

Sport and crime prevention: Individuality and transferability in research

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Abstract

Researchers have examined sport practices as a means of crime prevention. The article reviews the international body of literature on this subject from a social constructionist perspective. By exploring the idea of sport as a means of crime prevention, the article considers what is described on the subject and how these descriptions are articulated. Through a content analysis, the article aims to develop categories and provide an analytical discussion of the findings. The descriptive analysis reveals that, although researchers are most notably critical of putting faith in sport for social objectives, there is research that affirms the role of sport in crime prevention. When sport is upheld as a means of crime prevention, two modes of prevention are emphasised, called the averting-mode and the social change-mode. The discussion focuses primarily on how the dominant social change-mode is articulated and how this social change becomes a meaningful concept as portrayed in discourses on individuality and transferability. The importance and potential consequences of framing crime as a social problem and of framing sport as a solution in response are also discussed. Finally, the article sets out the direction for further research on sport as a means of crime prevention.

Introduction

Sport practices with social objectives – such as public health, social and economic regeneration, active citizenship, drug abuse prevention, and crime prevention – have emerged in the last few decades as an increasingly

important element in sport and society (1). Practices with such objectives have been surrounded by common-sense assumptions that sport can contribute in different ways to positive social development (2-4). This has been examined and debated in research (5-13).

Sport as a means to achieve social objectives is primarily a Western phenomenon. International sport for development programmes has targeted wide-ranging objectives such as peace (14,15), human rights (14) and the fight against HIV/AIDS (14,16,17). Such programmes have been carried out by Western NGOs (14-16,18) and exported to “Two-Third World” societies (17). Sport for development has accordingly been celebrated by the UN and associated bodies (15,17,19,20). In the US in the 1980s and 1990s, new cost-effective ways were acclaimed as targeting urban social problems (6,21) in light of public spending cuts (21,22), including Midnight Basketball programmes (11,22). In the UK as well, sport for crime prevention gained attention as part of New Labour’s reform policies in the 1990s. New ideas in public administration and social policy emphasised civil society and the voluntary sector (rather than the welfare state) to address social problems, and sport was considered a suitable means for social inclusion in the local community and for active citizenship (1,3,19,23-26). These tendencies are further mirrored, for instance, in Australian and Canadian (19) social policy. Sport has also gained wider recognition in Scandinavian social policy (27-29).

Claims-making (30) advocates of sport as a means of crime prevention, such as policy-makers, social problem activists and other actors in society, have promoted sport to deal with

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or even solve various social problems, resulting in the emergence of programmes and practices using sport to prevent crime (1,31).

Programmes that are politically initiated, supported and financed require evidence-based methods in their practices (1). Research has examined and evaluated the effects of such sport practices (8,32), and scientists “are at the top of the hierarchy of credibility” in making claims about social problems (30 p39). It is therefore important to systematise the outcome of this scientific knowledge. It should be noted that, even though a considerable amount of research is critical of sport as a means of crime prevention and questions such a notion (2,3,6,10), sport practices are still nourished by claims from the scientific discourse in research.

The present article reviews the research literature on sport as a means of crime prevention. The aim is to explore the idea of sport as a means of crime prevention as expressed in research, examine the assumptions underlying this idea, and consider how these assumptions are articulated. This aim is operationalised with the help of two questions. First, *what* does research focus on when sport is described as a means of crime prevention? The purpose here is to provide a description of the research object, questions and findings in the current literature on sport as a means of crime prevention. Second, *how* are these descriptions of the research object, questions and findings articulated? The purpose here is to discuss and analyse the descriptions and prevalent modes of prevention in terms of implicit assumptions and discourses in the literature reviewed in order to make them explicit.

