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Sports-based intervention and youth offending: a diverse tool for a diverse society?

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Introduction

This paper explores the use of sport-based intervention (SBI) to tackle the problem of youth crime and anti-social behaviour in the United Kingdom (UK). In doing so, the paper notes key issues pertinent to the future development of such interventions as youth justice workers seek to ensure SBIs do not serve to further stigmatize what is arguably already a highly excluded diverse social group. Although its focus is on the UK context, international research into the use of SBI to tackle the problem of youth crime is discussed, while the themes outlined are arguably common to many westernized criminal justice systems, particularly as over the last two decades criminologists and youth workers have noted how increasingly the criminalization of young people appears to be a prevalent feature of modern criminal justice (Goldson and Muncie, 2006).

Ever since the advent of the modern Olympics in 1896 organized sport has been regarded internationally as a force for good which can promote mutual understanding and tolerance between socially and culturally diverse groups and nations (Sage, 1979). Over the last several decades the use of sport in pursuit of international development goals has broadened. There is now widespread policy support at an international level for sporting programmes that promote social change, health and wellbeing, as well as educational and employment opportunities (Kidd, 2008). Indeed, in 2001 the United Nations established the United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace (UNOSDP). The UNOSDP recognises over 700 sporting organisations worldwide and its mandate is to support the activity of the United Nations by using sport as an aide to peace and mutual understanding through promoting urban regeneration and social development. One example of the developmental power of sport in this manner from the UK is the planned regeneration of the Lower Lea Valley in London into an urban environment fit for a modern and diverse multicultural inner-city community, which forms a key part of the 2012 Olympic legacy (Olympic Delivery Authority, 2008).

Given this broader background, it is perhaps unsurprising that SBIs are used worldwide by governments to tackle the problem of youth delinquency and crime. For example, an Australian study identified over 600 programmes nationally which used sport and physical activities to tackle the problem of youth crime and anti-social behaviour (Morris, Sallybanks and Willis, 2003), while an American study identified 621 (Hartmann and Depro, 2006), a United Kingdom study 427 (Splash, 2002) and an Italian study identified over 200 (Caruso, 2011). It seems to be the case internationally that governments, criminal justice experts, youth workers and sporting bodies, hold that anti-social and criminal behaviour amongst young people are social problems which to some degree are responsive to SBI.

SBIs for young offenders can involve a variety of sporting experiences, ranging from athletics and track and field, to basketball, boxing, football and table tennis (Kelly, 2011). In this paper SBI is taken to cover a diverse range of sporting initiatives, frequently organized and run by a mixture of criminal justice agencies, sporting professionals, charity organisations and community-based volunteers, which share in common the aim of providing young people under the age of eighteen with a diversionary pathway away from an adult criminal career.

The paper is divided into four parts. In the first, the extent of the problem of youth offending in the United Kingdom is outlined. This provides a necessary contextual background to the second part of the paper, which discusses the role of SBI in tackling anti-social behaviour and youth crime .A key element of this discussion relates to the strength of available evidence internationally for the positive role SBI can play in meeting the complex needs of young people. Leading on from this, the third part of the paper discusses the underlying assumptions about young people embedded within the discourse of SBI enthusiasts who advocate their usefulness for tackling the problem of youth crime and anti-social behaviour. In doing so the paper notes that young people are often viewed as if they were a homogenously dangerous group of deviants, rather than being a collection of diverse individuals who possess a range of personal needs and come from a variety of differing social and cultural backgrounds. In the final part, the paper concludes by reflecting on the implications of its preceding discussion for the future development of SBI in tackling the problem of youth crime.

The problem of youth crime

Youth crime is undoubtedly an important social issue that receives much attention. Indeed, it is nigh on impossible to pick up a newspaper or watch the evening news on television without encountering a story which serves to reinforce the seemingly huge scale of the problem that is young people and crime. If the news media are not concerning themselves with youth gangs, knife crime and random acts of street violence and robbery, they are telling stories about young people who deal in drugs, shoplift, or like to put graffiti tags on anything from shop fronts to park benches. It can seem at times that today's youth, particularly those who live in inner-city estate areas, spend most of their time operating in wolf-like packs, hanging around street corners and local shopping centres, waiting for the right conditions to appear so they can commit a malicious anti-social or criminal act.

Self-report studies frequently show that a significant number of young people do engage in offending behaviour. One such study reported that *"over half of males and almost a third of females aged between 14 and 25 admitted to committing criminal offices at some point in their lives"* (Maguire, Morgan and Reiner, 2012: pp 496). But it is important to note that offending behaviour amongst young people is arguably part and parcel of a normal and healthy transition into adulthood. Most teenagers commit non-violent, status-related crimes, such as underage smoking or drinking, and most do so once or only a few times. The vast majority of transgressive anti-social and/or criminal behaviour by young people does not result in their becoming formally involved in the criminal justice system.

It is precisely because of this that criminologists have long warned against treating young people as if they are an inherently deviant group responsible for many of the minor and not so minor day to day inconveniences and social ills that litter everyday contemporary life for the adult proportion of the population (Goldson and Muncie, 2006). It is when repeat offending behaviour occurs during the teenage years, or when such behaviour escalates into property crime or violent criminal activity, that patterns of behaviour can take hold which are likely to continue into adulthood, that is unless significant steps are taken to intervene and challenge and change such behaviour (Blyth and Solomon, 2008). Yet it is important to note that to some extent the focus of the media and social elites on the problem of young people and crime is to be expected. Indeed, it is arguably completely justifiable when the extent of the problem of youth crime is considered.

The available research does show that a large number of young people engage in some sort of anti-social or criminal behaviours, albeit for a limited period of time and quite possibly without having any contact with criminal justice or youth services, before becoming law-abiding adults. But it also reinforces that a significant number of young people commit serious offences, and what is more, repeat such behaviour on numerous occasions. Latest statistics from the UK released by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) (Youth Justice Board, 2011) show there is a high level of criminal activity by young people that results in them coming into contact with the criminal justice system. The 2011 YJB report figures reveal that they were 198,449 criminal offences committed by young people aged between 10 and 17 which resulted in conviction and disposal into either detention or a supervised community sentence. 60 percent of all offences were committed by young men aged between 15 and 17 years. The most common offence committed was theft and the handling of stolen goods (41,702). The other most common offences were violence against the person (38,744) and criminal damage (23,611).

The reoffending rate for young offenders is officially measured by the Ministry of Justice as where someone who has received some form of criminal justice sanction (such as a conviction or a caution) subsequently goes on to commit another offence within a set time period. Worryingly, reoffending rates are high for young offenders. Known internationally as the recidivism rate, the reoffending rate after one-year for youth offenders in the UK is 75 percent for offenders released from custody and 68 percent for young people on community sentences (Ministry of Justice, 2010). Given the statistics, it should come as no surprise to learn that it is conservatively estimated that youth crime and anti-social behaviour cost somewhere in the region of four billion pounds per year (Laureus Sport for Good Foundation, 2011).

