Defense or attack?
Can soccer clubs help tackle social exclusion?

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Abstract

This paper examines soccer as a social and cultural phenomenon which is increasingly being adopted as an instrument for social change. The economic power of soccer in the UK, and in many other parts of the world, is apparent with the fame and wealth visited on players.

But what is it about soccer that leads policy-makers to think that it can help change the life-courses of young people who may be excluded from education, work, health or suffer other forms of deprivation?

Little literature has been found to explain how sport in general and soccer in particular is suited to countering issues of social inequality although the potential socialising effect of sport has been examined. Likewise evidence of effect from funding bodies seems to be limited although some examples of good practice exist.

In this paper the theoretical and empirical basis of the assertion of soccer's 'transformative ability' is challenged and the actual and potential role of soccer in social inclusion is assessed.

A reflexive approach inspired by Bourdieu is adopted. This examines the structural, social reality of the soccer clubs involved in social inclusion projects but also looks at the individuals' involvement in constructing this reality. A 'participant objectivation' approach is suggested and the initial results reported.

Tentative conclusions suggest the emic and etic perspectives of participants and programme workers need to be taken into account. We argue that, although social exclusion is referred to, it is in fact only a set of correlated effects of the distribution of economic, social and cultural capital. An understanding of social exclusion and the potential role of soccer is, itself a form of cultural capital that will have different values to the various actors.

The phenomenon of Soccer

There is little doubting Association Football's (soccer's) popularity globally; in Europe, South America, Asia and Africa. Over the last century the sport has grown into a cultural phenomenon commanding media, academic and government attention

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not to mention potential television audiences of over a billion (for a world cup final) and supporting an industry worth, according to *Fortune*, over US$12 billion. Some of this attention has unfortunately been paid because of problems of violence amongst football fans and soccer's claim to countering exclusion seems, at best, optimistic when issues of racism are taken into account.

Increasingly soccer has developed a more positive public image although incidents of violence and racism still occur frequently. Not only is there increasing coverage of sports events but also an increasing number of cultural intermediaries use sport as raw material for the production of cultural and economic goods such as newspaper supplements, magazines, fantasy football league games, comedy and music performances, replica soccer shirts, club branded TV channels, mobile phones and, of course, academic papers.

Soccer's position in contemporary culture is therefore ambiguous. It remains wedded to its working class history and recruits from predominantly working class towns and cities – well educated professional footballers are the exception, certainly in the UK. On the other hand, successful soccer players earning £150,000 (US$274,000) per week are figures of popular myth – heroes and villains whose lives are discussed in lurid detail in daily news bulletins. That these provide a powerful symbol of what constitutes success to many young people seems undeniable.

But hidden within this apparent explosive growth of football's influence is an enormous diversity amongst the social structures that constitute the total 'field' of soccer. This diversity is very similar to that within the third sector as a whole. Only a very small proportion of clubs operate at the highest levels and each week hundreds of matches are played all over the UK by adults and children in amateur leagues.

A sociology of soccer?

In his article for *Sociology of Sport Journal*, Pierre Bourdieu (1988) notes sport occupying a dominated position in society. Whilst (high-brow) cultural pursuits (such as dance, theatre, opera, music) are largely seen as having a wide range of acceptable expressions from, say, pop and rock music to classical and avant-garde genres, sport is considered to be of a somewhat lower order. In particular it has afar more restricted vocabulary associated with it and is less subject to reflection – although a certain amount of 'high brow' academic attention has been paid to it more recently.

Crucially Bourdieu points out the diversity of sporting practices that is disguised by the treatment of all variations of a sport as one. There are obvious distinctions of taste between, say, rugby or cricket and soccer but there are also considerable differences between British Premiership soccer clubs, those clubs playing in local Sunday (so-called pub-) leagues and junior soccer clubs meeting each Saturday morning.

It is probably an artificial concatenation to call all these forms 'soccer'. It could be argued that the only thing that a youth football club playing in a local park and the Premiership team have in common is their adherence to a *similar* set of rules whilst on the pitch. In fact even here differences are apparent. Some, officially sanctioned, differences include the length of the match, the size of goals and balls used. It is, for example, clear that the use of so-called 'professional fouls' in local youth games is frowned upon, but the sanction is rather less clear in the highest leagues. The most partisan expressions of support are condoned, even encouraged, in the professional game yet frequent press reports show how parental over-enthusiasm may lead to their children being sent off the field of play (BBC News 2001).

