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The Neoliberal Game: An critical analysis of children's non competitive grassroots football

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UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

The Neoliberal Game: A Critical Analysis of Children's Non-Competitive Grassroots Football

by

Grace Ann Gallacher

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth in
partial fulfilment for the degree of

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Author's Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of *Doctor of Philosophy* has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee.

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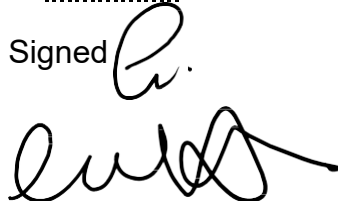
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**The Neoliberal Game:
A Critical Analysis of Children's Non-Competitive Grassroots Football**

Abstract

This thesis explores the propensity for harms throughout children's non-competitive football. Adopting ethnographic approaches this project follows a team of under 9's non-competitive team in a SW FA league, it analyses their private social media page and conducted 18 semi-structured interviews with life-long players, parents, coaches and referees. It advances a critical criminology of sport by presenting an alternative framework to Elias and the Civilising process by using contemporary critical criminology, namely ultra-realism and deviant leisure. By using ultra-realism and deviant leisure this study examines the underlying systemic harm which comes from the neoliberal environment of sport, including children's non-competitive football.

Keywords: children's football, harm, consumerism, ultra-realism, deviant leisure, neoliberalism.

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List of Abbreviations

ABH	Actual Bodily Harm
ACC	Atlantic Coast Conference
CCT	Competitive Compulsory Tendering
CDT	Cognitive Development Theory
EA	Extra- Curricular Activity
EDL	English Defense League
EPL	English Premier League
ESC	The Council of European Charter on Sport
FA	Football Association
FAW	Football Association Wales
FIFA	Federation International de Football Association
FIM	Football is Medicine
FOMO	Fear of Missing Out
HIIT	High Intensity Interval Training
HOLMES	Home Office Large Major Enquiry System
IFAB	International Football Association Board
IMF	International Monterey Fund
MHFA	Mental Health First Aid
NHL	National Hockey League
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
PA	Physical Activity
PE	Physical Education

PLPS Premier League Primary Stars

List of Abbreviations Continued

RAT Rational Action Theory

RCT Rational Choice Theory

SEC Southern Eastern Conference

UNCRC United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child

WTO World Trade Organization

YOLO You only live once

YTS Youth Sports Trust

Introduction

'we don't want our players to be monks, we want them to be better football players because a monk doesn't play football at this level' (Bobby Robson, 2004).

The aim of this thesis is a simple one: to explore the potential harms that are culturally and ideologically embedded within youth football, which is one of the most popular forms of organized children's sport in the UK (Lange, 2020). To fully immerse myself in the world of children's football I adopted an ethnographic approach, spending 18 months following the trials and tribulations of the players, parents, and coaches of an under-9s boys grassroots football team in a non-competitive league in the Southwest. I attended games, training sessions, and tournaments, in addition to engaging in digital observation of the posts and discussions on the team's closed social media group. I also completed a series of semi-structured interviews with lifelong footballers, parents of children who played football, and managers and referees from across the UK. I wanted to situate any harm that may arise from children's grassroots non-competitive football into context by exploring it on an abstract, practical, and theoretical level.

On an abstract level I wanted to examine the effect of neoliberal ideology and policies on children, youth football, and childhood more broadly. In particular, how children's leisure time has been shaped by neoliberalism and consumerism. On a practical level I wanted to see if there was any harm present within youth football for these children, and the role of neoliberalism in creating the contexts in which such harms occur. From a theoretical level I have used contemporary frameworks to assess these harms, reflecting the wider zemiological approach in society and academia. I have used a harm-based typology outlined by Smith and Raymen (2016) through their deviant

leisure framework, which is underpinned by cultural criminology and ultra-realism. This allows me to situate my findings within contemporary theories which reflect the realities of living in a consumer capitalist society.

Football is classed as both a sporting activity and a leisure activity, therefore this thesis looks at children's football in both these capacities for children and their parents. As a sporting activity football involves physical activity (PA¹), which means the players are using the game as a form of exercise, which enhances their heart rate, works their muscles, enhances self-esteem and reduces the risk of stress, to name a few (NHS, 2021). It is also a skill set, a profession which feeds into the motivation for children because professional players become role models to them.

Football as a leisure activity involves spectating, supporting, and participating in the game, not because of the physical activity, but as a pastime. This type of participation can be an individual hobby, or it can be enjoyed with friends and family. Everyone is introduced to football as a leisure activity and then some go on to participate in the playing of the game as a sporting activity. This distinction between football as a PA and football as a leisure activity is important because when the distinction is not recognized, all the benefits of the physical activity element of football become enmeshed with the game of football. For example, *Football is good for you* is not always the case; football as a PA and football as a leisure activity have different benefits and potential harms. These distinct harms result from the alternative functions that the different types of participation perform. For example, football as a leisure activity is swathed in advertising, media, and commercialization and is very much framed as an entertaining pastime. While football as a sporting activity is not without

¹ Within the literature surrounding physical activity it is commonly abbreviated to PA.

a relationship with advertising, media, and commercialization, this is primarily based around the pro-social, pro-educational and pro-health benefits which can be gained from participation in the game. The benefits which football boasts (as both a leisure and sporting activity) are reflective of the generic benefits of any sporting activity such as swimming, running, or dancing. So, I look at why football is important, examining why I chose football as the sport of choice for this study.

In order to establish why I chose football and the context in which children's football is situated, this thesis will begin in chapter 1 by tracing and reviewing the growth of football in society and exploring how this relates to the claims of being pro-educational, pro-social and pro-health. I examine the evolution of football as a game and as a specific consumer 'product' and elaborate on how these different types of participation became a catchall category. By doing this in chapter 1 we can start to untangle the benefits surrounding children's football from the possible harms that can also result from both football as a pastime and football as exercise.

It should be emphasized that this PhD thesis is quite distinct, both in its general approach and its theoretical arguments, from criminological studies of sport that have come before. Criminology's previous approach to sport has mainly been focused upon the overt forms of crime and sensational acts which happens in and around sporting activity. These are acts which transcend the socio-legal construction of crime such as doping (Hurst, *et al*, 2020), violence in sport (Young, 2019), football fan violence (Redhead, 2009) and pedophilia (Tamer, 2011). While these are important aspects to study and understand, there is also a need to look at the mundane harms which are usually overshadowed by more spectacular crime. When this happens, there can be a lack of critical edge because the interpretation or analysis is taking place within a framework which does not allow for much critical or forward thinking. In the sociology

of sport, this underpinning theoretical framework is Elias' (1939) *The Civilising Process*. The exploration of sport rarely ventures beyond this theoretical underpinning and sport analyses and criticality are consequently held in its matrix. We can see this in criminology when we examine the benefits of sport as a tool of desistance (Meeks, 2013) and social peace (Bloyce and Smith, 2010). Even when Jump (2020) and Meek (forthcoming) are critical about the environment in which these desisting qualities can take place they still hold on to the core belief that sport is inherently good. Again, this is clear in the argument laid out by Groombridge (2017) who is self-named as a leading voice in the critical criminology of sport; a claim which has been disputed by Brisman (2018) who claims that Groombridge is more concerned about the policing of sport rather than why athletes commit crimes.

There are currently works on-going to bring a more critical edge to sporting criminology. Silva and Kennedy are putting a volume together which pushes the boundaries of critical criminology, with the aim of finding a truly critical voice within the criminology of sport. In their collection there are contributions from various international scholars who are exploring critical forms of sporting criminology including domestic violence, head injuries, on the field violence, punishment, and desistance. In it I question the role of Elias and the civilizing process. I am less concerned with the criminality within sport or the perceived inherently good qualities which people believe it holds. I am, however, concerned with the everyday hidden harms which are an inherent part of sport through the infiltration of the ideologies of a neoliberal, consumer capitalist society, and what this means for the children who are participating in them.

Examining things which are perceived as harmful rather than criminal reflects the shift in criminology over the last 20 years where the discipline has expanded to include, somewhat reluctantly in some cases, the notion of harm as a worthwhile criminological

pursuit. Through their edited collection '*Zemiology: Reconnecting Crime and Social Harm*', Boukli and Kotzé (2018) explore how the zemiological movement in the 1990s marked a landmark shift to those wanting to include harm within the realms of criminology (Pemberton, 2016) and harm generation became a serious concern (Boukli and Kotzé, 2018). In the early days of the move to the inclusion of harm Hillyard and Tombs (2005) produced '*Beyond Criminology*' and have been researching and highlighting harm ever since, while also expanding the parameters of the scope of harm to include non-deliberate acts, for example the Grenfell Tower fire. Today in criminology the study of harm is still disputed by the more traditional, classical streams of administrative and positivistic criminology, but it has gained a lot more traction within the discipline. There are studies around the harms of work (Lloyd, 2013, 2019), the effect of de-industrialization on Northern towns and familial relationships (Winlow, 2014; Ellis, 2016), the role and harms of consumerism (Raymen and Smith, 2019; Hall, Winlow and Ancrum, 2008) and what it means to flourish under liberalisms attempt at prevention (Pemberton, 2016; Raymen, 2019).

To fully situate the harms that may arise from the hyper-commodified hybrid of leisure and sport which is children's non-competitive grassroots football, I adopt a deviant leisure perspective (Smith and Raymen, 2016; Raymen and Smith, 2019) framework for exploring these possible harms. Deviant leisure was not the only way to situate harm within my thesis - I could have adopted a fully zemiological stance or followed in the footsteps of Yar's (2012) concept of recognition or Pemberton's (2011) notion of flourishing or Hillyard and Tombs' (2005) concept of social harm, to name but a few. However, these all carry limitations which I believe will be shown throughout this thesis and which are rectified through using the deviant leisure perspective.

Using a deviant leisure perspective allows the thesis to draw on contemporary critical criminological theory, whilst placing this theory at the heart of the latest debates within criminology. Moreover, it combines the notion of harm with criminology while inverting the notion of deviance – unlike Yar (2012). This, therefore, allows the thesis to explore the systemic root causes of potential harms whilst topologizing them into four categories. Deviant leisure is drawn from both cultural criminology, which allows us to take the cultural value into consideration, and ultra-realism, which provides the tools to be able to deal with motivation. Situating children's football within the wider structure of society whilst simultaneously examining the collective and individual motivation, opens up and brings to light the role and harms that neoliberalism and its effects are having on the socialization of children.

However innovative and useful ultra-realism and deviant leisure are, they both miss one fundamental element, which is the aspect of youth and their socialization. Hall (2012) has spoken briefly on a schizoid socialization and Ellis (2016) and Winlow (2014) look at how the grown children from deprived de-industrialized areas operate in society, while Smith and Raymen (2016, 2017) and Raymen and Smith (2016, 2019) have topologized harm and applied it to a number of circumstances. But they have all neglected to explore how children are impacted by leisure, sport, and the political economy. Moreover, they do not look at mundane sport in any meaningful way. Deviant leisure addresses elite sporting activities such as parkour (Raymen, 2018, 2019b) and CrossFit (Mulrooney and van de Ven, 2019) however, there is yet to be a youth aspect of deviant leisure, or a sport at the grassroots level. My thesis will fill this gap by exploring mundane non-elitist participation in children's football. All of these points put this thesis at the forefront of contemporary criminological theory, pushing

the boundaries of criminology and harm to explore the mundane and hidden harms within the schema of children's sport and leisure.

I chose football as the vehicle to explore these harms and ideologies because it sits at the crux of a juxtaposition of sport and leisure. The individual's motivation is tied into the ideologies fed to the public through cleverly targeted advertising and propaganda aimed at 'being a better you', getting the edge over your competitors, and being ready to take your chance: a neoliberal subject (Gallacher, 2020). Moreover, children's football at a grassroots level should be non-competitive and I wanted to ascertain if anything, against a back-drop of consumer capitalism, could indeed be qualified as non-competitive and what this meant in practice for the children playing in these non-competitive leagues. Using deviant leisure, I explored the competitive angle and the harms which could be seen in the plain light of day should you be willing to accept them and not disavow them. Contemporary criminological theory, which draws on thinkers such as Lacan and Žižek, allowed me to situate the symbiotic relationship between an individual's subconscious drives within the wider structure and the structure's effect upon the individual through plasticity of the brain (Johnston, 2008). This is far removed from a standard sport criminology study such as Groombridge's (2017) *Sports Criminology* or Silverwood's (2015) *Five For Fighting: The Culture and Practice of Legitimised Violence in Professional Ice Hockey*, because my stance is that we need to re-evaluate the potential harm and the framework within which it works.

There is substantial research on sport, leisure, and childhood within their respective disciplines, which chapters 1 and 2 address in greater detail. At times the topic may seem to go wider than necessary for a criminological PhD however, to fully understand and address the issues and harms of children's sport and leisure we must examine literature and studies from a variety of disciplines. This will help situate children's

football, and its potential for harm, within a precarious political economy. The discussion in chapter 1 is centered around the functional benefits of sporting activity concentrating on children's football, PA, Physical Education (P.E.) and extra-curricular activities (EAs).

The Third Way and Sport and Leisure Development

Sport and sporting activity have long been considered a benefit to society - this can be seen in the way that various governments across the years have utilized sport and sporting policy to coax out these benefits for the good of society. None so much as New Labour from when they gained power in 1997. Under New Labour various sporting policies were implemented within the UK and although they were not the first government to use sport in this way, they are certainly one of the most prominent and important in order to understand the current climate of publicizing the benefits from sport, especially in relation to children. From their first manifesto in 1997 New Labour cemented the idea that physical activity is imperative to social benefits, and that school is where their efforts should be placed to educate children about the importance of these benefits. Through the P.E. curriculum New Labour enlisted the aid of private companies to deliver these objectives through what they termed public-private partnerships (PPP) which came in the form of afterschool clubs serving a dual purpose of increasing physical activity and providing much needed childcare provision for working families. These PPPs were put out for tender to local sports businesses where private coaches were brought in and paid to deliver P.E. lessons, usually in football (Smith, 2015). If we adopt a more critical lens through the deviant leisure framework we can see that this is an extension of neoliberal managerialism into sports (Taylor and Garret, 2010, 2013 in Smith, 2015). Ultimately, New Labour built on what the

Conservatives started; a creeping commodification of education (Sockett, 1984 in Smith 2015) and repackaged it as a natural benefit for all:

‘as part of the free market of education dominated by neoliberal ideologies of individual choice, consumerism and responsabilisation of people and behaviours, the quest for self-advancement at the expense of others, coaches find themselves locked, increasingly into privatised models of PE provision’ (Smith, 2015: 555).

This privatisation of P.E. increased football’s popularity because it was one of the main sports which was outsourced to these private companies (Smith, 2015). Increasingly, children’s football could be accessed through schools and through private companies, or a hybrid of both. This is explored throughout this thesis to try to establish and understand the harms that have occurred from this privatisation process of children’s leisure.

Football as a leisure activity has been researched in various ways and is a significant research area within the social sciences. Leisure is a major aspect of life in a postmodern or late modern era because it provides a cultural reference for participation. It goes some way to explaining why football tends to be the activity of choice in afterschool clubs, and it also situates modern football within its historical context. There is much football research happening in the wider community from a research group known as The Football Collective, but these again neglect the criticality of the youth aspect of the game. Where they do engage with children’s schemes it is centered around the positive impacts that elite clubs have in the local community or the harms from elite participation. My thesis will address the gap within the football literature pertaining to this.

Family Leisure Time

For the purposes of this thesis I have concentrated on the literature surrounding family leisure time and pursuits such as purposive leisure (Shaw and Dawson, 2001) and the impact this has on the family unit (Wheeler and Green, 2018). Lareau (2003) explored the parenting practices from various social strata and how this impacted on the children's leisure time, afterschool activities, and what this meant for childhood accomplishment. Various studies have outlined the educational benefits of leisure activities (Covay and Carbonaro, 2010) whilst some have questioned their validity. What is clear from the literature is that leisure time has a significant impact on family time, family life, and the relationships children form during this time. Kay (2009) and Fletcher (2020) look specifically at the fathering relationship forged and cemented through leisure time. This is an aspect that is explored in chapter 7 when we look at the coach from The Bears – the under 9's team I observed-and his relationship with his son.

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is a concept which runs throughout this thesis, and it is the political system which is tied most closely to the change in the psyche of the collective, which is discussed in chapter 4 and beyond. Neoliberal in the basic sense is an economic ordering system which was adopted in the UK when Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979 (Harvey, 2005). It encourages free markets and trade and rescinds the responsibility of the social. Neoliberal policy believes that entrepreneurialism should be a guiding principle and that if a market does not exist one should be created (Harvey, 2005). However, it is more than just an economic system, as:

‘advocates of the neoliberal way now occupy positions of considerable influence in education [...] in the media, in corporate boardrooms and financial institutions, in key state institutions [...] and also in those international

institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) that regulate global finance and trade' (Harvey, 2005: 3).