Consequently, the article does not observe sport practices, but rather observes how researchers observe and articulate descriptions about sport practices. ‘Research on sport as a means of crime prevention’, rather than ‘sport as a means of crime prevention’ as such, is within the scope of observation, and for that reason this article does not provide any definition of sport or of sport practices other than those articulated in the observed research literature. The research literature covers a disparate field of sport practices, varying from sport in rehabilitation programmes to voluntary organisational practices. Definitions of sport practices covered in the literature are extensive, yet they all are signified as sport and thus may be included in the selection. In short, sport thus refers to practices of physical activity signified as sport, targeting children and youth, performed in an organised setting, in the presence of a supervisor. This article does not investigate crime or crime prevention as

such, nor is any legal definition provided. Instead, research articulating crime, and by extension anti-social behaviour, delinquency and deviance related to crime, is considered. Research on sport as a means of crime prevention covers various types of crime prevention such as primary, secondary and tertiary and also identifies a number of social objectives with respect to crime prevention. Furthermore, claims made in research on sport about aspects other than crime prevention, such as sport generating crime, corruption, public order offences and hooliganism, are also beyond the scope of this article.

The analysis of the descriptions that current research provides is based on a systematic literature review. The methodology of inductive category development is introduced in the following section. The third section is comprised of a descriptive exposition of the literature reviewed concerning what is observed and articulated in the literature. The exposition focuses on prominent research questions and findings in the literature, and perspectives that are both supportive and critical of sport as a means of crime prevention are identified. The aim of the subsequent section is to provide a reflective discussion by critically examining the findings in the literature. The analytical discussion focuses on how the idea of sport as a means of crime prevention has been underpinned in the research literature, targeting in particular the concepts and assumptions underlying this idea. The article argues that the literature covering research on sport as a means of crime prevention can be arranged into two separate strands and modes of prevention: first, the averting-mode and second, the social change-mode. The discussion demonstrates that descriptions predominantly emphasise sport as an instrument to promote social change and thus that the social change-mode is the dominant strand in sport for crime prevention. The article further argues that the social change-mode prevalent in sport becomes meaningful through discourses on individuality and transferability, respectively. These two discourses create order in the research field, otherwise emphasising disparate aspects with respect to sport as a means of crime prevention. The discourses on individuality and transferability are moreover discussed in terms of potential consequences for framing crime as a social problem and of sport as a solution. In the final section, the article is summarised and further conclusions are presented.

Methods: procedures in selection and analysis

The article is based on a literature review and is organised in line with the two questions presented above, formulated in terms of *what* and *how*. These review approaches

stress first the demarcations of the literature reviewed and second the utilisation of analytical method (33).

Literature reviewed: searches and selection

The literature reviewed consists of some 55 research publications, including scientific articles, research reports, book chapters and monographs. The literature has been chosen using two methods of selection – database searches and a systematic review of references in the literature selected. First, social science databases including Scopus, the Social Science Citation Index, Sociological Abstracts, ERIC and Swedish Libris were used to gather mainly articles in scientific journals and dissertations. The following keywords were used in various combinations in the international databases: (a) sport, athlet* and “physical activity”, respectively; (b) “social problem*”, crim*, delinquen* and devian*, respectively, thus generating searches such as sport AND “social problem*” AND crim* or athlet* AND devian*. Furthermore the keywords (c) “social work”, (d) leisure and (e) “sport program*” were used in combinations with the other keywords. The keyword (f) idrottssociologi (English: sociology of sport) was used in the Swedish database Libris. The research literature identified was then selected based on two criteria – whether the text deals with research on sport relative to crime and criminality or delinquency, or on sport as a method of crime prevention or related social objectives in social work. Second, the literature selected was then subjected to a systematic review of references. The selection criteria noted above were also applied to the latter selection method. Saturation was reached given that the references reviewed referred to a satisfactory degree to literature already identified.

From the database searches, 25 publications (of a total 55), predominantly peer-reviewed articles, were identified and selected. From the systematic review of references, another 30 or so publications were selected. In all, 38 peer-reviewed international articles in English, 9 book chapters, 8 research reports (from the US, the UK, Australia, Canada and Sweden) and 6 monographs, were included. All publications included are in English, except for 3 cases in Swedish. 25 of the international peer-reviewed articles are empirically driven and target questions such as whether sport works to prevent crime, what aspects of sport work, and how sport should further be designed to work. Qualitative and quantitative designs each represent half of the peer-reviewed articles. Furthermore, the empirically driven approach is dominant in the research reports. In addition, about 12 of the peer-reviewed journal articles are more

theoretically driven, emphasising sport as a social phenomenon, often critically assessing sport as a means of external objectives. The monographs and book chapters cover both empirically driven approaches and more theoretically oriented designs. The literature included covers a broad spectrum of methodological approaches. These also include literature reviews and meta-theoretical studies. The literature reviewed further covers research from various disciplines such as sociology, social work, pedagogy and education, criminology, sport studies and political science.