The *performance* of the players in soccer, over and above the rules, is of course significant; it has been used as a metaphor for social action itself (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) with players variously skilled at 'navigating' their habitus . Bourdieu draws attention to the interrelationship between the body and the spirit (*l'esprit de corps*) and the commonly held belief that somehow physical training begets physical and mental discipline or, perhaps more accurately, that the employment of physical assets in approved action somehow bypasses mental processes that might otherwise resist. In this respect soccer is similar to dance, but again, there is less a sense of reflection in the analysis of this aspect of soccer. Although it is, of course, "the beautiful game", the aesthetic of playing is strongly disavowed by most participants; and this may have something to do with the dominant notions of masculinity associated with soccer amongst the working class.

However, Bourdieu warns against drawing a direct connection between social class and participation in or preference for a particular sport. Globally this is most apparent since the symbolic position of soccer in the USA is, for example, far less masculine than in the UK. It is clear from the above account of soccer's development that in the UK and Europe, soccer's cultural and symbolic value has changed over the last fifty years and continues to change.

Bourdieu (1988) describes the 'arc' in which the relative power of a particular position (in Bourdieu's special sense – initially, he discusses Vivaldi's music) changes over time: at first, perhaps, neglected, then accepted and finally absorbed and mundane. In the same way soccer has been seen as increasingly important to more and more non-performers. Whilst soccer increasingly becomes a product to be consumed by fans and, particularly via the media, the sport has developed its own (internally arbitrated) rules of taste and distinction and its followers demand extrinsic outcomes – victories, fame and well-known players and managers.

Somewhat contentiously Bourdieu also links to this rise in the sport as consumption-good with the rise of violence. He suggests, we think, that the 'fans' desire for "victory at all costs" separates them from the ethical framework within which football clubs (or, perhaps 'true' aficionados) themselves operate. However this view is far from substantiated. In any case the symbolic content of soccer is contested by different fractions of society; from one perspective it may be about violence and tribal identity whilst from another (policy makers, for example) it may be about fair play and personal development.

However, it is striking to us that participation in soccer (defined at the most general level) varies so enormously. Those who play regularly may not be the same as those who attend a local team's matches each Saturday. Even when they are one and the same, they may participate in very different ways and with different aims and even beliefs and values in mind. Conversely, participation in soccer-related activities could meet the same broad social needs of the participants even if the activity is very different.

A study of gangs associated with Sheffield United (a soccer team in the UK) Armstrong (1998), referring to an earlier work (Wallman 1984) identified the key resource requirements of the social network that supported football hooligans. These were -

- Time: to participate and a shared notion of the appropriate allocation of time to aggression
- Information: the circulation of necessary knowledge for participation, the sharing of which defines membership

- Identity: a shared affiliation with a team but also the internal reproduction of sub-cultural rules

Even more striking is the similarity between this analysis and Bourdieu's analysis of (mainstream) sports fans who, he says, require –

> "…spare time (a transformed form of economic capital), economic capital (more or less indispensable depending on the sport), and cultural capital (again, more or less necessary depending on the sport)." (Bourdieu 1993)

On the one hand, this represents a simplistic analysis of the 'structural' aspects of participation in sport (as a fan or as a hooligan) that constrain or encourage certain actions and to present this is to beg questions of the role of agency in the 'choice' of divergent forms of behaviour. It is clear to us, however, that at least on the surface there may be little functional difference for *some* participants between 'joining in' peaceful support of a team and violent aggression under the 'flag' of a team.

Regardless of the veracity of this argument, violence - whether modified and constrained on the field or, apparently, unconstrained amongst some supporters is a symbolically significant part of European soccer. The myth of sport in general and soccer in particular is summed up by the term 'controlled aggression' and the concomitant assumption that participation in (officially sanctioned) sport teaches the control rather than the aggression. This is an argument often cited for the value of rugby (very much a contact sport) in British public schools.

This increased interest in soccer – both its positive and negative aspects – comes at a time of increasing uncertainty in the finances of soccer clubs of all sizes. Whilst soccer clubs have been urged to embrace marketing techniques and undertake sponsorship and fundraising activities, they have also depended on wealthy benefactors and have recently been offered other sources of funding, most notably from the UK National Lottery, often tied to the creation of community facilities. The consequence is that local and national government along with sport umbrella bodies such as Sport England and the Football Association in the UK have become identified, particularly by smaller clubs, as a source of money that may help ensure survival.

The extent to which soccer clubs are already involved in their communities, and hence might be supposed to be appropriate vehicles for specifically 'social' or 'community' projects, is known to vary considerably (Bale, 2000). Hence our initial concern on undertaking this research was to ascertain the extent, amongst policy makers, of their understanding of how soccer worked in society and, amongst soccer clubs, their understanding of social issues such as social exclusion.

We also wanted to trace the antecedents of the assertion that young people's involvement in various soccer-related schemes was likely to have positive social outcomes at least in part because of the intrinsic qualities of the sport itself.