This means that neoliberal policies penetrate the very fabric of society and have become 'an ethic in itself, capable of acting as a guide to all human action' (Harvey, 2005: 3). This ethic is achieved by increased competition, competition being the main principle of neoliberalism because it encourages growth within markets. We have arrived at a point in society where 'the neoliberal man is the *competitive man*' (Dardot and Laval, 2013 cited in Beer, 2016: 11) and this is what we are teaching our children through things like non-competitive football. This is because competition is now seen as the norm (Beer, 2016) so although I observed a non-competitive league, chapter 6 will show that competition is so engrained into society that any claims of non-competitiveness are futile. This means that competition has surpassed the point of an organizing principle but is seen as a virtue (Beer, 2016). Mirowski (2013) observes that 'competition is the primary virtue and solidarity is a sign of weakness' (pp. 92 cited in Beer, 2016: 12). I explore this concept in chapter 6 when we see how socially corrosive non-competitive football is. Neoliberalism is a core area of study throughout this thesis rather than the answer to it, because it is as Peck (2010) notes neoliberalism should mark out the area for study but not be the answer to the question, which is how it is applied throughout my thesis. Neoliberalism is explored as a critical result of the reorientation of collective behavior and the moving state of accepted norms (which is explained in chapter 4). As Thatcher once said, 'economics are the method; the object is to change the heart and soul' (Butt, 1981). I propose through this thesis that Thatcher has achieved her goal, which can be seen in the neoliberal game of children's non-competitive football.

Overall aims of the thesis

Therefore, the overall questions and aims of my thesis are as follows:

- 1) Does children's grassroots non-competitive football have the potential to be harmful?
- 2) What is the best way of exploring and examining this harm? And why?
- 3) What effect does the political economy have on the shaping and perpetuating of this harm? Does it mark a shift in society?

Generally, I am concerned with examining the idea that there is underlying systemic harm embedded in the political economy by using advertising and political policies, within children's non-elite sports and leisure time activities.

Chapter Outlines

This, the introductory chapter, offers us a backdrop into the research area. It presents the main aims of this thesis while giving some background information crucial to the development of the ideas presented. It has thus far briefly examined the parameters and limitations of the thesis whilst exploring core themes, such as family leisure time, the impact of the Third Way on children's sports and the meaning of and importance of neoliberalism throughout. This chapter has then laid out the overall aims of this thesis and the subsequent sections will go to some to showing how each chapter addresses the aims. Chapter 1 outlines the social backdrop against which sport, leisure and children converge. Firstly, it nuances the idea of childhood and what it means to be a child in a consumerist society. We are currently witnessing children who have a limited concept of a life-biography or following in their parent's footsteps. Children today are immediately greeted with toys and caring aid which will improve

their motor functioning or cognitive skills (Erickson, 2015). Children and therefore childhood is being hijacked from birth and as chapter 1 explores, sporting activities which serve a dual function as a fun activity and an Extra-Curricular activity (EA), are constantly underpinned by this notion of manifest and latent benefits. Chapter 1 explores and nuances these benefit claims by separating the sport from the Physical Activity (PA) which afford the sport its benefits. The concept of an EA is fundamental to the creeping commodification of PA and Physical Education (P.E.) within Schools. Chapter 1 moves on to revealing the benefits which are often conflated between sport and PA. these include academic, physical, social and mental benefits. It then moves on to studying the purpose of leisure in a capitalist society before examining the Civilizing process which underpins sociological research on sport.

Chapter 2 turns its attention to current climate of criminology, sport and leisure. It examines the literature around sports criminology and ultimately where is it is concentrated and lacking in places. Chapter 2 explores the history of football and the criminological interest around football, violence and fan-based violence, before examining cheating within sports. Chapter 2 continues with the overt forms of harm (Smith and Raymen, 2016) by looking at sexual and non-sexual abuse in sports, harm to participants and toxic masculinity. These are all areas you would expect within a criminology PhD on sport. It then moves onto looking at the opposite ideas of sport within Criminology and that is the idea of sport being a diversionary and desisting tactic for those involved in criminal activity.

Chapter 3 marks a turn in the thesis by looking forwards to a critical criminology of sport, it addresses the limitations of the previous frameworks for exploring children's non-competitive grassroots football. It starts by offering the work of Lacan up as building on the work of Freud to allow us a deeper understanding of the sub-conscious

and the effect this has on our actions and our actions on it. It then explores the concept of narcissism and how this impacts children's football. We then explore the tripartite of reality laid out by Lacan and how by using these we can provide an in-depth analysis on the current climate of childhood through the use of children's football. We also examine the ways in which a child constructs their sense of self around this activity within the registers of reality. Chapter 3 then provides alternative working theories around sport by using Ultra-realism's concept of pseudo pacification and the pseudo pacified self to really examine the underlying drivers and the structures in which they have developed, before, concluding with the concept of deviant leisure. By using deviant leisure, we can explore a typology of harm which will allow us to fully situate children's non-competitive grassroots football into a neoliberal society.

Chapter 4 brings us to the dynamics and logistics of this research project. It explores my rationale for my chosen ethnographic sensibility and explains how I achieved this. It lists the demographic for my study and my position as a researcher adopting a critical interpretivist stance. It then outlines my methods and the justification for doing so. After the research design is addressed, the ethical implications of my study are explored as well as the measures to protect my participants from harm and identification. The data analysis section provides the analytical reasoning to my approach and how I analyzed my 3 data sets. Finally, this chapter looks at my positionality as a researcher as I offer some reflective thoughts on my research process.

Chapter 5 is the first of the three empirical data chapters of my thesis. It addresses the environment in which children's non-competitive grassroots football is predicated upon. Returning to the idea that we are living in a neoliberal consumer capitalist society it explores the cold realism of my participants' ontological realities. It starts by looking at the media's impact on the game and how this affected my participants by the allure

of a distinctive league, the Premier League. We then examine how the non-competitive element of non-competitive football is useless because of the metrics of neoliberalism.

It explores how everything must be rooted within competition and symbolism. This chapter is then summarized by 'take your chance' a concept which is repeated at all levels of football, this is echoing the cold realism of the world, if you do not do it, someone else will and then you have missed out. This argument is furthered by the children being encouraged to play as if the score is always nil-nil, no matter what. This chapter sets the current environment for children's non-competitive grassroots football.

This tone is followed by chapter 6, the next of the empirical chapters which looks at the way in which the environment of the game outlined in chapter 5 effects the parenting styles of those involved in the game, it examines what I have called pseudo pacified parenting and looks at the skills and benefits the parents are proud of when their children play. These skills are more around neoliberal life skills than any of the benefits offered in chapters 1 and 2. This chapter then looks at the Respect campaign by FA to change and alter unwanted (parental) behaviour on the side-lines. Chapter 6 looks at the effect this had on my participants and how they felt this campaign worked before examining it as a failing Little Other.

Chapter 7 is the last of the empirical chapters and the last before my conclusion. This chapter looks at the effects found from chapters 5 and 6 on the identity formation of children involved in non-competitive grassroots football. It explores the child as a transcendental material subject and explores the hijacking of maturation by the football industry and consumerism. This chapter continues to highlight the harms found within children's grassroots football by examining how the child sees themselves as a

neoliberal project and how this deepens the level of harm through non- attainment of goals in a never-ending cycle of 'there is always another game'.

Chapter 1:

The Benefits of Children's Leisure and Sport

Introduction

As outlined in the introduction, in order to place into context, the growth and maturation of non-competitive children's grassroots football, children's leisure needs to be situated within a wider framework of a neoliberal society. This chapter structures some of the core ideas that will be developed throughout this thesis. It starts by addressing Postman's (1983,1994) assertion that childhood is disappearing. He claims that through the modernisation of technology, changing norms and increased access to the adult world, children are becoming less and less childlike. Children, he states, have been 'expelled from the garden of childhood' (Postman, 1983: 192). During this chapter the idea of childhood and what it means to be a child in a consumerist society will be examined through the changes around sport in schools. The chapter will then move onto the benefits which are associated with children's participation in physical activities, and how this participation has expanded and penetrated into the education system through the political changes that have been made to the P.E. curriculum, and the introduction of extra-curricular activities (EAs). In other words, the introduction and expansion of the privatisation of the provisions delivered by schools allowed education

to become commodified. The chapter then moves onto the rationale underpinning the changes in education, sport, and leisure. The rationale for these changes is centered around the benefits which can be yielded from the participation in activities which have an element of physical activity. By examining the increased participation in these activities, I will also examine the parental role in socialising children into these activities. Finally, this chapter will outline the theoretical underpinning that presents these changes as benefits, before concluding how through all these changes, children have lost the ability just to play.

Childhood

Childhood and transitions to adulthood have been a central concern across the social sciences in recent years. Importantly, Bauman (2005) stated that childhood, once reserved for grooming children into functional societal roles, is now in a state of 'reprocessing' (Bauman, 2005: 111). Meaning that, in the 'society of producers' children would have spent their childhood with an idea of their future in mind. However, as society is now focused on consuming rather than producing, childhood is undergoing a reprocessing. This reprocessing of childhood allows us to explore children and their childhoods in an exciting and unprecedented era of society. Children are now fully embedded and socialised into a new way of life that is characterised by the fear of missing out (FOMO) and the idea that you only live once (YOLO). This presents a unique time for social researchers to witness and examine children and their respective childhoods. They have no predictable life path, they are not going to continue a tradition of producing goods, and they are truly postmodern in the sense that nothing is fixed for them. Yet, the old world has not completely disappeared - there is some semblance of structure and rationality to be seen in the actions of their parents, who have experienced the old world. This section examines the changing

nature of childhood, the thesis more broadly examines the reprocessing of children and childhood, as will be shown in the results chapters.

The vast literature around childhood demonstrates that it is a contested term, open to a range of definitions. Childhood in academic literature often reflects the belief that childhood is a distinct biological category, with different phases linked to the biological age of the child. For example, in Piaget's four stages of cognitive development. However, as Postman outlines, and as we shall see below, childhood is in fact not a natural occurrence and is a social 'artefact' (1994: xi). However, our attachment to childhood as a state of nature prevails across much of the literature as well as common sense understandings of children and childhood.

For many, the very idea of children and childhood conjure images of innocence and youth. Yet, this idea of youthful exuberance is a product of the Middle Ages (Gabriel, 2017). Prior to the 15th century there was little or no collective awareness of children being a special or protected group within society or of childhood being a protected time. It was not until Aries historicised childhood through his seminal work *Centuries of Childhood* (1962) that childhood came to be seen, not as a universal or natural phenomenon, but one which varied according to time, place, and culture (Gabriel, 2017). The notion that childhood was a distinct period in a person's life cycle which required special treatment came in the form of the protection of the child. Postman (1994) argued that the introduction of print allowed, and continues to facilitate, a separation of knowledge between the child and the adult. Adulthood contains knowledge and information that children should not know. In early modernity, according to Postman, Locke and Rousseau started to theorise childhood. Locke believed that a child is a *tabula rasa* (a blank slate) and can be assimilated into prevailing culture, whereas Rousseau argued that the child is important in and of itself.

He believed that children hold the closest state to nature, and this should be prolonged for as long as possible (Postman, 1994). As this thesis will show the two theorisations from Locke and Rousseau are still pertinent to childhood today, in a more practical sense, and inform the work of Lareau which will be introduced later in this chapter.

The association of innocence with childhood remained throughout the structural changes of modernity; developing into childhood as we would recognize it today. During modernity, the idea that children are innocent, special and should be protected permeated the workforce, and philanthropists started petitioning for the rights of children. Eventually children were removed from workforces and workhouses and by 1914 there were no children working in factories (Case, 2018). From 1919 the League of Nations (formerly the United Nations) posited the idea that a child should have special protection and rights which could be written into law. By 1924, the first recognition of child's rights; The Declaration of the Rights of the Child, accorded specific rights to children while placing the responsibility on adults to enact these rights (Humanium, 2019). This development is important to this thesis because this is where the responsibility for a child and their childhood is firmly placed with the parents or caregivers, where previously this was not set out in any formal way. In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) set out that childhood and motherhood should be allowed special care and assistance, which furthered the notion that the responsibility of the child lies with the parents and not society. The UDHR and the understanding of it, is an important advancement for this thesis because it lays out the expectation that parents, notwithstanding the gender issues of the time, not only have a formally articulated responsibility for the child which are ratified and then built into domestic laws; but that society also believes they have responsibility for the child. This is important to bear in mind when we look at the role of parenting in chapters 6

and 7. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) emerged in 1989 and has 54 articles outlining the economic, social, and cultural rights of the child (Humanium, 2019) which today are used as a baseline to protect children and their childhoods.

The brief overview of the rights of the child outlined above indicates that the obligation that domestic countries held to wards children throughout the 20th century. Socially and culturally, the concept of childhood evolved as the economic circumstances after World War II (WWII) increased freedoms in leisure practices. The post-WWII decade of the 1950s is often given the status of a nostalgic utopia for childhood (Schor, 2004). Schor warns we must take into consideration that these are a romanticised, nostalgic version of childhood much akin to a grandparent saying that ‘it was not like that in my day’. Likewise, when looking at the parents in my study (chapters 5, 6, and 7) it should be noted that they are comparing their children's childhood experiences to that of their own. As we will see some are even re-living or living vicariously through their children. More specifically, they are to some extent hoping to rekindle something which is a romanticised version of what once was.

Bauman's observations relating to liquid modernity² have a twofold effect on our understanding of childhood: firstly, impacting on the child's identity formation and, secondly, on the socialisation from parents who are themselves experiencing the difficulty of navigating late modernity. Childhood in liquid modernity is not reflected within the current theories of childhood. James and Pout (1997) believe that the biological categorisation is the universal distinction throughout childhood (Gabriel, 2017) whereas Elias (2011) believes that it is the combination of culture and social

² Liquid modernity to Bauman reflects the flexibility of the ever-changing present social world, it is used in contrast to the solid modernity which preceded this time.

conditions with the biological age of the child which affects and defines childhood (Gabriel, 2017), neither James and Pout or Elias' belief addresses the fluidity of conditions into which children are socialised. Socialisation is a concept which is integral to the ontology of the child; in its functional sense socialisation is the assimilation of cultural norms, values, and attitudes into children (Frønes, 2016). Socialisation is achieved primarily through the family and secondarily through educational institutions. Childhood theorists are trapped in a perpetual loop of biology versus cognitive development and cultural assimilation. Meanwhile, children are being continuously exposed to the values of neoliberalism, which has the potential to be harmful. This thesis demonstrates how participation in children's non-competitive football socialises children into these neoliberal traits through the commodification of childhood just as Barber (2011) indicated childhood is now being consumed as will be disused in chapter 7 when we examine how consumerism hijacks childhood.

Childhood is being commodified in every aspect and this section will show how the commodification has reached the UK school system. Schor (2004) argues that this commodification has penetrated the education system, parenting, and social life to the extent that children are now not only targeted by advertisers but seen as knowledgeable consumers and informers. This highlights the reprocessing that Bauman (2005) spoke of. Schor (2004), Mayo and Nairn (2009) and Bakan (2011) all argue and illustrate through various studies that companies are using children as a target market. Bauman furthers this claiming that "children are first and foremost tomorrow's consumers" (2005: 112-113). Advertising gurus are using children to spy on their friends (Schor, 2004; Mayo and Nairn, 2009) and to come up with new concepts, for example, the 'Squeezy Ketchup' bottle from Heinz (Schor, 2004; Mayo and Nairn, 2009). Children are also used to promote products through word of mouth

or on social media. Schor (2004) used the American school system in her text as an example of commodifying childhood and, whilst this is useful to aid our understanding of how the market works, we will focus our attention on the UK. Rather than looking at the school system as a whole, we will look specifically at the UK P.E. curriculum because this is where the creeping commodification of education (Sockett, 1984) is most pertinent to this thesis.

The Creeping Commodification of Physical Activity

The benefits that are often cited as coming from sporting activities tend to centre on the physical activity element of the sport. In other words, it is the act of being physically active, rather than the sport itself, that is the focus when the benefits of sport are cited or used as a justification. Sport is the way of enticing people to be active much like the concept of learning by play. By creating sports (games with different settings, rules, and rewards) around the physical activity, people are more likely to participate. The nuance between physical and sporting activity is where the literature claims are lacking and become somewhat confused, because benefits that are cited are often from physical activity and not the sport itself and this is where my thesis lies. I am not disputing the benefits which can be gained from PA, but I am debating the benefits cited from the sport as an environment for the PA to be achieved. For example, the Football is Medicine movement (FIM) claims medical benefits from playing football, however, it is the benefit of the physical activity, which is encouraged by being wrapped in the game of football, which is medically beneficial. This is a point which is explored in more detail shortly. It is this conflation which allows the advertising, marketisation, and commodification to take the benefits from the physical activity and use it to endorse the sport. The way this is applied in children's football will be explored

in the empirical chapters. The benefits which are often linked to the medical benefits of sport, but which only arise from the physical activity is what I would broadly term as 'latent benefits' (Gallacher, 2020). Some examples of the types of benefits traditionally associated with sport are medical, social, upskilling, and educational. The manifest benefits are those which are not always or as often cited when discussing sport - things such as the building of relationships. For example, Kay's (2009) fathering through sport, the social capital that is gained through the networking attached to sport participation (Wheeler and Green, 2018) and specific skills from the hidden curriculum that parents have identified (Shaw and Dawson, 2010). These latent benefits will be scrutinised primarily through Lareau's concept of unequal childhoods after the discussion around the manifest benefits later in this chapter.

Physical Education (P.E.)

