her research said they joined a soccer club at a young age, this she used as evidences of parental guidance to a particular sport. 41% also spoke of the connection between their career choice and their father's love of the game (2003). Where this develops into intense participation it is obvious that some children benefit from it however for many children the experience is negative (Cahill and Pearl 1993).

If a career path is to be decided at such a young age then the question must be asked as to the protections that are in place to protect the child from the dangers associated with the soccer industry. One particular area of concern identified relates to "several complaints of abuse and exploitation of young Irish soccer player in England" Connor (2003:81). In this regard Connor states that the FAI have in place a career guidance officer. However this service is aimed at players who have already embarked on a career in professional soccer rather than those intending to. Another area of concern is the risks and consequences of injuries associated with this career (Hickey and Kelly 2008). Here Hickey and Kelly call for a prudent approach to a professional career in elite sport, where consideration is given to higher education as well as a sports career, claiming that reaching both education and career goals actually improves sporting performances. It also results in the player making more money during a longer playing career.

Career guidance advice for boys who aspire to a career as a professional soccer player can be found on www.career guidance.ie. Although it does advise that a career in professional sport can be as limited as ten to fifteen years in length, it also states that this can be followed by a further career in coaching, management or broadcasting. As all of these roles require various formal educational attainments, players who have neglected their formal education in pursuit of their professional career will find themselves at a disadvantage. Yet none of those interviewed for this research received or sought career guidance of any description. One area that career guidance would normally be available is in schools. In the case of the players interviewed the reality was that limited or no career guidance was offered to them. One elite player describes career guidance in school as.

“I think we only had about two career guidance’s classes but it wouldn’t of being anything to personal too look after you to see how you’re going to go with your life but it was just in general giving you things to look at” (Interviewee A 1).

Here the literature review shows the multifaceted nature of career choices. Within this complex process a number of influencing factors can be seen including rational choice, socialisation, Bourdieu’s idea of habitus, serendipity and the influence of parents. However when making such a fundamental choice in one’s life, career guidance is in short supply. Where it is available it is limited in its scope and does not happen until the pupils leaving cert year. In the case of players who have been offered a contract this is too late as they have already left the Irish education system.

As has been stated previously the career path for elite players inevitably leads to the UK and in most circumstances without having completed secondary education (Bourke 2002). Why is this so? One reason put forward is that of dependency theory. This is where the core country England goes in search of its raw material in the periphery (Ireland). In this case the raw

material for the soccer industry is the players. At the same time we see the industry of the periphery country stifled by the actions of the core country (McGovern, 2000).

In the case of sport, the neo-Marxist dependency theory argues the associations at the core of the international sports industry tend to dominate both the sports audience and the labour market of the periphery. This is done through commodification and globalisation of the sport. This can be seen in the domination of the Irish industry by the broadcasting of UK soccer games into Ireland. This is accompanied by deskilling of the league at the periphery due to the ability of the core league to attract their most talented players at a young age. Finally leagues at the periphery are excluded from any real decision making and therefore unable to influence the decisions that dominate them (McGovern 2000).

This produces an uneven economic development of the soccer industry in the UK and Ireland, with the UK industry being more developed than its Irish counterpart. This uneven development is not due to any internal arrangements in the Irish soccer industry but the outside impact of the industry of the core (UK) country on the peripheral country (Ireland). Core/periphery inequality provides the context for exploring the relationship between those Irish boys who transform the dream of being a professional soccer player into a career choice and the impact it has on their education. Because a career in professional soccer is only available in the core (UK), the second level education of the young Irish player is brought to a premature end.

Class

Soccer, as other football games have ceased to be just games and have developed into global sports industries this in turn means that the elite players that play soccer are no longer just players but celebrities who's every action is commodified (Hickey and Kelly, 2008). This celebrity life style can be viewed as a way of gaining both status and respect for boys from

lower socio economic backgrounds where the education system traditionally does not allow them to achieve the status and respect that most people seek (Andersen and Hill Collins 2004).

An anthology *Race Class and Gender* by Andersen and Hill Collins (2004) shows that elite sport participation plays different roles depending on the socio economic background of the participant. Here it is stated that “the institutional context of education (sometimes with the collusion of teachers and coaches) and the constricted structures of opportunity in the economy made the pursuit of athletic careers appear to be the most rational choice to these young men.” (Anderson and HillCollins 2004:183). In particular they suggest that males from lower socioeconomic backgrounds see sport as a way of gaining both respect and status from society suggesting it to be a rational choice. However for most of the men it failed to result in social mobility and the status and respect gained was fleeting (2004).

Although a career in sport may be seen as a rational choice by people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, the same cannot be said for people from higher status background. Here successful athletes see a career in sport as “pissing in the wind” meaning that the potential for success is very limited. Instead they transfer the status afforded to sport onto education and income in line with middle class institutional norm (Anderson and Hill Collins 2004:180).

When the rational choices made by different classes in society are examined it can at first be hard to understand the choice of the lower socioeconomic group. When we consider the limited career of a professional soccer player to be approximately fifteen years (www.Careers.ie), a success rate of approximately 3 in 100,000 of attaining professional status (Anderson and Hill Collins 2004) “high wastage or failure rate especially during the early

years” (Bourke 2002:376) and the potential career ending injuries associated with this sport (Weber 2009).