The problem of youth crime and sport for social development

The statistics outlined in the previous section of this paper reinforce that they are a significant number of criminal offences being committed by young people which do warrant some form of formal punishment. No matter how much one would prefer to divert young people from the criminal justice system, in practice there will always be some behaviours which require formal punishment. But it is equally important to introduce targeted

rehabilitatory interventions to address offending behaviour, in doing so giving young offenders the opportunity and support they need for positive change, as well as just as importantly, to introduce community-based programmes to as far as possible divert young people out of anti-social and criminal activity before it starts. Yes, some young people may well need to be imprisoned for a period of time, but the majority need to be diverted into community-based programmes which seek to promote a sense of community and provide essential skills, educational and work opportunities, positive role models and good peer relationships. Developing the self-esteem, life skills and support networks of the young people at risk of (re)offending, alongside promoting a sense of community belonging and social responsibility, must lie at the heart of youth work and youth criminal justice (Goldson and Muncie, 2006).

Sport is often promoted as a gateway into a better life for young people who may otherwise have turned to a life of crime. As Carmichael (2008, pp3) notes *'the organizing committee for the…Olympic games is…..promoting the importance of sport for 'at risk' youth. Many great athletes…have spoken publicly about how sport probably helped keep them away from criminal activities. Sebastian Coe....wants sport to be recognized as an effective mechanism for empowering and educating youth to tackle the problems they face and for building the social skills they need to succeed'*. It is argued that through participating in sporting activity programmes young people gain key life skills, employability skills and can even training and accreditations which can expand their social horizons. It is important to also remember that a significant number of young offenders have behavioural and learning difficulties; many are prone to aggressive and violent behaviour. Sporting activities often enable the release of such feelings and this could be a vital way for some young offenders to release their energy in a structured, channelled and above all lawful way. As Mutz and Baur (2009, pp 308) argue, *'sports activities are seen as a favourable, functional alternative to violent and aggressive behaviour. It is widely believed that physical activity allows a person to 'let off steam' without harming others. During sports, aggressive actions may only be displayed within a regulated context...the release of aggression can be achieved in a socially acceptable way'*.

Importantly, given that youth offenders often have few, if any, formal educational qualifications and poor self-esteem, *'sport provides an alternative to educational underachievement, blocked aspirations and low esteem'* (Faulkner and Taylor, 2005, pp 195). When young people have high self-esteem they see themselves more positively and have more belief in their own abilities. For many young offenders other areas of their life (school, home, work) may be difficult and limiting, but sport may allow them to demonstrate, not only to others but themselves too, that they are talented and worthy of respect and support. Young offenders are often brought up in broken, problematic homes. As a result, they frequently have no positive role models and authority figures to be able to look up to. In such circumstances children often look to others for guidance and support, unfortunately for some the role models they look up to are not positive and law abiding. Furthermore, some young people may feel they have no choice but to turn to street gangs in order to satisfy their need for approval, belonging and self-worth (Carmichael, 2008). Professional sport undoubtedly

provides a range of positive role models and charismatic authority figures for young people, which can encourage participation and a sense of belonging. Indeed, links have been made between the bonds of gang membership and the bonds that can be created in a sporting atmosphere. '*The key lies in the similarities of sport and gangs; both provide a sense of belonging, status and excitement. But, whilst sport also helps you develop control over your emotions and learn to respect certain boundaries, being in a gang can be much more destructive and sometimes even fatal*' (Laureus Sport for Social Good Foundation, 2011, p 4). This brings the foreground the possibility for using sport creatively as a 'hook' to encourage young people to get involved through designing sporting programmes which are attractive to them, in part through replicating the sense of emotional belonging that gang membership can bring.

When dealing with anti-social and criminal behaviour amongst young people, SBIs are typically employed in one of two ways. Firstly, they can be used as post-offence as rehabilitatory tools, operating either in the prison environment prior to release, or as part of a community-based sentencing programme. Within the UK youth secure units, for example, sport and physical activity plays a big part in the residents everyday lives under what is termed the 'second chance' youth justice programme (Andrews and Andrews, 2001). The focus is on using sport to develop young people's self-esteem, help them channel their energy constructively while acquiring team working, communication and life skills, as part of a broader programme designed to tackle a range of underlying issues; including, behavioural and mental health problems, drug and alcohol abuse, as well as poor education, training and communication skills. Such sporting initiatives are '*designed to engage young offenders, improve their behaviour, achievement, skills and attitudes...a number of pathways were introduced offering offenders' a variety of alternative opportunities on release from custody*' (Mapstone, 2011: 12).

Secondly, SBIs are also used pre-offence within communities through connecting 'at risk' young people to social- and job-skills training and educational programmes, with the aim of helping them pathway away from anti-social behaviour and a potential criminal career (Andrews and Andrews, 2003). In essence, the aim is to divert or 'hook' the target population, namely, young people from deprived areas which possess a high level of social disorganisation indicators; including, high crime rates, long-term (often inter-generational) unemployment, poor public health and life expectancy indicators, as well as dependence on social welfare and voluntary services. Here diversionary sport programmes are used to establish relationships between young people and positive role models and authority figures, voluntary organisations and community groups, youth and social services, as well as training and educational providers. An example from the United Kingdom is the Tottenham boxing academy in London. The academy describes their approach as using sport as the hook '*to get young people re-engaged with education and away from crime*' (Laureus Sport for Social Good Foundation, 2011, p31). Although it is focused on working with young people from at risk areas before they become involved with the criminal justice system, some offenders on community-based sentences attend the academy. Similar programmes can be found internationally, including in the United States, (West and Crompton, 2001, Hartmann &

Depro, 2006), Scotland (Coalter, 2005), Australia (Morris, Sallybanks, Willis & Makkai, 2003), the Netherlands (Rutten et al, 2007) and New Zealand (Begg et al 1996). These initiatives do not just focus on sport training, rather they use such activity as tool to help young people realise their potential, obtain training, as well as recognise the importance of the shared community bonds. The individuals involved in these programmes often have been excluded from school, are known to social and welfare services, and may well have been involved with criminal justice agencies, such as the police and community support officers (Laureus, 2011). Here, sport is being combined with targeted support to engage hard-to-reach young people to try and divert them away from crime - every student at the Tottenham academy is required to attend lessons in Maths and English, ultimately leading to them gaining GCSE qualifications in these subjects.

SBI and the problem of youth crime: do they really work?

Given such considerations, it is understandable why it is argued that sports-based interventions can indeed meet the needs of youth offenders and can be *'effective in early intervention, preventing youth crime and acting as a diversion for those already caught up in the criminal justice system'* (Sport for Change Project, 2011, p1). But it is nevertheless important to not accept at face value the claims made by SBI enthusiasts and examine the empirical evidence relating to their positive impact on the behaviour of young offenders. They are several issues which immediately come to light when this is done. The first of which is that the published research literature on the topic is not that extensive. Indeed, even though there is a commonly held assumption that sporting activity can be a positive developmental tool, it becomes immediately clear when the literature is examined more closely that this assumption has not in fact been as rigorously tested as one might expect (Kelly, 2001). There certainly is evidence available internationally from the United States, United Kingdom, Australia and Europe, which suggests that sports participation by young people can be positively associated with reduced rates of anti-social behaviour and crime within local community areas (see Cameron and MacDoughall 2000, West and Crompton 2001, Morris et al 2003, Mutz and Baur 2007, Laureus 2011). For example, Cameron and MacDougall (2000) examined a wildness camp in the United States which provides a varied SBI based around swimming, hiking and other outdoor activities, for young offenders aged between twelve and seventeen who have been committed of crimes ranging from petty theft and burglary, to arson and murder. They found that 85 percent of participants from their programme did not reoffend in the first six months after completing it.