Analytical procedures: descriptive analysis and analytical discussion

The themes, modes and discourses in this article emerged from an inductive process aimed at structuring the complexity in the literature reviewed, from a manifest level to a higher abstract level. This could be illustrated in three steps.

First, concrete articulations that were part of the descriptive analysis (corresponding to the *what* question) were thematised and categorised in three steps, emphasising inductive category development (34). (a) Reading of literature: the literature selected was read thoroughly and important aspects regarding aims, theoretical setting and results were noted systematically in a list; (b) Thematisation of literature: the literature was thematised based on its content regarding the two questions What research questions are articulated? What central themes emerge in research? and (c) Categorisation of literature: certain patterns emerged in the thematisation, from which categories could be developed. Examples among the categories that emerged and which were apparent in the literature reviewed were for instance the question of “how can sport contribute to positive development?” and the theme of “empowerment”.

Second, themes in various categories were structured primarily in two modes of prevention, based on the rationale of prevention articulated. Themes expressed in the descriptive analysis and themes reflected upon in the analytical discussion are both structured as either averting crime or facilitating social change. That is, manifest themes such as “empowerment” and “education” address different aspects of social change and are thus considered part of the social change-mode. The social change-mode is an abstract concept and a theoretical construction not explicitly manifest in the literature reviewed, although it is used in this article to structure complexity and to contribute to further discussion.

Third, the analytical discussion (corresponding to the *how* question) comprises a reflective, critical examination. This discussion is based on the results of the descriptive analysis (research objects, questions and findings) and abstract concepts of prevention modes. The analytical discussion results in the identification of two prominent discourses (on individuality and transferability) in the social change-mode, which are abstract concepts supporting the idea of sport as a means of crime prevention with respect to aspects of social change. The analytical discussion is inspired by a constructionist view of discourse (35) and of social problems (30). This means that the discussion is aimed at examining how objects, questions and findings described in literature, abstracted as modes of prevention, become meaningful through prominent discourse and moreover constitute the idea of sport as a means of crime prevention. Accordingly, these discourses are vital for framing the meaning of social problems and corresponding solutions. This approach can be understood as a second-order observation (36-38) in examining and thus observing how research observes and how these observations are articulated.

The constructionist approach provides a perspective from which descriptions that generate scientific discourse – which in turn influence policy-making and the organisation of sport initiatives with social objectives – can be explored and critically assessed in terms of their underlying assumptions and implicit notions. Such a constructionist approach is embedded in the aim and further research questions of this article.

Descriptive analysis: the literature reviewed

Research on sport as a means of crime prevention is articulated through three categories of distinct research questions. First, does sport prevent or reduce crime or criminal behaviour? Second, how can sport contribute to positive development regarding crime prevention? Third, how can sport be designed in order to be successful with respect to crime prevention? These questions reflect an empirically driven emphasis in the reviewed literature (39). The literature features perspectives that are both supportive and critical of the potential of sport as a means of crime prevention. Literature emphasising a critical view is reported in a separate subsection.

Does sport prevent or reduce crime or criminal behaviour?

A review of the literature yields three findings. First, there is a lack of clear evidence on the relationship between sport

and crime prevention (3,32). Second, there is nothing inherent in sport that makes it suitable for crime prevention (5,6,8,25,40,41). Third, activities are difficult to evaluate due to poor theorisation (3,41), and furthermore relations are considered mediated (1,3,8,22,42-44).

Quantitative studies accordingly show shifting findings. Most notably, some studies stress a lack of support for causal relations between sport and crime prevention (2,3,5,25,45), while other studies emphasise a relationship between participation in sport and lower levels of crime (46-49). Moreover, some findings suggest that participation in power sports, such as boxing, wrestling, weightlifting and martial arts, which focuses on elements of fighting and strength, could lead to increased antisocial involvement (50).

How can sport contribute to positive development regarding crime prevention?

