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Sporting Intervention and Social Change:

Football, marginalised youth and citizenship development

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Abstract

Numerous sport-based interventions exist which target marginalised or 'at-risk' young people with the intention of enabling some form of social change for programme participants. Very often, the objective of such interventions is the acquisition and development of qualities associated with 'good citizenship'. However, critical scholars have noted how sport-based initiatives are frequently used as a form of social control, focusing on the development of personal responsibility. As such, these initiatives accentuate more passive forms of citizenship, as opposed to more active forms of citizenship towards which many educational policies and programmes are aimed. Nevertheless, there is a limited amount literature which explores the connection between sport-based interventions and citizenship development within marginalised or 'at-risk' youth populations. This paper presents findings from a small-scale, qualitative study of one such (football-based) intervention located in a number of inner-city boroughs of London, UK. Placing the accounts of programme participants and staff at the centre of the analysis, the paper: (i) uncovers the practicalities and nuances of football being utilised as a tool for social engagement, and (ii) explores broader notions of personal and behavioural development in relation to the acquisition of citizenship qualities. The paper concludes by suggesting that sporting activity may confer citizenship benefits for young people, but only when integrated into wider programmes of social support and community engagement.

Introduction

Youth delinquency and anti-social behaviour has long been regarded as a problem in UK society (Parker, Meek & Lewis, 2014). It is estimated that offenders aged 18-24 years

commit a third of all crime, comprise a third of prisoners (at a unit sum of c£50,000 p.a.), and cost the UK tax-payer £11 – 20bn per year (Transition to Adulthood Alliance, 2009; National Audit Office, 2010). Since the time of the UK riots in August 2011, there has been increased concern amongst politicians and social commentators alike over gang violence in particular and youth offending and anti-social behaviour remains an issue of serious concern. Indeed, government inquiries which resulted from the events of 2011 highlighted moral deficiency within young people as a key issue (Riots Communities and Victims Panel, 2011), and appealed for wide-ranging solutions to address this perceived problem.

Among the solutions that were proposed, engagement with sport-based initiatives was advocated as an agent for social and personal change (DCMS, 2012). While there is some contention over the value that sport-based activities offer in relation to broader social concerns (see Coalter, 2008; Hartmann and Kwauk, 2011; Haudenhuyse, et al., 2013; Collins and Haudenhuyse, 2015; Coakley, 2016; Spaaij et al., 2016; Woods et al., 2017), it is widely accepted that such activities can be used as part of strategies both within custodial and community settings to inspire positive change in marginalised young people and alleviate offending or anti-social behaviour (Lewis and Meek, 2012; Meek and Lewis, 2012; Meek *et al*., 2012).

Of growing academic interest, is the extent to which engagement with sport may bestow citizenship qualities upon its participants (Collins and Kay, 2014). While definitions vary as to what the term citizenship means within this context (see Tyler, 2010; Tonkiss and Bloom, 2015; Turner, 2016), conceptualisations have taken two broad pathways. First, are *passive* forms of citizenship, encompassing notions of civil obedience (Carr, 1991), individual freedoms, civil rights, participation in political activities (e.g., suffrage), and access to

educational and welfare systems (Marshall, 1964; Tonkiss and Bloom, 2015). In contrast, more recent debate has highlighted altogether more *active* forms of citizenship, accentuating democratic engagement (ten Dam *et al.*, 2011) and proactive participation within the society and communities to which the individual belongs (Scheerens, 2011). The deployment of sport as an educational device to enhance citizenship qualities has received much support in related the literature (see Lawson, 1999a; Eley and Kirk, 2002; Garratt, 2010; Garratt and Piper, 2014), with sport policy discourse reflecting this (Bradbury and Kay, 2008). However, little attention has been paid to the role of sport participation in developing citizenship qualities within socially marginalised populations or within youth populations 'at-risk' of engaging in crime and/or anti-social behaviour.[1]

This paper presents findings from a small scale, qualitative study featuring a sporting (football-based) intervention delivered to young people across two social housing estates in a London, UK. It seeks to explore how sport development activity might shape the personal and social lives of those involved in such interventions and, more specifically, how sport participation may contribute to the facilitation of citizenship development. The central thesis of the paper is that, under certain conditions and circumstances, participation in sport has the potential to offer a mechanism via which young people might experience not only an enhanced sense of personal and behavioural progression (passive citizenship), but also increased levels of social and community engagement (active citizenship). In turn, the paper contributes to existing literature pertaining to citizenship education and offers insight into how sport can serve as a platform to encourage young people to think more positively about life, and to (re)gain a stronger sense of citizenship.

