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Abstract

Sport is often promoted as a vehicle through which a variety of social policy outcomes can be achieved, one of the most common of which is the enhancement of social inclusion opportunities for marginalized youth populations. However, more critical literature has questioned the potential of sport-based interventions to act as a 'panacea' to address youth marginalization and has called for more nuanced research that examines the mechanisms within such programs that may enable positive outcomes. Drawing upon research findings from studies of sport-based interventions that aim to engage and assimilate marginalized young people, this chapter seeks to examine some of the key mechanisms within such interventions that enable the social assimilation and inclusion of young people. In doing so, the chapter seeks to challenge popular notions associated with the instrumental use of sport within such contexts highlighting how those involved in the operationalization of sport-based interventions are critical to the harnessing of 'the power of sport' in terms of social inclusion.

Keywords: Sport; interventions; interpersonal relationships; capital

1. Introduction

Sport is often promoted as a vehicle through which a variety of social policy outcomes can be achieved, one of the most common of which is the enhancement of social inclusion opportunities for marginalized youth populations. Consequently, the rhetoric surrounding the transformational qualities of sport is highly visible in policy directed at social change or designed to address global issues related to youth (see European Commission, 2010). Typically, these instrumental policies identify sport as a means to engage young people and afford them access to mainstream activity or present them with openings within society through the redistribution of opportunity (Coalter, 2007; Kelly, 2011). Indeed, global

organizations, such as the United Nations and the Commonwealth Secretariat, have acknowledged sport as an important enabler within projects focused upon social inclusion and an effective means to build capacity for a more inclusive society (Dudfield & Dingwall-Smith, 2015).

As a multi-dimensional concept that encompasses a blend of social, political, cultural, and economic dimensions (Levitas, 2005), the extant literature points to social inclusion as a concept that possesses shifting meanings and is often deployed flexibly to serve specific political purposes (Haudenhuyse, 2017). This is perhaps most visible within policy documentation related to the instrumental use of sport, where social inclusion is often conflated with conceptualizations of social exclusion, whereby these terms are used interchangeably or presented as unproblematic opposites (Morgan & Parker, 2017). Indeed, much sport policy is predicated on its intention to tackle social exclusion (Collins & Kay, 2014; Haudenhuyse, 2017), on the premise that those who are not socially excluded must, by definition, be experiencing social inclusion.

However, more critical literature has questioned the potential of sport-based interventions to act as a 'panacea' to address youth marginalization. For example, Collins and Kay (2014) observe that access to sport is often restricted by demographic background, a factor that is heightened by the (often) competitive nature of sport, which by definition is more exclusive than it is inclusive. Therefore, any claims regarding the perceived 'power of sport' to enable social inclusion among marginalized youth must be mediated against the fact that participation in sport is a differentiated experience which confers opposing outcomes for diverse populations (Bailey, 2005; Coalter, 2007; Morgan & Parker, 2017). Consequently, there is growing interest in more theoretically-based and methodologically-nuanced research which examines the mechanisms within sport-based programmes that may enable or enhance a sense of social inclusion.

Aligning with such ambitions, this chapter examines the 'logic' surrounding the application of sport as a tool for social inclusion and, in so doing, provides insights into the conditions that may enable the social assimilation and inclusion of young people through sport. We open with a brief introduction to the theoretical positions that have informed the analysis of youth participation in sport, before exploring how different forms of sporting participation might contribute to inclusion outcomes. The chapter then turns to one of the mechanisms that have been noted as critical to the effective implementation of sport-based interventions—namely, the construction of interpersonal relationships between youth participants and the leaders of such programs. We close by outlining how sports-based interventions may enable the acquisition and accumulation of various forms of capital, which, in turn, enable social inclusion.

At this point, it is important to provide definitional clarity in relation to our use of the term 'sport'. In this case, the term encompasses a wide range of physical activities, that, via casual or organized participation, are aimed at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming relationships, or obtaining results in competitions at all levels (Council of Europe's European Sports Charter, 2001, cited in Bailey, 2005). As such, this definition of sport is inclusive of a breadth of physical activities, not just competitive games, including (but not restricted to) dance, outdoor activities and the martial arts (Bailey, 2005).