One explanation for this rational choice can be found in the structural inequalities that can be seen in Ireland in relation to class (Baker, et al 2004). With regard to this research the structural inequalities that are of most importance can be found in work and education. In relation to education, Baker et al state that students from lower income backgrounds cannot “access, participate and achieve in education on equal terms with others” (2004: 145). The inequalities found in work are then stated to be closely related to inequalities in education (ibid).

The Sports Council of Ireland has funded research in the area of sport and social class. The study “Fair play? Sport and social disadvantage in Ireland” (Lunn 2007) tells us that soccer is not as previously thought a sport associated with the working class. One of the reasons given is that people from higher socioeconomic backgrounds continue to play sport into their adult life. Lunn’s finding relates to total participation in sport of people of all ages. In contrast this paper looks at children in sport and here the indications are that soccer is a predominantly working class sport. This is supported by research conducted by Ann Bourke entitled ‘The road to fame and fortune: insight on the career paths of young Irish professional footballers in England’ where only one respondent out of ninety was privately educated (Bourke, 2002). This was also supported by Armour (2000) who states that few players in the professional ranks come from public school backgrounds and football still seeks to pull its players from a notional working class background.

In relation to sport and education class has been shown here to merit serious consideration. Rational choices made in relation to a career in sport can be influenced by the structural

inequalities associated with class. However this rational choice appears to ignore some serious consequences associated with striving for a career in professional soccer.

Conclusion

This Literature review has established that the link between sport and education is irrefutable and that in most cases it is a positive one. However when engaged in at an elite level by children the relationship can become negative and damaging to the educational prospects of the child. Here a balance is called for but may be hard to achieve due to the vested interest of adults in the child's future potential career (Coakley 2004). How the child then makes this career choice the literature shows can be multi faceted. The arguments put forward include rational choice, Bourdieu's theory of habitus and serendipity.

The reason for an early departure to the UK to pursue this career choice is explained through dependency theory and the undermining of the soccer industry in Ireland by numerous means including the early transfer of its best players to the core country England.

Previous research in Ireland on the career path of young Irish soccer players has shown that less than half of them seek any career guidance while in secondary school nor do they undertake any preparation before their move to England (Bourke, 2002). With better preparation and information alternative routes to a professional career may be found that will benefit both players who make it as a professional and those who don't. Seeking to encourage the elite sports person to concentrate on education as well as their potential sports career can be argued is not just in the interest of the player but also it is in the interest of the sports industry.

Chapter three

Methodology

Introduction

The research was carried out using a mixed methods approach which employed both semi structured interviews and participant observation, both of which are qualitative in nature (Schutt 2009). The use of mixed methods allowed for different types of data collection which produced an enriched understanding of the data surrounding the research question (Schutt 2009:346). The participants for the semi structured interviews were aged between 18 and 24, all have played soccer at an elite level between the relevant ages of twelve to fifteen (Elite level will be defined for the purpose of this research, as having played representative soccer at a national level).

Sampling Method

The participants were chosen using non probability snowball and purposive sampling, Schutt states that snowball sampling allows the elements to be selected “as they are identified by successive informants or interviewees” (2009:174). The reason in this instance for selecting snowball sampling is the lack of detailed information available in relation to the sampling frame consisting of players who played elite soccer between the age of twelve and fifteen. Here the names of those who played elite soccer are only available through competition programs that were produced at the time that they played in the representative games. This would have been between six and ten years ago. These programmes only contain the names of the players but no other contact details. The first interviewee was a League of Ireland player whose name appears in one such programme. As a result of his current status as a national league soccer player his contact details were available to me through his current club. This participant in contrast to the rest was selected using purposive sampling. Purposive

sampling is where a participant is selected for characteristics that are thought to have a bearing on the research being conducted (Barbour 2008:52). All subsequent interviewees were sourced using this player as my starting point (snowball sampling). Problems in relation to snowball sampling were mitigated against by asking participants to recommend people from different clubs and people who may be unlike themselves (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). An interview was also carried out with the principal of a boy's school here the aim was to get an insight into the career choices of boys in junior cert years at school.

In the case of the school principal he was considered to be a key informant. Key informants are said to be individuals whose experience and role puts them in a position of having pertinent information and knowledge which they are prepared to share (O'Leary 2010:171). A number of challenges are also pointed out by O'Leary, one being the need to identify if possible, any subjective ideas that the interviewee may have (2010:172). All participants who participated did so willingly and without coercion having been briefed fully on the nature of the research (see appendix 1). The researcher found some limitations in the use of purposive and snowball sampling. Here the preference would have been for the use of purposive random sampling were even within a small group it would increase the credibility of the results (Patton 1990:179). However due to limited contact details for the total population of the sample frame this was not possible.

Semi structured interviews

In regard to semi structured interviews, this method of research is considered to be qualitative in nature and is designed to give as full and holistic understanding of the participant's experience. Bryman (2008:321) reminds us that qualitative research is not merely quantitative research with the numbers removed. It also allows the interviewer to explore topics that are of interest to the interviewee as well as the interviewer (Ibid). The use

of semi structured interviews in this research can be supported when we consider one of the aims of the study was to get a full and holistic view of the relationship between education and elite soccer from the participant's perspective as both a student and an elite soccer player. In this regard the research aims should dictate the research methods (Weiss 1994:9).