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[1] We use the terms 'marginalised', 'vulnerable' and 'at risk' to denote those young people who find themselves excluded from the societal mainstream (including social support services) and who have limited control over their life chances and resources. Such individuals are often vulnerable in terms of their ability to anticipate and cope with key life events and are therefore at risk of succumbing to further experiences of exclusion.

Sport and social control

In the UK at least, sport has long been used as a tool for the 'crisis management' of social ills (see Houlihan, 1991; Lawson, 1999a; 1999b; Green, 2008) and as a vehicle through which successive governments have sought to ease a variety of wider political concerns. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Albermale (1959) and Wolfenden (1960) reports began to explicitly promote such a view, alluding to sport's potential to control and pacify anti-social behaviour. During the 1970s and 1980s sporting provision was framed as an essential 'social service' in the battle to reduce boredom and urban frustration, and to aid the 'social planning' of Britain. Similarly, in the 1975 White paper *Sport and Recreation*, the UK government's Department of the Environment viewed "participation in active recreation" as a necessary measure in "reducing delinquency among young people" (1975: 3), and this was further endorsed by the English Sports Council's response to the 1981 inner-city riots with the introduction of campaigns such as 'Action Sport'. Since then, political commentators have periodically promoted sport as a panacea to a whole series of social and moral issues (see Collins & Kay, 2015; Green, 2007, 2008).

While such concerns were largely absent from UK sport policy during the 1990s and early 2000s—as the government agenda shifted to increasing sports participation and making the UK a world-leading sporting nation (Bloyce & Smith, 2010)—themes surrounding the utility of sport as an antidote to crime and anti-social behaviour have re-emerged within more recent government policy. As noted, since 2012, sport policy rhetoric has encouraged a specific focus on the 14-25 age group largely in response to the riots of 2011, an issue re-emphasised in *Sporting Future* (DCMS, 2015: 10), which makes clear that future funding decisions by government will be informed by the "social good that sport and physical activity can deliver".

Academic debate has tended to criticise the utilisation of sport as a form of social intervention, highlighting it as a mode of benign policing (Henry, 2001; Green, 2007), or as a means to categorise citizens on the basis of their ability to contribute to society economically, politically, and morally (Paton et al., 2012). While on the surface, sport-based initiatives which purport to incubate accepted forms of citizenship appear to possess significant well-intentioned purposes, more critical scholars have noted how, paradoxically, such programmes merely perpetuate, embed and reinforce the pervasive, omnipresent ascendency of neoliberalism as the dominant form of governance (Winlow & Hall, 2013; Paton *et al.*, 2012; Silk & Andrews, 2008; Dean, 2010; Rose, 2000). As such, sports-related legislation has often been seen as carrying a hidden agenda, i.e., the social control of the lower classes (Hargreaves, 1986; Hylton & Totten, 2013). Alas, early UK government interventions aimed at providing more sporting and recreational opportunities often failed to recognise the deeply embedded social, economic and (in some cases) racial tensions that fuelled rioting and social disorder (Scarman Report, 1981; Coghlan & Web, 1990). Consequently, (and despite much exposure amidst related policy rhetoric), the empirical and theoretical basis for sport's potential to address social ills is somewhat unproven, with critical commentators suggesting that presumption and implication, rather than evidence, has informed this position (Coalter, 2008, 2015; Dacombe, 2013).

Whilst accepting that sport-based interventions commonly act as a convenient mechanism to create obedient, passive citizens (Carr, 1991; Westheimer and Kahne, 2004), contrasting literature has highlighted how sport holds potential to move citizenship development beyond this fundamental aim. For example, numerous studies have noted the role of sport participation in facilitating personal qualities and characteristics akin to more active forms of citizenship (ten Dam et al., 2011), where young people, in particular, use their sporting

experience to not only (re)engage with their communities but also make a democratic contribution to them (see Lawson, 1999a; 1999b; Bailey, 2005; Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005).