2. Understanding youth marginalization: Theory and practice

Tackling the marginalization and social exclusion of young people continues to be a major challenge for governments the world over (European Commission, 2010). Bailey (2005) notes a series of interconnected dimensions of social exclusion which provide proponents of sport-based interventions with a theoretical entry point to make claims about the instrumental contribution of sport. For Bailey (2005), social inclusion has: i) a spatial dimension, which is concerned with highlighting and addressing social and economic disparity; ii) a relational dimension, where social inclusion is based on an increased sense of belonging and acceptance; iii) a power dimension, where inclusion involves challenging the status quo or changing the locus of control by empowering individuals to enhance community cohesion or develop social networks; and iv) a functional dimension, which involves the enhancement of knowledge, skills and understanding in individuals to enhance inclusion. While sport has potential to address all four of these dimensions (Collins & Kay, 2014), it is the functional dimension to which the majority of interventions have been focussed. This has been fuelled by discourses which highlight the importance of employment as a key marker of social inclusion, whereby young people who are categorized as not in education, employment or training (NEET), often become the focal point of interventions which seek to address youth marginalisation (Nudzor, 2010), an issue that a number of scholars have sought to explore.

In their analysis of such debates, Morgan and Parker (2017), have argued that being classified as NEET can bring with it a sense of stigma relating to being anti-aspirational, irresponsible and/or negligent in terms of one's social or civic duties (see also Winlow & Hall, 2013). Utilizing the work of Strathdee (2013), Morgan and Parker (2017) explain how attempts to resolve the crisis of NEET young people has cohered around carefully constructed amalgams of 'motivational' and 'punishing' approaches. The former relates to activities which encourage the identified population to (re)enter the workforce, primarily through skill development, and typically consist of short-term, employment focussed training programs that are often incentivized for both NEET young people and potential employers (Nudzor, 2010). Sport-based interventions often utilize this incentivized approach by providing opportunities for young people to volunteer or to undertake work experience (Morgan, Parker & Marturano, 2020). In turn, critics of motivational strategies have highlighted the propensity of such programs to concentrate their energies only on those young people who could be most easily transitioned into education, employment or training (Winlow & Hall, 2013; Morgan & Costas Batlle, 2019). Marshalled by the pervasive nature of neo-liberal governance, chiefly through its audit culture, these critics argue that whilst motivational strategies may appear effective, their fixation on 'hard outcomes' at the expense of assisting those whose needs may be far greater or more urgent, often limits the extent to which these strategies can combat the intricate and often perpetual complexion of NEET status.

In contrast, punishing approaches to the NEET crisis have principally utilized welfare system reform to force young people into paid employment by reducing welfare dependency and increasing the negative connotations attached to being NEET (Strathdee, 2013). While punishing strategies adopt a diametrically opposed set of processes to motivational strategies, this approach further reinforces the ideals of neo-liberal governance, primarily by further stigmatizing NEET young people (Strathdee, 2013). Punishing strategies are rarely observed within sports-based interventions, however, their limited efficacy in creating openings in education, employment and training for marginalized young people, as well as their propensity to further pillory NEET youth, suggests that alternative strategies are required to address this issue.

A final strategic approach offered by Strathdee (2013)—the ‘bridging’ approach—aims to generate social connections which enable NEET young people to “repair deficits in [their] social capital by ... acting as a conduit between employers and job-seekers” (p. 41). In relation to an intervention strategy, this approach aligns with suggestions which advocate NEET-focussed programmes to concentrate on sustained change within people’s lives (Nudzor, 2010; Spaaij, Magee & Jeanes, 2013; Morgan & Parker, 2017). In short, bridging confronts the social barriers which might impede access to education, training and employment, and thus, perpetuate social exclusion, through the construction and incubation of mentoring relationships between a young person and ‘authority figure’ which are built upon mutuality, acceptance and trust (Rose, Daiches & Potier, 2012; Morgan & Parker, 2017). While the merit of sport-based interventions to create such relationships will be explored in due course, it is suffice to say at this stage that evidence indicates that this is a key mechanism in the instrumental use of sport to enhance social inclusion (Spaaij et al., 2013; Morgan & Parker, 2017; Nols, Haudenhuyse, Spaaij & Theeboom, 2019).

Strathdee’s (2013) description of the approaches to address youth marginalization emphasize policy solutions that homogenize NEET youth and reinforce the (often negative) discourses and portrayals ascribed to this particular population (Winlow & Hall, 2013). What these approaches often fail to recognize is the complicated and individualized experience of becoming marginalized, which is often influenced by adverse experiences related to deprivation, financial exclusion, and poor familial and support networks (O’Donnell, Sandford & Parker, 2019). Nevertheless, a proportion of NEETs do exhibit some of the negatively construed elements associated with their status, such as substance abuse/dependency, poor educational attainment, and/or criminality (see Parker, Morgan, Farooq, Moreland & Pitchford, 2018) all of which fuels the discursively created assumptions surrounding marginalized populations.