In advance of the interview the questions were piloted on a person who has played soccer at an elite level and at the relevant age. This was done to ensure that the questions "are as clear to the respondents and interviewers as they are to researchers" (Bryman, Becker & Ferguson 2012:242). Although this list of questions formed the basis for the interview, the interviewer did not stick rigidly to the order in which the questions are listed and encouraged the interviewee to elaborate on certain points. This gave more latitude to probe beyond the answers given and "enter into a dialogue with the interviewee" (May 2001:123). A description of how the semi structured interviews were conducted is as follows. The interview took place in a setting that was both suitable and practical to the interviewee and interviewer. The venues were selected taking into account things such as cost, privacy, noise, and distance from home for interviewer and interviewee. The interviews were taped and lasted approximately 45 minutes each. The interviews were guided by a list of questions as recommended for semi structured interviews (Bryman, Becker & Ferguson 2012:242) (see appendix 2).

In relation to the kind of things that interviews should seek to ascertain Bryman suggests Kvale's nine types of questions this includes, values, beliefs, behaviour, relationships, places and locations, emotions, encounters and stories. This was achieved in the case of all interviews that were carried out (Kvale 2008:328).

There were however some precautions that need to be taken when using interviews for data collection this included, inaccuracies due to poor recall, response bias and reflexivity, this is

where the interviewee tells the interviewer what the interviewer wants to hear (Yin, 2009:102). Having completed the recordings I proceeded to transcribe them within two days to avoid the previously mentioned poor recall. Respect and consideration was afforded to participants at all time during the interview process. As well as being the right thing to do it was also done to avoid spoiling the field for future research. In relation to accuracy of recall some difficulty was experienced in relation to the age that participants engaged in representative football. This was overcome by the researcher by relating particular milestones in relation to representative football to milestones in other sections of their lives.

Finally consistency between the methods outlined in this methods section and the questions used will ensure the research has both internal validity (investigating what it claims to be investigating) and reliability (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). Reliability although contested in relation to qualitative research in this case refers to the repeatability of the methods used. Here reliability was used with regard to sustainability and validity in relation to being well grounded; both are relevant to qualitative research in defining the strength of the data. With regard to generalisation this is not a desired outcome in relation to qualitative research and will be limited to the participants involved in the study (Ritchie Lewis 2003:270).

Participant observation

This was carried out with two football scouts who work for English Premiership clubs. The observations were carried out over six hours while the scouts attended under thirteen schoolboy matches. In this regard participant observation is said to be a “qualitative method of gathering information that involves developing a sustained relationship with people while they go about their normal activities” (Schutt 2009:277). Schutt also states that participant observation provides a way for the researcher to see the social world as the participant sees it. Bourdieu suggests in relation to participant observation, that it does not allow the researcher

to think as the subject thinks. It does however allow the researcher to imagine doing what they do by extrapolating from our own social world (Jenkins 1992:178). The participant observation also made it possible to experience the social interaction between the players, players' parents and team managers and the football scout. Particular attention was paid to the context and environment in which this interaction occurred (ibid). The observations were recorded using pen and paper to take note of all relevant activities, conversations and the environment and context that they occurred in.

Although participant observation can be carried out both covertly and overtly this observation took the form of the latter. Here permission was sought from the football scout to accompany him to the games; this was done by means of a signed consent form (see appendix 3). Where third parties asked what I was doing I informed them as to the nature of the research. It should be noted that my presence in this setting could have had the effect of altering the social situation. This was unavoidable and is recognised as potentially being part of the process of participation observation (Schutt 2009).

Data analysis

The process of data analysis commenced in the field, where notes were taken in the margins of both the sheet containing the questions in relation to the semi structured interviews and again on the margin of the note pad I used to record the participant observation. This allowed for potentially important information to be identified (Schutt 2009:362). Further notes were made in the margins as both the interviews and the participant observation notes were being transcribed, again to note issues of potential importance as well as the emergence of potential themes and sub themes.

A detailed reading of the transcripts allowed for themes and sub themes to be identified which were highlighted using coloured highlighter pens. The data was then reduced to the

areas highlighted and specific themes were grouped together (O’Leary 2010:264-265). Having reduced the data to relevant themes, the themes were then explored to identify relationships between them (ibid). This analysis of the data, combined with a simultaneous reengagement with the literature allowed for the building of “the richest map possible” (ibid).

Ethics

Although no ethical issues arose during the interviews, this was in part due to a number of actions that were taken in the preparation for this research. This included opting to interview people over 18 years of age, this limited issues in relation to informed consent for juveniles. Other ethical issues that were considered in relation to this research included, minimising the risk to participants, informed consent, anonymity was assured in relation to the final report however confidentiality can only be assured in relation to the raw data, protecting researcher from harm and avoid any harm to participants as is described in (Ritchie and Lewis 2003:66-71). In the case of the informed consent, the interviewees were informed of the nature of the research and who will have access to the raw data. They were advised that a copy of the interview will also be given to them for any corrections. This allowed for the removal of any information that the interviewee may perceive as harmful to them thereby minimising the risk to them. They were reassured that the data will be stored securely, this includes both the taped and transcribed version of the data.