Social policy and exclusion in the UK

The current UK government has shown great interest in the issue of social exclusion. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has its own Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) which defines social exclusion as having –

> "…complex and multi-dimensional causes and consequences, creating deep and long lasting problems for individual families, for the economy, and for society as a whole. It can pass from generation to generation: children's life chances are strongly affected by their parents' circumstances, such as their income and the place they live" (Social Exclusion Unit 2004).

It is a definition broadly accepted amongst the several government departments involved with this policy area. They include the above unit, but also the

Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU), the Regional Co-ordination Unit (RCU), the Department of Health, the Department for Transport, Local Government and the regions and others including the Department of Work and Pensions which is responsible for co-ordinating social inclusion objectives.

But the definition of social exclusion is contested. The lack of any shared understanding of the term 'social exclusion' or its antecedents in various dimensions of deprivation (see, for example CASE 2002; Hills et al. 2002) in issues of consumption, production, political activity and social engagement, suggests that policy is far from uncontested. It is unclear, for example, whether exclusion from sport is universally seen as a symptom of social exclusion or is, itself, a form of exclusion.

Government policy is, according to the SEU, to address all issues relating to social exclusion in so-called 'joined-up' working and this includes co-operation with and funding of other voluntary organisations and quasi-autonomous bodies such as Sport England (formerly the English Sports Council), the New Opportunities Fund, the Football Foundation and others.

Specifically, policy is intended to address inequalities in employment, health, income and education. Also to be addressed are issues such as rough sleeping, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy and juvenile crime which are presented not so much as consequences of inequalities but as correlations (DCMS 1999). Many of these have dedicated policies which 'belong' to specific government departments.

A range of policies has been initiated to address both causes and effects of social exclusion. Obvious examples include welfare to work schemes familiar in the US but more community based schemes (known as Neighbourhood Renewal) have also been implemented, particularly in the 88 local authority areas defined as most deprived. These schemes have tended to emphasise local involvement and a measure of self determination on the part of participant communities.

Following the SEU's report in 1998 on neighbourhood renewal, a number of 'Policy Action Teams' (PAT) were established to address the problems of poorer communities and PAT 10 focused on the contribution of art and sport.

In 1999 PAT 10 (DCMS 1999) expressed the department's assertion that sport (along with arts, cultural and recreational activity)

> "… can contribute to neighborhood renewal and make a real difference to health, crime, employment and education in deprived communities."

However, crucially, the *process* of sport impacting on social exclusion was not specified, with the exception of broad statements such as -

> "Participation in the arts and sport has a beneficial social impact. Arts and sport *are inclusive* and can contribute to neighbourhood renewal. They can build confidence and encourage strong community groups. However, these benefits are frequently overlooked both by some providers of arts and sport facilities and programmes" (DCMS 1999, our emphasis)

The report also asserts that -

> "Arts and sport are not just an 'add-on' to regeneration work. They are *fundamental* to community involvement and ownership of any regeneration initiative when they offer means of positive engagement in tune with local interests." (DCMS 1999, our emphasis)

It seems that the implied benefits are to human capital ('confidence') and bonding social capital ('strong community groups' and 'engagement with local interests'), a point echoed in (Wainright 2002). However this still does not account for the *mechanism* that is supposed to impact on social exclusion. Why are sports intrinsically inclusive and fundamental to community? Are the forms of capital

created intrinsically good? Are these forms of capital concerned with bonding ('getting by' in an existing social order) or bridging ('getting on'; or social mobility) (Putnam 2000).

Sport, therefore, has been implicated as important in tackling social exclusion, with soccer highlighted as significant – but only in the most general way.

To some extent this has been as a result of the policy outlined above leading to funding. For example, the Football Association's participation in the New Deal for Communities (NDC) Football Festival in Manchester in 1993.

The Football Foundation (FF) and Sport England meanwhile have been distributing grants for a wide range of projects. These range from basic facilities for clubs, to more ambitious community-based schemes.

To conclude thus far, the term social exclusion is certainly linked to notions of class. As yet, though, it seems that the mechanism of exclusion is unacknowledged save to say that it is hereditary. This is to say little more than those who are socially excluded tend to remain so. Sport, as Bourdieu has pointed out (1993) is inextricably linked to class but not so much in its distribution (although this is clearly linked) but crucially also in the distribution of meaning and function ascribed to different sporting activities.

However the consideration of the (much debated) term 'social capital' and, we believe, more precisely Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital may offer greater explanatory power than a focus on social exclusion *per se*.

Social capital

Famously Robert Puttnam identified participation in sport and leisure pastimes as an indicator of declining social capital in the US (Puttnam 1995 and 2000). Definitions of the term social capital largely depend on his work but vary from a relatively precise measure of (social) networks to a broader concept of cohesiveness – a progression mirroring Putnam's own writing. Fine (2002), though, has noted that the term should be attributed more to Bourdieu's radical sociology than to James Coleman's rational choice theory. Most commentators agree that social capital resides in relationships and hence is distinct from, say, human capital which resides in individuals.