Yet much of the data for the value of SBI is anecdotal in nature, consisting of small sample sizes, as well as often omitting to track research participants past a relatively short period of time. Indeed, Cameron and MacDougall (2000) themselves recognize that they were unable to identify the long-term effects of the programme they studies past the six month mark. Furthermore, the majority of studies are over reliant on qualitative case-study or questionnaire-based self-reports of behavioural change by research participants, rather than on undertaking a rigorous analysis of hard statistical data pertaining to reoffending rates using a control group from which to measure change (Seefeldt and Ewing, 2002). For example, a study of the aforementioned Tottenham boxing academy in the UK argued that

there was a 40 percent decrease in reconviction for the offenders who participated in the programme. It was also noted that this programme only needs to stop just over one in four hundred young people a year from reoffending to break even, while *'if it stops two young people from reoffending the return on a £1 investment is £1.90'* (Laureus Sport for Social Good Foundation, 2011: p43). Such figures and claims appear impressive until it is noted that the size of offenders in the sample was very small (n =8) and relied on qualitative self-reports from the individual offenders themselves, rather than the scrutiny of officially recorded reoffending data. This is not to underplay the value of such research. We must not fall into a 'positivist research trap' where only the controlled experiment can be deemed to be a valid and reliable model for research. It is necessary to recognise the importance of both anecdotal evidence and rigorously conducted qualitative research for capturing *'the expression of local understandings and knowledge that are crucial to the assessment of the 'social impact' of sport in development contexts'* (Kay, 2012, pp 1190). The need to ensure that the voices and life stories of research participants are heard regardless of a researcher's methodological priorities and proclivities, lies at the heart of the history of narrative criminology, due to its overriding concern with the collection of the oral histories of the stigmatized, dispossessed and social excluded, which dates back to its origins in the early twentieth century 'Chicago school' (Chamberlain, 2013).

But this point accepted, we are nevertheless confronted by the fact that when more statistically-driven research exists, the evidence is inconclusive and also demonstrates the problems that exist in seeking to link young people's participation in SBI with behavioural change through examining offending rates. For example, the swimming-based SBI 'Splash programme' in the United Kingdom appears to present pretty conclusive empirical evidence of the positive effect of SBI on youth offending behaviour (Splash, 2003). It reported that in the ten areas it operated in between June and August 2002, total crime reduced by 7.4 percent and anti-social behaviour increased by 0.1 percent, compared to an increase of 13.2 percent for the previous June to August period in 2001 (a period which coincides with summer school holidays). Such figures point out that perhaps the most effective method to reduce youth crime is to divert young people away from negative social activities using SBI before they become involved in crime (Hartmann and Depro, 2006). Yet it is not possible to claim that there is a direct link between the Splash programme and a reduction in the crime rate and anti-social behaviour, due in part to the fact that it is not known, firstly, who exactly participated in the programme (i.e. were they from local 'at risk' communities or not?; were they known to the police or youth services?; what was their offending profile?), and secondly, what other possible diversionary activities were occurring at the same time during the school holiday period, including local events and festivals, day-trips and away days, family holidays, and so on. While perhaps most importantly, it should be noted that the local police force had adapted their street-level policing and crime prevention strategies in targeted areas in light of the previous year's recorded crime data, which in itself may well account for much of the noted reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour.

Another informative example which highlights some key problems in drawing a direct correlation between a sports programmes and a reduction in youth offending, is the midnight

basketball league from the United States. Its creator, Mr G. Van Standifer, *'had become convinced that one of the keys to the problems of poor, inner-city young men was the absence of safe, constructive activities during what he believed to be the high crime hours of 10:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m'* (Hartmaan, 2001, pp 342). So he created a basketball league which would run during these high crime hours. This example of a SBI was both simple and inexpensive. It operated only during summer months and had only three core components: firstly, that the target group was young men between the ages of 17 and 21; secondly, games began at 10:00 pm sharp and not before; and thirdly, that two uniformed police officers attended each game. This project based its reasoning on the assumption that crime occurs purely down to boredom and that an activity like this could steer potential offenders away from criminal behaviour. The results were remarkable – during the first 3 years of its operation there was a 30 percent reduction in late-night crime in the communities it ran in (Hartmann and Depro, 2006). The Maryland County corrections chief, for example, told Chicago reporters, *'I haven't seen one single one of these basketball players back in my jail since the program began'* (Hartmaan, 2001; p342).

Although such early indicators of success seemed to provide evidence for the value of midnight basketball in tackling crime, it was later established that crime rates dropped rapidly at a national level during this period, a point which made it difficult to accept the programme organiser's claims to success (Hartmann and Depro, 2006). This said, matching cities who adopted the midnight basketball programme with those that did not offer it, did reveal that there was a reduction of property crimes running at around 5 percent (Hartmann and Depro, 2006). Importantly, it was not possible to say it was the young people playing basketball who were responsible for this crime drop. Indeed, the midnight basketball programme was not held to have directly responsible for reducing property crime. Instead, Hartmann and Depro (2006p.192) argued that the extensive political and media interest generated by the midnight basketball programme brought positive attention to stigmatized and marginalized communities, which served to *'send a more positive, proactive message to community members, one that puts a new emphasis on community outreach and builds trust, commitment and solidarity.* This, it is claimed, had a knock on effect on property crime rates due to the closer social bonds created within the communities in question.

The midnight basketball programme reinforces that sporting activity can influence at a broader level the lives of community members. But it also reinforces the central problem of measuring what impact SBIs actually have. West and Compton (2001) reinforce this further in their meta-analysis of the effectiveness of SBI. Drawing on studies from the United States, they point out that although there is some supportive data for the benefit of SBI in tackling the problem of youth crime and anti-social behaviour, it is nevertheless difficult to claim that any reduction in crime is the direct result of sporting activity alone. Not least of all because there is a lack of consistency in the type of offence analysed – i.e. not all studies they analysed included offenders who had committed more serious types of violent crime – as well as in the definition of reoffending rates – i.e. some studies they analysed reoffending after one year while for others it was less. Furthermore, they note that a range of external factors are likely to intervene in any apparent relationship between SBI activity and a young person's

offending or anti-social behaviour, the most of important perhaps being their personal circumstances, home environment, family relationships and the nature of their peer networks. Similarly, extensive studies from Australia (Morris et al, 2003), Scotland (Coalter, 1999) and Germany (Mutz and Baur, 2007) all conclude that when compared to powerful primary agents of socialisation and social integration (notably family, school, peers, and the media) participation in sporting activities seem to be of marginal influence on young people's behaviour.

Finally, it is important to note that contradictory evidence for the impact of SBI does exist. Begg et al (2007), studied participation in varsity sports in the United States. They found that sports participation in young people was associated with an increase in anti-social and criminal behaviours associated with aggression and risk taking during adulthood; including, speeding, drunk driving and violent behaviour. It is important to note that contrary studies such as these suffer from the same already noted problems as the positive supportive studies just discussed. But the work of Begg et al (2007) does bring to the foreground the question of appropriateness – often there is an assumption that all sporting activity, regardless of type, is beneficial when dealing with the problem of youth crime, when this may well not be the case. A Norwegian study by Endresen and Olweus (2005) is particularly informative in this regard. They undertook a longitudinal analysis of five hundred 11-13 year old males in 37 schools in Bergen. The aim was to examine the possible relationships between participation in power sports (boxing, weightlifting, wrestling and oriental martial arts) and violent and anti-social behaviour. A strong correlation was found between violent and anti-social behaviour and participation in boxing and weightlifting. A finding they put down to the presence of a 'macho culture' in these sports. Although they are suitably cautious about their findings, they note that they do raise the possibility that some sports may not be appropriate for SBI programmes which are seeking to challenge and change violent and anti-social behaviours.