To truly understand the evolving commodification of P.E. and to frame some of the harms which I outline in the latter chapters, such as the neoliberal self and the cost of winning; we must first understand the evolution of P.E., alongside the mainstream acceptance of neoliberal doctrine from the late 1980s/early 1990s, before moving on to examine how football has created a privatised market from it. P.E.'s journey commenced from the implementation of the Education Act 1870 in the form of military drills (Haywood et al., 1995) and evolved through the education system until it became a required component in 1994. This journey reflects the growing pressures placed on the government to include and standardise P.E. across schools. When we dismantle what has happened in this journey and beyond, we can see why it was a Conservative government which eventually made it part of the core curriculum. When Margaret Thatcher moved society to a neoliberal economic structure she ignored sport, possibly

because of her rocky relationship with the British Olympic team³ (Jefferies, 2012). This resulted in an ambiguous message to society and parents more specifically; on one hand the government was telling parents that everything should revolve around market principles of competition, and yet their children were not being taught how to navigate this competition through sport in schools.

This ambiguity caused an uprising with parents which culminated in a segment from Panorama in 1987: *Is Your Child Fit for Life?* (Evans, 1990). This documentary established that P.E. failed to prepare children for life because it lacked the core elements of success which had been pushed forward since Thatcher came to power in 1979. This was compounded by the selling off of school playing fields (Evans, 1990) which are an integral resource tool in children's P.E. This left parent believing that their state school educated children were at a disadvantage both physically and symbolically:

‘the demise of competitive team games is singled out as a matter of public concern, the process signifying not only a threat to tradition (the moral and social order), but also the dissolution of important elements of the hidden curriculum of schooling which foster the development of drive, ambition and competitive spirit arising from the will, the longing desire to win’ (Evans and Davies, 1989 cited in Evans, 1990: 162).

Parents felt that their children were being disadvantaged because they were not being taught or socialised into this new world order, the desire to win, that was fundamental to the spirit of neoliberalism. However, it was not until John Major took over as Prime Minister that P.E. and its competitive training was re-evaluated. In 1994 Major made P.E. compulsory, affirming that the competitive element was a fundamental life skill. He also introduced the different levels of competitiveness by age (or key stages as we now know them) outlining what competitive skills are expected at what age, just like

³ Thatcher had wanted the Olympic team to withdraw from the 1980 Olympics because of political disagreements with Russia. The team refused and Thatcher became disillusioned with sport from therein.

the levels used in reading or mathematic ability. Moreover, since competition was woven into P.E. in 1994 it has continued to be considered a beneficial skill for life and has remained a constant within the core curriculum. However, the popularity of gaining life skills through P.E., and sport more generally, has increased since 1994.

When New Labour came to power in 1997 they used these growing benefits and increased their utility across society. Sport became integral to improving areas in society, echoing Thatcher's response to the riots of 1981. Action for Sport was the agency set up to manage troublesome areas of society by instilling in them good values (Bloyce and Smith, 2010). This is reflective of how football was managed previously like that which was employed when football was managed in the early days by Muscular Christianity who wanted the middle-classes to impart their well-mannered and law-abiding behaviour onto the working classes. The Muscular Christianity Movement (1884) promoted football because it promoted values which they believed were beneficial to society, such as teamwork and self-discipline (Haywood et al., 1995). They held the belief that 'bodies were consecrated as a living sacrifice to God' (Birley, 1993: 257) concluding that these desirable skills and sacrifice would be best learnt on the football pitch (Birley, 1993). In essence the early games were a distraction from alehouses for the working-classes and were also a vehicle for conveying middle-class wisdom about values and behaviour (Beaven, 2005):

'The public-school ethic of amateur athleticism and sportsmanship was perceived as a set of ideal traits that could be introduced into working-class neighbourhoods through the formation of football clubs' (pp. 72).

It is clear that New Labour were not new in their approach to these manifest benefits, but they did revive them and integrate them into mainstream society and politics. They also included children's behaviour and sport in these life-lessons, which until Major had not been considered. Another development that can be attributed to the Third

Way⁴ is the adaptation of the conservative notion of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT). CCT allows an array of service provisions to be put out for private tendering (Bloyce and Smith, 2010). In 2000 through *A Sporting Future for All* New Labour extended the minimum time that P.E. must be taught in schools, this was changed 2 hours per week minimum. They agreed that this should be delivered by extending the provision of the school day and encouraged the use of extra-curricular activities (EAs). This extra provision would have a double function as it would serve as a childcare setting which would also increase children's physical activity, thus extracting the sporting benefits. In addition, in 2002 through *Game Plan*⁵ they called on private companies and grassroots movements to become partners in the delivery of P.E. and EAs. This is where the creeping commodification of education, briefly introduced earlier, becomes apparent.

Extra-Curricular Activities

The provision and popularity of EAs increased through New Labour's extension of the school day, noted above. Weininger, Lareau and Conley described EAs as 'sports, religious activities, and cultural education' which were 'voluntary, organised, adult-led, and which have a fixed schedule and some form of enrolment' (2015: 484). On the surface this may not seem significant but if we think about this in a systemic sense, we can start to understand how these EAs started to embed themselves into educational provision. Through the extended school day, New Labour set the way for partnerships between schools and the community in order to deliver this increased sporting activity, adopting the key message that 'we [the schools] cannot do this alone'

⁴ The Third Way is the underpinning of New Labour's politics based around the writings and guidance from Tony Giddens. Tony Blair used these policies to create a more central labour party.

⁵ A Game Plan is a strategy document. It was the first of its kind to be jointly produced by two government departments, the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) and the Department of Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS). It is often known as a landmark document because it is of its kind to be jointly produced.

(Game Plan, 2002). By 2004 the schools could put EAs and P.E. out for tendering. Private coaches, predominantly football coaches (Smith, 2015) were paid to deliver P.E. lessons as part of a broader re-organisation of society which was commercially led and highly commodified. Using a more critical lens, it becomes clear that this is an extension of neoliberal managerialism into sports (Taylor and Garret, 2010, 2013 in Smith, 2015). During this period scholars questioned the appropriateness of individuals and coaches, who were not teacher trained, to be teaching children in any school setting (Blair and Capel, 2013, cited in Smith, 2015) and if they understood the National Curriculum and could deliver the teaching required to fulfil it. Powell (2015) termed this the notion of the inexperienced teacher and expert coach, meaning that just because one is an expert in coaching does not mean they are an expert in coaching school children to the standards of the National Curriculum. This led to what Valley and Moala (2013) called the privatisation of P.E. and EAs delivered through schools, and more generally the privatisation of education, thus making it a commodity to be bought and sold (cited in Evans and Davies, 2015). Green (2000) claimed that this was the “normalisation of the involvement of sports coaches into P.E.” (Smith, 2015: 576).

Many will wonder where the harm is in children getting private coaching through the school, however, because this provision was delivered from a private source it often incurred an additional cost to the parents or if subsidized, was taking up a sizeable amount from the school’s budget. So, football (as noted by Smith, 2015 as the most popular afterschool club) delivered by an expert coach was creating a gap in delivery. This means that it is either dependent on parental income (Wheeler and Green 2018) or it disadvantaged those who did not take part by using some of the school budget that could have been used to benefit the majority elsewhere. Of course, many would

argue that football or any other sport was providing benefit to the children; while this is not under dispute, the equality of access and its use is. We must then consider the various impacts on the accessibility of the EAs and the various parenting styles which lead to children's participation.

Lareau (2002, 2011) in her landmark study 'Unequal Childhoods' argued that "the relations between social structure and various childrearing behaviours are mediated by a set of class-specific cultural orientations that confer distinct meanings of these behaviours" (cited by Weininger *et al.*, 2015: 481). In simple terms, Lareau found that parenting style was linked to socio-economic status; she then theorised that those who typically belonged to the middle-classes parented through 'concerted cultivation', whereas those in the working-classes adopted what she termed 'the accomplishment of natural growth'. Concerted cultivation was adopted by the middle-classes because leisure activities and EAs provided the parents with the ways and means of cultivating their child's potential talent and skills, which would benefit them later in life. For example, Linver *et al.* (2009) found that participation in such activities positively affected psychosocial development and Pauline *et al.*, (2007) found that it served as an important selection factor in later life. The working-classes favoured the accomplishment of natural growth where the basic premise is that children must be loved and cared for but are given the freedom to grow in their natural environment (Weininger *et al.*, 2015). Lareau has been criticised for this by Chin and Phillips (2004) who believe that it is in fact variations in economic resources, time, and work flexibility that will account for much of the association between social class and participation (cited in Weininger *et al.*, 2015) which brings it back to a case of socio-economic status.

While these are important starting points, arguably this does not account for all of those who would identify within the socio-economic classes. For example, it is more expensive to send a child to a childcare setting which favours natural growth (such as the Montessori method). The Montessori method involves flexibility and a child-led space focusing on the respect for the child, prioritising auto-education as opposed to a structured day set around learning objectives and outcomes. Through Montessori settings we can see the ethos of the accomplishment of natural growth, however, the fees for these settings are more than one would pay for a pre-school or private nursery. For example, the Rainbow Montessori School charges £3447.00 for 5 full days care (8.30am-3.15pm) and then an additional £73.00 per term for French (Rainbow Montessori nurse, 2021). The fact that they also offer additional French language training for a termly fee demonstrates how the accomplishment of natural growth may combine with concerted cultivation and therefore be more attractive to the middle-classes. This mix of natural growth and concerted cultivation is much more likely to transcend socio-economic class groupings because of the provision provided in afterschool clubs. Shifts in society would suggest that this cultivation has moved beyond the middle-classes, as this chapter will demonstrate throughout.

Moreover, Wheeler and Green's (2018) study highlights this shift of cultivation. Although they looked at middle-class families, they found that it is the school system, as an institution of the government, which is pressuring parents to enrol their children into EAs, including football. This is true of schools throughout the country, and many of the participants and people I spoke to in the course of this research commented how their children play football through school; therefore this notion has surpassed the reach of predominantly middle-class only, and therefore class, analysis. The popularity of football within schools and more broadly in society is

a result of a number of factors including, the growth of privatised companies delivering sessions within schools (see Smith, 2015); the expansion of precarious working hours and contracts (see Standing, 2011; Lloyd, 2018) causing parents to need to use EAs as a form of afterschool care; and the increasing popularity of the sport and its personalities. These factors are structural and not wholly relevant here other than to illustrate that society is more fluid and economically unstable than at the time of Lareau's study. Therefore, it is my intention to take Lareau's notion of concerted cultivation and to use it as merely cultivation without a class analysis. I have demonstrated here that it has progressed beyond simple class structures and is now part of a liquid society that everyone is subject to.

Summary of P.E. and EAs

Labour cashed in on concerted cultivation taking the benefits from physical activity and EAs and applying them to a cross-cultural section of society that was realised by the pressure of it being an after-school activity. Many children who would have enjoyed free play were subjected to the peer pressure of their friends attending the football club, leading to many parents being placed under increasing pressure to allow their children to go to these clubs, because who would not want their child to enjoy these benefits? Moreover, parents do not want to feel like they were making their children miss out on that competitive edge which could serve them well in later life (Schor, 2004; Bakan 2011). However, these activities do come with direct and indirect costs of both financial and time. If a child takes part in any sports based EAs, there is usually a weekend commitment as well as the time after school, due to matches. These EAs are part of a broader trend of cultivating children through privatisation measures in education to enable them to best prepare for their future in a neoliberal liquid society.

As part of this cultivation more and more spheres of a child's life are becoming increasingly commodified, and the examples above highlight how physical activity, P.E. and EAs are all part of what could be termed the commodification of childhood. The commodification of childhood (including education) goes some way to explaining the increase in EAs and the transformation through P.E., but what we still need to address is the manifest benefits of children's football which underpin the commodification of sport, education, and more specifically football, which in turn led children's football to being as popular as it is.

Manifest Benefits of Physical Activity

This section will discuss and highlight the current and important literature around the most frequently cited benefits of sport, which we have established as the element of physical activity. It will explore how these benefits have been incorporated into football, leading to claims of it being pro-health, pro-social, and pro-educational. In terms of pro-health, we will explore the concept of Football as Medicine as an influential movement from the latter part of the 20th century. Then moving on to the pro-educational and pro-social benefits which are now being delivered via private partnerships in schools and the local community, enhancing the commodification.

'Football is Medicine: it is time for patients to play'

The subheading of this section is taken from Krustup and Krustup (2018). Krustup and Krustup (2018) created the FIM holistic model. From over 15 years of research they found that football training is 'an intense and versatile training type that combines endurance, aerobic high-intensity interval (HIIT) and strength training for participants of all ages and skill levels' (2018: 2). These findings are centered around the physical activity aspect of football; by using football drills and training methods they developed

their model believing it would have enormous global implications for fitness and wellbeing. The FIM model is cheap to implement and, as the authors note, it is successful because it builds on football's already established popularity. This popularity is important to the success of the model because it is based on the premise that using physical activity to combat diseases will make it more popular with the masses, and more likely to have a positive and lasting effect in the way of a lifestyle change. This is just one of the benefits of the FIM model outlined in a new handbook edited by Krustup and Parnell (2019) *Football as Medicine: Prescribing Football for Global Health Promotion*. Many conditions which could be improved by the benefits of football (or more specifically the physical activity element of football) are explored, such as: health conditions including (but not limited to) cardiovascular disease, diabetes, metabolic syndrome, bone health, cancer patients, broad spectrum prevention in children; and then social benefits including but not limited to: for the homeless and socially deprived, football and healthy aging, motivation in team sports and mental health. Essentially football is marketed at preventing health issues and social issues. However, these beneficial aspects are inextricably linked to the popularity and marketisation of football, because whilst the same benefits can be found in many other forms of physical activity, the commodification of the game of football has resulted in the belief that football is the best (or only) way to deliver these benefits in these ways. It is also this commodification that ties football to the concept of marketisation and consumer culture, which as we see in the empirical chapters, is where the impact on children becomes apparent.

Academic Benefits

The positive effects of sport and leisure in liquid modernity are now widely cited - Krustup and Krustup claim that they found over 150 peer-reviewed articles from 35

international scientific journals in which football is described as joyful, social, and a popular sporting activity (2018). They are not alone in such positive pro-social claims of the benefits of sporting and leisure activities. Pfeifer and Cornelisen found, in their study of German adolescents, that participation in sporting activities has significant positive impacts on educational attainment (cited in Coaliter, 2011). A study by the Youth Sports Trust (YST) (2016) confirms this by stating that improved well-being coming from sporting and leisure activities leads to better educational attainment, with 91% of schools in 2014 considering that sport makes a positive contribution to achievement. They further claim childhood obesity at the age of 11 will impact on GCSE results 5 years later, affecting girls more than boys (YTS, 2016) and concluding that those lower levels of physical activity, both inside and outside of schools, will lead to a decrease in academic achievement (YTS, 2016). McPherson et al. (1989) have shown that some athletes have a higher-grade point average than non-athletes. Moreover, Fletcher et al (2003) found that sport teaches children to have a higher level of work orientation and self-reliance (cited in Covay and Carbonaro, 2010) which aids in academic success. This is addressed by Covay and Carbonaro (2010) who claim that extra-curricular activities are the mechanism by which non-cognitive skills are learnt:

‘We argue that extracurricular activities improve students noncognitive skills: a broad set of skills that include (but are not limited to) task persistence, independence, following instructions, working well within groups, dealing with authority figures and fitting in with peers (I.E. skills that align with the ‘hidden’ curriculum’ (Covay and Carbonaro, 2010: 20-21).

It is through these non-cognitive skills that academic attainment is increased as the child is more prepared mentally, physically, and cognitively to deal with academic pressures. Moreover, Covay and Carbonaro argue that structured extra-curricular activities are organised with a focus toward a specific skill set(s) (Gilman, Meyers and

Perez, 2004 cited in Covay and Carbonaro, 2010) and social and/or behavioural goals (Fletcher et al, 2003 in Covay and Carbonaro). These skills then prepare children for adult life, for example skills which will be useful in employment:

‘Lareau asserts that activities such as sports instil in young children “the ability to perform in public, in front of adults, including strangers” and to “work smoothly with acquaintances”, consequently, many organised activities reproduce “in their organised style... key aspects of the work place” (2011, cited in Weininger et al, 2015: 481).

More specifically to academic attainment, children who attend sport clubs are seen by their teachers to have better interpersonal skills (Fletcher, 2003, in Covay and Carbonaro, 2010: 23). Dumais (2006) found that students in dance and football during kindergarten and first grade had a greater reading gain (and math’s gain for dance participants only) between the first and third grade compared with students who were not in any sport or dance club (cited Covay and Carbonaro, 2010). These findings clearly depict the benefits of football and dance as an organised extra-curricular activity, however, this thesis questions if these benefits are actually just the benefits from physical activity and whether they could be achieved without the embedded neoliberal ethos. I must note that many of these findings are based on American literature; literature from the UK is minimal. Yet, this does not negate the findings in any way and they still highlight the strong positive correlation between extra-curricular sporting activities and academic attainment.

The academic attainment is achieved through the transfer of cultural capital from the middle-class/upper-class parents who seek out opportunities for concerted cultivation for their children via the activity, which acts as a secondary socialisation sphere (see Bodvoski and Farkas, 2008). This secondary sphere includes a transfer of the Habitus (in Bordieuan terms) which means ‘class dispositions inculcated in family, social networks, neighbourhood and educational institutions, but is manifested in individual

expressions' (Widdop & Cutts, 2013: 109) and is a form of internalising social and structural norms (ibid) which, as shown earlier, can be achieved through schemas and assimilation. The extra-curricular activities act as a 'pre-employment' training (Weininger et al, 2015: 481) and it will be shown in a later section how it can also be viewed as adults in training. What is prominent about extra-curricular activities is that they are often used as a selection factor for prestigious colleges and universities (Kaufman and Gaber, 2004; Stevens, 2007 in Ibid) and in the hiring of elite professions (Rivera, 2011, ibid).