As Robison *et al* (2002) say, social capital is more known by its effect that its ontology. Fine's (2002) criticism of the current state of the term also relates to its implicit support of the hegemony of (capitalist) economics, the 'economism' that Bourdieu strenuously avoided.

Both Fine and Robison *et al* point to the epistemological problems raised by a social capital which is always a 'good thing': there is no doubt that strong social ties exist amongst some football hooligans to the extent that they offer mutual financial and emotional support to each other in situations outside their main, violent, *raison d'etre* (Armstrong 1998). This assumption is often overt in government statements on social exclusion and social capital. Further, social capital is often used as a synonym for social *networks*. De Nooy (2003) clearly distinguishes between these views, though reconciles the methodological implications of them.

It has been argued (Williamson 2002) that Putnam's analysis of social capital is, however, valuable if only because it draws attention to declining social and political engagement of the working classes. But at the same time Williamson accepts that Putnam's analysis of the causes of this decline or the role of social capital in successful social policy is questionable.

Nevertheless, despite (or perhaps, Fine would argue, because of) its polysemy social capital has proved an influential concept both theoretically and with regards to policy making. Sporting involvement and social capital has not, however, been thoroughly researched. In the UK, Government research (Attwood et al. 2003) does not separately identify participation in sport although it was captured as part of social involvement or volunteering. Li *et al* (2003) surveyed data on social capital and social exclusion in England and Wales concluding that class membership was the most significant factor in predicting levels of civic engagement, followed by level of education. In a similar study looking specifically at children's social capital in relation to their families, Egerton (2002) noted that neither social class nor education significantly affected young people's cultural or sporting activity but that 'managerial' parents – and especially parents themselves actively involved in such activities – are more likely to have children actively involved.

Surveys of citizenship and engagement however typically measure involvement with sporting activity in a single question which, again, pre-supposes its positive contribution to 'social cohesion'.

One report from Australia (Driscoll and Wood 1999) acknowledges that social capital associated with sports may not always be positive. It acknowledges that whilst sports clubs can contribute to health, economies and the physical environment, they can exclude (for example, women and black and ethnic minorities) and, of course, have ability to exclude by virtue of the fact that they are sports clubs. Indeed the dominant cultural values associated with sports often promote "commodification, sexism, racism and discrimination against people with disabilities." (Driscoll and Wood 1999)

We believe that most recent analyses of social capital, networks, citizenship or social engagement tell, at best, only half the story, more concerned with structure than agency, and avoiding articulating the relationship between the two.

We suggest that Bourdieu's formulation of cultural capital is significant since it constitutes an individually held resource that is socially influenced (through life experiences such as education and family interaction), and interacts with other forms of capital (most notably economic and social). Further, cultural capital is valorised by dominant social actors – those who, to some extent, determine the boundaries of the field(s) and legitimise others' positions.

Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and field also help to sidestep the agency structure 'choice'.

> "One does not have to choose between structure and agents, between the field, which makes the meaning and value of the properties objectified in things or embodied in persons, and the agent who play with their properties in the space of play thus defined." (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

This is key to Bourdieu's sociology and especially true of soccer – as evidenced by its ambiguous position – in which participation in different expressions of soccer may be viewed as differentially 'authentic' or, perhaps, 'socially valuable' by both the policy makers and the young participants.

In addition, notions of submission and resistance to a dominant culture must also be modified in the light of Bourdieu's analysis. The insoluble paradox is that in proclaiming their difference the dominated fail to resist and in working to be socially and upwardly mobile they, arguably, submit. Hence the use of soccer by social policy makers as a form of passport into dominated fractions of society may work initially, but it may also begin to change the symbolic value of soccer itself. It could be argued that the escape of folk heroes (such as George Best or, more recently David Beckham) from positions of relative disadvantage is an act of resistance. However participation

in a soccer-related programme is unlikely to lead to international celebrity and may lead to unrealistic expectations on the part of young people.

The key is the nature of symbolic domination. As long as policy makers and those in dominant positions are disinterested in, or even disapproving of, soccer it had a markedly different cultural value (for excluded groups) than when soccer is officially sanctioned.

Finally, some work indicates that social capital – transferred from parents to children – has a significant impact on children's acculturation. This is broadly reflected in Egerton's research cited above (Egerton 2002).

Parcel and Menaghan (1993) note that this is key to Coleman's understanding of social capital that inheres in family relations *and* community organisation (our emphasis). Parcel and Menaghan go on to suggest that family social capital and the impact on parent-child relationships is relatively ignored. However the picture is complex in that, in their research, time available for parent-child interaction was taken as a proxy for a mother's 'investment' and yet the children of part-time working mothers fared less well (in terms of behavioural problems) that those of full-time working mothers.