Prior to commencement of the interview participants were advised that they did not have to take part in the interview if they did not wish to do so and they had the right to withdraw at any time. They were also given a copy of the questions to be asked in advance of the interview. All the above was outlined in the consent form and signed by the interviewees. The Sociological Association of Ireland suggests that “as far as possible, sociological

research should be based on the freely given informed consent of those studied” (Ethical guidelines Sociological association of Ireland 2012)

In relation to protection of the interviewer from harm a number of issues were considered but not deemed to be relevant. This included location for the interview, volatile interviewee and risk of sparking anger in the interviewee. Consideration was also given to the possible need to terminate the interview if either the interviewer or interviewee felt threatened or overly upset as a result of the interview. In the event of unpleasant memories being resurrected as a result of the interviews a list of numbers was available to the interviewee.

Chapter four

Findings

Introduction

When the gathered data was analysed a number of themes emerged. This included class, family influence over initial participation in soccer, career choice at an early age made with little career guidance, a lack of interest in the formal education of the young player by any interested parties connected to soccer and effects of elite soccer. The findings will be analysed thematically using the themes that emerged from the data analysis

Class

In one of its simplest form the definition of working class is the Marxist one of a person who sells their labour. It can be argued that this definition is less than satisfactory in a post modernity society where many jobs now offer various levels of autonomy and wages. Bourke in her analysis of the career paths of young Irish professional footballers used attendance of private or public schools as an indicator of class (2002). For the purpose of this research the term working class will be defined by education and employment status of the interviewee's parents. In this regard the parents of all the interviewees were shown to be either unemployed or sell their labour. In relation to education none have gone beyond second level. As a result all the participants were considered to be of working class. This position is supported if type of school attended is used as an indicator of class as Bourke (2002) did, as all the participants in this research attended public schools.

A typical response in relation to the parent's level of education was.

“They came from (area name) so they only realistically reached their, inter cert I think it was called and then they were working from an early age” (Interviewee B 2).

Others left prior to the junior cert.

“I think they went up to just before the junior cert I think me Ma might of done her junior cert or just before it so they didn’t have a great background in following right through education” (Interviewee A1)

The previous literature review chapter outlined how participation in elite sport plays different roles depending on the participant’s socioeconomic background. This in part results from structural inequalities in education (sometimes with the collusion of teachers) and the restrictive structures of opportunity in the wider economy. This in turn makes the pursuit of a career in sport appear to be one based on rational choice (Anderson and Hill Collins 2004:183). For those who pursue this course it can be seen as a way of gaining respect and status from society. However the respect gained can be fleeting and for most it fails to deliver social mobility. The data derived from this research supports this where a certain level of status and respect was gained although fleetingly through representative football at under age level. However none of the interviewees have secured a professional soccer contract to date and almost all are unemployed. One interviewee summed it up well.

“People would tell me I was good at football.....I knew I was good a lot of people did say that I was good, word gets around and you always get feedback from people”
(Interviewee I 9).

“People give you a lot more attention and time; they always want to talk to you..... when you’re playing representative football they pay more attention to you”
(interviewee A1)

One interviewee made a direct connection between class education and elite soccer.

“Maybe when you come from a working class area and you’re a good footballer I don’t think education is at the top of the tree. I think you just think you’re going to be a footballer and you don’t think of the future down the line” (Interviewee I 9)

In relation to class the findings showed that all the participants came from a working class background where a choice of a career in soccer could afford a certain amount of status and respect. However the status and respect gained was found to be fleeting.

Family influence

This leads well into the second theme that emerged from the data that was family influence over the interviewee’s initial participation in soccer. As previously stated all of the interviewees were introduced to soccer by a family member.

“I would have started around five or six I’d say, I started with a local club that would have been the normal thing Me Mam and Dad would have taken turns bringing me down” (Interviewee A 1).

This is further supported by Ann Bourke where 65% of respondents in her research said they joined a soccer club at a young age, this she used as evidences of parental guidance to a particular sport. 41% also spoke of the connection between their career choice and their father’s love of the game (2003) (Schulenberg et al.2005). When these findings are compared to the theory of careership, little evidence can be found to support a part for serendipity in the choices made in this regard.

On occasions this influence over the player’s participation in soccer by the father can be seen to extend to encouraging their sons to aim towards a career in soccer. One quote shows the mothers concern for education and the fathers for the soccer career

“She was the one what’s the story with education. Me and me Da just blanked it out completely. It was always; well what’s the story with football, what are the chances that are available. It’s always your mothers’ role to do the education”

(Interviewee C 1)

The participant observation also highlighted the issue of the player’s father’s interest in a career for their son’s in professional soccer. In this regard over the course of the participant observation fathers sought to engage with the football scouts seeking the opinion of the scouts in relation to their son’s progress as a player. (Participant observation).

Here the findings showed that the social choices made by family and friends have a substantial bearing on the choices made by the interviewees. Although some evidence of agency was at play in this regard. A better explanation for the choices made by the participants can be found in Bourdieu’s theory on habitus.

Career choice

A significant theme that emerged from the data was the fact that the interviewees decided on a career in professional soccer from a very young age. This was accompanied by a lack of career guidance for the player who wished to embark on this hazardous career.

All the interviewees when questioned about their desire for a career in professional soccer expressed similar sentiments.

“When you’re watching the boys on the telly for Ireland and Manchester United. You get to about eleven or twelve and you see yourself on the telly one day. So your mapping your life out before it evens starts ye know” (Interviewee I 9).

“To be honest it would have been in around the Kennedy Cup and things I can make a career out of this, ye this could be your potential job for the rest of your life”

(Interviewee B 2).