A discursive approach to understanding social exclusion/inclusion is most aptly captured by Levitas (2005), who presents three, overlapping discourses of social exclusion which differ according to how the boundary for exclusion is ascribed. The first of these discourses—the redistributive discourse (RED)—emphasizes poverty and a lack of material resources as the primary cause of exclusion. As such, attempts to address social exclusion coalesce around the reduction of poverty through the redistribution of universal welfare, not just in terms of financial assistance, but also via public services (Levitas, 2005). Indeed, sport-based interventions often seek to provide access to public services, in particular around education, with sport utilized as a ‘hook’ to (re)engage young people (Green, 2008; Collins & Kay, 2014; Morgan, Parker, Meek & Cryer, 2019 [Morgan et al., 2019a]).

Conversely, the social integrationist discourse (SID) highlights the role of paid employment as a foundation for social inclusion (Levitas, 2005). Based on the assumption that paid employment enables individuals to contribute to society through taxation, SID emphasizes the development of human capital as the primary means to enhance employability, and subsequently, social inclusion. As noted, research highlights the potential for sports-based interventions to enhance employability, most prominently through the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes to provide opportunities in the employment market (Spaaij et al., 2013; Sherry, Schultenkorf & Chalip, 2015; Morgan, 2018; Morgan et al., 2020).

The final discourse presented by Levitas (2005)—the moral underclass discourse (MUD)—is concerned with a population whose social exclusion stems from cultural and moral deficits caused by a contempt of

their social obligations towards the family and the labour market. Consequently, sport-based interventions which have sought to address MUD have focussed on tackling morally undesirable activities by acting as a remedy for anti-social behavior and criminal rehabilitation (Parker, Meek & Lewis, 2014) or by enhancing personal qualities such as resilience and self-efficacy (Morgan, 2018; Morgan, Parker & Roberts, 2019 [Morgan et al., 2019b]) to engage marginalized populations in activities designed to assimilate cultural values, beliefs and attitudes accepted within the mainstream.

By utilizing these theoretical approaches, it is clear how sport holds potential to address social exclusion or contribute to social inclusion. However, the basis for sport's palliative qualities is often based upon presumption and implication, rather than empirically-based evidence (Coalter, 2013) and it is to more precise articulations of sport's ability to contribute to the enhancement of social inclusion that we now turn.

3. What type of sport participation assists social inclusion?

A prerequisite of social inclusion work is that young people fully engage in the services that seek to support them (O'Donnell et al., 2019). Interventions centered around activities that young people find enjoyable, such as sport, have proved to be particularly effective in optimizing engagement. However, the participatory experience of sport is very much a unitary one, meaning that sport-based interventions often vary in the outcomes experienced by participants (Green, 2008; Morgan et al., 2019a). Previous studies that have attempted to explain the distinctive nature of the sporting experience, and its beneficial effect on social outcomes, have focussed on the type of sporting activity that is offered (Coalter, 2007; Green, 2008), the nature of the participative role that is undertaken (Skinner, Zakus & Cowell, 2008), and the manner in which recruitment to sporting activity has arisen (Coalter, 2013; Morgan & Costas Batlle, 2019). We address each of these in more detail below.

3.1 The sporting experience

With regard to the type of sporting activity that is experienced, Coalter (2007) outlines how sports can be categorized into individual, partner, or team sports, each of which: contain varying levels of physical contact, possess differences in the need for motor-driven or perceptual skills, and vary in orientation in terms of competitive focus. Literature indicates that sport participation that favors collective involvement (i.e. partner and team sports) may possess more potential to enhance social inclusion given the distinct opportunities to form relationships, social connections and trust between participants that these sports permit (Green, 2008; Coalter, 2013; Parker et al., 2018). However, there are examples where participation in individual sports has had greater appeal to marginalized populations and has proved beneficial for social integration. For example, Morgan (2016) found how the individualistic aspect of some sports enabled 'at-risk' youth to feel more in control of their own destiny and carve a path to enhanced inclusion and social mobility, thus reinforcing discourses that accentuated social mobility as the responsibility of the individual (Winlow & Hall, 2013). At the same time, studies have advocated that coherence must exist between the composition of the sporting experience and the preferences of the target population to not only increase initial engagement, but also sustain involvement and optimize the potential to enhance social inclusion (Green, 2008; Morgan et al., 2019a). By offering sports that have a cultural salience to the targeted population, the potential to connect with marginalized groups through an activity that is popular, interesting, and may enable participants to demonstrate a particular skill or competence in that activity is likely to foster a more positive engagement with the intervention (Morgan et al., 2019a).