Pro-social

The pro-social benefits of physical activity branded as sport in general, cover both manifest and latent benefits. This is because through the process of socialisation – both primary and secondary - children are taught that the benefits they get from sport participation, especially team sports like football, provide them with the skills that enable them to be good citizens, which in turn result in the underlying benefits of society. I will outline some of these skills and speak briefly about the latent benefits, however, the latent benefits of sport will be discussed in more detail in chapter two. Socialisation is the assimilation of cultural norms, values, and attitudes into children (Frønes, 2016). It is achieved primarily through the family and secondarily through educational institutions and is an important concept throughout this thesis because the overall aim is to look at the possibility of the embedded harms that can result from the environments surrounding sport and leisure. Socialisation will be explored in more detail towards the latter part of this chapter when purposive leisure and family leisure are examined.

Pro-social benefits are those which ultimately affect the social life of a community and culture. Some of the pro-social benefits around physical activity and sport are the impact it can have on our wellbeing. This is a topical subject area because during the lockdowns of 2020 and into 2021, people have been allowed to have an hour of outdoor exercise. On the surface, this epitomizes the government's position on physical activity and endorses that this is an actual benefit e.g. you can go outside and walk, ride a bike, or go for a run. However, these activities do not exist outside of the profit motive and market forces therefore they are not pure or free from commodification. Although gyms and leisure centers were closed (notwithstanding a small number who have disobeyed and challenged this ruling) home exercise equipment sales rose by 5813% during lockdown (Fenton, 2020). What this shows is that physical activity in its purest sense is still entangled with consumer capitalism, technology, and consumerism. Additionally, exercising in isolation or with your household meant there was a limited social aspect to physical activity, with no team sports, and therefore no building up of community cohesion. Online platforms tried to regain some of this social aspect, but effects were limited.

When professional football resumed, amateur sports were still on hold, (BBC, 2020) indicating that the emperor was indeed naked. What I mean by this is that it was clear that the revenue, reputation, and the culture of professional football was prioritised, even though it placed players in life endangering situations and long periods of isolation away from their families. It showed that the benefits of physical activity are not the important aspect of football, game and it truly has become a form of entertainment (like the television programmes which continued filming). It has very little to do with inspiring children to play for the health benefits but because they could become someone special and have their own special rules; effectively the special

liberty that Hall (2012) speaks of. Moreover, a pro-social benefit of sport is to reduce the strain on the NHS by the population being healthy and fit; a message repeated throughout the pandemic, as Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

‘if we all do our bit, we can reduce our health risks and protect ourselves against coronavirus – as well as taking pressure off the NHS’ (Moscrop,2020).

However, professional football players are fit and still contract the virus (using the NHS resources) therefore the pro-social argument for putting amateur sports on hold does not follow, when government campaigns over the years indicate that the non-professional levels are much better for society from a health standpoint.

The fact that during the pandemic there was no or little social interaction in the earlier stages shows that the teamwork aspect of sport was also on the lower end of the sporting concerns. For example, P.E. throughout the pandemic was reduced to theoretical research on the body movements or activities outside which was weather permitting. My argument here is that if P.E. promotes teamwork and a sense of community etc. then why was the replacement an individual based activity. The pro-social benefits of physical activity seemed to dissolve in the wake of the pandemic when (evidenced by the benefits outlined by various governments for the best part of half a century) they should have been a critical lifeline for the wellbeing of the general population and not just used for entertainment purposes.

Family Benefit of Sport and Leisure

The other major area of benefits that are pertinent to this thesis are the benefits which the family receive, or perceive to receive, from any combination of participation. Lareau (2003; 2011) argues that families, based on their socio-economic status, developed different parenting styles to cultivate their children into specific traits.

Although I discussed earlier how this concept is not as static as Lareau claims, what is useful is the cultivation aspect of her landmark study and subsequent studies since. She conceptualised the idea of EAs, including those which involved physical activity, as instilling desired skills into children through the notion of play. This section will explore these concepts starting with purposive leisure, moving onto to fathering through sport, before examining the commonality that the benefits are rooted in; it will then finish on the concept of play.

Purposive Leisure

Today we experience leisure as increasingly centred around the family (Rojek, 2006) and my results will show that increasingly grassroots football is a family sport, with fathers coaching, mothers spectating, and siblings watching. The growth of the sport and leisure industry's impact on the built environment has created a degree of separation between workplaces and leisure places, with leisure places being planned around the family market (Clarke and Critcher, 1985). This shift towards family leisure is reflected within leisure studies research which has consistently pointed towards the home and family as a crucial site for childhood socialisation into life-long leisure participation in sport (Haycock and Smith, 2014). This shift to the family as a research topic is due to increasing evidence that social advantages and disadvantages are conveyed to children early on in life, often before they enter the formal education system (Wheeler and Green, 2018; Feinstein, 2003; Goodman, Gregg & Washbrook, 2011). Researchers have looked to the family for a source of answers (Wheeler and Green, 2018;) and the culmination of this research is what Shaw and Dawson (2001) call purposive leisure. They found that leisure in this sense was not a freedom but an obligation, which is not intrinsically motivated, and often involved a lot of work and effort on the part of the parents (Shaw and Dawson, 2001).

According to Shaw and Dawson (2001) purposive leisure is a way of achieving other parental obligations by engaging in physically active pursuits as a means of socialising children into positive and worthwhile leisure activities (Haycock and Smith, 2014).

They state that:

‘we recommend that family leisure should be seen as a form of purposive leisure, which is planned, facilitated, and executed by parents in order to achieve short- and long-term goals’ (2001: 228).

From this they name two themes which they highlighted in their study: firstly, that leisure pertains to the family’s functioning, including things such as interaction, communication, bonding and cohesion; secondly, it contains parents’ perceptions of the benefits of leisure to the family such as learning positive values and developing a healthy lifestyle (Shaw and Dawson, 2001). In essence, parents wanted their children to be physically, and mentally fit and healthy and family leisure provided a way to allow this. Evans and Davis (2015) found that this purposive leisure is linked to a family’s socio-economic status where the middle-classes have the means to enjoy and partake in leisure, whereas the working-classes will struggle more with the costs of such activities. However, Lareau (2003) found that this was associated with much more than merely a family’s socio-economic status. The results section will show how a link to socio-economic status is not necessarily the case within children’s football, for example, there are findings of a coach who subsidised costs and of a school who offered the service for free (but the children needed to be good enough to make the team). The perceived advantages of EAs, including the use of physical activity and purposive leisure, will be discussed further in the results. A point we should discuss here, that highlights the impact of precarity on family leisure, is the concept examined by Kay (2009) in *Fathering through Sport*.

Fathering Through Sport

The definition of fatherhood, according to Trussell and Shaw (2012), is a changing landscape. They note that from the 20th century a father's employment status, and thus his ability to provide for his family, was the underpinning of a strong ideological notion of fathering and masculinity (Brannen and Nilsen, 2006 in Trussell and Shaw, 2012) but this traditional assumption about family dynamics has been superseded as the dominant household configuration. Such (2009) found that in 2007 the reality was that dual-earner families are now the dominant configuration for families (Such, cited in Kay, 2009) which challenges previously cemented ideological notions of male identities and has increased the expectations that society now places upon fathers, who must now balance earning money and contributing to the childrearing practices of the household. Coakley (2006; 2009) talks about this changing family ideology, and how fathers' increased involvement reflects this change in ideological notions. Leisure time offers fathers a way of contributing to the childrearing practices (Brannen and Nilsen, 2006, in Trussell and Shaw, 2012), while 'reaffirm[ing] traditional gender ideology at the same time as they meet expectations for father involvement' (Coakley, 2009: 44). This shift from financial roles to caring roles (O'Brian, 2005 in Kay, 2009) is one way in which men, specifically fathers, must continuously seek to reconstruct their identity in liquid modernity. Fatherhood becomes one of the projects of the self where the father must continually work on self-improvement and is subject to self-scrutiny. Therefore, we can then take fathering through sport as another precarity in liquid modernity but, in this precariousness, sport and leisure take on the additional role of measuring their worth and success⁶ as a father. In this the child becomes part of their perpetual, liquid modernity driven, cycle of self-improvement. Nonetheless, fathering

⁶ Please see Coakley (2009) in Kay (2009) pages 43-45 for an in-depth look at how fathering measures their success.

does provide an interesting and under-researched area about parenting through sport and leisure in liquid modernity (Kay, 2009) and allows me to examine leisure and sport with a purpose in a non-traditional way. This thesis will contribute to this gap in the literature, especially in chapters seven and eight, and will continue to seek alternative lenses to examine children's sporting participation.

Commonality of the benefits of sport and leisure

In the late 1880s modern football, as we now understand it, was adopted by Muscular Christianity to instil the virtues of the middle-classes into the working-classes (Beavan, 2005). In the same way as society is experiencing sport and leisure today, children are being cultivated into these desired skills through sporting activity. Children being socialised or cultivated into desirable skills is not a new concept, nor is the idea of preparing them for life. Winlow (2014) and Ellis (2016) explore how men living within the deindustrialised north were prepared for life through tough love and abuse in their childhoods. Sport and leisure participation are a far cry from those experiences yet are linked theoretically; every parent is simply preparing their children for the world and supplying them with tools so they can optimally navigate it. Today this preparation is based on neoliberal ideals and is delivered through sport and, in this case, grassroots non-competitive football. As Harvey (2005) notes, within neoliberalism 'competition between individuals, between firms, between territorial entities is held to be a primary virtue' (cited in Beer, 2016: 12). Therefore, even though activities claim to be non-competitive, the way the activity itself is viewed as a tool for delivery of these neoliberal virtues and life skills, they cannot be anything but competitive. This competition can be against someone else, another team, or against yourself by way of improving yourself (Scharff, 2016) and it is then through these activities that children take on the concept of the neoliberal subject (Gallacher, 2020). This concept of cultivating children

into neoliberal virtues through non-competitive grassroots football is examined in detail in chapter six.

Where the examples above differ from each other is that the common assumption and framework that sport benefits are cited from, is one which claims there is less violence in the world and that we are inherently more civilised as a result. Whereas, the Winlow and Ellis examples come from a perspective that acknowledges violence as a core motivation which has been re-directed into socio-symbolic competition, and violent outbursts are the breakdown of this re-direction or pacification. We will return to the core ideas of the pseudo-pacification process through ultra-realism in the theoretical framework chapter, which is chapter 3. For now, the focus is on the civilising process and how this dominates the reasoning behind the benefits of sport and leisure activities in the current climate, including children's grassroots football.

The Civilizing Process

Elias and Dunning (1986[1993]) claim that violence was re-orientated or re-directed into modern sports from the middle-ages, meaning that society outside of this liminal sporting space would become more civilised. Therefore, they are responsible for the notion that sport acts as a civilising agent, containing violent outbursts. It is a compelling argument that can be seen in a variety of modern sports. If we take the example of modern football, we can easily trace how it changed from a form of brutality to the civilised game that is currently perceived within society (see Bevan, 2005; Hill, 2002). In their text *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process*, Elias and Dunning take the reader through a historic journey where they formulate the standardisation of society alongside the standardisation of sport; a process which they name Sportization.

The sportization of sports is, according to Wheaton :‘play-like activities becoming more regulated and organised’ (2013: 38). Cashmore (2010) further explores this as being the symmetry between the development of standardised forms of competitions. Rojek (1999) contends that Elias and Dunning’s contribution also involves the legitimised release of emotion [or aggression] in controlled and enjoyable ways. It is here that we can see that sportization involves the codification and order of sporting activities so that everyone understands the rules of the play-activity or game, which have been pacified over time, to enable enjoyment and a safe release of any extra emotions that cannot be released in everyday activities.

A prime example of Sportization in modern society is the conception of modern-day football. Football was not classified as a game until the legitimate rules of play were established and codified by the Football Association (FA) in 1863 (FIFA, 2017). Before this it was a disturbance and often games between local village parishes ended in violence (Hill, 2002) resulting in its prohibition. Today it is still prohibited in spaces such as housing estates and private land, but this is due to the potential damage to property, noise disturbance, and a general misconception that it is anti-social behaviour⁷. This is similar to what Raymen (2018) found in relation to parkour where he concluded that there is a neoliberal idea of specific places and spaces for activities, which are usually regulated by renting out space. This prohibition resulted in football becoming an established sport that is practised globally adhering to the same set of codified principles: children playing in the park are following the same rules as the

⁷ Tamworth Council have a webpage dedicated to this argument, which outlines the parameters of ASB, the child’s right to play and what to do in such instances. We can take this a blueprint for other LEAs. <https://www.tamworth.gov.uk/ball-games-ASB> [accessed 14/3/18].

World Cup final. The level of skill and technique displayed does not affect the controlled form of play and thus football in modernity was sportified.

Elias and Dunning have been accused of replacing aggressive or violent urges with a romanticised view of leisure (see Rojek, 1999); for generalising the functions of sport and never addressing what type of violence or aggression they are writing about (See Bodin and Robène, 2014) and it has been questioned if the civilising process is a valid expression of modern life (See Hall and Winlow, 2015). It has also been questioned as to whether we are actually pacified and if sport has just contributed to an already highly individualised and competitive society (See Bodin and Robène, 2014; Hall and Winlow, 2015; Hall, 2012). Nonetheless it is clear, from the example of football and the creation of the FA, that on a practical level football was indeed codified or sportified in modernity. We do not need to agree with every aspect of Elias' civilising process to ~~be able to~~ deduce that sport underwent the processes of sportization, and indeed the central premise of pacification will be discussed in this thesis in due course. Currently this Sportization is still taking place as we can see with newly formed sports such as parkour (See Wheaton, 2013; Raymen, 2018) and it is not, as this thesis contends, the sportization process of the sport in question which has resulted in its demise. It is, as Lasch (1979) suggests, its trivialisation, which will be discussed in chapter five.

Elias and Dunning furthered their argument by claiming that sport is indeed a symbolic representation of 'a non-violent, non-militant form of competition between states' (1986 [1993]: 23) and heeded that we should remember that sport is foremost a competition and the violence experienced within it should not harm the competitors. We can again see an example of this in modern ice hockey where the main competitors are shielded, to an extent, from the violence by their teams' enforcers. Increasingly, rules introduced in sporting activity are about shielding the players from violence, e.g. the use of

headers in football. However, the crux of their argument is that there is still the need for an acceptable amount of legitimised violence. Rojek (1999) contends that Elias and Dunning saw this violence as a necessity because it was in fact the legitimate release of emotion in a controlled and enjoyable way. This release is needed within every society as a counter-measure against rising stress and tensions, however, for it to perform these manifest and latent functions of society, as Elias and Dunning have shown, the activity itself needed to be regulated so that the violence was legitimate. It is in this legitimisation and regulation that Elias and Dunning saw the civilization process:

‘But in order to fulfil the function of providing the release of stress tensions, these activities must conform to the comparative sensitivity to physical violence which is a characteristic of people’s social habitus at the later stages of a civilizing process’ (1986[1993] : 41-42).

However, if we accept the civilizing process and its legitimate space for violence, we would be ignoring the systemic harms that also result from the sporting activity, as well as ignoring an alternative explanation for why there is such underlying violence within sport, and truly missing the point of critical exploration. Therefore, I believe that we need to address the underlying systemic harms that can occur within sport, which is the aim of this thesis.

The Loss of Play

The sportization of grassroots football leads to a loss of play for the children. Many childhood theories cite that playing through learning is a good and beneficial tool for learning, including the commodification of P.E. as discussed earlier. Play behaviour according to Haywood et al. (1995) is used by social scientists as a tool to socialise the child or to cultivate them, as discussed earlier. Games are utilised to socialise children into the ‘values, roles, practices, beliefs and conventions of society’ (Haywood

et al., 1995: 15). Lasch (1979) furthers this argument by claiming that play fulfils the need for fantasy. Huizinga (1938) believed that it is play which sets humanity aside from other animals; he uses the term *Homo Ludens* to explain how the human race has evolved from other species, and believes that we organise our social life around play and games (cited in Caillois). Lasch (1979) believes that, as modernity progressed, work became subjected to routine and therefore games and play offered a different dimension, while keeping the need for concentration and retaining stimulation. We can correlate this with the rise of football through modernity (for an overview see Hill, 2002) and, notably, Huizinga claimed that play can only be deemed play when people are engaging in it for intrinsic motivational factors. This is what Caillois (1961) called the duality of play; on the one hand we play for no external motivation, yet on the other, it holds value because it satisfies a purpose in society.

This duality is what makes play a worthy point in a discussion about children's leisure time, as the concept of play consumes much of that time, whether in EAs, P.E. or free time. Caillois (1961) developed a four-level model to explore the way in which goals or values ascribed to play are relational to its intrinsic qualities. The first is that, motivationally speaking, play is an instinct. The second is that games have become a formal system of education, and concepts such as 'learning through play' are evident in pushing play into the extrinsic motivational zone; if a child is forced to play a game in P.E. to learn the rules of society then that child has no freedom of choice. We can question here if they are still playing. The third level uses socialisation theories to try and keep play as close to its intrinsic roots as possible so that it does not lose its use-value. Level four is structured gameplay or games with rules. These explorations allow an in-depth examination of leisure displaying both forms of motivational values, for example, different people play the same game for different reasons.