Although most of the players interviewed were aware of the pitfalls in relation to potential career ending injuries and the need to have an education to fall back on, none mentioned the success rate associated with a professional sports career which is approximately 3 in 100,000 (Anderson and Hill Collins 2004). Bourke also speaks of a “high wastage or failure rate especially during the early years” (2002:376). When this is considered little sign of rational choice is in evidence.

In relation to career guidance none of the players received anything that would prepare them for a career in soccer instead most spoke of being told to have something to fall back on. In most cases this was falling on deaf ears, one response was.

“ye I got plenty of career guidance but I kept telling them that I want to be a footballer and they told me that I need something to fall back on ye ye ye but I want to be a footballer” (Interviewee F 1).

While this may be seen as a logical approach it did little to prepare a pupil who had decided on a career in soccer an industry’s that has a hazardous reputation of injury and a high failure rate (Bourke 2002).

The interview with the school principle hit on this in relation to career guidance in general here he stated.

“you bring students in here on occasions and you say, you are capable do you not want something better than this and in some ways that’s imposing our value system and does not always work” (school principal).

These remarks were however tempered when he stated.

“It would be criminal not to give as wide an education as possible, in sport an injury can wipe out a career and you need to leave as many doors open as you can” (School principle).

Although the players saw that the choice they made was one of rational choice little evidence was available in this regard. In the case of all interviewees a career choice of professional soccer was decided on between the age of twelve and fifteen. This was done with little or no advice from career guidance. Entering into an industry that evidences suggest is extremely hazardous in relation to career ending injuries and a high failure rate (Bourke 2002).

All players interviewed spoke of prioritising a career in sport over their education. Although there were regular reminders from some parents (mainly mothers) and teachers about needing an education to fall back on, to a large extent this fell on deaf ears. This was described as

“At the time it was just football I didn’t care about learning I didn’t care about what was in the future all I cared about was football. To be honest I probably thought football was definitely going to happen for me in the future, getting a job out of it and I didn’t think about education at all then it was put back to the end of the line”
(Interviewee I 9)

All of the interviews continued in the same vain where education is firmly located in second place to soccer.

“I had no interest in it because of football. Football took over a lot of it. When I was younger I didn’t really go to school a lot because I was going on trials back and forward to England. On trials and I was playing international football I didn’t really look at the bigger picture” (Interviewee D 4).

Trials impacted on education

“I’d say it impacted a small bit I would not say it sidelined it. Because obviously I had to miss school going on trips and the school were fine with that to be fair..... it wasn’t a priority for me between going to games and missing school me Mam and Dad had no problem with it as well. It was definitely football, football was the priority and school came second” (Interviewee A 1).

All players that were interviewed went on trials between the age of eleven and fourteen, one that went at eleven said.

“Eleven years of age that shouldn’t happen over here it shouldn’t be allowed to happen..... It was a great experience but I was on the phone to my Da every night I was upset because it was new to me. It was my first time ever being away from my family. We went on the train on our own and we met up with them at Belfast airport” (Interviewee D 4).

Education was not seen as a priority for any of the interviewees as most had set their sights on a career in professional soccer. This was further exasperated by the amount of school time missed due to various soccer related activities primarily trials in England.

Education and Elite sport

The findings show that to some degree the involvement in elite soccer had a negative effect on their education.

“I was barely in school I was away with football all the time or on trials. like it was always the notion that I’m really not going to do my leaving cert if I keep going the way I’m going with football but when it came to it I ended up having to do the leaving cert it was a bit of a setback “ (Interviewee C 1)

“ To be honest about it education to me was coming second it was always football. I saw the different opportunities I was getting in football and education was coming second. Ye know me head was in the clouds. Like even the junior cert I never really got to study for it..... I was up at the Foyle Cup, you had the Milk cup with different clubs Blackburn and I went away to Switzerland with Man City. You would get home and there was letters from XYZ club looking for you to come on trials. You were barely getting to sleep rather than saying I’ll get the books out” (Interviewee B 1)

As can be seen from the previous quote the interviewees claim to have prioritised elite soccer over education. However also evident was the impact trials with English clubs was having on their education, this was evident in almost all interviews. When asked if education was on the agenda for the clubs the response was unanimously no. The same was true of the FAI in relation to education were no mention of or consideration was given to the education of players that were interviewed, even though the players were going on international duty during school term. Two players described going on international duty with the FAI at under fifteen level.

“That was during school we got the week off. It was over here we stayed in the Regency Hotel; we stayed there for the week we had two games. There was all the lads there but no tutor. You just mixed with the lads and train, you’d go home to your hotel, meals team meeting whatever and go back to your room” (Interviewee D4).

“I had exams coming up and I did bring books. I never opened them, I never touched them, they never came out of the bag” (Interviewee C1).

The regularity and early age at which trials happen was supported in the participation observation. While observing the football scout at an under thirteen game he was making notes in relation to players ability. Behind one of the names he had written N.I. he explained

that this meant that he was not interested in the player as some of the bigger clubs in the English Premier League already had him over on trials in spite of it being against both English Football Association and Football Association of Ireland rules in relation to the age that a player must attain before trials are permitted (Participant observation).

Some negative sentiments were expressed in relation to involvement in elite soccer.

“There’s pressure on you from eleven or twelve to go out and play well and it shouldn’t be like that. You should be able to go out and play with a smile on your face” (Interviewee D 1)

One interviewee described his relationship with soccer scouts.