Sport and marginalised youth

In terms of its potential to act as a mechanism to engage 'vulnerable' and 'hard-to-reach' groups and/or to provide some kind of social palliative, sport has remained a viable investment. Youth crime is a case in point. According to Nichols (2007), sport has the potential to reduce youth crime in three main ways: (i) as a distraction or as a surveillance mechanism, (ii) as cognitive behavioural therapy; and (iii) as 'hook' or a relationship strategy. What Nichols advocates is a rooting of sports projects within community sport development principles so as to ensure that the vehicle of sport is sufficiently and appropriately mobilised to achieve the wider social objectives of community partners, as opposed to simply being promoted as an intervention tool in and of itself.

Available evidence strongly suggests that sport alone is not sufficient to combat youth crime (Coalter, 2008), but that it can work effectively if intervention occurs before delinquent behaviour sets in (Caramichael, 2008; Farrington & Welsh, 2007; Parker, Meek & Lewis, 2014), and/or when it is provided alongside a range of other support structures to minimise socialisation into criminal/anti-social behaviours (Muncie, 2009). Collectively, such research findings highlight the extent to which both the personal and social aspects of sport can positively impact marginalised young people by promoting confidence, self-esteem and a range of interpersonal and social skills. In this sense, sport can serve as a powerful tool via which to address issues concerning personal and social education, recognition and acceptance

(see Morgan and Parker, 2017; Woods et al., 2017).[2] Sport-based projects which have been successful in tackling youth crime and/or its associated factors are evident within the academic literature. For example, Bowtell's (2006) work highlights the effectiveness of initiatives such as StreetGames, a sports charity that delivers sport on the doorsteps of young people in disadvantaged communities across the UK, citing community sports coaches as effective change-agents who have the capacity to deter youth from crime. Similarly, McCormack's (2010) overview of StreetSport suggests that this initiative has also been successful in reducing youth crime because its primary purpose is to prevent young people falling into criminal activity within highly deprived locations, with secondary and tertiary interventions framed in and around diversion and rehabilitation.

It is not unusual for community sport development projects aimed at tackling youth crime to engage a range of different young people such as: those at risk of participating in criminal activity, those who are currently offending, those who have served (or are serving) custodial sentences, and/or those enrolled on community rehabilitation programmes (see Parker, Meek & Lewis, 2014). However, it is essential that projects engender a holistic ethos, enabling them to accommodate the differing (and often complex) needs and requirements of the young people concerned. According to existing research, a focus on educational attainment can be an effective way of deterring criminal behaviour and empowering and up-skilling those from such backgrounds (see, for example, Farrington & Welsh, 2007). Walpole and Collins (2010) allude to the positive effects of sport-based education within this context, highlighting how one 'East Midlands Sport Action Zone' initiative used a sporting curriculum to enable participants to gain accredited courses in their chosen career paths (see also Parker et al.,

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[2] It is acknowledged that within this context a number of 'educational' processes are at work including: holistic education (social and emotional development and positive social behaviours etc.), interpersonal education (co-operation, trust, conflict resolution etc.), and intrapersonal education (self-concept, confidence, self-efficacy etc.) For further discussion on these topics, see: Hellison (1995) and Martinek et al. (2006).

2012, 2014). The benefits of such programmes are clearly beneficial, enabling vulnerable young people to find exit routes and pathways out of criminal activity and into meaningful (and lawful) employment. More importantly, integrating within this model discussions of the negative consequences of criminal behaviour, further enables participants to see the implications which their actions (i.e., gang membership) might have on the wider community. Such findings enable perspectives which view engagement with sport-based interventions as something which has the capacity to nurture a sense of citizenship amongst excluded groups (Theeboom et al., 2010; Muncie, 2009). However, despite some indications of how citizenship qualities can be enhanced via sport participation (see Eley & Kirk, 2002; Garratt, 2010), conceptual clarity over the term citizenship remains elusive, contentious and contested (Davies, 2000; ten Dam *et al.*, 2011). To better understand how participation in sport may nurture a stronger sense of citizenship within youth populations who are engaged with, or at-risk of, crime, a sharper theoretical articulation of citizenship is required.