We can use the concept of this thesis to explore these four levels. Grassroots football for children in the first instance starts with the toddler child kicking a ball in their garden or park. This moves then to level two wherein a child's parent or school adopts the use-value of football to try and socialise that child into core societal values. The Premier League Primary Stars values are: 'be ambitious, be inspiring, be connected and be fair' (PLPS, 2018) and grassroots football specifically seeks to socialise children into these values. Level three shows us that, if football retains that first feeling of kicking a ball, it keeps the alignment of the game close to the intrinsic reasons that a child wants to play it. The fourth level is where grassroots football epitomises structured gameplay. We can now imagine a scenario where a variety of children are playing football for several differing reasons; some because they love playing the game (while subconsciously being socialised into dominant values of society) others because their friends play it and, for some, it is a requirement through P.E. or EAs.

Given this variety of reasons, can it still be classed as play? To some extent it is, but if we break it down we know that play loses its value as soon as it is used for educational purposes (Lasch, 1979) and in a modern liquid state the child cannot escape the concept of play as a learning tool. It is through football, through the privatisation of P.E. and play spaces, that childhood has lost all sense of playing.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the literature surrounding childhood and its function. By looking at the different ways in which parents tackled their role as parents and how they have been influenced and guided by the government and its ideology surrounding competition, fitness, and what is best for the child; it has highlighted how even education is a commodity that has been undergoing the influence of privatisation since the emergence of New Labour in the 1990s. This exemplifies how consumerism

hijacks childhood by surrounding children with an endless array of commodities. But where Bauman (2005) claims we have moved on from the human body as a commodity, this chapter has shown that, through the guise of fitness and wellness, there has been an evolution. So that rather than fully replacing the body with the soul (ibid) the soul and body of childhood is, as Postman (1994) suggested at the opening of this chapter, disappearing and being expelled from the garden of childhood.

Chapter 2:

Criminology, Sport, and Leisure

Introduction

Sports criminology is not a topic that is graced with huge popularity; it scarcely appears on any criminology curriculum and when it is offered or discussed it is often regarding the spectacle crimes or legal transgressions around sport. For example, Edge Hill University offer 'The Criminal Law and Sport' (Edgehill, 2021). This is not to say that spectacular crimes or legal transgressions are not important to study in the world of sport and criminology, but they offer little insight into the wider harms that can be experienced because of sport participation. This chapter will start by exploring the current landscape of sports criminology, looking at the overt criminal acts that are studied in this area of criminology, before moving on to looking at the overt harm which also results from sporting participation. The chapter will then introduce the concept of deviant leisure by looking at how hidden and embedded harms are ignored within criminology. This chapter will then examine why these hidden harms are barely discussed within criminology by returning to the idea of the benefits that are yielded from participation. However, in this chapter (unlike chapter 1) we will also examine the latent benefits of sport on a social level. We will explore how sport is often cited as a way of retaining social peace and averting unwanted behaviour, before turning our attention again to how criminology interacts with these behaviour altering claims. We

will examine the idea of using sport as a tool of desistence and rehabilitation through prison projects and youth training schemes. This thesis will address what is missing in this literature and again challenge the framework on which it is predicated (Elias, as seen in chapter 1) before providing a summary of what this literature means for hidden harms of children's grassroots football.

Criminology, Sport, and Overt Crime and Harm

When criminology intersects with sport it is either as a celebration of diversionary tactics from crime or it is to study the crime and deviance of specific behaviours which transcend the socio-legal concept of crime and deviance. This section will firstly address the gap in the literature around sports criminology before looking at what has been done to rectify this, then move on to looking at where and when sport does feature in criminology. Sports criminology is a fairly young area: it has yet to feature in *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology* and does not appear in many core criminology programmes. There are, however, some criminologists working within the area of sports criminology both here in the UK and internationally. However, these interactions with sports criminology all seem to focus on overt forms of harm and crime. Nic Groombridge produced the first sports criminology book, aptly entitled *Sports Criminology*, in 2017. In it, he outlines various games and sports, and links this to criminology in a broad sense. He concentrates on different types of sport and then uses this as a platform to discuss other sports, which, according to him, work on the same premise. The book follows the trend of how sports criminology is growing within the UK; that is, it is most interested in the overt crimes and harms within the criminological gaze.

Brisman (2018) offers an insightful critique into Groombridge's foray into sports criminology. He states that sports criminology is lacking in some areas; it does not

define what is considered as sport, and it establishes varying purposes of sport over time. Brisman calls it a 'stake-in-bed' book, meaning it offers no new insight (2018:1), and it is concerned with the 'policing of sports rather than why athletes commit crime' (2018: 3). Deborah Jump (2019) holds a similar opinion and says that although Groombridge wanted to address criminology more generally rather than to achieve a specialism within criminology for sport, that he achieved too much of the former and that he should be considered more as a contributor to a wider interpretation of sports criminology than as a subject specialist. This is not to say that Groombridge is the only one guilty of this: there are many authors who concentrate on specific areas within criminology and sport without having produced an overview textbook. What these authors do have in common is their use of sport to highlight overt crimes and harms within the sport itself, or they use sport as a tool within the criminal justice system to offer a way of rehabilitation or diversion from criminal paths. The latter of these will be discussed in the second half of this chapter. For now, we will concentrate on areas which are in abundance in criminology, which is acts that are deemed as criminal and/or deviant.

Despite being a fairly large area within the discipline of criminological sport studies, Kevin Young correctly ascertains that

'until recently "sports violence" seems to have been understood in both lay circles and inside the academy as largely restricted to the organised hostilities of European soccer fans and the injurious proclivities of North American ice hockey players. Almost all other aspects of what one might reasonably consider as "violence connected to the sports process" have been understudied or not studied at all' (2015: 640).

During what Young (2015) termed the first wave of violence sociology, and by extent criminology, ventured into sports violence by way of football hooligans and football fandom (Young, 2015). However, this shifted to include broader areas of football after the Hillsborough disaster, where Young comments 'A constellation of approaches

(from social psychological to Figurational to Marxian) underpinned this outpouring, but none more prodigious than the so called Leicester School' (2015: 641). The Leicester school being the Figurational input from Elias and Dunning that we touched upon in chapter 1 and which we shall return to later in this chapter. Others have commented that violence is hard to pin down (Cashmore, 2010) and that sports related violence is cathartic. Beisser (1967) stated that

'there can be little doubt about the advantages of confining violence to the athletic field if it frees man to act in humane manner at other times. Certainty to compete in a symbolic way in sports and thus to avoid wanton killing is consistent with the highest goals of civilisation' (cited in Young, 2019: 7).

One would be forgiven for linking this to the works of Elias (and later Elias and Dunning) because it promotes symbolic violence over actual violence and believes that this is an acceptable cost of civilisation. There are a number of problems with this approach. Firstly, symbolic violence can and does promote physical violence on a mass level. If we think about how many children watch football, this doesn't even have to be a regular occurrence. The World Cup, which is the most popular football competition in the world, saw this symbolic violence spill into physical violence both on and off the pitch, with some places suffering damage to property and businesses because of it. Secondly, the violence on the football pitch is rarely symbolic, for example, Luis Suárez has famously bitten three of his opposing team members on separate occasions. Thirdly, symbolic violence has the potential to be as harmful as physical violence, which is something often missed out in mainstream studies around violence.

Football and Violence

Football is no exception to the reporting of overt crimes and harms as Haynes (2016) states 'football stories have long appeared outside the confines of the sport pages, particularly those involving sex, violence, drugs or gambling scandals' (in Cashmore

and Dixon, 2016: 117). Football has a long history of overt violence, which makes the modern game seem non-violent in comparison, yet this thesis claims that there is still both overt and hidden violence within modern football. The history of football will now be explored before looking at modern day concepts of violence within the game, and then moving onto another overt crime, cheating.

History of Football

It should be noted that football's conception is highly contested. However, Giulianotti (2009) accepts the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) literature that tends to highlight ancient games, such as Tsu-Chu played in China circa 2 BC, the Japanese Kermari from 12 AD (Goldblatt, 2006 in Giulianotti, 2009) and Calcio, a version of football played in the 16th century by Florentines with social status. The British conception of football came from religious festivals such as Shrove Tuesday, where various parishes would play each other and Henderson (2001) states this could have been as early as the 8th century (in Giulianotti, 2009). These games were highly volatile, using weapons, and sometimes ending in death (Birley, 1993). Gulotta (1980) reports cases of player violence entering the British court system as early as 1878 (in McPherson et al, 1989) and speaks of one extreme case in which a player died as a result of their injuries on the playing field; the other player being charged with a play that was 'beyond the spirit and intent of the game' (McPherson et al, 1989: 97). These examples highlight why, in comparison, today's version of football seems less violent.

However, in the case of violence it is more likely that it is just handled internally by the match officials than by being reported or recorded as a crime. For example, when Suárez bit his third opposing teammate in the group stages of the 2014 World Cup, it was not reported or treated as a crime, but was handled internally by FIFA. Suárez was banned from 9 international matches (the first nine matches of the premier league

season of 2014/2015) he was fined 100,000 Swiss francs and dropped from Adidas as a model (BBC Sport, 2021). This also highlights the liminality of the game where violence is concerned, because outside of FIFA's protection, biting someone in the UK could amount to actual bodily harm (ABH) which carries a sentence of up to five years imprisonment, which is more likely to be handed out if it is not their first offence (Laver, 2021). Suárez has not bitten anyone outside of a football match, so he has never been charged for it, but this begs questions around what happens in football to cause him to bite other players.

Returning to the history of football, the game practiced by the elites was much more civilised in comparison to the earlier battles of the parishes outlined above. In the late 19th century, the elites wanted to instill these values and practices into the working-class. The game by this time was more organised and propagated on the 'Muscular Christianity' movement, promoting appropriate values such as self-discipline and teamwork (Haywood et al, 1995). Football was codified by rules drafted in Cambridge in 1862 and the Football Association (FA) was founded a year later. From this time its popularity grew, and by 1888 the first leagues appeared in the North and the Midlands. The Elementary Education Act 1870 aided this popularity by expanding the game into elementary schools; teachers came from universities where football was very popular, so the game was passed down (Birley, 1993) through both generations and classes. This period also experienced the first international game of football, the creation of the International Football Association Board (IFAB) and the first English football tour of Europe (Smart, 2007). This is the birth of modern football as we know it, with rules to prevent violence and passing on required civilising traits.

The introduction of football leagues also cemented the idea that football could be a form of entertainment, in the sense that it created the spectator aspect, which is just

as important to the influence of society as the physical act of playing the games. By the mid-1890s spectatorship was attracting between 300,000 and 400,000 fans weekly (Beaven, 2005). The leagues were run by local businessmen who took advantage of the legislation around businesses being granted immunity from liability of debt and bankruptcy (see Hill, 2002) and clubs such as Sheffield United and Nottingham County took football into a 'commercial ambience' (Mason cited in Hill, 2002: 27). This was achieved by enclosing the ground, charging gate fees, and paying players in line with a 'combination of capital formation and legal protection enshrined in limited liability status' (Hill, 2002: 27). This resulted in a successful business model for football, which is still in use today. As a result of both the playing and spectating of football, Beaven concludes that 'the rules of society were learnt on the nation's playing fields' (Beaven: 74).

Fan-based Violence

Redhead claimed that football hooligan literature is recounting 40 years of 'aggressive male football freedom' (2009: 17). He believed that football hooligan studies were formulated and trashy and that they did not shed any light on what was really happening on the ground (or close to the grounds, as the case may be) and the only way that the police knew to manage this was through control and order forms of policing. In a time where football is being consumed through an increasingly mediated format (Redhead, 2009; Dixon and Cashmore, 2016) the game is somewhat of a simulation (Baudrillard, 1998) yet, the football hooligans are there week in week out at the games or fighting before the games. At this point I would like to drop the term hooligans because I feel that, like Ayres and Treadwell (2012), we are more concerned about the fan violence within firms, which is where most of the criminological literature

is placed. Ayres and Treadwell (2012) found that cocaine use and alcohol, along with fighting, created identities around a supreme masculinity where men were measured against either the number of drugs and alcohol consumed or their ability to fight the other firm. In addition, it was clear that for their participants cocaine was part of the football day experience. This experience is one of escapism for the individuals who partake in the fighting; football violence was simply a way of letting off steam with others who wanted to let off steam too. This study deviates from the mainstream criminology literature on football violence that Redhead (2009) alluded to. Most commentators see these men as mindless thugs, and usually part of a wider political right group such as the English Defense League (EDL). Whereas the meets are organized in advance, rules are set out, and those who do not follow them are looked upon unfavorably within the community. Either way, football violence is a part of the football community and should be included in such criminological studies.

Cheating in sports

Cheating in sports is not a new concept and it is, again, part of the spectacular reporting and engagement that the public and social sciences have with sport. 'Sport is a situation in which anti-social conduct, such as doping, foul play, aggression (instrumental or not), cheating and gamesmanship behaviour is widely present' (Kavussanu *et al.*, 2009 in Verdaguer *et al.*, 2017: 28). This section will briefly examine the role of cheating and doping within sports before looking at how criminology interacts with cheating and doping in an overt sense. There are many forms of cheating within various different types of sports, and I am using the definition of cheating as 'a violation of regulations whether they are official or inferred (but commonly understood and accepted by the participants) guidelines of the sport' (Kamis *et al.*, 2016: 551).

Throughout their article Kamis *et al.* (2016) briefly take the reader through the history of cheating in sports; they start at the Olympics in Greece and bring us up to the Russian Olympic team in 2016, pulling out examples of behaviour that involve assault, doping, bounty hunting, bribery, and gambling. What is striking about the commentary they provide is that only one of their examples, ‘Skatergate’,⁸ ended in a criminal outcome, albeit community service.

There have been a couple of studies in relation to children and cheating within sports and these can be found outlined by Boyan (2012). These studies, as Boyan (2012) notes, are usually bound within wider teammate discussions and predictors for cheating. What is most pertinent to my study and the results that follow in chapters 5, 6 and 7 is the study by Minoura (1992) who found that children around the age of nine (similar to that of my research) begin to pick up on ‘social and cultural cues’ (Boyan, 2012: 73) about socially accepted rules. This is similar to what is found in the literature around children’s development and advertising; because a child cannot understand the context of what is being presented to them until a specific part of their brain develops, enhancing their cognitive understanding (Mayo and Nairn, 2009). These studies and beliefs are rooted in Piaget’s (1950) Cognitive Development Theory (CDT) and researchers in consumer socialisation have agreed on a three-stage process through which children mature. These ages are like Piaget’s developmental stages but omit the first of the four stages, sensor motor stage, and have been tailored to consider consumer socialisation. The first of the three stages are aged 3-7, known as the perpetual stage; secondly, 7-11 is the analytical stage; and lastly, 11+ is the reflective stage (Mayo and Nairn, 2009). Put simply, if a child is around something which is seen

⁸ An incident where a world-class figure skater hired individuals to injure her opponent and eliminate her as a threat in the 1994 Olympics (Kamis *et al.*, 2016).

and developed as a social and cultural norm then they will, by the age of nine, understand when and where to use this behaviour, which can be in direct violation of fair game policies. For example, children playing football pull a Neymar:⁹ where they emulate the world class player diving. It is something which has been socially and culturally embedded into their cognitive development.

Criminology and Cheating

Sports criminology looks at cheating through a skewed legality. There are sports laws in existence around movement of players, wages, if a contest is lawful, or when someone can lawfully collect a sample. There is very little in the way of sports cheating being managed by the legal system; as noted earlier, sports fall into a liminal category where the governing bodies are somehow more responsible for punishment rather than the laws. This liminality, of course, only applies to crimes committed on the sports field. The arrest, trial, and verdict of the *Oscar Pistorius*¹⁰ case proves that sports stars are not exempt from the laws of a country, nor is this what I am claiming. I am, however, claiming that on their chosen fields' athletes are firstly ruled by the relevant governing body, which often avoids legal proceedings that could be applied if it had happened in a different place or space. There is very little examination of cheating within the criminological literature; there is some coverage in other social sciences, such as psychology or law, but it seems to be missing from criminology.

In Groombridge's *Sports Criminology* (2017) he lists the various theories of criminology and applies them to sports in a more generic way of thinking, for example, sport is rooted in classical theory because it has a set of rules that must be obeyed or punishment will occur. But neither he nor criminology tends to venture beyond the

⁹ Please see <https://youtu.be/vruEFPu-Gr8> for children pulling a Neymar.

¹⁰ Although it could be argued that he received a more lenient sentence because of his status.

pathological explanations of those who already fit within defined parameters of criminological theories or issues, such as doping or match fixing. We as criminologists need to move beyond this generic idea of sport and criminology and start to address the underlying harms that are also resulting from sport. Sport as a socialiser for children is often valued in a pro-social way, ignoring the harms, such as pulling a Neymar when they are showing that they are willing to do what it takes to win. This thesis starts to unpick some of these issues and serves them as a way of bringing the issues to light, thus giving criminology a starting place.