“I thought he was just being nice and this and that but realistically they were just looking after themselves. Ye know it’s a dog eat dog world. Like they have to survive. You were only kind of a pawn in everything ye know” (Interviewee B 2).

The negative effect of elite sport on education has been well documented. Donnolly and Petherick (2006:20) point out numerous negative consequences of participation in elite sport, including the child’s detachment from larger society, psychological as well as physiological stress and most relevant to this research impaired intellectual development. Here they claim educational achievements are earned in spite of the sport and school system not because of them. In this regard a balance is recommended, here Hickey and Kelly (2008) draw on Foucault’s theorising about ‘caring for the self’, stating that “individuals might be encouraged to restrain their passion and instincts to establish a balanced and prudent identity”.

The findings here are in line with previous research in this area where participation in elite sport is shown to have a negative effect on the education of the players interviewed.

Chapter Five

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to give a sociological description of the relationship between the interviewee's education and their participation in elite soccer. The research commenced with the aim of exploring the impact that participation in elite soccer has on twelve to fifteen year olds education. A number of wider themes emerged from the data collected. These themes in turn directed the findings section of the research. Dialectically the discussions section now returns to the original perspectives of class, education and career choice to discuss the findings.

In defining class Bourdieu's theory may be more appropriate than one that looks at a Marxist economic capital analysis of class. Instead Bourdieu also looks at the relationship between a broad range of class practices from taste in food to types of social choice in everyday life as well as the economical and the political (Harker, Maher and Wilks 1990:109). Here Bourdieu's theory on habitus offers a deeper perspective, where the habitus of the interviewees has an influencing effect on choices they make. One social choice that affects this group is the predominance of soccer in the social environment inhabited by the interviewees this includes parents, family and friends. Here Bourdieu claims that the player internalises the expectations of the relationship to others who share this particular habitus. At the same time external structures are internalised into the habitus (Jenkins 1992). The external structures here can be seen as the education system and the structural inequalities associated with it (Anderson and Hill Collins 2004). The sharing of a particular habitus can be seen in the data were all the interviewees were introduced to football by a family member in almost all cases this was the father.

In general a negative approach was taken to education by the players interviewed. This was also readily identified in the literature section as a potential hazard for young people who participate in elite sport. A lot of the players interviewed stated that school was not for them one states that. "I had no brains anyway to be honest" (Interviewee D 4).

The use of Bourdieu to get a sociological understanding of this issue is supported by Jenkins because of the clarity it brings to the cultural struggles traditional and modern society as well as the comprehensive understanding it gives us of the relationship between, "education, cultural consumption and stratification patterns in modern society" (Jenkins 1992:180)

If we look at this approach to education from Bourdieu's habitus perspective it can be seen that peoples material position is as a result of early socialisation. In this regard we perceive a way of knowing and appreciating the world. As a result we internalise our life chances deciding whether certain situations or opportunities "are for the likes of us" (Nash 2002:280).

Here we see children making career choices that they believe to be of their own making and to some degree they are. However it is also influenced by the habitus that forms the society they come from. It is also influenced by the field in which they are situated and the dominant structures associated with the field. This includes the soccer labour market and an educational system that limits the educational chances of working class children. All of which have a heavy bearing on the choices made by the child with regard to education. This is reminiscent of the Marx adage that "although men make their own history, they do not do so in circumstances of their own choosing" (Jenkins 1992:70).

The career choices that were made by the players interviewed was shown to have an influence on their education. This was partly as a result of the need to travel to England on a

regular basis for trials. The need to do this results from the absence of a sustainable soccer industry in Ireland. McGovern explains the reasons for the absence of an industry through dependency theory. This is where the core country England goes in search of its raw material in the periphery Ireland. In this case the raw material for the soccer industry is the players. At the same time we see the industry of the periphery country stifled by the actions of the core country (McGovern, 2000).

The reason for selecting a career in professional soccer can be as a result of the player having gained a social identity as he grows up. This is as a result of acquiring a set of practical and cultural competences (Jenkins 1992). The player's educators, sports coaches, family and community it can be argued see the player in a particular social world and take this social world for granted. Bourdieu may argue that the reason why we accept our social world is that it is easier than continuously questioning the meaning of life, this gives rise to the statement 'That's just the way it is' (ibid).

When the career choice is considered from a conflict theory perspective the young player can be seen to be commodified where the commodified value of this skill takes precedent over his education. In this case both the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) and the English soccer clubs that are bringing him on trials are sacrificing the player's education for the future potential value of the player's commodified skills Giulianotti sees this as the player becoming known for his financial value as opposed to intrinsic value (1999). Examples were also given by players interviewed of alienation from their skill at an early age.

"At that age it should have been about enjoying football but at that time there's pressure on you. At twelve and thirteen to go out and play well and it shouldn't be like that. You should be able to go out and play football with a smile on your face"

(Interviewee D 4).

This was also evident from the participant observation where little or no emotion was shown by either the players or the parents and supporters who attended the game that formed part of the participant observation (Participant Observation 1). Giulianotti (1999:108) states that “In football as in industry the worker fits into the division of labour, performing his or her allocated role continuously”.