Sport and citizenship development

In recent years, citizenship education has become a focal point for governments around the globe and features as an integral aspect of educational systems and formal curricula across a number of nations states (Scheerens, 2011; ten Dam et al., 2011). For Westheimer and Kahne (2004), attempts to define citizenship are often narrowly formulated, ideologically conservative and politically laden. Nevertheless, as noted, articulations of citizenship have been broadly attributed to either *passive* or *active* forms of the concept (see ten Dam *et al.*, 2011; Scheerens, 2011).

In an attempt to bridge these contrasting positions, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) offer three distinct conceptions of citizenship which present a concise theoretical framework to examine

which aspects of citizenship may be enhanced through participation in sport. The first of these – the personally-responsible citizen — aligns with articulations of citizenship where a preoccupation with social responsibility and functionality prevail (e.g., ten Dam *et al.*, 2011) and where the development of 'character' is the primary concern through the prominence of such qualities as honesty, integrity, self-discipline, and hard work. However, as Westheimer and Kahne (2004) acknowledge, whilst such traits are irrefutably admirable, the obedient, passive nature of this form of citizenship restricts the degree to which critically-informed reflection and action — the hallmarks of active forms of citizenship — can be attained. Instead, these authors encourage the pursuit of two alternative forms of citizenship, the participatory citizen and the justice-oriented citizen. The participatory citizen is essentially an activist who demonstrates a more deeply involved sense of community, transcending the basic form of community responsibility described above towards the creation of deeper "relationships, common understandings, trust, and collective commitments" (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004: 242). Conversely, the justice-oriented citizen exhibits critical and analytical engagement with society, questioning and challenging established structures and systems which, historically, have supported social injustice (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

While citizenship education is often contained within the formal, school curriculum, a growing number of academics have highlighted the benefits of exposing young people to experiences that are embedded within less formal modes of education (e.g., Geboers et al., 2009; Scheerens, 2011) to redefine the role of citizenship education to one of "learning through life" (Lauder et al., 2006: 57). Such thinking invites citizenship education to embrace opportunities for learning encounters within the wider community (Lauder et al., 2006). Research to support this view is encouraging, if cautious, on the role that extra-curricular activity provided by organisations and agents within the community can perform in

contributing to the citizenship development of young people. For example, in their review of 28 scholarly articles related to citizenship education effects, Geboers *et al.* (2009: 171) highlight the potential of community-based, extra-curricular activities to engage young people "in meaningful learning and problem solving while dealing with authentic problems". At a policy level, literature has noted how organisations located under the umbrella term of 'sport' have increasingly been designated responsibility for developing citizenship qualities (O'Donovan, MacPhail & Kirk, 2010; Garratt & Piper, 2014), to further support claims that sport may possess potential for addressing citizenship challenges (Green, 2008; Parker, Meek & Lewis, 2014). Theoretically speaking, sports-based initiatives that are housed within social control modes of intervention (Hylton & Totten, 2013) resonate strongly with the development of the personally-responsible citizen espoused by Westheimer and Kahne (2004), whereby qualities such as honesty and law-observance are foregrounded. Consequently, such initiatives have proven popular with governments, in particular during episodes of urban community unrest (Hylton & Totten, 2013), within locales perceived to be problematic (Paton *et al.*, 2012), or as a rehabilitative mechanism for those in custody (Parker et al., 2014), and have, accordingly, received healthy financial support for their implementation (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

In contrast, some authors (e.g., Lawson, 2005; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011) have suggested that initiatives which align more with social welfare provision (Hylton & Totten, 2013) are appropriate for the enhancement of active citizenship, noting correspondence between the skills which may be developed through such programmes (e.g., decision making and problem solving skills, tolerance towards others) (see Green, 2008) and the requisite understandings that underpin the aforementioned articulations of active citizenship. While social welfare sporting interventions possess components which also align with more passive forms of

citizenship (Green, 2008), other literature (e.g. Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011; Morgan & Bush, 2016) has indicated the potential of sport to transcend citizenship development towards more active forms which foreground deeper, more critical engagement with both the community and its associated challenges (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