Other research, by Furstenberg and Hughes (1995) aims to show that social capital is important for young people to 'negotiate' their way out of disadvantage. Broadly speaking the factors they assessed both as starting points and outcomes were in line with the policy-makers' views of social exclusion; educational attainment, employment, economic status, mental health and, for females, the avoidance of childbirth before age 19 and, for males, the avoidance of serious criminal activity.

Other theoretical contributions

Some work has focused on the impact of sport participation on behaviour directly that is, unmediated by social capital either community- or family-based.

Goal orientation seems to be a significant issue with sports participation and Carr and Weigand (2002) usefully summarise much of the literature in this area. It refers to the distinction in approach between those who tend to view success in sport as being concerned with improvement, effort and learning ('task orientation') and those for whom it comprises winning and demonstrating superiority over others ('ego orientation'). Essentially these polar opposites could be characterised (after the well-known aphorism) as "it's the taking part that matters" or "it's the winning that counts".

It seems that achievement goal theory accepts that individuals have their own dispositions but that their 'choice' of objectives (for example, of those offered in a soccer match or social inclusion project) is also influenced by the situation. It also presents the two 'orientations' as coexisting in an individual's 'orientation profile'; that is that the two are <u>not</u> inversely proportionate as one might expect

Carr and Weigand looked specifically at the role of non-family influencers on children's approach to sport. Interestingly they included not only physical education (PE) teachers and peers but also sporting heroes.

They concluded that teachers and peers where highly influential in creating the situational factors that might influence task or ego orientation. They also discuss research that suggests that sporting heroes may also influence children's disposition towards "the taking part" or "winning that counts" attitudes.

According to Carr and Weigand, children's tendency towards an ego orientation was best predicted by their peers emphasising a "winning that counts"

culture. PE teachers' promotion of a task-oriented culture was the strongest indicator of a task orientation amongst the children.

The implications of their research are that task and ego orientation may have different antecedents. Importantly, however, they suggest that sporting heroes may influence both orientations, although not as strongly as those closest to them socially; their peers and their teachers.

Significantly, for the discussion earlier of aggression and rules, Tod and Hodge (Tod and Hodge 2002) looked at young rugby players, their achievement motivation and assessed their responses to various moral issues in participation with sport.

Building on earlier work by Haan at Berkley and, to some extent, Kohlberg's notion of moral development, Tod and Hodge investigated the link between achievement goal orientations and moral reasoning amongst rugby players between the ages of 19 and 21 years. Their data was restricted but appeared to suggest that players with a strong ego orientation (and weaker task orientation) tended towards making moral decisions based on self interest whilst those with a task orientation (and weaker ego orientation) tended to make more use undertake 'higher level' moral reasoning; considering themselves as a moral actor and others' interests.

Not surprisingly Tod and Hodge conclude that, although moral reasoning is influenced by achievement motivation, it is also subject to social interaction and other contextual influences (such as significant others). They also hint that the relationship may be two-way with moral reasoning also impacting upon goal/task orientations.

This reflexivity seems to be very similar to that envisaged by Bourdieu in the concept of habitus.

How might soccer and social exclusion interact?

The theoretical framework for understanding social exclusion and soccer is a composite of the various contributions above.

To summarise, we see social exclusion as a loose collection of disparate 'symptoms' which are related to possession or lack of various forms of capital, as well as the symbolic value of such capital.

Sport can be analysed as a cultural field in which various practices occupy positions. These positions are indicative of positions taken over symbolic legitimacy (such as the appropriate sport to play in a junior school) and in relation to positions of power in other fields.

Cultural capital (often too narrowly associated with education and privilege) can be acquired by young people in the soccer (cultural) field. This capital is, however, more valued by their peers. Some policy initiatives though, rely on soccer either to create capital that has some value elsewhere (say, in education or employment) or to effect some change in the individual such that they are more able to acquire capital. The latter process, we suggest, is also the creation of cultural capital.

Hence our concern in the current research is to explore soccer-related social inclusion schemes and to note if (and if so, how) social exclusion is identified and analysed. Then to see how participants (both young people and coaches) interact to generate capital that supports social mobility. Rather than simply helping young people to 'get by' in the immediate social context of their peers, how might they be enabled to 'get on'?

The potential such schemes and their associated funding has for changing the priorities of the soccer clubs involved is reasonably well known and was, initially, a

concern of this study. Recent work has shed more light on this area; see Garrett (2004) on lottery funding of clubs and McKinney and Kahn on voluntary organisations (2004). Our hope is that the present research will complement these by exploring both emic and etic perspectives.

The present research has begun to look at one premiership club and two smaller, local clubs – one in a regional division and the other a youth soccer club. So far findings concentrate on the interviews carried out with club personnel with the largest club the findings of which are summarised below and a more ethnographic approach with the same club.