3.2 The nature of the participative role

In terms of the nature of sporting participation itself, the extant literature has been dominated by studies that examine active participation in sport, where the subjects of the research are the intended recipients of the sport-based intervention. Whilst such research has presented inconclusive findings (Coalter, 2013), some studies have observed how 'playing' sport has benefits for marginalized groups, not least in fostering a sense of discipline among participants and instilling valuable life lessons around the necessity of rule-adherence as an important first step towards social assimilation (Parker et al., 2014; Nols, Haudenhuyse & Theeboom, 2017; Parker et al., 2018). However, other scholarship has indicated that social inclusion is more likely to be enhanced through sport when the individual connects in an altogether deeper way with the sporting experience, i.e. where sporting participation transcends merely playing or taking part. These 'non-playing' roles, such as volunteering as a coach or administrator within a sports club, have been shown to be more effective in enhancing inclusion by exposing excluded populations to experiences within community settings that enable them to encounter real life social problems and design solutions to them (Morgan, 2016; Morgan et al., 2020).

3.3 Recruitment to sport-based interventions

Coalter (2015) argues that the general propensity for sporting participation to be based on self-selection and voluntary engagement suggests that the positive social benefits of sport can be exaggerated as it is often people who are better educated, from higher social classes and more socially connected who opt to participate. As such, socio-culturally defined perspectives and expectations often impact individual decisions to participate voluntarily in sport (van Bottenburg, Rijnen & van Sterkenburg, 2005). Nevertheless, the vast majority of sport-based interventions that aim to enhance social inclusion for young people utilize an 'open-access' approach to recruitment (Coalter, 2013), where participation is voluntary and made available to all young people but is offered within a designated locale that displays characteristics of deprivation. Morgan and Costas Batlle (2019) found that while these kinds of recruitment practices can be effective in maximizing the number of young people engaged by such interventions, the impact on the personal development and inclusion of participants may be limited. In turn, 'targeted recruitment', which aims to engage an identified population by utilizing the sports setting as the social context to provide further services (Coalter, 2013), has been posited as a potentially more effective means to enhance social inclusion. In theory, this approach increases the opportunity to tailor interventions to align with the sporting interests of an identified group and to pinpoint the specific areas of deficit to be addressed (Morgan & Costas Batlle, 2019). Research that examines targeted recruitment to sport-based programs is sparse; however, Kelly's (2011) findings infer that the impact of such interventions may only assuage the problems associated with social exclusion rather than contribute substantially to inclusion. Likewise, Morgan and Costas Batlle (2019) found that while targeted approaches to recruitment proved more effective in engaging and retaining marginalized young people, the heavy investment of time and resources to operationalize such programmes meant that they were often discounted in favour of open access recruitment.

3.4 Sport as a metaphorical 'hook'

Despite the common perception that engagement in sport may confer a variety of qualities on populations defined as socially excluded, deeper analysis reveals that sport is largely superfluous in the development of social inclusion. In fact, the major role that sport plays in the process of inclusion is that of cultural intermediary, where it serves as a metaphorical 'hook' to engage marginalized groups in activities through which pro-social or educational outcomes can be delivered (Coalter, 2015; Morgan et

al., 2019a). To this end, while the utilization of sport as a technology of change possesses limited correspondence within the development of social inclusion, it remains a key mechanism in this process, given that without some form of engagement with an activity, the potential to develop social inclusion barely commences. Accordingly, it is critical that sports that contain an initial attraction founded upon their cultural salience or significance to the target population are integrated and promoted within social inclusion interventions, to generate the requisite level of engagement through which other change processes can be initiated.

Consequently, these 'other' processes may reveal the true impact of sport-based interventions on the lives of socially excluded populations. Indeed, as Hartmann (2003, p.134) argues, "the success of any sports-based social intervention programme is largely determined by the strength of its non-sport components". Of these, the formation and consolidation of trusting and resilient interpersonal relationships between programme participants and programme facilitators is noted as a particularly important mechanism (Spaaij & Jeanes, 2012; Morgan & Parker, 2017), a feature to which we now turn.