Method

The empirical findings featured here comprise part of a wider research project which sought to investigate the impact of a sporting intervention on youth crime and anti-social behaviour. The project – Sporting Youth[3] - was delivered from a number of project sites (i.e., community sports clubs) located across three major UK cities and targeted young people aged 13-19 years who were considered to be 'vulnerable' and/or 'at risk'.[4] Project/club leaders and coaches were all experienced in working with youth populations and possessed relevant qualifications (both in-house and external) in the delivery of sport-related activities all of which were derived from materials produced by Sporting Youth. The research was driven by a constructionist ontology and interpretive epistemology with the aim of eliciting the subjective interpretations of the everyday lives of respondents in relation to their experiences of the various aspects of programme intervention that they were involved with (Andrews, Mason & Silk, 2005; Bryman, 2015; Sparkes & Smith, 2013). Data were collected between October 2010 and April 2012 via semi-structured one-to-one and focus group interviews with participants (young people), project/club leaders, coaches, and members of related partner and community groups.[5] The overall aim of the research was to evaluate whether or not sport can be used effectively to combat crime and anti-social behaviour

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[3] In the interests of anonymity, pseudonyms have been used throughout except in relation to the host city.
[4] The project was open to both male and female participants and hosted young people from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds. Individual project sites may engage up to 200 young people in sporting activities at any one time and delivery sessions took place on average between 2-3 times per week.
[5] Respondents were selected on the basis that collectively they provided a cross-section of the individuals involved either in intervention delivery or as participants and in line with access and availability. Participants themselves were self-selecting as volunteers on the project. In total, 60 respondents were interviewed.

amongst young people whilst also assessing how, where and when this might best take place. In line with funding agency requirements, the research team aligned their investigations with young people: (i) in areas with a high incidence of crime; (ii) on the periphery of crime; and (iii) already in custody. The present discussion relates to the first of these categories and focuses in particular on two social housing estates located in a single inner-city London borough, the Shaftsbury estate and the Linkfield estate. Findings are grounded in first-person participant accounts of young peoples' engagement with the intervention.

Interviews explored young people's personalised experiences of engaging with the Sporting Youth initiative and its associated projects. Discussion topics varied with participants talking about their entry route into the intervention, their awareness of its overarching aims and objectives and positive and negative 'critical' moments which defined their experiences. The research team explored testimonies where the initiative had successfully and effectively removed young people from damaging social circumstances associated with crime and anti-social behaviour, and facilitated their re/integration within localised communities. Focus groups with project leaders/workers and partner agencies addressed their perceptions of the kinds of young people and communities engaged with the intervention, the perceived benefits accrued by young people from its various activities, and the extent to which delivery staff felt that wider project aims and objectives (around sport for social inclusion, positive youth development and social change) were being met.

Interviews with respondents lasted between 10-60 minutes and were recorded and transcribed in full.[6] Thematic and axial coding was used in relation to the analysis of these data where the research teams adopted a cyclical process of examination and inductive interpretation to draw

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[6] Variations on interview timings were due to the availability of respondents.

out themes and meanings in response to the primary aims of the research and in line with the key themes and concepts identified from the existing literature (Charmaz, 2002, 2014). Data were analysed in four stages. Firstly, the transcripts were read in full to gain an overview of the data. Secondly, each transcript was individually coded and indexed whereby a capturing of the different aspects of participant experience took place. Thirdly, these experiences were then categorised into a number of over-arching topics which were chosen on account of the fact that they broadly encompassed the key issues emerging from the data; these comprised: 'acceptance', recognition' and 'inclusion'. The final stage of analysis involved the formal organisation of these topics into generic themes by further exploring the key issues around participant experience and framing those experiences within the context of existing conceptual debate (differentiated by respondents). These themes provide the framework around which our findings are presented and comprise: (i) the utility of football as a legitimate means for social engagement and citizenship development, (ii) football and the development of passive forms of citizenship, and (iii) football and the development of active citizenship.