Andrews and Andrews (2003) say the same in their study of the role played by SBI in secure youth offending units in the United Kingdom. Although they recognise the positive role sport can play in young people's lives, they also note that not all sports are appropriate when dealing with young offenders who often have complex needs. They argue that a more person-centred approach to the provision of sports opportunities is key to its success in alleviating anti-social and criminal behaviour. Activities must be purposeful for the individual and tailored to their individual needs, rather than being constructed for mass participation in a one-size-fits-all fashion, as is often the case. The most prolific young offenders often possess a range of problems and issues which make it difficult to prescribe a one size fits all approach, including, trauma and aggressive behaviour resulting from being a victim of physical or sexual abuse; a lack of opportunity and social mobility; substance and alcohol abuse problems; high levels of disengagement from educational pathways; poor communication and life skills; dysfunctional family relationships; a lack of positive male and female role models; a distrust of authority figures; and finally, feelings of isolation and social exclusion (Millie et al 2005). For Andrews and Andrews (2003) experience shows that sporting activities can only ever be one small element of an offenders' rehabilitatory

programme. They place significantly more emphasis on professionally-led counselling, mentoring, life skills training and educational programmes, for supporting young people to change their offending behaviour. While when sporting activities are provided, it is argued that they must to be careful to de-emphasise competition and winning, be tailored to individual need, while also emphasizing choice for participants and positive feedback.

Unpacking some key assumptions: sport for development vs sport for social control

So far this paper has discussed the potential for SBI to address the problem of youth crime. In doing so, it has noted that although there is evidence for the positive impact of SBI on youth offending and anti-social behaviour, the evidence not conclusive, and indeed, they are a range of factors which reinforce that any relationship between sport and crime is too complex as to be reducible to a simple causal relationship. But this is only half the story. It is important to examine the underlying assumptions about young people that commonly possessed by SBI enthusiasts and criminal justice agencies. Not least of all because these point to broader issues pertaining to how young people are viewed and treated within both the criminal justice system in western nation-states (Kelly, 2011). In order to do this the paper will now turn to briefly consider a broader shift that has occurred in relation to the operation of the criminal justice system in the UK over the last two decades.

Underpinning much of the discussion of young people and crime is a particular set of somewhat familiar discursive imagery. There is a tendency for the media, criminal justice agencies and political elites, to propagate the well-worn caricature of the rebellious youth, with all its associated transgressive discursive imagery, and this undoubtedly accounts for much of the successful folk devilling of young people that has occurred over the last several decades, and in doing so shaped much of the contemporary political discourse surrounding the problem of youth crime and how to solve it. Indeed, it has been argued that the last two decades in particular have witnessed the emergence of an actuarial-managerial penal policy for dealing with the problem of dangerous offenders and unruly youths (Garland, 2001). Here *'the management of risks and resources has displaced rehabilitation as the central organisational aim of the criminal justice system'* (Garland, 2001, pp177). The aim now is for criminal behaviour to be increasingly profiled and predicted, as the penal emphasis shifts to containment and control, as opposed to offender treatment and rehabilitation. Evidence for this position can be found in the prison statistics – the prison population has dramatically risen in most western countries over the last two decades. For example, in the UK in 1984 they were 43,295 individuals in prison, by 1994 it had risen slightly to 48,621, in 2004 it stood at 74,658, while by 2011 it stood at 84,812 (Ministry of Justice, 2011). Such a dramatic increase cannot be put down to shifts in crime-rate patterns, it can only be the result of a deliberate shift in penal policy (Chamberlain, 2013).

This new actuarial-managerial penal policy is not solely concerned with containing crime through 'warehousing' a growing number of offenders, both young and old, in penal institutions. Its focus remains on managing instead of solving the problem of crime and this has led, in turn, a widening of the surveillance net, in part through the intensification in community-based surveillance and risk profiling (Garland, 2001). Hence, the shift in

emphasis to managing the problem of crime through risk profiling and assessment means that diversionary and rehabilitative programmes for offenders intensify. In the UK, criminologists concerned with youth crime, have noted that the new labour government of the mid-1990s onwards oversaw the rapid expansion of community-based interventions for youth offenders, with the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act establishing Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) in addition to Youth Justice Boards (YJBs) to oversee them. The creation of YOTs extended the responsibility of youth intervention and supervision past probation and social workers alone. A wide range of criminal justice and welfare agencies – the police, the probation service, educational providers, benefit, housing and health agencies - were joined by local community voluntary groups and youth group organizations. Bound up with this was the introduction of Youth Inclusion and Support Panels (YISPs) to target young people under the age of thirteen who were at risk of offending and introduce preventative strategies at a local level to tackle both offending and reoffending behaviour. This in turn led to an increase in the role of 'alternative' programmes, involving a range of voluntary and statutory organizations with local community groups, to tackle the problem of anti-social behaviour and youth offending. The growth in the number of SBIs in the UK in the 1990s was somewhat a natural outcome of this state of affairs (Carmichael, 2008).

The growing role of SBI over the last two decades has arguably been the result of the shift towards a more surveillance heavy 'risk aware' punitive system of criminal justice in the UK (Andrews and Andrews 2003). Not least of all because SBIs undoubted ability to attract young people allows state crime control agencies to pursue a diversionary and rehabilitatory programme while at the same time extending their knowledge of the nature of the social problem that is youth offending and anti-social behaviour, so they can more effectively profile and risk-manage the phenomenon (Nichols and Taylor 1996). Furthermore, the current conservative and liberal-democratic coalition government, in announcing their future plans for youth justice in 2010, signalled their intention to continue to promote alternative crime prevention strategies, such as SBI (Independent Commission, 2010: 25). Although undoubtedly critical of their new labour predecessors in many ways, the coalition government nevertheless is continuing to pursue an actuarial-managerial penal policy. They intend to do this through emphasising 'restorative justice', with youth offenders being required to participate in 'community payback' programmes that promote '*the tough discipline of regular work, tougher curfews [and] paying back the debt they owe society'* (Ministry for Justice, 2010: 14). This development is underpinned by a series of 'payment by results' pathfinding projects, which are designed and run by a mixture of private and publically funded bodies operating at a local level to reduce the number of youth offenders in custody by diverting them into less costly community-based alternatives. Bonuses are awarded and profits ensured through a reduction in reoffending behaviour. Whether this strategy works or not is a matter for long-term analysis and debate, as such programmes continue to roll out across the country over the next few years (Maguire, Morgan and Reiner, 2012). There is even the possibility that SBIs may become part of these pathfinder initiatives.