Sexual Abuse in Sports

If historical child abuse cases have taught us anything it is that the criminal justice system, and society more widely, has not dealt with this in an appropriate manner. Take the case of Barry Bennell, who was not prosecuted until 2016 from cases starting in 1979. He was convicted of 22 cases of sexual abuse and there were 100s more who came forward, but their cases were not prosecuted (Guardian, 2021). The subject of sexual abuse has recently been in the media because of a review into how the FA dealt with historical child abuse claims. The report conducted by Clive Sheldon (2021) examined cases of sexual abuse in football from 1970-2005; it found that there were a great number of children who suffered abuse in football, however he also acknowledges many more will have gone unreported. There are figures from Operation Hydrant,¹¹ which are accessible through the HOLMES (Home Office Large Major Enquiry System) database, but Sheldon is careful to point out that these figures

¹¹ Operation Hydrant is a coordination hub which was set up in June 2014 to 'deliver the national policing response, oversight, and coordination of non-recent child sexual abuse investigations concerning persons of public prominence, or in relation to those offences which took place within the institutional settings' (NPCC, 2021 [online]).

reflect the Operation Hydrant criteria and that there is, therefore, a dark figure surrounding these cases. Nonetheless, this is the only form of quantifiable data we have in this area. Operation Hydrant found that there were 240 suspects within football and 692 survivors. Sheldon points out that the media reported on those in professional clubs or feeder clubs to professional clubs, however, he acknowledges that the abuse happened at all levels:

'however, there were also many cases of abuse that occurred in the grassroots game. This is reflected in a number of the Crown Court records that have been examined by the Review Team, as well as a number of criminal trials that have recently taken place' (Sheldon, 2021: 14).

This highlights one of my original points in this chapter that overt and spectacular events are studied and brought into public knowledge, and that there are harms (and crimes in this case) at all levels of football; and that, once again, the grassroots movement has been overshadowed by the professional game. Whilst it is worthwhile to study and try to prevent this type of crime and harm, it is overt, in the sense that people know it has happened and safety protocols are now in place by the FA to protect children. Criminology tends to engage with child sexual abuse through the lens of pedophilia and to my knowledge there is no subcategory for football coaches as abusers.

Non-Sexual Abuse within Sports

There are texts from wider literature that examine abuse within sport, or rather, elite sport, such as Pablo David (2005) who looked at the human rights of children within elite sports. In this text he looks at the effects on the body of early elite training and how the Human Rights Act can be useful in trying to protect the children's childhoods effectively. He believed that sporting communities were failing to protect the children's

human rights. David laid blame at the media stating they often promote distorted views of success and what success looks like in sport. He also explores the role of competition, which is an important notion throughout this thesis. He believes that competition in itself is neither good nor bad; he claims it is a social process and is neutral until an adult place a bias on it for the child, and that it is often through competitive sports that 'major tension between the interests of the child and those of adults' are revealed (2005: 8). David also states that until the age of nine (which is the same age that Minoura (1992) found that children could start to understand social cues) children are incapable of differentiating between effort and ability. Up to this age, children believe that winning can only be achieved through trying hard and when they lose it is not because they do not have the ability but is because they do not try hard enough (Murphy, 1999 in David, 2005: 39). Therefore, children internalise their losses because they do not understand any other way; this is a concept that will be picked up in chapter 6. Furthermore, losing does not actually mean anything to a child until we, as adults and society, give them that notion:

'joy and sadness are not synonymous with winning and losing in the minds of young athletes – at least not until adults teach them so' (Martens, 1978: 279 in David, 2015: 39).

Therefore, the activity itself, such as football, is not inherently harmful. It is the environment in which we have shaped football, and the concept of competition, that has the potential to be silently harmful.

A report conducted by Alexander *et al.* (2012) for the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) looked at the experiences of children participating in organised sport in the UK. Based on a three-year online survey study they looked at the retrospective experiences of adults aged 18-22, from when they

practised sport as a child (up to the age of 16). The report found that there was limited literature examining the range of negative experiences within organised sport, and that before 2001 only a quarter of the sporting governing bodies had child protection policies. They found that 75% of the children in their study experienced some form of emotional harm, and that the relationships with coaches were of the intensity of a close personal relationship. They acknowledge that there is a limited scope to research into harms and that when it is focused around emotional harm it is usually within a familial context rather than an institutionalised one. Hopefully, the above-mentioned Sheldon report (2021) will mark a change in direction for research policies. Although this report is a useful starting point for looking at harm within children's grassroots football, the information is somewhat limited, for example, they provide figures on emotional harm and explain how it is not examined properly or in the right context, but they themselves simply quantified this emotional harm into categories without looking at the individual effects it could have or why it was. As the results of this thesis will show, there is an institutional phenomenon, to perpetuate and embed this practice and culture of harm into organised sports at all levels, including non-competitive ones.

Abuse, cheating, and interpersonal violence all have the potential to transcend the socio-legal construct of crime and are therefore overtly accepted in whatever form as a legitimate study of criminology; this is not to say that these acts do not involve harm but to point out that they are also criminal. This section will now move onto the overt harms which are also studied, at least partly, by criminologists. It will briefly explore concepts such as toxic masculinity and the harms for people who play sports at the cost of their own health, before moving on to looking at why these overt crimes and harms have been allowed to continue.

Toxic Masculinity

Toxic masculinity is often cited as a being perpetuated by sports (Anderson, 2009 in Adams, *et al.*, 2010). Yet, Owen (2012) claims that masculinity is a contested praxis and concept of the everyday. Masculinity is a constructed term and in today's society is more fluid than ever. With a postmodern turn in society it is ever more important to state the meanings of terms. Masculinity, according to Kimmel, is

‘a man *in* power, a man *with* power, and a man *of* power. We equate manhood with being strong, successful, capable, reliable and in control’ (1994: 125, cited in Ellis, 2016: 23 [original emphasis]).

It is this form of masculinity that Ellis (2016) claims is achieved through physical coercion and violence, and this is where Jump's (2020), McMahon and Jumps (2018) and Jump and Smithson's (2020) work, on boxing as a diversion, comes in. It will be discussed in more detail in the latter half of this chapter, but, for now, we can use her concept that boxing is a diversionary tactic that allows men to be men and to display male attributes in a safe and controlled way, rather than the ways found by Ellis (2016). No matter whether the violence is legitimate or illegal, the traits of masculinity are still being reproduced.

More recently, masculinity can be said to be in crisis (Ellis, 2016; Coakley, 2003; Kay, 2009). There is an increase in a more balanced working-life, males are less likely to be the sole breadwinners, and male life biographies are no longer static and fixed. This has plunged men's mental health downwards, as evidenced by ever increasing male suicide rates. Mental health campaigns such as *Movember* (a month-long awareness campaign centered on male mental health and suicide prevention) and the football related *FC Not Alone* and *Heads Up* have been set up to provide a safe space for men to talk and get help. The other way sport is reproducing this idea of what it

means to be a man is through football. Kay (2009) looked at 'fathering through sport' and found that football is a good way for men to spend time with their children in a positive environment and without losing that masculine edge:

'individually, men face strong tensions between the traditional role of provider and the modern role of carer that, as fathers, they are expected to embrace and combine' (Kay, 2009: 8).

This notion of fathering through sport will be picked up in chapter 7 when I look at the toxic masculinity of the parents in children's non-competitive grassroots football. (I say parents because my findings support that it is more a parent phenomenon rather than a gender based one in today's society). Through their parents, children are expected to reproduce their parent's values of winning and losing and gaining an edge over the marketplace that is life.

Harm to Participants

There are a group of critical criminologists and sociologists who are working out of Canada exploring the idea that those who are participating in sport are doing so at the risk of physical and mental harm to themselves. This section will briefly explore this innovative area of criminology and explore how it can be applied to the current Covid-19 situation. In sport are doing so at a risk to their physical and mental health. There are several publications and a podcast which questions the end of sport, as well as an upcoming edited collection on critical approaches to sport. Firstly, Kennedy and Silva (2020) explore the punitive logics and governance in sport; in this article they discuss the role of the NHL (National Hockey League) in responsabilizing players and endorsing/accepting vigilantism and refusing to implement structural changes which could prevent the harm and struggles of the players. These struggles include 'financial

struggles, chronic physical and mental health issues, and the early deaths of a host of former players' (Kennedy and Silva, 2020: 658).

They are not alone in their pursuit of examining sport as a way of perpetuating harm which, 'builds on existing scholarship regarding the exploitation of athletes in a neoliberal capitalist system' (Kennedy and Silva, 2020: 672). There are the recent works of Kalman-Lamb, who has an impressive catalogue of work around sport, fandom, inequalities, and athletes as a commodity (Kalman-Lamb, 2018; 2019; 2020). He also shares a popular podcast with Silva and Mellis where they question aspects of sport from a critical and harm-based perspective. They are currently exploring the example that sports have not been cancelled in the face of Covid-19 because the entertainment industry needs to make a profit:

'college football is all the ugliest facets of U.S. Society: unapologetic racism, violence, raw exploitation, and endless harm all so that powerful people and institutions can make a buck' (Kalman-Lamb, Silva, and Mellis, 2020).

They use examples from college football coaches and medics from the SEC (Southern Eastern Conference) and the ACC (Atlantic Coast Conference) to show that the authorities could not guarantee a Covid free environment for the sport, and yet they carried on anyway, posing a risk to 100s of players and those who they came into contact with.

There was a similar situation in the UK when premier league and other professional football was allowed to continue during the pandemic, clearly demonstrating that football is also a business in the entertainment industry. No longer could the government hide behind the rhetoric that football is needed to improve mental health, it is good exercise, or that it is a good tool for learning and development, because they had banned all grassroots forms of the game. Football throughout the pandemic was

subject to business decisions based around the global economy of football; international competition dates were taken into consideration as to when the leagues could play and finish. The government itself was held accountable to global football fixtures yet people continued to buy into the fandom and 'need' for the game. Fans adapted to watching their favorite teams online and on tv, the football shows started to adapt to an online audience and spaced-out guests, much like the rest of the entertainment industry. Society ignored this and conformed to the market principles: we knew players would get Covid, we knew they would not all follow the rules, yet throughout the pandemic (at a time when mental health issues rose significantly because of lockdown) professional football was allowed despite the continued harm it could cause to the players and those in their networks, in the terminology of Žižek (1989) it was fetishistically disavowed.

Harm and Criminology

The shift towards examining the potential harm in society reflects a shift within the discipline of criminology; although criminology is still debating with itself over what should be included in harm, and others feel that it should include more harm. Hillyard and Tombs (2005) started to bring social harm into the confines of criminology back in 2005 when they urged criminologists to take harm seriously:

‘the principle aim of the social harm approach is to move beyond the narrow confines of criminology with its focus on harms defined by whether or not they constitute a crime, to a focus on all the different types of harm, which people experience from the cradle to the grave’ (Hillyard and Tombs, 2005: 1).

They highlighted to the discipline that many harms that occur are outside of the criminal law or are handled without resorting to it. We discussed this earlier in relation to FIFA and the FA dealing in-house with what could be constituted as crimes (and

are most definitely harms). This is where the concept of social harm is integral to this thesis; children's grassroots football is seen as non-harmful nor criminal, so it has been ignored by criminology (unless it covered one of the aforementioned spectacular areas of crime and harm). Whereas, using a social harm approach, the results chapters of this thesis will show how when we bring to light the harms from liberalism's triumph, consumer capitalism, we can see how areas of sport and leisure, including children's non-competitive grassroots football, can be instrumentally harmful.

In order to achieve this, we must delve deeper into the concept of social harm, moving on from when Hillyard and Tombs made the call to look beyond criminology, there is still the same debate and divide within criminology and zemiology (Boukli & Kotzé, 2018; Pemberton, 2016) as to where exactly harm should situate itself within the wider realms of academia. Hall and Winlow (2015) claim that the concept of harm is fast changing and that many types of harm are now normalized by the everyday and the presentation in the media, and systemically ignored by the over administrative discipline of criminology. The definition of social harm is also somewhat problematic; it has never really had a set definition (Pemberton, 2016) and is often used interchangeably with the concept of the study of harms: zemiology. Social harm according to Pemberton (2016) represents the study of socially mediated harms. Lloyd furthers this explanation and gives us a working set of parameters that social harm can and does cover thus far:

'Social harm invites the extension of the criminological gaze beyond the horizon of legality (Hillyard and Tombs, 2004; Pemberton, 2016). Whilst debate continues between social harm as an extension of the criminological discipline and zemiology as an independent study of social harm (see Hillyard and Tombs, 2017; Copson, 2016), the concept of harm infuses key topics including environmental damage (Hall, 2015; White and Heckenberg, 2014), *workplace safety* (Tombs and Whyte, 2007), leisure (Smith and Raymen, 2016), and poverty (Gordon, 2004). The limitations of crime as a conceptual category raise

questions about the ability to place criminal activity and state responses in a wider context (Copson, 2013)' (2019: 15).

This thesis will draw upon the deviant leisure typology of harm to situate children's grassroots football within the wider context of society, examining those mediated harms through a critical lens. More recently, Raymen (2019) has picked up on Pemberton's (2016) notion of being free from harm as a way of human flourishing. In his highly regarded theoretical piece on the enigma of social harm, Raymen examines what this social good is and what it would mean to be able to flourish. He argues that

'some of the most significant problems facing contemporary society not only lie beyond the present scope of legal prohibition but are thoroughly normalized and integral to the functioning of liberal-capitalist political economy' (2019: 134).

This functioning of the liberal-capitalist political economy is where we intersect again with the manifest and latent benefits of sports.

Societal Benefits of Sport

As outlined throughout chapter 1 there are numerous benefits which can be extrapolated from the physical activity element of sport. These are divided into manifest and latent within chapter 1 and here we are going to pick up this concept on a societal level rather than that of an individual (as in chapter 1). The idea that sport is good for society will be explored in this section before looking at some examples of how sport has been employed as a tool of coercion and control by those in power and justified by those in administrative criminology. This section will then look at how sport, specifically football and boxing, has been studied and explored as a tool of desistance, by looking at some schemes set out by football clubs and youth organizations to try and keep youths on the right path in life.

Action for Sport

In chapter 1, we learnt that sport and leisure underwent a cultural transformation rooted in early modernity and based loosely on Victorian capitalism. Sport and leisure increasingly became organized around industrial ideas of pro-social benefits; largely built on notions that sport, especially football, could be used as a way of instilling desired values into the working-classes (Haywood, *et al*, 1995; Clarke and Critcher, 1985; Jefferys, 2012). These beliefs laid the foundations of what would almost seem like a natural belief in society; one that sees sport as an inherently good tool for imparting civilizing values onto those in society who need it. This belief is derived from the Civilizing Process outlined in chapter 1 and which will be revisited in chapter 3. It can be seen in the example of Action for Sport.

In 1981 the Brixton area of London saw three days of rioting by young black males who were faced with high unemployment rates, racism, and little or no political voice (Lea and Hallsworth, 2012). The Scarman report (1981) concluded that it was 'essentially an outburst of anger and resentment by young black people against the police' (Jefferson, 2012: 1). The immediate trigger for the riots was Operation Swamp which, as Jefferson (2012) outlines, was a 10-day operation where 150 plain clothes police officers made over 1000 stop and searches and 500 arrests in the Brixton community. This insensitive policing towards black and deprived communities sparked the riots which sparked the Scarman report of 1981 which 'highlighted heavily racialized and antagonistic forms of policing' (Parker and Atkinson, 2018: 165). The on the ground response to the riots by the government was to allow the Sports Council to handle their response, the council achieved this by the way of Action for Sport.

Action for Sport was founded in 1981 as a response to the wide socio-economic stresses which contributed to the cause of the riots. The Sports Council through Action

for Sport redirected £1 million per year from 1982-1985, to give to local councils of deprived areas to build up access to and participation in sporting activities. There is a direct correlation between the areas of rioting and the inner-city areas which received these grants (Bloyce and Smith, 2010). This is not the only example in history, but it does clearly show how sport has been used as a possible benefit to the wider society or as Wacquant (2014) would claim to be a stabilizing factor in otherwise chaotic lives. However, we cannot address these claims because it would be impossible to isolate a single cause for improvement or derogation. However, what it does not address is the underlying systemic reasons for the disorder or chaos in the first place. This is explored in chapter 5 and 7 when we look at the role of the transcendental materialist subject and the death of the Big Other.

Sport and Criminology: Desistence

This section will examine the intersection between sport and criminology where sport is used as a tool for positive change within society. It will examine two studies; one by Rosie Meek about the use of football in prisons, and the second by Deborah Jump about the use of boxing to divert from a life of crime. It will conclude by looking at youth schemes used by the Alliance of Sport in Criminal Justice.

Prisons

Prisoners are a vulnerable population, often at the mercy of the wardens and policy on how their time will be spent, what activities they can do, and also what access they have to education, health care, and self-management. As a result, a large number of prisoners suffer from two or more health issues and are vulnerable to self-harm and suicide (DOH, 2009a; WHO, 2007 in Meek and Lewis, 2012). As a hard to reach

population with curtailed freedoms, making an impact on this population is somewhat complicated, and when they are offered Stewart (2008) found that there is little uptake of available provisions (in Meek and Lewis, 2012). Meek *et al.* (2012) believed that physical activity through sport could play a role in enticing prisoners into engagement with services:

‘suggested that voluntary participation in sports can offer a means by which to increase empowerment in healthy living, as well as offering an active form of learning which is typically more amenable to offenders’ preferences (Audit Commission, 1996; Evans and Fraser, 2009; Meek *et al.*, 2012) [...] interest in participating in sport in prison is often high (Buckaloo *et al.*, 2009; Lewis and Meek, 2012b); thus physical activity has the potential to play a key role in promoting health objectives. [...] scant academic attention had been paid to the role of sport and physical activity in promoting wellbeing among prisoners, or the degree to which this is achieved in policy and practice’ (Meek and Lewis, 2012: 118).