Legitimising football as a vehicle for social engagement and citizenship development

While previous studies have explored the connections between sporting participation and the attainment of broader social aims, more critical observers suggest that a deeper understanding of the relative role that a specific sport (in this case football) contributes to the achievement of programme objectives is fundamental to legitimising the claims of sport's wider, social, appeal (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Coalter, 2013). Football is one of the most popular sports in the world and is often characterised as having the potential to transcend cultures and

societies alike and to engage vulnerable and excluded young people (Coalter, 2013).[7] Across the inner-city boroughs of London alone over 300,000 individuals participate in the game at least once per week, with the largest demographic being 16-19 year-old males (Sport England, 2013). Football was delivered at many Sporting Youth hub sites because it was the activity that respondents most frequently requested.[8] As one young person put it "… football was the hook ... because it's the main sport in London ... it's what we grew up playing". Another declared auspiciously that his "life depended on football".[9] Comments like these illustrate the centrality of football in the everyday existence of Sporting Youth participants and justify the logical and legitimate inclusion of the sport as an outreach vehicle. Yet participants also recognised the value of the wider opportunities that the project offered:

> [W]hen we was (sic) younger we obviously just focussed on football, but now you see the bigger picture ... You now know [that] Sporting Youth can give you a lot more than football - and we are willing to take all of it …

Over time, this respondent had made a connection between the utilisation of sport as a vehicle for development/social engagement and his own desire to become a youth worker – and to use sport to engage other young people. The latter point should not be underestimated given that the majority of respondents had rarely come across project workers who they felt were genuinely interested in their personal and social development. Sporting Youth appeared

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[7] It is acknowledged, of course, that football has the potential to divide communities as well as unite them (see, for example, Cashmore and Dixon, 2016).

[8] Though gender neutral in terms of access, generally speaking a greater number of males attended Sporting Youth delivery programmes and this impacted the nature and complexion of the sporting activities on offer.

[9] Sporting Youth also undertake to deliver similar programmes in South Africa and the Middle East within the context of the wider 'Sport for Development and Peace' (SDP) agenda. For further discussion on related debates see Giulianotti (2011) and Sugden (2008).

uniquely attractive in this respect utilising football both in relation to initial engagement and the generation of aspiration around future career pathways (Finlay et al., 2010).

Project leaders reiterated these sentiments stipulating that the delivery of the Sporting Youth intervention placed an emphasis on football for the "social good" rather than "football, for football's sake"; meaning that the initiative was not simply concerned with mass participation but with the wider social benefits on offer:

> … We just use sport as a hook ... to enhance their employability skills and their ability to stay away from crime … Sport has an ability to reach out to these kids and through that we can work to improve other aspects of their life, like leadership, respect and trust.

These comments help to underline the effectiveness of football in engaging otherwise socially excluded individuals and as a means by which to enable a deeper involvement in Sporting Youth whereby citizenship attributes could be enhanced in ways that the young people themselves could recognise.

Football and the development of passive citizenship

Fostering positive change in young people was a central facet of the Sporting Youth intervention and was framed around the ethos of better enabling participants to engage with society - and in many cases, enabling them to acquire skills and training that would aid their search for employment. One Sporting Youth project worker confirmed this, suggesting that

helping young people to make positive life choices and transitions was a central feature of the intervention, particularly in a climate of economic austerity:

> Our aim is to provide training and development for participants and leaders because the world is changing day by day … This is a big role of Sporting Youth, to help support young peoples' development in an ever-changing world …

These sentiments resonate with existing literature which highlights the importance of fostering young people's abilities to respond to contemporary societal challenges as a primary objective of citizenship education (Lauder et al., 2006; ten Dem et al., 2011). Moreover, the above testimony aligns with perspectives that support the notion that participation in non-formal or community-based education opportunities (such as those within sport) holds potential to develop citizenship qualities (Lauder et al., 2006; O'Donovan et al., 2010; Garratt & Piper, 2014). More specifically, there was ample evidence to suggest that established Sporting Youth activities were working to incubate personally-responsible forms of citizenship (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) and induce the kinds of positive changes that were required to help young people deal with local problems. In turn, Sporting Youth was working effectively in helping young people to develop personal characteristics conducive to them dealing more appropriately with issues such as 'post-code' rivalries and demonstrate social responsibility (ten Dam et al., 2011). For example, data revealed how participants were able to empathise with and demonstrate tolerance towards others, and develop a sensitivity around their own self-conduct, i.e., the capacity to control confrontation (Paton et al., 2012).