4. Sport as a mechanism to build relationships

While the function of sport may be little more than a metaphorical 'hook', participation is widely reported to provide a necessary condition to facilitate other processes and mechanisms that contribute to social assimilation and inclusion (Coalter, 2007; Hermens, Super, Verkooijen & Koelen, 2017; Morgan & Parker, 2017). One such mechanism that has received increasing attention in recent years is the quality of relationships between program participants and program facilitators (see Spaaij & Jeanes, 2012; Morgan & Parker, 2017; Nols et al., 2019). Crucially, this research concludes that sport-based programs are more likely to assist social inclusion when relationships are constructed which: i) are based upon trust and mutual respect; ii) enable participants to feel valued or that recognize the abilities and contribution that the young person can bring to the relationship; and iii) promote program leaders as role models who understand and appreciate the challenges that participants encounter in their everyday lives (Morgan et al., 2019a).

To explore the first of these points, previous research has observed how relationships built upon trust and mutual respect are critical to facilitating behavior change. For example, Coalter (2013) highlighted how the social and behavioral climate created by leaders of sports-based interventions played a pivotal role in generating trust and reciprocity, a point reinforced by Morgan and Parker (2017). In both studies, it was noted how positive actions by participants were rewarded and recognized by staff, to not only facilitate the building of trust with young people, but also to construct a platform upon which a broader sense of recognition and acceptance often developed. Given the discourses surrounding marginalized youth which often accentuate moral and cultural deficits in their attitudes and behaviors (Levitas, 2005; Winlow & Hall, 2013), it is perhaps unsurprising that many of the young people engaged by sports-based interventions often lack positive relationships with adults or authority figures (Morgan & Bush, 2016; Morgan & Parker, 2017). In cases where educational, social, or economic exclusion has led to young people engaging in 'negative cycles of behavior', such as crime, anti-social behavior and/or substance misuse, the construction and development of trusting relationships is a vital part of these programs, where the environment created by leaders and facilitators reimagines the worth and value of the young people concerned.

Building upon this observation, a second key factor in the use of strong interpersonal relationships to facilitate social inclusion is provided by Whittaker (2010), who proposes that strategies to engage socially excluded youth may need to reconsider how young people are valued and recognized. Accordingly, instead of employing traditional measures of recognition, which emphasize formal indicators of success such as academic achievement, more informal structures of recognition such as 'verbal praise, or simply knowing that someone trusts and believes in you' (Whittaker, 2010, p.78) is of greater relevance to marginalized youth in making them feel valued within society. In support of this view, Rose et al. (2012) note how societal perceptions which draw attention to formal structures of recognition often impact negatively on marginalized young people, to further de-value, stigmatize, or exclude those 'at risk'. Therefore, when leaders of sport-based programs seek to praise or commend young people for the talents that they exhibit, and thereby legitimize qualities which may differ from those that are traditionally and formally recognized, there is potential for youth participants to feel more valued as citizens and to construct a stronger sense of self, belonging and acceptance as a result (Morgan & Parker, 2017).

Finally, and perhaps, most importantly, research suggests that for interpersonal relationships to be effective in incubating social assimilation and inclusion, there is a need for the leaders of sport-based interventions to possess a strong awareness of the issues of concern within local communities, and, more critically, appreciate how these issues impact on the lives of individuals within those communities (Henderson & Thomas, 2013). For Henderson and Thomas (2013), this requires program leaders to demonstrate a community consciousness, whereby the accomplishment of any sporting objectives within an intervention become subsidiary to the role of facilitating individual development within program participants (Morgan & Bush, 2016). As such, the mentoring approach undertaken in this context may differ substantially from that of traditional mentoring where the mentor is often someone who is far removed from the life experiences of the mentee (Coalter, 2013). Conversely, this alternative approach provides an altogether more tangible peer-mentoring relationship where the regularity, frequency and consistency of contact are paramount, with trust established and reinforced via community consciousness (Henderson & Thomas, 2013). In many cases, young people derive inspiration and encouragement from the fact that the mentor in question has managed (and chosen) to exchange their negative life experiences for more positive and productive lifestyle choices or to re-orient aspirations towards more 'conventional' life transitions (Morgan & Parker, 2017; Morgan et al., 2019a).