Though evidence is lacking, evaluations are problematic and no inherent essence in sport is identified, certain aspects in sport practices are highlighted as potentially mediating the relation with crime prevention. Two categories of crime prevention are discernible in the literature reviewed. They are presented here as two modes of prevention. First, the averting-mode stresses only the goal of averting antisocial involvement or crime and is defined by the absence of deviance. Second, the social change-mode stresses change in various circumstances that could cause criminality and is accordingly defined by the presence of progression (i.e. more than just averting a specific behaviour or activity).

The averting-mode: Two aspects focused on averting criminal or anti-social activities stand out. First, the literature reviewed stresses that participation in sport could constitute diversion for youth in two ways. In one sense, sport can physically divert young people from criminal or deviant activities: one cannot simultaneously be engaged in criminal activities outside the sport setting and perform sport activities (22,31,43). However, deviant behaviour is obviously possible within the sport setting (51). In the other sense, sport – being fun, exciting and entertaining – can divert attention from criminal environments and activities (8,31,41,43,44,52-54). Sport may also offer its participants structure and a framework and thus divert youth from restlessness (43).

Second, the literature reviewed suggests deterrence as a crime-preventive mechanism. This emphasises that youth would be deterred from criminal or deviant behaviour when

they recognise a higher risk of detection by supervising adults, coaches, police (22,55) or staff (52,53) in the sporting setting (31).

The social change-mode: Four aspects focused on changing circumstances with regard to crime prevention emerged in the literature review. First, research suggests that voluntary participation in sport creates good conditions for contributing to the development of personal and social relations. This has been considered to constitute forms of social capital in sport (though not explicitly related to crime prevention) (56,57). Sport is thus considered an arena where different youth of different social standings meet and interact. In this respect, it is debated whether development of personal and social relations could promote crime prevention through community development, which implies that sport can lead to relations in the community based on trust and reciprocity and that this could benefit crime prevention efforts (25). Furthermore, this emphasises sport as a means of community development since it contributes to collective identities and facilitates active citizenship, which in turn contribute to the establishment of social networks in civil society (8,57). In addition, efforts to prevent crime by integrating ethnic minorities can be viewed as community development (58,59). Research also stresses that sport can promote personal relations with equals from different social contexts (31,60), between youth and staff in social projects (52,53), coaches (10,25,31,61), parents and other adults (62), and positive role models (31,41,43,59,60).

Second, sport is often referred to as a hook – a way to reach out to individuals or enter environments that would otherwise be inaccessible. This is especially prominent in inspiring young people to take part in and continue social projects aimed at crime prevention (10,31,61). A hook can thus be described as using sport to change the social environment for youth.

Third, empowerment can be considered from two perspectives. First, empowerment for individual activity and responsibility is presented as strengthening the functions and abilities of individuals to become socially mobile in an established society. Education is emphasised here (61). This view of empowerment could be understood as an expression of a more common focus on active citizenship in public policy (1,8,57), with an emphasis on individual autonomy to handle social problems (57). Second, empowerment for societal change (2,10) is presented as a means of education, to stimulate emancipation and prevent youth from being subjected to

injustice and marginalisation in a social structure, which in turn is the cause of social problems (10). Possibly in this sense, sport could offer activities that question ideologies through which an unfair society is reproduced (10).

Fourth, three aspects of pro-social development are evident in the reviewed literature. First, the self-image of individuals emphasises that success in the sporting effort, though not possible for everyone (31), can lead to improved self-confidence, self-esteem and self-control (8,41,43,53,62-65), which in turn could lead to reduced impulsiveness and risk-taking (8) and also enhance educational skills and promote employability (8). Second, life skills emphasise how sport can offer skills and values necessary in life. Skills acquired in sport, such as communicative and cognitive skills, goal attainment, aggression control, problem solving and learning to give and receive feedback, could be transferred to other spheres of life. Hence it is argued that sport helps young people play “the game of life” (40,66). There are also claims that active leadership could be developed in deviant youth through sport, based on the notion of using leadership traits in criminally experienced youth within a sport setting (58). Third, the relation between physical health and mental health stresses that sport leads to good physical health (41,43,52,57), which subsequently improves mental health (43,63). Developing a sound lifestyle is essential in rehabilitation from deviant or criminal lifestyles (49,66).

How can sport be designed in order to be successful in preventing crime?