A critique of the dismissal of rational choice in favour of a theory of habitus can leave Bourdieu theory open to criticism in relation his own ability to set himself goals and objectives. A fair question to ask then is whether this is not true of the people this study is based on can they not also set themselves goals in defiance of their habitus (Jenkins 1992). We then must ask are the choices children make simply as a result of rational choice or are the more complex and better explained by habitus that is the “internalisation of reality and the externalisation of internality” (Jenkins 1992:79). This research has produced evidence to confirm that the latter is the case.

Conclusion

This research has engaged in a sociological exploration of the impact that participation in elite soccer by twelve to fifteen year olds has on their education. The initial task undertaken was to ascertain the class of the players. In all cases those interviewed were found to be working class. The template used to determine class of the interviewee was the parent’s occupation, employment status and type of school attended by the player private or public. The use of school attended to determine the class of soccer players is supported by Bourke in her research on the career path of young Irish soccer players in England (2002). The need to determine class is due to the fact that elite sport plays different roles depending on the socio economic background of the participant (Andersen and Hill Collins 2004). In the study

carried out by Andersen and Hill Collins on young men success in sport was not just one way of showing proof of masculinity, it was often the only way of achieving masculine status (ibid).

The literature review initially outlines the positive effect of sport and the importance of an incorporation of sport into the education system. However this research suggests that participation in elite sport by working class boys from a young age can be detrimental to their education. More specifically the evidence that emerged from this research in relation to this group of players showed that they had all decided on a career in professional soccer from an early age. Although some still have ambitions for a career in professional soccer to date none have been successful in achieving their goal.

The findings also showed that prioritising of participation in elite soccer over education has had a negative impact on their formal education leaving them ill prepared for the wider labour market. This was shown to be as a result of a number of factors including the choice of a career in soccer from a very young age, in most cases this was thirteen years of age or younger. Although it can be argued that children are not just passive recipients of an adult world and are in fact “co-constructors of childhood and society” (Corsaro 2011:35). All player were seen to be encouraged by significant others to follow the dream of a career in professional soccer. In this regard little evidence was found to support either the idea put forward by theory of careership that serendipity plays a part in selecting a career or that agency was playing a significant role. In this regard the theory on habitus appeared to offer the best sociological explanation in relation to career choice. Here the theory of habitus sees the agency in the internalising of the habitus in which we live and in turn then externalising the internalised reality of our habitus thereby perpetuating the reality of one’s habitus.

Although all interviewees recognised belatedly that education should have received greater attention during their early secondary education all had neglected it to some degree as a result of their participation in elite soccer. This resulted from habitus, personal disengagement from education, lack of career guidance advice and the distraction of international football and trials with English soccer clubs. In this regard this paper concurs with Donnolly and Petherick (2006) in relation to the negative consequences of participation in elite sport. This includes child's detachment from larger society, psychological as well as physiological stress and most relevant to this research impaired intellectual development (education). As does Hickey and Kelly (2008) this paper found a need for a balance to be struck in relation to the player's education and participation in elite soccer

Recommendations from this paper would be that international football would not start until after junior cert this would allow for a solid foundation to be laid in respect of secondary education. Trials with professional soccer clubs should only be permitted again after completion of the junior cert or equivalent. Finally any player who wishes to engage in a career in professional soccer should be afforded a comprehensive understanding of such a career and not just advice on what would be required as a backup in case the first choice fails.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Information Letter to Participants

My name is James L'Estrange, I am in my final year studying for a Bachelor of Social Science degree at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. As part of my final year I am undertaking a research project.

My chosen project is a study of;

An exploration of the relationship between education and the desire for a career in professional soccer.

In this regard I am looking for men between the age of 18 and 24 years of age who played in the Kennedy cup, to participate in this project. The aim of the research is to get an understanding of the relationship between education and the desire if any for a career in professional soccer. I also intend to interview a number of people who may be considered to be key informants in the area as well. This will be done using a taped interview where the participant will be asked questions in relation to this period in his life.

The interview usually takes about one hour and can be arranged for a time and place of your convenience. This interview will be taped but your name will not be used. All of the interview information will be kept confidential; this includes a copy of the recorded interview and the subsequently transcribed interview. Should you take part in the project any information you give will be included with what other participants have said. Your identity will be kept confidential and only a code number will be used to identify you in the transcribed notes and the final report. The only other person who will have access to the information gathered will be my supervisor Peter Murry Lecturer NUI Maynooth.

Participation in this project is voluntary. You should feel free to withdraw from the process at any time, refuse to answer any question or stop the interview at any time. You may also withdraw from the project at any time up to the completion of the research. If you have any further questions about the research you can contact me on 0866775078 or at james.lestrange.2012@nuim.ie

Yours sincerely

.....

James L'Estrange

Appendix 2

Questions for players

Name

Date of birth

Some questions in relation to your parents or guardian who was in charge of your primary and secondary education

1. What level of education do your parents have
2. Do they work if so what type of work are they employed in
3. Where your parents into soccer how involved were they

What is your own level of education at present?

1. If still in education what level are you aiming to achieve
2. In you have left education at this **point** what was the highest level of education that you reached **Junior results, points** in leaving cert etc.

What is your status at the moment in relation to employment or education (working, studying or other)

1. Are you in paid employment
2. Is this full time or part time
3. What type of employment is it

At what age did you start playing soccer and who was the main person who introduced you to it

1. Who first introduced you to soccer
2. Was it a local club
3. What involvement did family friends and neighbours have in soccer
4. Can you describe what you remember of this occasion
5. What if any emotions did this experience generate in you

At what age did you first realise that you were good at soccer.