This emphasis on the importance of relationships that are non-authoritarian in nature and are constructed on mutual trust and community consciousness resonates strongly with the underlying philosophy of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1972). As a widely applied approach to education with marginalized (or oppressed) populations, critical pedagogy has been proposed as an educational strategy to enable marginalized populations to feel less disillusioned and more agentic in the pursuit of personal goals (Snyder, 2002). Examples of critical pedagogy being deployed within sport-based programs have noted how it may benefit participants by provoking young people to re-assess aspiration and to re-imagine their future selves (Spaaij & Jeanes, 2012; Morgan & Parker, 2017; Nols et al., 2019). More specifically, this research emphasizes the central importance of relationships between leaders of sport-based programs and young people that are able to facilitate a dialogue which originates from the young person's own life experiences, and where joint ownership, collective involvement and shared responsibility for individual development is at the heart of the pedagogical approach (Nols et al., 2019). Consequently, the relationship between program 'leader' and participant is horizontal, rather than hierarchical, and the act of dialogue serves as a conduit to 'give voice' to the young person thereby

providing a platform to convey their viewpoints and perspectives and to enhance their connection with society more widely.

In summary, and importantly in the context of utilizing sport as a tool for social inclusion, the findings of related research conclude that, in the majority of cases, where relationships between leaders of sport-based interventions and participants become more focussed on social development than on physical development and sporting prowess, sports leaders can operate as agents of change where trusting relationships provide the bedrock for the regularity, frequency and consistency of provision that are paramount for social inclusion (Morgan & Parker, 2017; Parker et al., 2018).

5. Developing capital – The key piece in the social inclusion puzzle?

In keeping with recent policy rhetoric surrounding marginalized youth populations, a further mechanism that is evident within sport-based social inclusion interventions is the acquisition of various forms of capital. Not only is capital noted as an important resource in equipping young people for positive social change, it is often heralded as a ‘meal-ticket’ to a more prosperous future or as a foundational building block for social mobility (Kelly, 2011; Nols et al., 2017). Typically, research which has examined the relationship between participation in sport and the accumulation of capital has been attentive to the acquisition of both human and social capital (Nicholson & Hoyer, 2008; Kelly, 2011; Sherry et al., 2015). However, more recent research has explored how positive psychological capital is equally critical as a resource that can be exchanged for social development (Morgan, 2018; Morgan et al., 2019b). The connections between participation in sport and the accumulation of these three forms of capital will now be examined in more detail.

5.1 Human and social capital

In the case of human capital, research has explored how participation in sport might facilitate the acquisition and accumulation of knowledge, skills and attitudes, which may, in turn, unlock the economic potential of young people and enable them access to employment (Kelly, 2011; Hermens et al., 2017). This research further indicates how positive experiences through sport may be transferred to enable human capital to be acquired, with school attendance, academic performance, and educational aspirations all noted as being positively influenced by engagement with sport. Given that school exclusion is one of the primary reasons for broader social exclusion, disengagement with formal education becomes a major barrier to acquire human capital for marginalized populations. However, there is evidence to suggest that, when used as a mode of non-formal education, sport has the potential to develop human capital by acting as a conduit to formal education and training and the pursuit of recognized academic or vocational qualifications (e.g. Parker et al., 2018). In many cases, this connection between sport participation and formal education is a central feature of social inclusion intervention projects, where sporting activities are provided in combination with support around employment, education and training. To illustrate, a study by Meek, Champion and Klier (2012) reported how one sport-based intervention proved effective in encouraging marginalized youth to take part in education or training and attract those who would otherwise be difficult to engage using more traditional educational methods. The same study demonstrated how engagement with this intervention improved individual attitudes towards learning, increased the willingness of participants to take up such opportunities, and outlined how such ‘blended’ provision enabled the targeted population to obtain qualifications which enhanced employability prospects.