Sport practices can be organised in different ways to promote a positive development in terms of crime prevention. First, one must recognise the value of non-sport components since sport itself has no inherent or essential value with respect to crime prevention (2). This could, for example, be education (10) in non-violence, the importance of good health and self-control, and a sense of responsibility for oneself and for others (2). Second, sport practices need to de-emphasise competitive elements and thus stress non-competitive components (8,52,54,62,64). Sport practices instead should emphasise personal and social relations with other youth and adults (31,52,54,60,62,67); they should consist of a minimum of formal rules and limitations (31,52,54); be performed individually or in smaller groups where participants experience independence and participation (8,31,52); and emphasise internal motivation and individualised standards of success (31,54) in a task-oriented setting (64). Third, sport practices should have a rational, explicit development

plan and offer arrangements in which participants can reflect on and understand criminal behaviour (31). In this respect, sport practices should also acknowledge the importance of policy-makers and sport organisations (62,68).

Critique of sport as a means of crime prevention

A considerable body of research articulates a more critical perspective, highlighting how sport should instead be perceived with a focus on negative aspects regarding its potential in crime prevention. With respect to this criticism six different aspects are discernible.

First, the literature suggests that since it has been argued that sport does not reduce poverty, unemployment or social welfare cuts, which are considered to be foundations of crime, faith in sport instead obscures structural explanations of social problems and further legitimises structures in society that reproduce the foundations of crime (6,8,21,61,69). In this respect, sport alone is considered an all too simple solution (6,8,21), and also contributes to ideas of individual responsabilisation (70).

Second, the literature suggests that sport organisations are primarily interested in sport – not social work; thus sport is not a social service. There is an exaggerated belief in the interest and possibilities of sport organisations in attracting and caring for socially excluded or deviant youth (23).

Third, aspects of selection and stratification emerge in the literature reviewed. Sport practices mainly attract youth from economically and socially privileged environments (23,43,62,71). This calls into question what groups of socially vulnerable youth that sport could reach out to (23). There is also a stratifying function in various sport practices, exemplified by activities targeting black youth from disadvantaged areas that emphasise control and discipline while activities targeting white youth from wealthy areas emphasise prosperity and social mobility. Furthermore, sport practices are more likely to lead to exclusive bonding than to inclusive bridging, strengthening rather than transcending social boundaries (2). This function of sport, however, has been conceived as effectuating social control, normalisation and re-socialisation in a society characterised by hierarchical relations through subordination and control over bodies, identities and social relations (10).

Fourth, the literature describes competition and subordination as a problem because the logic and values of

competition seem to dominate (62) and exclude other possible ideals in sport (57,72). Conventional sport in many ways reflects the social milieus in which vulnerable youths have already experienced failure (54). In this regard, sport can have a negative effect (52). The individual's drive to defeat others leads to practices that target ranking, subordination and selection (57). The logic of competition could also result in doping, use of performance-enhancing drugs and cheating (73).

Fifth, it is suggested that sport ritualises and legitimises violence and confrontation in connection with ideals of masculinity (62,73,74). The question is therefore whether sport is a suitable means for responding to problems of deviancy or crime since it replicates and legitimises experiences of excitement that could otherwise be found in drug use or criminality (75). Research also indicates that power sports in particular lead to the acquisition of aggressive skills and behaviours that could be brought into play outside the sport setting (50). Moreover, an emphasis on violence in sport highlights sexual violence among athletes (76).

Sixth, the literature describes how a belief in social fostering through sport is often exaggerated, how values adopted and skills acquired in sport are not automatically transferred to broader society, and how they are not necessarily needed in society at large (64). There is thus a limited transferability, reducing the potential use of sport for social objectives.

A brief summary of the descriptive reading

Exposing disparate directions and outlooks on sport as a means of crime prevention, the research demonstrates a reasonably cohesive imagery. First, the literature emphasises a lack of evidence, the absence of essential inherent values in sport, and the notion that relations between sport and crime prevention are indirect and mediated. Second, it stresses two modes for sport aimed at crime prevention – however, each is met with criticism. The averting-mode of diversion and deterrence could be considered relevant only for certain groups of youth included in sport settings. The social change-mode of developing personal and social relations could be viewed as stratifying and promoting exclusive bonding; the hook of sport could be seen as relevant only to those interested in sport; empowerment could be said to emphasise individual activity and responsibility, hence obscuring structural interventions and also exercising social control; pro-social development could be disputed while sport could also lead to the development

of anti-social skills such as cheating, violence and abuse. Third, in order to be successful, sport as a means of crime prevention should emphasise non-sport components such as education in non-violence and moral values, de-emphasise competition and deploy a rational and explicit development plan.