In this text we can see the beginnings of Meek’s interest in using sport as an aid for prisoners in various ways. In the same year (2012) Meek produced an evaluation report for the 2nd Chance Project. The 2nd Chance Project was a two-year programme that introduced football and rugby into HMP YOI Portland¹² with the help and evaluation of Meek. The project is the ‘first attempt to combine sporting activities with offender rehabilitation’ (Meek, 2012: 4). The 2nd Chance Project outlines the benefits which are often cited as benefit that come from sports, like the ones outlined in chapter

1. It claims that it can

‘bring physical health and fitness, improved mental health, psychological well-being, self-concept, physical and global self-esteem, and increased locus of control, as well as, sociopsychological benefits such as, increased community identity, social coherence and integration’ (Meek, 2012: 9).

¹² HMP/YOI Portland is a category C closed facility holding up to 530 adult and young adult male prisoners. (HMCIP, 2020 [online]).

The evaluation of the 2nd Chance Project found that reoffending rates had been reduced from an average of 48% to 18% and that improvements in attitudes were made towards conflict resolution, aggression, impulsivity and offending (Meek, 2012). Meek also produced a report where she conducted an independent review of sport in 21 different youth and adults' prisons. In this report she claims that 'evidence confirms that sport can play a huge role within CJS [criminal justice system]' (2018: 4) and that the lack of sports in prison is disappointing. In this report she outlines 12 recommendations to improve the efficiency and rollout of sports in prisons. She concluded that

'working with people in prison and tackling reoffending is one of the biggest challenges our society faces, and one in which sport has a unique and important role to play [...] participation can improve health and behaviour but can directly contribute to efforts to reduce reoffending, particularly by providing a route to education and employment' (Meek, 2018: 12).

The schemes that Meek specialises in throughout her criminological literature all involve football and/or rugby; therefore, it is imperative that we look at this when looking at possible harms from children's grassroots football, because the mainstream belief is that it is a useful tool for desistance. Again, restating the benefits of sport throughout society, which we have seen throughout chapter 1. Much like the benefits in chapter 1 the theoretical underpinning is based upon Elias and the civilising process. For example, how sport can be used to teach and reproduce more civil traits, such as desisting from crime. Although Meek (2018; forthcoming) does state that this is an under researched area and the environment needs to be taken into consideration, she is still working within the framework that sport is an inherently good tool for gaining more desired traits, much like the belief that we saw earlier from Muscular Christianity. Using this framework does not allow for the rigor that is needed to assess sport in a

modern consumer capitalist society and, as we will see in chapter 3, there are more effective ways of evaluating sport in the 21st century.

Diversion from a life of crime

Deborah Jump is currently the head of youth justice at the Manchester Centre for Youth Studies (MCYS). She is interested in youth and desistance and, although her specialism is in boxing, from her work we can extrapolate the principles that apply to sport in general. In 2018 she examined (with McMahon) the lives of 21 young offenders and what helped them desist from crime. They found that when there was a 'hook for change' (Jump and McMahon, 2018: 3) it was more likely that they would desist. The hook for change in this study was found to be education and employment, which are the same factors that Meek found to be a positive impact on desisting. By 2020, together with Hannah Smithson, Jump started to produce work from her research into boxing as a hook for change; they developed a workshop in which they explored the desisting qualities of boxing. They found that it is useful as an engagement tool, echoing what Meeks found with football and rugby, yet they ultimately concluded that although boxing could be a useful tool it needed to be explored at a more strategic level (Jump and Smithson, 2020). The other thing that should be taken into consideration from this study is that Jump and Smithson describe boxing as a 'hyper-masculine' sport (2020: 56) allowing the participants to situate their 'masculine accomplishments' (ibid). The same could be argued of professional football, however it should be noted that women's football is increasingly popular and within the children's grassroots game, most teams can be mixed sex (although the team I followed were all boys). Although Jump (2020) acknowledges that boxing can be an

effective hook for change, she also notes the limitations of this approach. In her book she concludes:

'in conclusion, the rationales by which the majority of participants lived their lives remained intact through core moral neutralisation techniques and justifications for further action. The men in this study always had an excuse for their behaviour. In an environment where the majority of men spent their time, these rationales and excuses became supported and sanctioned by significant others, this allowing boxers to craft identities that spoke to violent recidivism. Unfortunately, more so than pro-social development theories seemly think' (2020: 162).

Although Jump recognizes the limitations within certain aspects of sport and desistence, she still adopts the framework of passing on desisting qualities and diverting from a life of crime (not so much violence). What is ignored in this approach are the harmful qualities that they may also be socialised into and, taking into account the capitalist society, we must acknowledge that these are neoliberal in nature. These neoliberal qualities are often celebrated as a virtue, as shown in the introduction. However, these qualities, in this environment, are using sport, for example, grassroots football, to overshadow the benefits that can arise from physical activity. Throughout the results chapters we will explore these traits and the environment in which children's grassroots football is situated, but firstly we will examine the Alliance of Sport in Criminal Justice.

Alliance of Sport in Criminal Justice

The Alliance of Sport in Criminal Justice is a charity who claim to be the go-to organisation for sport in criminal justice (2021). They have an impressive range of strategic partners that include: The Ministry of Justice, Public Health England, the Youth Justice Board and the Universities of Birmingham and Royal Holloway. They claim that they are levelling the playing field, which to them is about fairness, in that

everyone plays by the same set of rules. To achieve this, they use the power of sport to engage and improve health and life outcomes for diverse children. Ultimately, they want to make society a safer place and to actively help to reduce violence, crime, and reoffending. This is a resource that provides practical solutions and a roundup of the studies that they have contributed to. Again, they ignore the types of qualities that children are developing.

[The Liverpool Football Club \(LFC\) Foundation](#)

One could be forgiven for wondering why we have moved onto Liverpool United's children's foundation. However, it is important to offer a brief overview of what is offered to children so that we can attempt to understand the motivation for engaging in grassroots football. LFC Foundation provides a good example of what premier league clubs offer for children; it has an informative website and an additional YouTube channel, so they have quite a wide-reaching audience. They offer a variety of community programmes and projects: Go Play! provides free public parks; #iwill brings together organisations from all sectors to produce meaningful social action; Premier League Kicks uses the power of football and sport to inspire young people; Premier League Inclusion offers free football activities for those with additional learning needs; Premier League Primary Stars works with local schools to develop the skills and ambition of young people; Mini Kicks provides specially designed coaching sessions for very young players; and Onside works jointly with Merseyside Police to help address the issues around youth and gang crime in conjunction with schools in Merseyside (LFC Foundation, 2021).

The Onside movement fits in within criminological research into the use of football as a diversionary tactic from a life of crime. Jointly funded by the Merseyside police and the LFC foundation, it is a three-year project with the aim of

‘us[ing] the power of the LFC badge to engage with students and provide them with key skills, confidence and the resilience needed to overcome obstacles and chose the right pathway in life’ (2021).

The Onside project is using the ideas, beliefs and values from the sport as desistance literature as a preventative measure. Onside has received positive feedback so far, citing that the power of sport is allowing children to break down barriers about what is happening in their community, and that school attendance has improved for those involved. This is an interesting concept, and I would have liked to have seen the techniques used and some more empirical data to draw a full conclusion, but this was not available on their website. What I can conclude is that it is another form of a diversionary tactic and is therefore still working within a limited framework; so while they may be diverted from a life of crime, they will be becoming a more neoliberal self (see Gallacher, 2020).

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has explored the intersection of sport, criminology, and harm. Firstly, looking at how criminology concentrates on overt crimes, we have traced the history of sport and violence, the history of football, and abuse within football. We have looked at harm and how criminology engages with harm on an overt and embedded level. We then changed gears and looked at the positive intersection between sport and criminology by focusing on how football is used in prisons, and how boxing is a diversionary tactic, both of which allow masculinity to come forward and be celebrated. Then we saw how Alliance for Sport in Criminal Justice are creating a one stop shop for all things sport and criminal justice, providing knowledge banks, tools, and press releases, on their informative website. We then explored how a premier league club, LFC, operates its foundation for children, offering several in-house football activities

and some which are partnered with the Premier League. They have also partnered with the Merseyside police in a diversionary programme around football for youths; this is still in its infancy so a full conclusion about how this scheme socialises children is not yet possible. However, based on the diversionary tactics used by Jump and Meek, one can assume that the Onside programme also follows an Elliassian notion of sport. This is the notion that sport acts as a civilising agent to instil desired values into those who do not have them. What my thesis aims to do is move beyond and challenge this limited framework by critically assessing everything that has gone before and works within it. My thesis addresses this lack of criticality by adopting a critical approach, using my theoretical framework which is outlined in the next chapter. By examining children's grassroots non-competitive football, I challenge the notion that we are in fact civilised and propose that by using a deviant leisure and ultra-realist framework we can bring to bear the harms which arise as a result of the environment around these schemes. Until we fully situate any sport within a consumer capitalist backdrop, we will not fully understand how to prevent the perpetuation of the potential harm caused.

Chapter 3:

Moving Towards a Critical Criminology of Sport

Introduction

This chapter addresses the issues with the previous sporting framework. It provides an overview of the theoretical underpinnings of a new way of thinking about sport in general and more specifically children's grassroots football. It starts off by addressing the inadequacies of Freudian analysis when it comes to the formation of our sense of who we are, by looking at an alternative model posed by Lacan. By using Lacan and his three registers of reality we can really unpick how a child forms a sense of identity and how through culture, society, and role models football influences and impacts this sense of identity, which is explored in detail in chapter 5. In order to fully situate ourselves in this I need to outline and trace some ideas which have been growing in criminology. From Lacan's registers of reality, we will examine the function of the superego and place this into the wider context of perpetuating culture through the notion of the Big Other. After discussing important concepts that pave the foundations for a critical criminology of sport such as, narcissism, the mirror stage, and the two forms of ego, this chapter will lay the foundations around a critical criminology of sport.

By addressing the limitations of Elias' (1938) Civilising Process, this chapter will provide an overview of ultra-realist criminology. Ultra-realism offers us a way of viewing the individual motivation on a collective level whilst exploring the structure in which football has blossomed. We examine the pseudo-pacification process and the pseudo-pacified subject so that in the empirical chapters we can delve into a deeper analysis. To end this chapter, we finish with an overview of deviant leisure, which is rooted in cultural criminology and ultra-realism; this allows us to assess if there are any harms associated with children's grassroots football and, if so, how we can typologise them. By adopting a deviant leisure approach this thesis will address the lack of true criticality in sports criminology whilst addressing the gaps around youth in ultra-realist and deviant leisure approaches.

Freud, Lacan, and Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis is a tool which we can use to try to understand the fascination with football. It offers us a way of examining what is going on beneath the surface of both the individual and the individual as a collective. For example, a football fan can be a fan in their own right but they are also part of a wider fan group of a particular club. Psychoanalysis is a tool that is often left out of criminological circles because psychological cognitive approaches tend to be preferred, for example, theories such as Rational Action Theory (RAT), Rational Control Theory (RCT), and Symbolic Interactionism, to name a few. Psychoanalysis is often conflated with psychology and this means it is also often associated with society's idea of what they believe criminology to be. As criminologists we see examples of this in everyday life; for instance, students who come onto a criminology degree expecting to study the minds of serial killers or people believing criminology to be just about Crime Scene Investigation. However, academia acknowledges that psychoanalysis is distinct from

psychology and that as a discipline, it has been largely ignored by sociological and criminological inquiry from the mid-1900s until a recent revival in the 1980s (Smith, 2006).

The hostility towards psychoanalysis feeds into a wider discussion around the progressive state of society, which was discussed in chapter 1. We are arguably in a late modern or postmodern era, which brings with it a set of assumptions around the foundations and workings of society; psychoanalysis does not fit nicely into the late modern or postmodern ideas around society or explanations of behaviour. What I mean by this is that psychoanalysis is seen by some as being reductionist and holding claims of universal truths when trying to understand something at its most rudimentary level, whereas postmodernism is inherently against the notion of any universal truth (Lyotard, 1979). In simple terms, society does not like how psychoanalysis explains behaviour: the terms it uses or the universality of it. Psychology though, is embraced by society; it is indeed psychoanalysis which has been ignored by the mainstream areas of criminology and psychology. Although, as Smith duly noted there has been a slight shift in the return to 'reinstate the importance of understanding the complexity of individual experience and motivation in theorising offending' (2006: 2). However, this shift is still an individualised approach and concentrates on a person's circumstances. For example, rehabilitation programmes are often based on the individual's factors rather than looking for a truth; that is to say that the problem lies within the individual and not within society. Whereas we will see in this chapter that ultra-realism starts to address some of these theorising problems.

Ultra-realism and by extension deviant leisure, as we will see further on in this chapter, attempts to readdress the balance within criminological theory. It challenges the mainstream notions and beliefs that there is no connection or interplay between motivating factors. For example, they focus on tendencies as a way of addressing problems on a much wider scale whilst having the ability to nuance the individual's circumstances and subconscious drives and desires, meaning they examine the relationship between the subconscious and society. Examples of this include the study of criminal motivation in the North East UK, such as the violence and drug use that happens in de-industrialised spaces. All that is to say, it uses psychoanalysis as a way of exploring the individual on a collective level. Which at first glance may seem oxymoronic, however, it is simply the examination of underlying systemic forces and desires used to form collective change, and how this then relates to motivation. For example, in Smith's (2014) work around adultification in the Night-Time Economy (NTE) he explored, through the lives of individuals, why (and how) they constructed their identities within the NTE. Therefore, psychoanalysis as a theoretical concept is a crucial underpinning of this thesis which enables us to explore and understand why parents enroll their children into football and what they hope their child will achieve from it. We also need to understand why the parents think that football is the catchall answer, as we explored in chapters 1 and 2.

Freud's Model of the Psyche

Freud used a tripartite model of the psyche organised around what he called the id, the ego, and the superego, which each play a particular part in our personality make-up. The id represents the raw drives and impulses, such as the sex drive, and the desire for security and comfort; the superego is seen as the voice of restraint, control,

and reason. The id and the superego are often depicted in cartoons, respectively as the devil and angel on our shoulder. The ego then must find a balance between the id and the superego; through the Ego we make the world aware of who we are. This battle between the id and the superego is constantly ongoing (although we may not always be aware of it). But, because the superego causes restraint in the id resulting in the ego, the superego is always a gradient of the ego (Johnstone and Malabou, 2013) and as a gradient it can shift, meaning that who we are can change; we are malleable. This is an important point because we need to recognise that in attending football activities the children will change, and as we have seen in the earlier chapters football is, in fact, marketed as bringing on that change.

The fact that we are malleable and impressionable is good for consumer capitalism; it means it can constantly sell to us, everything is up for grabs, and everything should be updated and renewed. We see this in texts such as the *Rebel Sell* (Heath and Potter, 2005) and Bauman's notions of planned obsolescence. This creates a constant reimagining of who we are and who we can be, allowing us to buy ready-made identities off the shelf (Smith, 2014). Being a premier league footballer or scoring a winning goal at Wembley may be one of these dreams and identities, and if they cannot sell it to you in real life they can do so via the various iterations of *EA Sport's* video game *FIFA*, which I explore in chapter 7. In that chapter I will also look at the media's influence on football and on the glorification of role models such as Wayne Rooney and Marcus Rashford, who are held up as having *made it*. The notion of the superego is imperative to psyche, and therefore personality formation, because it is the superego which has undergone a reorientation, as we will discuss later in this chapter.

The superego is forged in guilt, but it has changed, its idea about what we should be feeling guilty about. This will be discussed in more detail in the ultra-realism section of this chapter. But for now, it is important to know that Freud's superego-imposed guilt by making the ego repress desires and libidinal drives by promising future satisfaction (Much like the notion of the Hourī in the Quran¹³). Whereas the modern reorientation of the superego bolsters guilt by way of an injunction to enjoy (Žižek, 2008; Smith, 2014): we must live in the moment, give thanks to life by living it, and then we will be rewarded for conforming. A clear example of this presently is the notion of FOMO (fear of missing out) and YOLO (you only live once). The distinctions between the two different concepts of the superego are important for the examination of the underlying motivation of people and their actions. Basically, why people are acting in the way that they do, and how we have arrived at this point in history; a concept which runs throughout my empirical chapters.

Freud and Narcissism

In my empirical chapters I argue that children's football replicates and reproduces a tautology of symbolism. For example, in chapter 6 I discuss how the non-competitive element of children's grassroots football is rendered useless because the game is in fact rooted in competition and metrics. But these are for metrics' sake, much like the wider environment of football; it operates in its own world reproducing its own symbolism, e.g. The Premier League winners receive the Premier League title, which includes a cup, wearing gold badges on their uniform for the next season, and a cash sum. The positive physical activity elements would still be present without the imbued

¹³ This is the belief that there is a beautiful woman waiting for you in the afterlife as a reward for believing men.

symbolism. However, it would not be as appealing to the consumer, the players, teams, or the media. It is, then, in this argument that we must use the concept of narcissism to explore and examine this world of self-made symbols, and how this symbolism is used to keep people, across generations, interested and invested in the game. For example, why do fans support teams who are constantly defeated, much like my husband and Sunderland A.F.C. (Association Football Club) and why now are my children starting to follow suit?

