This thesis is concerned with the issues surrounding the participation of young people (aged 11 to 13) in junior club sport. This follows the acknowledgement that club sport is a key site for participation by young people away from school but that very little is known or understood about how this sports experience actually works (MacPhail et al, 2003). This thesis examines the complex relationships and interactions that shape the participation and attrition of young people from a cricket club in the Midlands.

This ethnographic participant-observation study focuses on two seasons of coaching sessions, practices and matches. It explores the dynamic interactions between the young people, their parents, their coaches and the cricket club itself. Underpinning this thesis are the core concepts of the sports socialisation process and the sociology of the family. On a more applied level, the thesis draws upon the theories of developmental stages of sports participation (Cote & Hay, 2002a), social construction and positioning in sport (Kirk & MacPhail, 2003) and situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Data was generated through observation and semi-structured interviews with the young people, their parents, the coaches and other club officials. The taped interviews and field notes were then collated and a grounded theory approach was used to analyse the data thematically. A number of methods were used to do this including data coding, memos and conceptual mapping.

The conclusions to the thesis highlight that there are key differences between the developmental stages of sampler and specialiser, that social construction and positioning within legitimate peripheral participation is vital to the way the sports club is experienced and practised by everyone involved in it and that `the family' is of vital importance in the participation process at the club as well as the way that the club is socially constructed and perpetuated as being like a certain type of family. The young people themselves were seen to inhabit varied social positions which were linked to the positions and practices of their parents and the coaches as well as their level of participation within the club `community of practice'. These experiences influenced their social construction of `self as cricketer' and their continued participation (or attrition) from the club.

The implications for policy makers and coaching practitioners is that more awareness needs to be made of the way that the interactions between coaches, parents and young people dictate their future participation or attrition from the club. The thesis ends with the assertion that the sports club experience for young people requires further detailed investigation.
Editor's comments - [ The above is the abstract from an original PhD thesis; the final publication in the study for the author in pursuit of a doctorate; such works result in the author being awarded a PhD and the title of Dr. by an appropriately accredited University. PhD's are the culmination of a number of years work by the author supervised by two (normally PhD or MPhil qualified) academics and, with the addition of a further appropriately qualified academic (not normally from the same University) as part of a viva-voce examination team. Successful research work at PhD level is designed to add to the body of knowledge in the study area at some level.
The developmental socialisation of young people in club sport: an ethnographic account

Written by Toms, M.
Thursday, 21 April 2005 00:00 - Last Updated Tuesday, 02 April 2013 12:50

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