Discussion: prominent discourses

The descriptions and themes presented above provide an interconnected yet incongruent imagery of sport as a means of crime prevention. The notion of sport in this sense has been critically observed, examined, and questioned in the research. Nonetheless, strong beliefs are attached to the notion and there is considerable research that emphasises the potential for crime prevention in sport practices.

In light of the aim of this article, identifying articulations of the idea of sport as a means of crime prevention, attention in this section will be paid to scientific knowledge that highlights the potential of sport to prevent crime. I will accordingly emphasise the two modes of prevention and the standards for the successful design of sport practices described above. The findings are contextualised by the critical views of sport noted above and the partial lack of statistical evidence on crime prevention.

The inductive approach of categorising various aspects of sport practices that potentially mediate crime prevention has resulted into two modes of prevention: the averting-mode and the social change-mode. Descriptions in the literature largely portray crime prevention as something more than just averting crime, further highlighting the goal of social change in various aspects. This emphasis is also prominent in the literature on how to design practices for prevention. In this sense, the social change-mode emerges as the dominant mode of prevention, and further focus will be given to this in the discussion. Nichols (31) has identified three mechanisms of crime prevention in sport: diversion, deterrence and pro-social development. Categorisations and modes of prevention that have emerged from the literature under review here seemingly correspond with these mechanisms, although it should be noted that Nichols has categorised actual practices while the present study has examined descriptions in research on such practices.

Social change and four prominent aspects

Personal and social relations, empowerment, pro-social development, and education in non-violence and moral values are the four main categories that primarily constitute

the social change-mode. These concepts are structured around concepts of individuality and transferability. This can be illustrated by the following quotations.

The success of utilising sport and exercise, as a means of facilitating delinquent rehabilitation, lies particularly in the intricacies of the counselling; the provision of purposeful activities, and adoption of an individualistic approach, leading to the recognition of individual motivations /.../. (52 p547)

[M]any skills inherent in recreation and sport are life skills transferable to other life endeavours, and can be understood by youths from a sport or games context. Through teaching recreational games for understanding, it is possible to help our adolescent clients to better understand, and play, the game of life. (66 p41)

Development of personal and social relations is described in relation to trustworthy, reciprocal relations between individuals contributing to community development. In that sense, the category requires a concept of individuality. Moreover, it is a central aspect of personal and social relations that the benefits from these relations are also valid outside the sport setting. Relations that are only valid inside the sport setting would be of less use for crime prevention. Instead the point of social relations attained in the sport setting is the transference to broader society. In that respect, transferability is also an inevitable concept, given the understanding that personal and social relations are an aspect of social change in terms of sport as a means of crime prevention.

In the following quotations, it is argued that personal relations from the sport setting can result in trust and reciprocity in relations between equals and with the community as a whole.

The coming together of staff and young people from all the units to take part in sport and activity twice a week has had positive effect on relationships between all involved. /.../ Prior to the CtG [Closing the Gap] intervention young people in the four units rarely mixed, on the occasions they did, they tended to be aggressive towards one another. Due to the sports sessions new friendships have developed /.../. (53 p40)

Rather than being a sports project, diversionary scheme or punitive measure, the initiative is about community development in a real sense, since it is about developing relationships with people on the basis of trust and mutual...

...understanding as a platform for building a broader range of relationships and opportunities. (75 p390)

Empowerment is described in relation to individual activity and responsibility as well as societal change. Sport is described as making it possible for individuals to act in certain non-criminal ways. Given the emphasis on a person's individual responsibility for each action and lifestyle or on that person's individual power to change aspects of society, the individual is still the subject of empowerment; the concept of empowerment is thus associated with the concept of individuality. Moreover, the idea behind empowerment as an aspect of crime prevention is to attain powers through which the individual can strengthen his or her abilities to resist anti-social involvement or criminal activities in settings other than the sport setting. This understanding presupposes a concept of transferability since the empowered abilities are supposed to be used not only in sport but in broader society.