On the Linkfield Estate, Sporting Youth had firmly embedded itself with local young people and community residents. Recognising local rivalries and gang activity, one project leader talked at length about how, following consultation with local teenagers, Sporting Youth had devised an 'anger management' course. Speaking about his experiences of participating on the course, one young man claimed that he had not only learned to curb his anger but that his engagement had contributed significantly to the development of his communication skills and levels of confidence whilst also providing experience of problem-solving, rationalising and managing difficult situations; all key issues which would be vital in relation to his sports coaching aspirations, and indicative of a burgeoning sense of personal responsibility (Lawson, 1999a; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

Likewise, on the Shaftsbury Estate (an area renowned for gang-related activity and antisocial behaviour), in order to facilitate opportunities for young people to build connections and make friends across 'turf territories', a 'Night-time Football League' (NFL) had been set up with the aim of drawing in participants of varying ages from different ethnic groups and postcodes. Perhaps not surprisingly, this proved challenging for some as it required young people to step outside of their "comfort zones" and to express an interest in reaching out to others to make new friends.

Further evidence of how the experiences of Sporting Youth participants enabled the incubation of passive citizenship qualities was provided by one young man from the Shaftsbury Estate who reflected on an off-site residential trip that he had attended. The 'Shaftsbury Exchange', an event jointly organised by Sporting Youth and partners at another sports-based initiative in Dublin, Ireland, involved a two-week exchange visit between programme participants from both locations. The overarching objective of this experience

was to provide young people with opportunities to enhance social competencies such as widening their friendship networks, enhancing their communication skills, and increasing their levels of confidence, all of which are elements associated with personally-responsible citizenship (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

Participants spoke of other events where they were given the opportunity to broaden their outlook beyond more passive forms of citizenship and enhance their problem-solving, entrepreneurial and leadership skills. One such opportunity, which was devised via links with a partner agency, provided constructive opportunities for young people to work with local primary schools and nurseries to deliver a sports-based curriculum of football, basketball and cricket. One respondent reflected passionately on this event identifying the multiple benefits involved:

> We got a whole new experience working with little kids, because we have never done anything like it before … Some of us decided that we would do well in a career as a PE teacher but others realised that they were good with working with the kids, but hated the school environment so they thought more about working as sports coaches and youth workers. It was a great experience; we never really have chances to think about our future. People don't give us that chance.

Perhaps the most significant impact that such experiences had on Sporting Youth participants was signposting them to potential career pathways and allowing them to develop leadership skills which they recognised as vital not only for success in sport but also within a variety of

other social settings such as education, training and employment. Whilst this aspect of the analysis further demonstrates how participants enhanced their sense of personally responsibility by adhering to 'normalised' perceptions of citizenship which accentuate paid employment (Levitas, 2005; Yates & Payne, 2006), this example offers an indication of how more active forms of citizenship, which promote deeper engagement with community and civic life, were fostered through Sporting Youth (ten Dam et al., 2011).

Football and the development of active citizenship

As noted above, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) identify two forms of active citizenship - the participatory citizen and the justice-oriented citizen - both of which accentuate a more involved engagement with community issues, through a deeper commitment to building relationships of common understanding and trust. Speaking of the aims and objectives of Sporting Youth in this area, one project worker echoed how essential the initiative was to the nurturing of more active forms of citizenship, and providing opportunities for young people to demonstrate such skills to others:

> We're all about how we can give more young people opportunities
> through sport ... how they can become Ambassadors through the
> programme. More importantly, about targeting young people that
> are really hard to reach ... to improve their quality of life ... and
> witnessing whether it does have an impact on them, measuring this
> impact or being able to see it for ourselves and for the kids too, is
> so important.