1. What age did this happen at
2. At what age did you come aware that other people thought you were good at soccer. Can you tell me who they were and describe any times that this happened
3. Was it something that was said to you that made you realise this
4. Who was this and what was their relationship to you
5. Who was the first person you remember commenting on you in relation to your ability as a soccer player. can you describe how you felt .

Did you at any point between the age of 11 and 15 decide on a career as a professional footballer?

1. If so what age did this happen
2. How did you come to this decision
3. who influenced you in coming to this decision

What was the experience of representative football is like

1. What age were you when this first happened starting with trials for the Kennedy Cup
2. Can you describe this in relation to Dublin trials
3. Trials for Ireland
4. First Ireland team how old were you describe it
5. Trials with UK clubs

What was your contact with soccer scouts representing UK soccer clubs like

1. Did you have direct contact or was the contact limited to your parents
2. How extensive was your relationship with the scouts

What were your feelings about education between the age of 11 and 15

1. Did you see education as being important in relation to how you saw your future
2. Did you get any career guidance in school
3. Did soccer have any effect on your thoughts on education,
4. if so what age did this happen
5. Did Scouts mention education at any time in relation to a career in soccer
6. Did clubs mention education in relation to a career in soccer
7. Did FAI mention education in relation to a career in soccer
8. Did your parents mention education in relation to a career in soccer

Anything you would like to add

Do you think there are things you could have done differently that would have made a career possible? EG things you could have done differently when you were on trials

Questions for school principal

How long have you been principle in Kevin's college

Have you thought at any other schools prior this one?

Do you have any background in sport yourself any particular sport that you would like or dislike (ask if any reason for this if relevant?)

I know class can be a contested issue but if you were to describe the student population in this regard how best would you describe it

In your experience do students decide on a career path while at secondary school

- If so are there any particular careers that attract students to them from an early age.

What career guidance's is available to children in the school?

- Is this set out by the department of education
- at what age does this happen
- Do the students engage with the service
- Is the age at which it happens related in any way to the chosen career or strictly related to age and turn
- If a student selected a career in professional soccer from an early age what approach would career guidance take
- If a student selected a career in another profession like engineer from an early age what approach would career guidance take

Do you have many students that put a high priority on soccer?

- Is there anything notably different about how these students approach education

Do you come across children who more specifically decided on a career in professional soccer in the school?

- If so, what is the attitude of pupils that decide on a career in professional soccer towards education?

In what way if any is this different to the attitude of other students who play sport for fun or not at all?

What is the attitude of children who adopt an elite approach to other sport or cultural activity such as music etc to education.

In your experience from your interaction with the parents of these students who seek a career in professional soccer. What in general is their attitude to their children's education?

How does this compare with the attitude of other comparable parents

Do you have anything else you would like to add that you feel may be relevant?

Appendix 3

Consent Form for players

1/3/2013

Thank you for agreeing to take part in my research project on. An exploration of the relationship between education and the desire for a career in professional football.

I am conducting this research as part of my coursework for a third year Sociology course on 'Fieldwork' at the National University of Ireland Maynooth.

This interview may take up to one hour and with your permission we would like to tape record the conversation. A copy of the interview tape will be made available to you afterwards if you wish to hear it.

There are no risks involved in this research and the interview does not constitute any type of counselling or treatment.

The benefit to you is that you will have access to the research when it is finished and you may use it to understand how your experience compares with others or to the wider sociology literature.

All of the interview information will be kept confidential. We will store the tapes and transcriptions of our conversation safely. Your identity will be kept confidential and we will use a pseudonym to identify your interview data. Neither your name or private information will appear in the final research project.

Your participation is voluntary. You are free to refuse to take part, and you may refuse to answer any questions or may stop at any time. You may also withdraw at any time up until the work is completed.

If you have any questions about the research, you may contact me at james.lestrange.2012@nuim.ie or my research supervisor Peter Murray at peter.murray@nuim.ie phone 017083594

"I have read the description above and consent to participate."

Signed _____

Date _____

Consent Form Football scouts

Thank you for agreeing to take part in my research project on.

An exploration of the relationship between education and the desire for a career in professional football.

I am conducting this research as part of my coursework for a third year Sociology course on 'Fieldwork' at the National University of Ireland Maynooth.

This participation observation may take up to two hour and with your permission we would like to take written notes to record my observations. A copy of the notes will be made available to you afterwards if you wish to read them.

There are no risks involved in this research and the interview does not constitute any type of counselling or treatment.

The benefit to you is that you will have access to the research when it is finished and you may use it to understand how your experience compares with others or to the wider sociology literature.

All of the noted gathered from the participation observation will be kept confidential. We will store the notes and transcriptions of the notes safely. Your identity will be kept confidential and we will use a pseudonym to identify your interview data. Neither your name nor private information will appear in the final research project.

Your participation is voluntary. You are free to refuse to take part, and you may refuse to answer any questions or may stop at any time. You may also withdraw at any time up until the work is completed.

If you have any questions about the research, you may contact me at james.lestrange.2012@nuim.ie or my research supervisor Peter Murray at peter.murray@nuim.ie phone 017083594

"I have read the description above and consent to participate."

Signed _____

Date _____