Empowering youth through sport to take on individual responsibility outside the sport setting is illustrated in the quotations below.

Sport also offers a very suitable medium for helping clients take responsibility: within the Summit programme the sports leader could gradually give the participants more responsibility for aspects of the activity. /.../ So sports-related contexts offer many opportunities to develop participants through a structured progression of taking greater responsibility. (31 p201)

The essence of SEPE [sport, exercise and physical education] work lies in liberating and empowering people /.../. This empowerment-oriented freedom has a dual character. It is freedom from terror, oppression and the ills of poverty; and it is freedom to choose, starting with what to do, play, and create. Both empowerment-oriented community development and sustainable development depend on this dual freedom, and it is integral to the social work of SEPE programs, practices, and policies. (57 p158)

Pro-social development is described in relation to the individual's self-image, to life skills and to that person attaining good physical and mental health. This aspect of social change is perhaps most obviously inseparable from the concept of individuality. The individual is the object of development in all these aspects. In this respect, pro-social development can scarcely be grasped without a concept of individuality. Additionally, the developmental proceedings are not primarily emphasised to be recognised as skills

within the sport setting. The skills should rather be grasped outside sport – more explicitly, in life. Although a better self-conception, self-esteem, self-confidence and self-control as well as reduced impulsivity and risk-taking are likely to enhance performances in sport, this is not the rationale in question. These skills presuppose a transfer from sport to other spheres in life, so the concept of transferability is vital.

It is claimed that pro-social skills and values attained by the individual in sport are transferred to other spheres of life, as illustrated below.

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. (47 p27)

Life skills and sport skills have several similarities. First both are learned in the same way – through demonstration, modelling, and practice. Second, the skills learned in one domain are transferable to other domains /.../. Sport can provide a valuable vehicle for teaching life skills when these lessons are learned and transferred. (40 p53)

Educational practices that stress non-violence and moral values are highlighted in the literature review as a means of designing sport practices with crime-preventive aims. The educational practice presupposes a subject (subjected to education): it is the individual who presumably learns, is socialised and internalises values of non-violence and morality. From this point of view, educational practices are inseparable from the concept of individuality. Furthermore, the educational aims are not intended to enhance performances in the sport setting, but instead to encourage the individual to use his or her moral and non-violent capabilities to avoid anti-social involvement or criminal activities outside the sport setting. Here too, and in the same ways as with pro-social development, this presupposes a transfer from sport to other spheres in life. The concept of transferability is thus a prerequisite.

In the quotation below, the educational potential in sport to teach youth skills and values that can be used outside the sport setting is highlighted.

While participation in sport will not curb all violence and deviant behaviour, it is a highly effective tool for teaching...

...youth skills and values, helping children develop a positive sense of self, and providing a health-promoting alternative for youth who have nothing else to do. (63 p39)

The four aspects of the dominant mode of prevention (social change) all presuppose and are structured around the concepts of individuality and transferability. It is therefore relevant to speak of discourses on individuality and transferability. The concepts can be viewed as central signs in a structure of meaning, constructing the idea of sport as a means of crime prevention through aspects of social change. These structures are discourses that bring order to a disparate body of knowledge. Without the underlying discourses on individuality and transferability, the idea presented – of sport as a means of crime prevention – could not be fixed.

The discourses on individuality and transferability

As descriptions in the research literature suggest, since sport can contribute in promoting social change, it is important to grasp the locus of this change. If there are circumstances that apply in the prevention of crime that change through the use of sport, something needs to characterise this change. What changes? Social change in this context targets the individual. Granted, it is possible to argue that this does not exclude societal or structural change, since society is assumed to be constituted by individuals. This could possibly be accepted because sport can change society and structures through the change in and socialisation of individuals – that is certainly a relevant position. The research, however, clearly shows that knowledge is not constructed the other way around: sport is not described as a means of changing structures in society and by extension affecting the individual. As a method of intervention, sport is described on the individual level. In the descriptive analysis, in the criticism of viewing sport as a means of crime prevention, it was maintained that this view obscures non-individualistic explanations of social problems. This also illustrates how non-individualistic perspectives are distinguished from the prevailing emphasis on the individual. In addition, descriptions not embracing the social change-mode (but rather the averting-mode) such as diversion and deterrence also become meaningful through the discourse on individuality (although these themes do not condition the discourse on transferability).