The ties that exist between the emergence of SBI to tackle the problem of youth crime and broader shifts in criminal justice policy and practice, should not come as too much

of a surprise given the assumptions about the nature of youth offending they share in common. I am not talking here about the academic position– which echoes the commonsense discourse of the SBI enthusiast – that youth offending and anti-social behaviour are likely to occur when young people are inadequately socialised into commonly held norms for appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, with sporting activity providing a mechanism through which these norms can be both taught and learned (Coalter, 2005). Rather, the focus here is broader and on the structural inequalities that shape the very social landscape that young people are born into and grow up in. Coakley (2002) and Donnelly and Coakley (2004) point out that the use of recreational sporting activity by nation-states to monitor and control what are held to be problem behaviours, such as violence and aggression, is tied up with broader exclusory social categories and processes that tend to operate in neoliberal western societies. Indeed, they note how in the United States sports programmes can be divided into two types: sport for 'social opportunity' and sport for 'social control'. Furthermore, they argue that the former is by and large targeted at the socially mobile white middle classes and the latter the more ethnically diverse working class, poor and socially excluded. Sport as social opportunity emphasizes sport as an opportunity for the personal development, growth and social mobility, while sport as social control focuses on young people from inner-city areas and 'at risk' housing estates and views them somewhat homogenously as a potentially dangerous group who are likely to get into trouble if they are not in structured settings participating in activities controlled by responsible adults (teachers, social workers, youth justice workers etc), not least of all because their parents are uninvolved and/or seemingly unable to control them. Here particular types of young people are seen as being inclined toward deviance, in need protection from their environment and themselves, and the streets and the community will be safer if they are controlled and socialized through recreation (Seefeldt and Ewing, 2002).

Both Coakley (2002) and Donnelly and Coakley (2004) note the class-, gender- and racial- based inequalities which permeate through the sport as social control model. Not least of all because the majority of young people involved in them come from inner-city areas where young people from middle-class white backgrounds tend to not 'hang out'. Kelly (2011) discovered the same in her analysis of SBI as a mechanism to promote social inclusion in the UK. She notes that SBIs often serve to conceal or obscure social inequalities through individualizing the problem of youth offending and anti-social behaviour. In part they do this through their incorporation of a 'pathways to work' discourse, such as those promoted by Andrews and Andrews (2003), where individualised counselling, mentoring, life skills training and educational programmes are advocated to support young people to change anti-social and offending behaviour. For Kelly (2011), such initiatives, no matter how beneficial for some of their participants, by and large do not work because they de-emphasize the very structural inequalities that she argues bring about the behaviour they are seeking to change in the first place. The core problem for the young person is that the SBI programme is failing to fully account for their lived experience of the practical outcomes of structural inequalities i.e. blocked social opportunity, poverty, stigmatization, racial and class tension, gender-based violence, and so on. Consequently, Kelly (2011) concludes that the impact of SBI on changing behaviour *is inevitably limited. Moreover, sports-based interventions risk*

legitimating a reductive analysis of these complex processes, highlighting individual deficits and de-emphasizing structural inequalities' (Kelly, 2011, p126). With the result, she argues, that they can run the risk of serving to further excluded the already socially excluded as individuals self-exclude themselves and disengage with a programme that they at some level instinctively feel is not 'in-tune' with the world around them and their everyday lived experience of it.

Discussion and conclusion

In noting how SBI can

the multicultural and diverse nature

What does this all mean for SBI enthuiasts and managers seeking to promote a critical (re) evaluation of existing cultures, structures and practices?

. It has been argued that the reforms introduced by new labour stigmatized communities, families and young people and it is time to move away from the actuarial-managerial penal discourse that has arguably underpinned the 'just deserts' model of youth justice for the last decade or so (Goldson and Muncie, 2006).

The coalition government is pursuing a sustained programme of deficit reduction, with the result has been a number of structural changes are being introduced in the police, health service, educational system, public services. The influence of this intensive programme of public expenditure management within.

It is arguable that the coalition government is going to be more cautious in criminalizing youth offenders, emphasizing instead more inclusive practices through focusing on diversionary and preventive programmes aimed at providing intensive welfare, youth mentoring, educational and life-skills programmes, as well as foster-care and parenting support. The coalition government plans to *'introduce a range of...changes to policies on sentencing and rehabilitation. These changes are designed to punish offenders for the crimes they have committed while at the same time providing them with support to rehabilitate'* (Parliament, 2011: 1).

This development has provided a space within which alternative programmes, such as SBI, can flourish as effective crime prevention strategies that arguably allow . One only need to .

new labour oversaw the rapid expansion of community-based interventions for youth offenders, with the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act

establishing Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) in addition to the already mentioned YJBs to oversee service provision.

The creation of YOTs extended the responsibility of youth intervention and supervision past probation and social workers alone. A wide range of criminal justice and welfare agencies – the police, the probation service, educational providers, benefit, housing and health agencies - were joined by local community voluntary groups and youth group organizations. Bound up with this was the introduction of Youth Inclusion and Support Panels (YISPs) to target young people under the age of thirteen who were at risk of offending and introduce preventative strategies at a local level to tackle both offending and reoffending behaviour.

The reforms instigated by new labour from 1998 onwards do seem to provide evidence for the argument that during this time an actuarial-managerial penal discourse had supported the growth of a 'just deserts' model of criminal justice. As do the crime statistics, which reveal that while the number of individuals imprisoned rose, the recorded crime rate dropped and continued to decline during the first decade of the new millennium until it had declined from its 19.1 million peak in 1995, to 9.6 million in 2011 (Maguire, Morgan and Reiner, 2012).

Tackling the problem of youth crime and its reduction has been a priority for successive governments over the last hundred and sixty years. The first major piece of governmental legislation was the Youthful Offenders Act, 1854 (Goldson and Muncie, 2006).

There is little consensus amongst criminologists about how to reduce youth crime. The most prolific young offenders often possess a range of problems and issues which make it difficult to prescribe a one size fits all approach, including, trauma and aggressive behaviour resulting from being a victim of physical or sexual abuse; a lack of opportunity and social mobility; substance and alcohol abuse problems; high levels of disengagement from educational pathways; poor communication and life skills; dysfunctional family relationships; a lack of positive male and female role models; a distrust of authority figures; and finally, feelings of isolation and social exclusion (Millie et al 2005).

For all the lack of consensus on how to tackle the problem of youth crime, two generally accepted points can be made. Firstly, there is little real evidence that punitive sanctions typical to the 'just deserts' model of criminal justice, such as prolonged

incarceration, are effective in the long-term when tackling anti-social and criminal behaviour. The complex needs possessed by the majority youth offenders, along with the high reoffending rate, together reinforce that the problem is too complex to be reduced to so simple a solution - a point the coalition government seems to recognize in spite of its continued advocacy of prison as a necessary sanction.

This leads to the second point, namely that perhaps the most effective method to reduce youth crime is to divert young people away from negative social activities before they become involved in crime (Hartmann and Depro, 2006). A balanced and diverse approach to dealing with youth offenders is needed. Yes, some may well need to be imprisoned for a period of time, but the majority need to be diverted into community-based programmes which seek to promote a sense of community and provide essential skills, educational and work opportunities, positive role models and good peer relationships.

Developing the self-esteem, life skills and support networks of the young people at risk of (re)offending, alongside promoting a sense of community belonging and social responsibility, must lie at the heart of community-based interventions (Goldson and Muncie, 2006).

The theoretical rationale for this approach positions offending youth as inadequately socialized to community norms, and sport as a remedial lesson in social norms and community livin (Coalter, 2005; Seefeldt & Ewing, 2002).