This study is still in its infancy however it is intended to follow more closely Bourdieu's prescription for a reflexive sociology (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) in which – to oversimplify – both the objective structure of social conditions and the lived experience of agents are fully accounted for.

> "For science cannot be reduced to the recording and analysis of the 'pre-notions' (in Durkheim's sense) that social agents engage in the construction of social reality; it must also encompass the social conditions of the production of these pre-constructions and of the social agents who produce them." (Bourdieu 2003)

As a result, a broadly ethnographic approach is being used by one of the research team acting as a coach in a scheme run by a Premiership soccer club. This participant *observation* (as it must be described so far, rather than Bourdieu's more developed notion of 'participant objectivation') is already yielding a perspective on some of the key actors in this field; the club officials, the young people and their families.

Crucially, the other half of the reflexive method, yet to be conducted, is to measure social exclusion or involvement and social capital amongst the young people participating in the schemes and their families. Therefore quantitative data will be collected that mirrors the SEU's definition of social exclusion, methods used in the studies of social capital mentioned above (Li et al. inter alia) and the Office for National Statistics' harmonised questions for measuring social capital (Harper and Kelly 2003).

Furthermore, the social construction of soccer in this context needs to be explored so a qualitative investigation needs to be undertaken of the staff of the soccer clubs who occupy a (symbolically) dominating position regarding the organisation and purpose of the schemes.

This latter is made all the more problematic since the terms 'social exclusion' and increasingly 'social capital' are now embedded in the language of (some of) the soccer clubs. Hence the symbolic value of these terms which is instrumental in determining the value of the social schemes themselves is likely to be manipulated according to the context of inquiries. It is already clear that seeking lottery funding, for example, has incidental effects on the culture of voluntary organisation (see Garrett 2004; McKinney and Kahn 2004) and some anecdotal evidence suggests that one major soccer club has already put in place documentation and personnel to legitimise its own involvement in social policy and hence its entitlement to funding.

Findings: Soccer-related schemes in one Premier League club

There is a wide range of schemes for which social inclusion is a part or whole of their aims and which utilise soccer to a greater to lesser degree. These include initiatives from central government as well as from various funding bodies (such as Sport England) but may also include local schemes some initiated by soccer clubs themselves.

In the one premiership club so far examined, several schemes were in place -

- A 'Positive Futures' (PF) project – part of a government funded nationwide sports-based anti-drug programme
- A youth football project – a local programme addressing school truancy and young offenders which has a commercial sponsor
- A women's football academy – supporting a competitive team.
- Soccer courses for the local Chinese community.
- A team for deaf players.

The status of each of these is very different. The women's football team could be seen as mainstream compared to the PF scheme and each has differing levels of emphasis with regards to social exclusion. The smaller, local schemes for the Chinese community and for deaf players did not, at least overtly, aim at social inclusion (at least according to the SEU definition given above). Nevertheless, in this first club we examined we found a high level of commitment to the community which included seeking partners and sponsors for a range of schemes not necessarily associated with government policy.

Some conversations with club personnel explored the aims of the club and tried to address the position of community involvement in the club's priorities.

Firstly the club's community schemes are well-understood within the club and are known to have enthusiastic support from the chairman and chief executive. Whilst economic and sporting success are clear, acknowledged, goals, so too are the long-term growth of the club's fan-base and the generation of 'goodwill' locally, nationally and internationally.

The club was and is deeply embedded in the local community so whilst it was accepted that community schemes would not generate a short term return, they were believed to contribute to longer term success; over the last ten years their average attendances at home games had risen by 160%. Projects may occasionally help the club to develop local soccer talent, with some young people from the projects moving to places at the academy for the development of professional players, this is not the primary aim.

The club, perhaps uniquely for clubs at this level, owes its survival to a group of committed fans who campaigned firstly for its support by the local authority – even standing for election to the local council, then for the retention of its ground (which famously fans themselves helped construct). Hence the sense of community seems deeply felt.

New community facilities, in association with a local college have been developed along with the range of projects described above. The community scheme now employs 15 full-time staff who have responsibility for different projects.

Increasingly the club has found itself being asked to share its knowledge with other clubs to develop similar schemes and community links. Officers from the club are frequently asked to go and present to these agencies, a number of whom have influence over future funding. Encouraged by the feedback from social services and youth offending teams, there is a feeling that these projects are working and therefore need to be continued.

The club has, in fact, taken a more liberal (even universalist) approach to its community obligations and used its expertise to help set up projects in South Africa and Spain.

Of the schemes linked with government policy, the most developed and most overtly targeted at social exclusion are the 'Positive Futures' (PF) programme and the youth football project.