The discourse on transferability is furthermore considered an inevitable complement to the discourse on individuality in enabling social change (in terms of sport, as a means of crime prevention). Perspectives in research emphasising

sport for social (or rather individual) change presuppose the idea that skills and values can be transferred from one sphere of society to another. Still, this idea presupposes three things: first, that skills and values acquired in sport are not very different from those in broader society; second, that they are cherished and desired in broader society; and third, that they can support a non-criminal lifestyle – when this is considered to be an effective means of crime prevention. This transference is explicitly called into question in the literature yet still constitutes a key rationale. The notion of transferability is quite explicit in claims that skills and values acquired in sport can be thought of as life skills, and that participants in sport learn to play the game of life. Accordingly, it is not possible to understand sport as a means of crime prevention through social change without the discourse on transferability.

The idea of sport as a means of crime prevention raises two further reflections. First, the discussion on individuality suggests that sport can be conceptualised as a means for individual ends. This has been met with criticism emphasising that an individualistic approach obscures structural explanations of social problems. In this respect, it could be argued that sport offers individual solutions to social problems. Whether or not this would be a true or fair statement is of less interest in this discussion. It is, however, a relevant discussion in general how this perspective sets the framework for the construction of crime as a social problem. In a society that emphasises solutions on the individual level, it would be relevant to question whether this does not contribute to the individualisation of social problems in general, hence framing them as individual problems requiring individual solutions. Second, the concept of and discourse on transferability could easily be further discussed and evaluated. The reviewed literature suggests that skills and values are not easily transferred to other spheres. Furthermore, the idea of transferability presupposes a certain mechanistic conception of instruction and communication, which could be questioned from other standpoints.

Conclusion

The findings in this article proceed from the aim of exploring the idea of sport as a means of crime prevention and its underlying assumptions by reviewing the scientific literature on this subject. Such implicit assumptions have been made explicit by exploring what research focuses on and how the descriptions are articulated. Although there is a heavy emphasis in the literature on researchers criticising the notion that sport can contribute in substantial ways to

preventing crime and delinquency, there are nonetheless ways in which sport is described and promoted as a means of crime prevention.

First, it was concluded from the descriptive analysis that the research is focused on three categories of empirical questions. Findings from this content analysis are succinctly summarised in an earlier section. From the categories developed, the content has been further analysed in the discussion section.

Second, the discussion concluded that the idea of sport as a means of crime prevention through aspects of social change such as personal and social relations, empowerment, pro-social development and education is supported by the discourses on individuality and transferability. These two key discourses construct a meaningful understanding of sport as a means of crime prevention. Additionally, the discussion has brought to the fore potential implications of individuality for our conceptions of crime as a social problem and potential empirical questions about the transfer of skills and values from one sphere in society to another.

The description has categorised and presented the articulated premises inherent in the research literature reviewed. However, the discussion has brought to the fore the implicit assumptions and discourses that are not visible yet are ever present in the literature reviewed. Accordingly, the discussion contributes to analytical achievements that push the gains from this article beyond descriptions in the literature by clarifying these, and making them explicit.

The central discussion suggests that the knowledge about sport as a means of crime prevention in the literature reviewed is dominated by the social change-mode and is further articulated through discourses on individuality and transferability. An examination is still needed of how these discourses are intertwined, what assumptions about the individual and society they are built upon and what ideological perspectives of sport or public policy these discourses are expressions of. Since questions like these are important for our understanding of sport and society, regarding our conceptions of sport both as sport and in society (or as a means of social objectives in society), they would be a strong aim in further research. Other aspects of the relation between sport and crime apart from the focus on sport as a means of crime prevention have been downplayed in this review. Moreover, a systematic review of the literature on sport as a generator of crime should lead to a more nuanced understanding of the relation between sport and crime. It is also worth noting once again that the

literature reviewed is not at all unanimous in viewing sport as an efficient or suitable means of crime prevention. This article concludes that social change by changing individuals and discourses on individuality and transferability are clearly prominent ingredients in current research that supports sport as a means of crime prevention. By considering these aspects, the bulk of scientific knowledge promoting sport as a means of crime prevention is constructed.

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