 In doing so

In doing so they share Not For example, in Canada, 49% of citizens believe in the ability of community-level sport to reduce crime among young people (CCES, 2002).

Delinquency and community safety

Many theories that attempt to explain how sports directly impact delinquency credit the structured nature of sports involvement for legitimating social norms. These explanations are consistent with the assumption that underconformity to social norms leads youth to engage in anti-social behaviours. Among the most cited explanations are:

Sports involvement encourages less frequent, shorter, or less intense interaction with deviant others;

The "values" of sports – such as teamwork, effort, and achievement – reflect those of wider society;

Sport involvement decreases the amount of unsupervised leisure time;

Being labeled an "athlete" reflects positively on youth; thus, they will be encouraged towards more positive behaviours (this is complicated by some research that indicates that athletic youth are not less delinquent, but less likely to be punished); and

Sports programs aimed at reducing youth delinquency work simply by reducing boredom in youth and creating a diversion from less desirable, sometimes criminal, behaviour (Morris, Sallybanks, Willis & Makkai, 2003).

meta-analyses could not conclude that the sport programs definitively replaced criminal or delinquent behaviour in the youth communities they served, given that measuring explicit anti-social behaviours require both short- and long-term follow-up and measurement (Morris et al., 2003). While short-term, uncontrolled studies are illustrative and informative, using such data to draw correlations between sports programs and reduced youth crime rates can result in misleading (or premature) conclusions. The case of Midnight Basketball in the U.S. is revealing.

The Midnight Basketball League (MBL) is a national program that operates organized basketball leagues in "at risk" communities in the U.S. for young men, aged 17–21, during the "high-crime" hours of 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. Early adopters of midnight basketball programs claimed extraordinary impacts on crime rates; however, it was later established that crime rates dropped rapidly in all regions of the country during the same period, severely limiting the claims of efficacy attributed to the sports intervention (Hartmann & Depro, 2006). However, after matching early-adopter cities with other U.S. cities that did not offer MBL, Hartmann & Depro (2006) found that the reduction of property crimes, specifically in MBL cities, was 5% greater than in non-MBL cities.

It is important to note that Hartmann & Depro (2006) did not credit the MBL basketball program with reducing property crime by diverting potential offenders into a more positive activity. Rather, they suggested that the media interest in MBL brought positive attention to these "marginalized" communities, which served to "send a more positive, proactive message to community members, one that puts a new emphasis on community outreach and builds trust, commitment and solidarity" (p.192). While comparisons on violent crimes did not reproduce these results, the authors concluded that diversionary sports programs warrant further investigation for their possible role in reducing property crime rates (see also Pitter, 2004).

Coakley (2002) and Donnelly & Coakley (2004) have also asked whether it is possible to use recreation to control violence and other problem behaviours among youth? They pointed out the class- and race-linked bases of diversionary ('social control') sport programs in North America, and how they differ in intent from middle-class ('social opportunity') sport programs. Coakley (2002) reveals these class linkages with two pertinent questions:

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Are corporate CEOs who participated in organized youth [sport] programs less likely than other CEOs to initiate and approve corporate policies that [violate corporate ethics], do violence to the environment, or have violent consequences for residents of low-income inner-city neighbourhoods?

-

Can we control corporate [corruption] and violence through youth [sport] programs offered to young people who are likely to acquire power as adults in society?

These questions reveal some of the assumptions behind the original ('social control') question, and represent a striking contrast with the 'social opportunity' model. These assumptions are: that young people (inner city, lower class) are potentially dangerous; that they are likely to get into trouble if not in structured settings controlled by adults; that their parents are uninvolved and unable to control them; 22

that young people are inclined toward deviance, and need protection from their environment and themselves; and that the streets and the community would be safer if these young people could be controlled and socialized through recreation. This represents a marked contrast to the assumptions behind 'social opportunity' sport programs for middle-class youth, which are associated with personal development of career- and community-related skills, such as leadership and teamwork.

Gateway programs

Sports have also been used to enhance social development among children and youth by connecting "at risk" youth to social- and job-skills training, education programs and/or leadership opportunities. In these schemes, sports are not a "mechanism" for social development, but rather a positive means of inducing marginalized or delinquent youth towards other social programs that address underlying risk factors for crime involvement, early school leaving, homelessness and a range of other social problems in this population. Seefeldt & Ewing (2002) suggest that sport programs that target "at risk" youth can provide a "safe alternative activity to violence and intimidation" and gang membership, because sports teams may meet the individual's need for social inclusion, physical competency and recreation. This research argues that the usefulness of sports to mediate anti-social behaviour in young people improves when used in combination with a full range of social, educational, and job-skill training programs (Seefeldt & Ewing, 2002).

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In fact, researchers acknowledge that there are nearly limitless sporting experiences for children and youth, due to the variety of sports played, the nature and length of time of involvement, the structure of the team/league/community, the sport's gender composition, the skill and engagement of the coach, and so forth. As a result, it is generally accepted that the physical act of performing sports skills cannot be thought to impact directly, either positively or negatively, an individual's inclination towards deviant behaviour (Shields & Bredemeier, 1995; Seefeldt & Ewing, 2002).

Given that most programs targeting youth delinquency offer a combination of sports, physical activities, outdoor experiences, leadership-skills development, and job-skills training, any reduction in anti-social behaviour cannot be attributed only to sport involvement (Morris, Sallybanks, Willis & Makkai, 2003). Thus, programs directed towards children and youth should "blend" the social interactions and physical activities offered by the experience of organized sport participation, in attempts to address social risk factors and decrease delinquency (Seefeldt & Ewing, 2002).

d. Character-building

Donnelly (1993, p.428) noted: "We have long held, although with little evidence, that sport participation has the capacity to transform the character of individuals." Of all the literature on sport and children/youth, the most difficult to quantify, yet also the most compelling in terms of social benefits, deals with the possibility that participation in sport and physical activity may positively impact the moral development of youth. Based on survey data, Canadians consider sport, after family, to have the most influence on the development of positive values in youth (CCES, 2002).

In fact, in data collected in this survey, the role that sport plays in promoting and developing moral character was considered to be an essential component of the very definition of sport for children and youth, although not surprisingly, these ideas of the positive impact of sports on the development of character tend to come from those coaches, parents, volunteers and participants who are actively involved in children's and youth sport (CCES, 2002). According to Coakley & Donnelly (2004, p.93) this "character logic" is often used to encourage and defend children's participation in sport; it is also used to justify the funding of sport programs, the building of facilities and the sponsorship of events.

While the causal linkages and mechanistic connections between sport participation and character-building are difficult to create and sustain, theories have been put forth (supported in some cases by evidence-based research) to support the notion that participation in sport and physical activity builds character in children and youth. In a review essay, Ewing et al. (2002, p.36) argued that sport offers a "dynamic domain" for moral and character development and expression among youth, particularly in terms of positive values such as hard work, fair play and an orientation to succeed, and behaviour and social relations. However, the same authors argue that sport does not, in and of itself, lead to the development of character or morals in youth, and, in fact, holds the possibility to undermine the creation of what would generally be considered positive traits of personal behaviour (Ewing et al., 2002).