That said, it is social capital that has been shown to be more readily acquired and accumulated by excluded youth as a result of their involvement in sport-based interventions. Specifically, there is a growing evidence to suggest that participation in sport may broaden social networks which, in turn, may lead to certain types of social advantage by acting as a medium of exchange or as an indicator of connectedness (Coalter, 2007; Nicholson & Hoyer, 2008; Hermens et al., 2017). Much of this evidence points to the universal appeal of sport to bring people together from across different social strata to promote community cohesion (Collins & Kay, 2014). Indeed, projects that have utilized sport to engage young people have reported increased cohesion among participants even where this was not an explicit aim (Parker et al., 2018). Putnam's (2000) oft cited work would categorize this form of social capital accrual as 'bonding social capital', whereby participation helps to tighten relations amongst homogenous groups of people, as would be the case among members of the same sports team, for example. Developing bonding social capital is often an important first step for marginalized populations by offering personal and social support for individuals who may lack reassuring or positive networks in other areas of their lives (Kemp, 2010; Putnam, 2000). However, it is Putnam's notion of 'bridging' and 'linking' social capital where sport participation has been shown to have most benefit for enhancing social assimilation and inclusion. The bridging form of social capital refers to the social ties that are constructed across and between horizontal social divisions (Putnam, 2000). Consequently, membership of, or involvement in, a specific, communal activity, such as sport, may present a productive conduit through which these horizontal ties may be created, and an individual's social network can be broadened. Likewise, the concept of linking social capital also possesses productive and positive connotations, in particular in enabling social mobility since it promotes vertical connections between diverse social divisions (Nicholson & Hoyer, 2008). Research has observed the potential for sport-based programmes to facilitate these upwardly-mobile connections for marginalized groups, in particular to connect young people with potential employers (Morgan et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, while the correspondence between participation in sport and the accumulation of human and social capital have been well-documented, academic debate has shifted to suggest that the acquisition of human and social capital in isolation may lack the capacity to enhance employability and, with it, social inclusion (see Brown, Lauder & Ashton, 2011). In addition, academic inquiry has investigated the extent to which 'softer skills', such as personal drive, self-reliance and interpersonal skills, may be equally valued by employers, and how these may be acquired or developed through sport (Morgan, 2018). To make such assessments, recent scholarship has utilized the concept of positive psychological capital (Luthans, Youssef & Avolio, 2007) as a guiding framework to explore how sport may be further integrated to develop this wider skill set and to actualize the potential of marginalized young people for employability (see Morgan, 2018; Morgan et al., 2019b).

5.2 Positive psychological capital

According to Luthans et al. (2007), the four main conceptual aspects of positive psychological capital are self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience and research indicates that the acquisition and consolidation of these four attributes is attainable through non-formal educational pathways including those allied to sport (Brown et al., 2011; Morgan, 2018; Morgan et al., 2019b).

The first component of positive psychological capital—self-efficacy—refers to the level of conviction that an individual has to successfully execute a specific or challenging task by possessing the confidence to mobilize the appropriate effort, resources or courses of action to achieve that task (Bandura, 2001). In relation to employability and social inclusion, Luthans et al. (2007) note that self-efficacious

individuals exhibit five characteristics comprising of i) the setting of high or difficult goals; ii) embracing or thriving in challenging circumstances; iii) high self-motivation; iv) the investment of time and effort into the accomplishment of goals; and v) perseverance when faced with obstacles. Research indicates that participation in sport can enable marginalized youth to enhance these five characteristics and feel more confident and self-efficacious both when playing sport, but also within other social contexts. For example, Morgan (2018) has noted how young people who adopted leadership roles in sport, as coaches or team captains, were able to transfer the self-efficacy developed in sporting contexts to formal educational domains. A further study by Morgan et al. (2019b) observed how participation in a sports-based intervention, that brought young people together from across neighboring postcode groups, enhanced the self-efficacy of 'at-risk' youth thus enabling them to feel secure in the relationships that they developed with program staff. In the same study, increased levels of self-efficacy allowed young people to recognize and put aside their individual and collective differences and to build a stronger sense of belonging with fellow participants thereby establishing friendships between and beyond rival (postcode) groups and enhancing social inclusion.

Second, the concept of hope has been described as the capability of an individual to develop the means to accomplish their personal goals (Luthans et al., 2007). As Phillips (2010) observes, socially excluded youth often lack the inner resource that enables them to generate coping mechanisms to manage their existing circumstances and/or to develop strategies to attain their goals. For Snyder (2002), possessing hope requires an individual to demonstrate the agency and perseverance to remain committed to their goals, and envisage clear pathways towards their attainment. In this sense, hope is a blend of 'willpower' (agency) and 'waypower' (pathways) towards the successful attainment of personal goals (Snyder, 2002; Luthans et al., 2007). Existing studies have highlighted the potential for sport-based interventions to generate the necessary willpower and waypower to attain personal goals. For example, Morgan et al. (2019b) observed how engagement with sport-based programs influenced individual aspiration by offering a defined route to employment, along with the requisite agency and perseverance to follow this pathway and commit to the accomplishment of this particular goal. As such, the rhetoric that connects meaningful employment with social integration (Levitas, 2005), demonstrates how participation in sport can foster hope as an important aspect of social inclusion. Similarly, Morgan and Bush (2016) outlined how the leaders of sport-based interventions were able to take advantage of opportunities that emerged within the sporting context to empower young people to take responsibility for their actions (agency) and generate strategies (pathways) for future development beyond this context.