Engagement and participation in community or civic life is said to be an essential marker of being or feeling 'socially included'. However, the community impact of sporting interventions can be a minefield of contestation and ambiguity. Indeed, given such complexity, very often, the development of more active forms of citizenship is beyond the scope of such projects (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Practical problems frequently arise such as communication with local residents, providing appropriate offers of engagement, and attracting and recruiting attendees. Project workers at Sporting Youth recognised that some of their delivery sites carried a sense of social stigma which further impeded progress at a grassroots level; that is, certain places had 'reputations' that seemingly prevented people from wanting to establish development programmes to help the locals:

> On the estate, if you're not from round here you are going to be
> scared because all the estate looks the same … and for someone
> coming into the area they might be frightened and think that they
> are going to get robbed ... It really can put a spanner in the works,
> and we try to recognise this but work to overcome it too

In addition to these logistical problems, also evident were wide ranging views regarding the effects of programmes on host communities. As we have seen, such interventions can serve to bring communities together and enhance a sense of collective affinity. At the same time they have the potential to exacerbate social divisions and to provide sites where territorial domination and advantage can be reinforced. As an intervention, Sporting Youth worked hard to minimise feelings of exclusion and to encourage young people to think about others and the role that they might play in a local context to foster positive social change. Participants alluded to a number of activities that had helped them in this respect. For instance, a

'fundraising' event was organised on the Linkfield Estate to encourage young people to think not only about themselves but about the extent to which they may be in a more privileged position than those around them. Participants spoke positively about the event with one recalling that it enabled him to: "understand [his] community, and other people's communities more". In this way this young man came to acknowledge the importance of individuals working together to enhance the quality of life in that local demographic and exhibit the qualities which are associated with participatory and justice-oriented citizenship (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004):

> I learned a lot about our community and how to get along with our community. We take this stuff for granted but if these people weren't around for us, we'd be worse off. Having them here and doing our little bit is about giving them back something that they give to us all the time.

Another young person stated how the event had helped "isolated people get out of their house", and "put a smile on peoples' faces". These comments certainly reinforce participant understandings of the importance of community engagement and the central role that initiatives like Sporting Youth can play in changing the mind-set of young people who may otherwise be disinterested in their local communities and fostering active citizenship. In essence, community (re)engagement was a means by which young people's negative perceptions of social engagement were being challenged, to further exemplify how this specific sports-based intervention offered more to its participants than a form of social control and the production of passive citizens (Lawson, 1999a; Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005).

Conclusion

In this paper we have attempted to uncover some of the social and political factors which feature large in contemporary UK society and how these might impact young people in relation to their experiences of marginalisation and exclusion. We have also sought to examine the ideals upon which much sport development activity has traditionally been based and the clear connections between these ideals and the personal and social benefits deriving from one particular sporting intervention, most notably in relation to the enhancement of citizenship qualities.

What our findings suggest is that sport has much to offer as a mechanism via which young people might gain not only a sense of personal and behavioural development, but also a sense of social engagement and community cohesion, to elevate their citizenship beyond more passive forms (which emphasise personal responsibility) towards more active forms (which promote deeper participation in their community) (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004; ten Dam et al., 2011). We have also argued that, at a practical level, sport can serve as a legitimate means by which to enable young people to engage more constructively with their local communities, to think positively about life, and to interact with a wider network of people (youth and adult) and agencies. All of which has the potential to allow young people to (re)gain a stronger sense of active citizenship and to access a better quality of life.

While this work largely supports existing research findings regarding the potential of sport to operate as an effective 'hook' to enage 'at risk' youth populations (Nichols, 2007) and enhance aspects of their citizenship (Garratt, 2010), what also becomes clear is that citizenship development is largely restricted to more passive versions of the concept. This reinforces suggestions that sport-based programmes of this nature rarely extend beyond the

realms of social control (Hylton & Totten, 2013), often operating simply as a means to police marginalised populations (Green, 2007; Paton et al., 2012) amidst the tenets of neoliberal governance (Tonkiss & Bloom, 2015; Winlow & Hall, 2013; Rose, 2000). However, there is evidence from the findings of this research that for some participants programme engagment enabled them to develop elements of active citizenship. We acknowledge that our findings emanate from a limited sample of young people, and therefore do not (and cannot) reflect the experiences of all project participants in terms of generalisability (Houlihan, et al., 2009). Nevertheless, there is sufficent evidence here to reinforce the social worth of sport-based programmes, and to invite further research which examines the specific programme conditions and mechanisms (Coalter, 2007; Haudenhuyse et al., 2013) which may incubate more active forms of citizenship.

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