Such interpretations are borne out in the literature. Hansen et al.'s (2003) recent analysis of youth activities found that such activities provide a context for a wide range of developmental experiences; but, development of self-knowledge, emotional regulation and physical skills were particularly high within sport participation when compared to academic-

and leadership-type activities. At the same time, sport activities were also the only context in this study in which youth also reported higher rates of negative experiences, particularly in relation to peer interaction and inappropriate adult behaviour (Hansen et al., 2003, p.47). Thus, when cataloguing

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sport within an array of youth activities, the pattern of experiences was mixed and sport could be understood as both character building and challenging (Hansen et al., 2003, p.50).

Hedstrom & Gould's (2004, p.5) review essay also concludes that research has demonstrated that character in children and youth can be enhanced in sport and physical education settings "when fair play, sportsmanship and moral development information is systematically and consistently taught." In other words, given that sport is a powerful social experience in the lives of children and youth, positive character development may occur under the right circumstances (PCPFS, 2006).

Given that moral behaviour is learned through social interaction, the ways in which relations with others are constructed and facilitated impacts the ethical and moral behaviour learned through sport. In other words, there is a level of transfer between the values and ethics promoted in the sport and the moral character instilled in children and youth who participate.

Ewing et al. (2002) reviewed evidence suggesting that a focus on reflection and meditation led to lower levels of anxiety for youth studying martial arts, and that athletes who focused on personal improvement, as opposed to greater ability, considered the sport to be a pedagogical tool for co-operation and citizenship as opposed to dominance and ends focused orientations (Ewing et al., 2002, p.37).

Evidence also suggests that coaches play a key role in developing the moral and ethical parameters that impact youth involved in sport. This research indicates that the moral values and behaviour learned by children in sport come directly from instruction and their own engagement, and indirectly from observing coaches' responses (Ewing et al., 2002, p.37).

The analysis of youth sport participation and character development has been broken down into component parts: perspective-taking and empathy, moral reasoning and motivational orientation (PCPFS, 2006). The concept of character is often understood in relation to the ability to consider the views and positions of others. Perspective-taking is the cognitive ability to understand multiple points of view, while empathy is the affective skill of understanding the experiences of another person or group (PCPFS, 2006). In combination, perspective-taking and empathy underpin moral development and can be learned through game strategy and consideration of multiple perspectives within the sporting context – although this relationship is primarily a theoretical one, yet to be corroborated through evidence-based research (PCPFS, 2006). What has been documented through research,

however, is that physical activity outside of sport may, in fact, be better suited to promoting empathy among youth, and that moral reasoning may be developed through sport if actively promoted in dialogue with a coach (PCPFS, 2006). For example, Trulson (1986, cited by Coakley & Donnelly, 2004, p.171) found that the type of sport experience was key to reducing 'delinquent' behaviour in that martial arts taught with a philosophy of respect, patience, responsibility and honour were related to decreased delinquency, while those based on free sparring and self-defence were related to higher levels of delinquency.

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Research examining moral reasoning, or the ability to think about moral issues, among athletes has actually found that participation in sport is associated with lower levels of moral reasoning maturity; however, there is also evidence that coaches or physical educators may successfully promote the development of moral reasoning if they actively seek to do so (PCPFS, 2006). In relation to the third component of character, motivational orientation or the cognitive rationales for behaviour, research suggests that motivation may be improved through the type of positive team environment that sport participation can provide for children and youth (PCPFS, 2006). In effect, the potential does exist to effectively promote moral development through sport because the social interactions associated with sport participation may impact certain psychological traits that underlie moral decision-making (Seefeldt & Ewing, 2002).

Leadership is also an issue that has been examined in research on children/youth and sport participation. Dobosz & Beaty's (1999) analysis found that high-school athletes scored higher on a leadership ability measure than their non-athlete counterparts. They conclude, therefore, that athletics offers youth an opportunity and platform to develop and improve leadership skills and abilities.

In conclusion, whereas sport has the possibility to provide an environment for the development of moral character, evidence also supports the idea that sport provides an opportunity to suspend moral obligation or support unethical behaviour in pursuit of winning. Coakley & Donnelly (2004, p.94) point out that much of the research addressing sport and character over the past 50 years suffers from three problematic assumptions: that every kind of organized, competitive sport impacts the moral development of every athlete in the same ways; that the character-building experience of sport is unique to the extent that those who do not play are at a disadvantage in developing moral character; and that the notion of what constitutes positive moral characteristics is generally accepted. In this sense, Shields & Bredemeier (1995, cited by Ewing et al., 2002) caution that it is not the physicality of sport, or the learning and performance of sporting skills, that is either ethical or unethical or related to character development; more accurately, it is that social interactions within the sport experience potentially impact the development of moral character.

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Sandford, RA; Duncombe, R and Armour, KM – 2008 – short term impact nly

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For example, there is Morris, Sallybanks, Willis & Makkai, 2003).

ummarized social and epidemiological trends in sport participation and youth delinquency. This evidence suggests that sports participants engage in delinquent behaviour less often than non-participants (and that this correlation is stronger among youth from lower-class backgrounds) or youth who participate in minor sports. As the authors note, the reason for this negative correlation is unclear.

Finally, it should be noted that the idea of improving the strength of local communities to help create a more positive environment for young people to grow up in has been a priority for government.

'Government is increasingly concerned with addressing issues of community cohesion, social inclusion and 'active citizenship' (Coalter, 2005; p19).

'Young offenders in organized sport programs have demonstrated significant increases in perceived competence in sport skills and increased self esteem' (Carmichael, 2008; p3).

But what real evidence is there? In uk and internationally?...

Diversity issues…? Must be used in tandem with other initayitives, bolted onto existing programmes certainy not….

. Yet it is important to recognize that stopping reoffending behaviour is a complex matter. . But it is necessary to say that only work in tandem with other tools

Over the last two or three decades criminologists interested in the study of youth crime have increasingly recognized the importance of not only placing their topic of study in relation to the study of offending in general, but also that the study of the causes of offending behaviour

and the success or otherwise of the interventions introduced to stop such behaviour happening again, must be placed within a broader context that recognises that not only the

which in part is due to structural inequalities that exist within western neoliberal societies

SBI – what it is

SBI – strengths weaknesses/limitatiosn of current research

Diversity…

Abstract

There is international enthusiasm for the idea that sport can contribute to 'social inclusion' strategies. Sport now features in various targeted youth initiatives, including 'Positive Futures': a 'sport and activity based social inclusion programme' currently operating in England and Wales. The processes through which these 'sports-based interventions' might promote 'social inclusion' require, however, further investigation. Drawing on interviews with operational staff, managers, partners and participants, the article critically analyses the concept of 'sports-based social inclusion' with reference to four main themes: 'sport for all', 'social cohesion', 'a pathway to work' and 'giving voice'. It argues that, while programmes achieve varying degrees of 'success' in relation to these themes, their impact on exclusionary processes is inevitably limited. Moreover, sports-based interventions risk legitimating a reductive analysis of these complex processes, highlighting individual deficits and de-emphasizing structural inequalities.

Tackling the problem of youth crime and its reduction has been a priority for successive governments over the last hundred and sixty years. The first major piece of governmental legislation was the Youthful Offenders Act, 1854 (Goldson and Muncie, 2006). Prior to this time young offenders had been punished and convicted the same way as adult offenders. The 1854 Act introduced reformatory schools (later to become the infamous youth borstals) to enable the separate incarceration of offenders under the age of 16, who became subject to a corrective educational programme that marked the early beginnings of the modern youth justice system.