Third, and relatedly, optimism relates to how an individual's explanatory style for positive events and outcomes is attributed to either internal, permanent, and pervasive causes or external, temporary, or situation-specific reasons (Luthans et al., 2007). One of the theoretical concerns directed at this concept is that over-optimism can lead to unnecessary risk-taking or reckless decision-making (Luthans et al., 2007), an issue that is often evident in the behavior of at-risk males, in particular (Morgan et al., 2020). Therefore, as Schneider (2001) cautions, marginalized youth should be encouraged to develop a sense of 'realistic optimism', where behavior is based upon a careful appraisal of situational factors, self-discipline, and analysis of past events of a similar nature. Again, research has presented specific examples of where sport-based interventions have the potential to develop realistic optimism. For instance, Morgan (2018) found that a facilitation of optimism occurred when participants began to attribute the cause for certain events - like winning or losing competitive encounters - to factors within their control. The same study revealed that optimism was also fostered when participants began to

value internally focussed attributes, such as the importance of hard work or personal commitment and integrity as the basis for achieving goals, whether this was within sporting environments or not.

The final aspect of positive psychological capital—resilience—has been described as the capacity to respond positively to adversity, uncertainty, failure and/or overwhelming change (Luthans et al., 2007) and is where existing evidence suggests that participation in sport can play the most significant role. For populations who experience social exclusion, enhancing resilience has emerged as a critical feature of initiatives that support the progression of skills necessary for an enhanced sense of inclusion. Skodol (2010) defines the resilient personality as a combination of: i) traits related to a strong sense of self, such as self-direction, self-understanding, a positive future orientation, and an ability to control negative emotions; and ii) strong interpersonal skills, for example sociability, empathy, understanding of others, and altruism. Related literature is replete with examples of the potential of sport to develop resilience (see, for example, Sarkar & Fletcher, 2014), however, in relation to the correspondence between sport and social inclusion, Morgan (2018) documents how sporting experiences may enable marginalized young people to develop an enhanced ability to respond positively to adversity or uncertainty. In addition, Morgan highlights how participation in sport may instil an ability to persevere and remain impervious to potential setbacks, control negative emotions, and be less confrontational in social situations.

While in and of themselves these three forms of capital are not enough to complete the social inclusion jigsaw, collectively they do provide a more detailed picture of the way in which active citizenship and social inclusion may be established. As noted, the potential for sport to develop these capitals is clear, first by (re)engaging marginalized youth with formal education and qualifications to enhance human capital; second, by broadening the social networks of excluded youth and connect young people with employment and training opportunities through the accumulation of social capital; and finally, by developing the qualities of self-efficacy, hope, optimism and resilience, to increase the positive psychological capital that is equally important for negotiating success in the employment market. As such, when sport-based programs identify how and where they can contribute to the development of these three forms of capital, the potential for sport to enable social inclusion becomes evident.

6. Conclusion and future directions

This chapter has sought to examine the logic and evidence to substantiate the notion that participation in sport can enable social inclusion among young people who have become marginalized from mainstream society. While it is clear that sporting participation can have some beneficial impacts for some marginalized young people, the varied experiences that engagement with sport-based interventions conveys suggests that it is necessary to caution against the universal application of sport as a 'silver bullet' through which social inclusion can be achieved (Coalter, 2007; 2015).

For Coalter (2015) the propensity for advocates of sport to overplay and inflate its potential to contribute to social concerns, such as social inclusion, is indicative of a marginal policy area that is opportunistically attempting to gain legitimacy—and with it, access to resources—from mainstream funding agencies. Unquestionably, the mere presence of sport within the lives of marginalized or 'at risk' young people cannot deliver outcomes related to social inclusion. Indeed, the pathway from initial engagement in sport to the enhancement of social inclusion is complex and fraught with contextual challenges that may render sport-based interventions ineffective (Morgan et al., 2019a). However,

where interventions possess the clarity of aim and intellectual coherence to enable precise evaluation (Coalter, 2015), it is possible to better articulate the exact contribution and impact that sport-based interventions can make to the fostering of social inclusion. This accentuates the central importance of designing sport-based interventions that are critically considered, theoretically informed, and, above all, contextually aware of the challenges and opportunities that exist within a specific group of young people (Morgan and Parker, 2017; Parker et al., 2018).

As this chapter has highlighted, sport can act as an effective 'hook' for engagement with social inclusion interventions and operate as a vehicle to sustain progress towards inclusion outcomes. However, it is the 'non-sport' components of these interventions (Hartmann, 2003), in particular interpersonal relationships between participants and leaders, in concert with program design and delivery that identifies how to utilize sport to accumulate stores of human, social, and positive psychological capital that may best explain the connection between participation in sport and social inclusion.

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