The PF programme is a collaboration between many of the government departments already identified as concerned with social exclusion and Sport England. Its strategy is described as -

"… based on the principle that engagement through sport and the building of mutual respect and trust can provide cultural 'gateways' to alternative lifestyles." (Positive Futures 2004)

The PF initiative located in the club is seen an exemplar of community involvement with two dedicated Positive Futures Officers each in charge of a number of club coaches. The club has been invited to discuss new initiatives and have regular meetings with local agencies in order to monitor the progress of young people on the programmes and it is likely that the programme will expand.

According to the recent impact study (Positive Futures 2004), the UK-wide scheme claims to have attracted 35,000 young people (between 10 and 16 years old) of which 14,000 are said to have achieved improvements in their education, undertaken training, started jobs, joined a sports club or "improving their social relations or making personal development progress." PF's level of participation from black and ethnic minorities is said to reflect the racial mix of the location of the projects.

The same impact study identifies three significant contributing factors, other than the overt aims and content, to the programme's success –

"Positive Futures' appeal to young people as an alternative to a lack of meaningful things to do locally; – the skills and enthusiasm of Positive Futures front-line staff, in particular their ability to engage and empathise with young people, to deal with challenging behaviour, and to understand and motivate young people; and – the use of sport to attract young people" (Positive Futures 2004)

The youth football project is located in some of the most deprived areas of the South of England. Four professional soccer clubs run schemes working with Youth Offending Teams (YOPs), Police, Youth Services, Social Services, Drug Action Teams and Community Safety Partnerships who, together, compile a list of young people who are on probation, those who are involved in criminal activities or anti-social behaviour.

This project also included late night soccer games along the lines of 'midnight basketball' schemes in the USA . These 'midnight or twilight football' schemes are run by a number of clubs in the UK and are primarily aimed at crime 'avoidance'. The simple aim of these projects is to give crime-prone young people an activity at precisely the time when there was little else available and when, it was felt consequentially, most crime was likely to be committed. Very similar problems and issues with midnight basketball as are explored here for soccer-related schemes are extensively discussed by Hartmann (2001).

The overall aim of the youth football project was presented as trying to change the attitudes and behaviour of the participants and to divert young people away from crime or the opportunity to commit crime. It is with these schemes that our primary research started.

Another national initiative, 'Playing for Success', aims at improving educational attainment by setting up study centres in sport venues and is worthy of mention since some attempt has been made to evaluate the scheme.

Sharp *et al* (2003) recorded that sport was embedded in the 'Playing for Success' scheme in varying degrees amongst the centres taking part. For most sport seemed to be a theme for teaching and learning activities and for many the venue, at a sports club, was significant. Coaching in the relevant sport was also a feature of many of the schemes and some used match tickets or merchandise as incentives. In the

majority of schemes examined, pupil's achievements were recognised by an event at the end of the course which variously included parents, school staff, players and press.

It is clear that innovative and exciting educational work is happening and that the role of soccer is vital. Initially, it seems from Sharp *et al*, the soccer connection is used in a promotional way to attract pupils – some teachers reported pupils' eagerness to be selected - and to encourage co-operation. Subsequently it encourages engagement, commitment and is used to reward approved behaviour.

Unlike the studies of community involvement this report looks not so much at the objective measures of social networks but at the perceived effect on the participant from the perspectives of the various agents involved. Sharp *et al* report positive impacts on learning. In almost all cases improvement has been shown in reading comprehension, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. However, the report is not (and does not claim to be) a longitudinal study and so cannot comment on any effect on social mobility. More importantly, participants in the scheme are selected by head teachers largely on the basis that they can somehow benefit from it. The position of those selected, in terms of social disadvantage, is not specified.

Findings: Personal experiences of a soccer-related scheme

The researcher's initial ethnographic experiences have been as a coach in a project run by a premiership for a two groups of children and young people.

One group consisted of 19 boys and one girl between the ages of 10 and 14; the second of 25 boys between 14 and 19 years old. The criteria for selection of these to participate were, initially, unknown although some of them were subject to monitoring by local social services departments and some by the Youth Offending Team (jointly by social services and the county police force) having already committed crimes. Some had been excluded from mainstream education and others were considered to be at risk of offending.

The sessions were run in the evening in a disused school building on a housing estate. They centred on short team games but often have short classroom sessions built in to discuss health or drug issues. Several aspects of the sessions are worthy of comment.

Most of the youngest (and all of the older group) arrived and left the sessions without a parent or carer. In contrast to the strict codes of practice in schools about releasing children to adult carers, the scheme had to work within the social mores of the housing estate. Children were, by and large, free to roam. The apparent lack of parental involvement is, of course, not proven. But it is considered to be an issue worth investigating especially with regard to the SEU's construction of social exclusion and the arguments of Furstenberg, Egerton and others already cited above.