It wasn't until the 1908 Children Act that significant changes in the management of youth offenders within the criminal justice system were introduced. The 1908 Act established separate juvenile courts, abolished the death penalty for children under 16, as well as made child neglect and abuse a criminal offence. Although undoubtedly progressive in many regards, the general legislative thrust was punitive, with the penal regimes of the time focusing on a mixture of incarceration and rigidly timetabled physical activities and educational practices to rehabilitate youth offenders, underpinned by a heavy emphasis on

corporal punishment for relatively minor transgressions of what was deemed to be appropriate behaviour.

Underpinning this populist 'just deserts' model of youth justice are assumptions and value-judgments concerning the moral adequacy of individuals who commit crime. Here a rhetorical emphasis is placed on criminal activity being the result of personal choice – those individuals who commit crimes choose to do so and are therefore just plain bad people. This discourse is used to justify the need for the incarceration and punishment of people who commit crimes – those individuals who choose to commit crimes and later get caught deserve their 'just deserts'. Concurrently, it is argued that a focus on deterrence, where the costs of committing a crime are seen to outweigh the benefits, is an effective way to reduce crime. Such rhetoric is often used to reinforce the need to severely punish those individuals who break the rules.

Such arguments may possess an instinctive appeal and indeed can be said to some degree to represent populist common-sense discourse on the topic (Goldson and Munice, 2006). But this is not to say that it wasn't recognized early on that offenders often belong to social excluded groups, who may well live in the margins of society, and as a result possess reduced social opportunity and blocked social mobility. For example, the Children's Charter of 1889 criminalised cruelty to children and enabled the state to intervene in family life where juvenile delinquency was perceived to be a particular problem. The Charter led to the greater use of interventionist strategies such as approved schools and boarding (King and Noel, 1993).

Key social reformers of the time, such as the philanthropic society, argued for the need to recognise the role of broader social issues in shaping the problem of crime, such as poverty, poor housing, unemployment and a general lack of educational and social opportunity (Garland, 2001). With the result that a growing tension emerged between the populist 'just deserts' model of criminal justice and a 'social welfarist' discourse that acknowledged the need to rehabilitate, not just punish, offenders.

The arguments of the 'social welfarist' position undoubtedly became increasingly influential within political circles as a result of the emergence of the labour party in the first part of the twentieth century, which itself came into being as a result of a recognition of the need to challenge the class elitism present in British society. For example, the Children and Young Persons Acts of 1933 (pp 5) stated that *'every court in dealing with a child or young person who is brought before it, either as an offender or otherwise, shall have regard to the welfare of the child or young person and shall in a proper case take steps for removing him from undesirable surroundings, and for securing that proper provision is made for his education and training'.*

At the centre of the welfarist position is the recognition that personal choice can be constrained and shaped by the social circumstances in which a person finds themselves. Hence the state is said to possess a duty of care to intervene to protect young people. With the result that just as the 'just deserts' model established itself within the fledging youth criminal

justice system, a growing opinion emerged that as far as possible young people should be rehabilitated through diversion out of the criminal justice system and into community-based interventions and supervision programmes.

It is fair to say that in the post-Second World War period the 'social welfarist' position led to the gradual development of a progressive youth criminal justice system which recognised the need to rehabilitate offenders, not just punish them. However, the tension between just 'just deserts' and the 'social welfarist' approaches to youth crime – which still persists to this day - was transformed from the early 1980s onwards with the election of the conservative government in 1979, with its ideological belief in the need to 'roll back the state' and concurrent committed to neoliberal free-market economics.

The 1980s signalled the beginning of the encroachment of managerial principles in public services, including within the youth criminal justice system. The firm commitment of the conservative government to individualism and personal choice led over time to the ascendency of the popularist 'just deserts' punitive approach to criminal justice. Welfarism was deemed obsolete, with the result that offenders were responsible for their actions and their 'just deserts'. A more punitive and criminalised society was created. For example, the 1982 Criminal Justice Act included the Night Restriction Orders and the Supervised Activity Orders, which appeared to represent a closer measure of control of young offenders.

However, although it is fair to say that the 1980s onwards witnessed the rise of the 'just deserts' model, one of the main aims of the conservative government at this time was to reduce state spending and intervention. In regards to youth justice, the government was undoubtedly seeking to balance cost savings with punitive interventions such as imprisonment. This provided a space within which 'social welfarist' principles could operate and in doing so led to an increase in the use of options short of prosecution, including cautions and informal action by Police, both of which were focused on promoting the diversion of young people out of the criminal justice system and into youth community interventions and programmes. With the result that while advocating a tough on crime stance there was also a dramatic decline in the youth crime and youth custody rate. So much so that developments in the mid-to-late 1980's have been heralded as amounting to a *successful revolution in criminal- particularly juvenile- justice policy'* (Muncie, 2004 pp 267).

For all the apparent success in tackling the problem of youth crime during this period the media spotlight increasingly focused on extreme cases, such as the brutal killing of James Bulger in 1993 by the 10 year olds Jon Venables and Robert Thompson, which sparked a huge debate about the future of young people and youth justice. This discussion was heavily shaped by a growing concern with the increasing overall crime rate. The officially recorded overall crime rate had been rising and rising in western nation-states from the early 1980s onwards. In the United Kingdom alone between 1981 and 1991 recorded crime rose 78%, peaking at 19.1 million offences in 1995 (Maguire, Morgan and Reiner, 2012).

The 1997 labour party manifesto stated that they were going to be tough on crime. New labour's reforms to the criminal justice system followed a populist 'just deserts' agenda,

but unlike with their conservative predecessors this led to an increasing stigmatization and criminalisation of young people. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 introduced Anti-Social Behavioural Orders (ASBO's), indeterminate sentences and an increase in community surveillance and control mechanisms via parenting and referral orders, alongside the introduction of formal curfews and action plans to address youth offending and anti-social behaviour.

One of the key results of new labour's reforms was the increasing use of incarceration to control the problem of crime. As the 1990s progressed the number of people in prison rose and continued to do so into the new millennium. In 1984 they were 43,295 individuals in prison, by 1994 it had risen slightly to 48,621, in 2004 it stood at 74,658, while by 2011 it stood at 84,812 (Ministry of Justice, 2011).

Following their conservative predecessors, new labour focused on managing the costs and risks associated with public service provision through the use of institutional target setting and performance appraisal. This state of affairs, alongside the growing prison population, led some criminologists to argue that the 'just deserts' model was becoming underpinned by an actuarial-managerial penal discourse (Garland, 2001). Here *'the management of risks and resources has displaced rehabilitation as the central organisational aim of the criminal justice system'* (Garland, 2001, pp177). With the result that criminal behaviour is increasingly profiled and predicted, with the emphasis being on its containment and control, as opposed to offender treatment and rehabilitation.

But this new actuarial-managerial penal discourse is not solely concerned with containing crime through 'warehousing' a growing number of offenders, both young and old, in penal institutions. Its focus remains on managing instead of solving the problem of crime and this leads to an intensification in community-based surveillance and risk profiling (Garland, 2001). Indeed,

Although the youth criminal justice context remains fluid, recent developments seem to provide a space within which alternative programmes, such as sports-based interventions, can flourish as effective crime prevention strategies. A possibility this paper will now turn to explore.

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