The participants approached the sessions in different ways. Some came prepared in training shoes and kit and (very few) with drinks for the breaks. It was striking the level energy with which almost all the young people participated in the games. It appeared that this was, for many, the only opportunity they had to exercise but also striking was the lack of differentiation between the young people as they played. Whilst it was known that many had been identified as having behavioural problems, these were not expressed on the field of play except, perhaps, in the difficulty of stopping the game with the whistle!

The third issue identified in the sessions concerns motivation to attend on the part of the boys and girl. Our early impressions were that the environment was dominated by an 'ego-orientation'. Participants were eager to show their levels of

prowess. The focus of many of the boys (although not all) seemed to be on the possibility that the club may be talent-spotting. This was hardly discouraged by the club since one boy had, in fact, been invited to join a representative team at a higher level. At the outset many boys asked if the researcher was, in fact, a club manager or talent scout.

During the sessions frequent use was made of the club name and it was the view of the club coach leading the first session that the club badge and coach's clothing were powerful symbols. The coaching staff's association with a Premier League club had significance for the participants.

In summary, it seemed clear to us therefore that the status or cultural value of the sessions for each of the participants is different. The position of the soccer sessions in young people's social and cultural space is indicated by the manner of their participation or consumption and the beliefs (one might say the hopes) that are attached to them.

This relates to some extent to the self-interestedness of the ego-orientation, yet suggests an instrumentality on the part of the participants as they identify the potential in the scheme for 'getting on' – social mobility represented by being 'spotted'. Inevitably this hope will, for the majority, be unfulfilled.

Having said that, there is also to be found in the sessions themselves a kind of 'forgetting' of the wider social reality with which, we suppose, the young soccer players are so ill at ease – indeed, excluded. Instead they perform 'in the moment' of the soccer match in a way that obviously does not depend on education (or any of the 'approved' social or cultural capital) which they signally lack.

Perhaps remarkably they also seem to leave behind much of the habitus that they otherwise express as 'streetwise' kids. That is to say, the capital they employ to navigate through their life with their peers, with potential accomplices in committing crimes or more widely as members of a dominated fraction, is of less significance. Instead their 'performative' abilities on the field and (to a much lesser degree) their knowledge and understanding of professional soccer is of greater significance.

This potentially poses a problem since goal orientation theory might suggest that the sessions should emphasise 'task-orientation' amongst the participants in order to encourage progress toward reflection on self improvement, learning or, perhaps, higher level moral reasoning. It appears, however, that part of the attraction of the game is its lack of demand on cognition, a finding corroborated by Hartmann (2001). Indeed when breaks were taken for the overtly educative content (such as discussing substance abuse) the participants seemed to revert to 'classroom behaviour' with low levels of attention and interest.

It was clear that, even with well-developed teaching skills, there was a need to engage with the young people on the scheme through means other than the act of playing soccer.

Half-time score – not the final result

In examining the future of soccer in the UK and especially the wider, social role of soccer clubs Watson (2000) declared it would be "unrealistic" to expect soccer clubs to put the interests of the disadvantaged before their own, however we believe this is a gross over-simplification of the current position of soccer clubs, at least in the UK.

Although our primary research is at a very early stage, it is clear that some premiership soccer clubs take a very enlightened approach to their social responsibilities. Although some major clubs may participate in community soccer

schemes without much in the way of social objectives at least one, in our experience so far, gives all the appearance of being a social entrepreneur.

The clubs that profess to address social exclusion, and the schemes that reward and encourage this, however need a deeper understanding of what constitutes exclusion and what actions can be proven to increase inclusion.

Other, smaller clubs, may well be very embedded in their local community but do not characterise their involvement as addressing social needs other than a intuitive appreciation of the local demand for, say, youth soccer. Nevertheless, as has been suggested, these clubs are being expected to contribute to community in return for lottery or other funding. As such they too need to have a greater understanding of the nature of exclusion and social capital.

Hence research is still needed to move the definition and understanding of social exclusion from one which is descriptive of a lack of opportunity or is dominated by the current state of the poorest and most deprived and towards one which accounts for the process of change from exclusion to inclusion.

We assert that a more engaged research method, outlined above, is required. This method looks specifically at the socially constituted world of the excluded and examines the potential 'exit routes' offered to them for their value and attractiveness *in their, culturally-relevant terms*. The notion of the cultural field is particularly useful since it may be that the field as perceived by policy makers merely intersects with that of the most excluded in society. Research therefore needs to understand the emic perspective of participants in soccer-related schemes as well as the etic (but also socially constituted) view of social theorists.

Soccer clearly has great cultural value for some of the young people involved in the schemes we are currently examining. However this value is not homogenous nor is it yet well enough articulated to make the appropriation by policymakers of soccer a guarantee of success.

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