According to Freud there are two stages to narcissism: primary and secondary. Both are important to understanding the systemic motivations for behaviour on an individual at a collective level, i.e. what motivates all people from an individual standpoint. Primary narcissism is the first stage of life. We are born too soon, meaning we have not yet fully developed the ability to take care of ourselves, therefore we are needy, selfish and demanding, in order to have our survival needs met. Anyone who has spent time around a newborn baby will understand. You cannot tell a newborn to wait for their feed: they are biologically, physically, and emotionally fully dependent on a carer. This dependency is pre-maturation, a period where we are basically needy, selfish narcissists; we can only consider ourselves, our needs, and our survival, and it is to us that all our caregivers' time should be directed. Children paint a vivid picture of this through numerous actions; the clearest being whenever a child proclaims ownership over a caregiver in the face of a perceived threat, such as '*no it's my mammy!*' which shows the instinctual primary narcissistic phase of early childhood.

Secondary narcissism is when the child starts to have some concept of others and the outside world by passing through the mirror stage (which will be discussed below). S/he begins to understand the otherness that surrounds them, and that the caregiver's love is not solely for the purposes of their survival. The child can start to perform some

of these functions for themselves by mimicking the actions of the caregiver. For example, when my four-year old goes to bed she sucks her thumb and pats her own back as a form of self-soothing - no longer do I need to do this for her. What else happens in this phase of secondary narcissism is that the child passes through the concept of survival as a physiological sense and starts to see things beyond themselves. This is a very painful concept for them to cope with and essentially signifies the passing through to the secondary phase. We can again see this clearly in any child who does not have their demands met immediately from the parents. Supermarket tantrums are a good example of this phase in their lives. They also start to project outwards onto external items and objects that symbolise something for them, as they begin to accept this otherness. This symbolism can be a physical representation or an emotional one. So again, returning to my four-year-old, she has (much to her daddy's delight... mine not so much!) started wearing her Sunderland A.F.C shirt, carrying around her Delilah (one of the 'black cat' mascots) and chanting 'Sunderland, Sunderland, Sunderland'. She has no idea how my husband is, through her, continuing the consumption of football, nor do the specifics of the symbols mean anything to her yet. All she sees is that when she does that, she has a positive reaction from her daddy, which is often accompanied by laughing at her mammy who is hurling big words at her daddy about the harmful effects of consumer society.

In doing this my-four-year-old has a relationship with that consumer object, which also reinforces her relationship with her loved ones. Much like Žižek's take on the Freudian example of Anna and her strawberry cake dream. Freud's take on my daughter's love for Sunderland would be simply that she likes the colours, or the game, or the cat teddy – it would not bring into question what Žižek (1997) does. Žižek digs beneath the surface of Freud's example and sees Anna trying to form a sense of self-identity

and security from the satisfaction she received from her parents, which was not specifically about the cake but the positive reactions from her parents when she ate the cake:

'so, what is the fantasy of eating a strawberry cake is really about is her attempt to form an identity that would satisfy her parents' (Žižek, 1997: 9).

My daughter and her love for Sunderland is the same thing; what she desires from that interaction is the enjoyment of the reinforcement from her Dad, and she builds her identity and relationship with him from that. This point is important for two reasons. Firstly, I have used an example from my own household here but as you will see in chapters 5, 6, and 7 I could have used any one of my interviews to make this point and I will expand on that in those chapters. And secondly, we need to move beyond the work of Freud if we are to fully examine and understand what is happening

Freud's concept of narcissism is a useful starting point and allows us to question the external role of socialisation on the intrinsic formation of the ego (i.e. the role of our relationship with a caregiver) and how this impacts the child's sense of self. However, through the work of Žižek we can see that Freud fails to reach the depths required. Lacan (see below) delves deeper into the formation of the ego, which is more useful for us. We can see in chapter 7 when we explore the role of FIFA, that the depth offered by Lacan is needed to understand the different processes of the same event, much like we have just accomplished with Freud, Žižek, and the strawberry cake. Moreover, Freud offers very little in the way of exploring the trauma that would prevent entry to the secondary phase of narcissism. Which again, as we will see in the empirical chapters, is an important concept. The Lacanian concept of the mirror stage

is much more poised to allow us to examine this prevention into the maturation process. Drawing on Lacan, we can use the mirror phase to explore the role of grassroots football as a tool of socialisation, which is there to aid in the transition from primary to secondary narcissism. It is therefore to Lacan we must now turn.

Lacan

The works of Jacques Lacan advances Freud's writings in many ways. He builds on the organic model of Freud to return the focus to a more philosophical conundrum of how reality is constructed and the subject's position within that reality; so why and how is a child's world built and where does she see herself in that world. Lacan uses his triumvirate of orders: The Imaginary, Real, and Symbolic, to explore ideological structures that shape our relationships with ourselves and others in the psyche of an individual on a collective level. Lacan developed on a variety of disciplines and authors to push the parameters of psychoanalysis into a more multidimensional concept than that of Freud's. Lacan questions the very existence of reality, as opposed to Freud who explored the individual's place within reality. In doing this Lacan builds on the structural linguistics of Saussure, the anthropological from Lévi-Strauss and the philosophical doctrines of Kant and Hegel. By using Lacan's notions, we can interpret the subjective role within and of children's football in relation to the individual and society.

Imaginary, Real, and Symbolic

While there are many Lacanian concepts, his triadic registers of reality are notable first because they provide the foundations for other Lacanian philosophies. This is imperative for this thesis because it is Lacan's ontological departure from Freud and

his discipline which grants us the foundational tools to start to explore children's football in an alternative way. These registers of reality should be comprehended as orders which fully situate subjectivity within a system of perception which move beyond individual mental forces. This is the biggest deviation from Freud because of its implications; ontologically speaking Lacan and Freud are at opposite ends of the scale. Freud's model is organic and concentrates on individualised drives, whereas we can look to Lacan for answers around wider structural issues including the popularity and perpetuation of children's football. Put simply, Freud explored individual micro explanations for behaviour whilst Lacan explored structural issues that shape the individual psyche on a conscious and subconscious level. Freud believed that the subconscious came to fruition through actions, but Lacan believed that action affected the subconscious through the reorientation of the drives within the superego. Lacan explores these concepts through his registers of reality.

The Real

The first order we are exploring is the Real¹⁴. The Real shows us that the subconscious is pre-ontological (Johnston, 2005) meaning that it exists pre-birth. It is in this order that Lacan diverts from the Cartesian notion of 'I think therefore I am'. Because for Lacan the Real holds the raw impulses and desires, and we do not, or cannot, think until we adopt the language that is needed to order and express these thoughts. Therefore, the Real is pre-thought. For thinkers such as Lacan, Žižek, and many ultra-realist scholars, the Real in its pre-birth state is where we are closest to nature, closest

¹⁴ It should be noted that these are not presented in the order in which Lacan did, and moreover they were developed throughout his life's work and not in one linear concept.

to being whole; there is no sense of separation within the Real – just being. As Hall and Winlow note:

‘the Lacanian Real [is] simply part of a natural world of raw impulses, forces and events that surround us and interrupt upon our senses, with no critical sense of self-awareness (2012: 404).

For Hall and Winlow this state of nature is different to that of Hobbes’ state of nature, where we all enter into a mutual social contract in order to continue enjoying one’s freedom. According to Hobbes we are free, but to keep this freedom we must give some of it up in order to retain it, e.g. we must give up the freedom to kill someone in order not to be killed. Lacan’s Real is different, existing firstly on a different plane of reality. In Lacan’s notion of the Real we are all irrevocably severed from it [the Real] through our entrance to language. This severance causes great trauma and as soon as we have experienced it, we are conditioned to try and avoid it at all costs. Put more simply, in the Real we are happily unaware of anything because we effectively do not know of anything other than what we are; once we have been shown the other orders in the registry, and we are brought out of the bubble of the Real, we cannot return but nor do we want to. It is this fear of returning to the void of emptiness (the Real) that makes us look outward and search for something to hold on to; a substitute, which can and should give meaning to our otherwise empty lives. The answer is the Symbolic, which is discussed later in this chapter. The Symbolic builds on, and is intertwined with, the Imaginary, but for now we must explore the mirror stage.

The Mirror Stage

The mirror stage was one of Lacan's earlier concepts and is where the Symbolic meets the Imaginary and the formation of subjectivity comes to fruition. It is a

'solid piece of theorising [...] retaining its value to explain human self-consciousness, aggressivity, rivalry, narcissism, jealousy and fascination with images in general' (Nobus, 1998 cited in Homer, 2005: 18).

It accounts for the subject's use of imagery and they use this as a form of identification with others. I do not plan to go into great detail about the formation of the mirror stage because this is not a theoretical piece on the inner workings of Lacanian concepts. (It has also been achieved in much more detail elsewhere - see Homer (2005) for a good example.) What I do intend to do here is briefly cover what is necessary in order to place the mirror stage within my wider thesis. It is important because the mirror stage translates into identity formation for the child. It is indeed much more complex than it seems on the surface, but again, Homer (2005) provides a good overview of this. In this stage the child is fascinated by their own image and in this fascination the child starts to recognise some of their own traits that are like those of their caregivers'. What happens in this stage is that the child's sense of self is then created against this image - the Other. This sense of self is captured by the external image and this will carry on throughout the child's life (Stanizai, 2018). The child's identification, the recognition of themselves in this image with the recognition of the Other (usually their mother), is based on the belief that the Other is whole, whereas the child is not (remember it has been pre-maturely born and severed from the Real). The child then wishes to be the Other in the sense that the Other is perceived as whole. The child will start to mimic the Other in order to also reach this point of wholeness. We can see this when children

'play' with the child in the mirror, and I think we can also see this when dogs bark at themselves. What they are seeing in the mirror is a different version of themselves.

When looking in the mirror, the child is both the child and the child in the mirror. They believe that it is both them and not them at the same time (Hall, *et al* 2008). This is where the child begins to master their own functions and begins moving through the narcissistic phases (again, we can see this when a child interacts with themselves in the mirror by waving, or clapping, or kissing). As this happens the child knows it is them and not them, and feels the weight of this., In this, the child's sense of self, his ego splits and he is trapped in this cycle. This cycle is a cause of despair for the child because they realise it cannot be them and that they are not whole. To soothe this process, they hold onto the semblance of having control over their own functions (Hall *et al*, 2008). Again, this can be seen when a child is upset with the mirror - starting to play with surrounding toys or being in control of their actions brings some tranquility to them.

However, we know that this sense of tranquility cannot last because Lacan knew, as do we, that a fixed, cohesive identity is not obtainable. The stability and tranquility are an illusion created by the Image, and consequently the child only has an idea of an identity and not an identity per se. Therefore, the mirror stage does not offer peace and tranquility to the child but instead creates anxiety. It is this anxiety which drives the need to try and fill the void and find some sense of completeness. In the most simplistic term's identity becomes insatiable, and this is where consumer culture steps in to help by offering a world of symbolic items to try and satisfy the need for wholeness. (We can see this again in children, where they may promise not to ask for anything else if they can just have this one thing. Until the next time something catches their eye.) Football is also based on the insatiability of metonymic logic: there is always

another game, another cup, another league. It is in this way that the mirror stage is most useful to this thesis.

The Ideal Ego and the Ego Ideal

The promises of identities are rooted within the formulation of the ego, which is where our attention must now turn. Instead of the ego being based on a gradient managed by the interplay between the id and the superego, Lacan's notions of the ideal ego and the ego ideal allow us to fully understand the role of consumer culture, by its relationship with the triadic registers of reality, and the effect that this has on the individual and their sense of identity. The ego ideal governs our place in the symbolic order, where the signifier (the Other) is recognised as an ideal - someone who is whole, which is what the subject wishes for themselves. As the child matures, they should pass through the phase of the imago and enter the ego ideal; we will see this in a detailed example in chapter 5, when we meet Jonah. However, passing through this phase is not always possible. When the maturation process is interrupted by consumer culture (Hall, *et al*, 2008), the child is forced into a trap, a never-ending cycle of being stuck in the ideal ego so that consumerism can carry on selling off-the-shelf identities. The ideal ego is one in which the child believes they are the Other; they are the role model; they just have yet to be discovered and are yet to be whole. So rather than accepting the lack of unity that they inevitably experience and transcend the primary narcissistic phase they are trapped in, what Hall (2012b) calls the Solicitation of the Trap, discussed in chapter 7 the child is forced into a stage of infantile narcissism.

While these changes have been happening on an individual level in a micro sense, there have also been changes that affect individuals on a collective level. One of these

changes is the pseudo-pacification process, which will be outlined in the next section, which will also cover the reorientation of the superego. It is clear that from a psychoanalytical standpoint the use of the Lacanian concepts is more useful to this thesis than the work of Freud. Lacan offers us a more appropriate set of tools, which we can use to begin to understand the motivations and consequences of children's grassroots football on their childhood development.

The Symbolic

The Symbolic brings to the forefront the search for meaning in our lives. At the core of the Real there is an emptiness of desire, a lack, a void, nothing; and we happily accept our place in the symbolic order trying to fill up this nothingness with something or anything. Whilst trying to fill this void we formulate our sense of who we are, and this is formulated usually in relation to an Other (this will be explored further in the next section) because we are searching for that thing that will make us whole again – what Lacan calls the *objet petit a*. However, this object does not exist, nor can we be whole again without encountering the terrifying Real, so we continuously search for an object that doesn't exist by using consumer capitalism's endless line of symbolic substitutes. Simply, the symbolic order is the one where we build our own reality imbued with meanings; a network of signs and symbols complimented by language, so that we can share these understandings.

We can again see this in everyday life - why does my 11-year-old need the latest iPhone rather than a Nokia 3300? Ultimately, the fundamental functions are the same, (we could contact each other should we need to) however, the brand of the phone, the *Apple* label, is much more important than the functionality. She would much rather stick to her dated iPhone 7, which has a cracked screen and therefore doesn't work

properly, rather than having a brand-new *Android* phone with a lesser branded make. The answer lies in the Symbolic. She needs to be seen by her peers as participating within the consumer culture. She needs to show that she understands the rules of the game and is willing to participate, even though the functionality of her device is impeded. The fact that she owns a device of that brand means so much more in today's society.

Lacan believed that it was in the Symbolic that we could see the reflection of culture and influence through the child's formation of the self, their ego. This is explored throughout this thesis; in the earlier chapters we looked at how football, and sport more widely, reflects society (Coakley, 2009). We could say that football actually reflects the symbolic construction of society back at us. That is, through football the mechanisms of the Symbolic become clear, and this is a concept which is highlighted in detail throughout the empirical chapters. Football creates and perpetuates its own symbolic laws. For example, the introduction of VAR (video assistant referee) saw the rules of the symbolic change in such a way that reflected the technological advances. It is vastly unpopular because of the rules and regulations which surround it. Football, being man-made, can change but because many have constructed their sense of self around it, the very idea of a change is threatening to them. This leads to comments like 'it's just not the same game' or 'VAR has ruined the game' when actually it has made it more accurate and therefore fair.

This brings us to the discussion of the Big Other. The Big Other, according to Lacan, is the 'possibility for a singular subjectivity of the collective symbolic order' (Johnston, 2018). It is basically the rule of law that governs us and our actions on a collective level. When the Big Other is working to full capacity it is symbolically efficient and the meaning behind the symbols and structures in life are respected, shared, and adhered

to. If we had a working big Other there would be scant need for laws and rules because we would all just adhere to the rules of the big Other. However, the Big Other is dead, and it has always been dead - it just didn't know it and now it does. What this means is that there never really was a time when laws and rules were not needed: only the façade and symbolism of such. We can see that there is no working Big Other, no collective sense of subjectivity, because we frequently as a society inflict harm on each other for our own perceived symbolic gain. In the absence of the Big Other we have Little Others, which are regulatory boards to adjust behaviour; accordingly, we can see these at work in the VAR example outlined above. However, what is more important to this thesis is that always being in comparison with an Other means our desires are never our own. We are always at the mercy of some form of Other for our desires.

If we return to the example about the strawberry cake: what was Anna desiring in her dream? A biological function of being hungry or the desire for her parents' joy in watching her eat the cake? The cake in this instance is the consumed symbolic object for her parents' (the Other's) approval. She doesn't actually desire the cake, just what the cake stands for. Again, does my daughter actually support Sunderland as a football team? No, she is four and she has no concept of what this means in the wider world. She is, however, constructing herself on the approval of her dad and uses this as a way to make him happy and be accessible to her as the Other. This has been examined in the Imaginary and the mirror stage. But for the implications for my thesis this is an important distinction, because the children are always looking at the relationship of themselves in comparison to an Other. So, whether the coach, their parents, or other children, it is a way for the child to create an aspect of their identity in relation to what they think they want from them. What am I to you? What do you desire from me? Or of me? And what does this then mean I am? All constructed on

symbolic meanings. We will see this in more detail in chapters 5 and 7 when we question if it is the game the children enjoy or rather, fulfilling their perceived ideas of what they believe their Others want from them.

The Imaginary

For now, we must explore this concept of the other through the Imaginary, which is intricately linked to the Real and Symbolic. Using images, the Imaginary provides meaning in the world before access to language is granted. Laplanche & Pontalis (1973) define

‘the imaginary order’ as being ‘based on an inescapable relation between the subject and a specular image of the image of the subject’s counterpart – La Semblable’ (cited in Stanizai, 2018: 1).

Stanizai, however, insists that the definition of the Imaginary goes beyond that to a more complex ‘host of intra-subjective and intersubjective relationships, which are imagined and internalised’ (2018: 1-2). It is in the Imaginary where the child experiences a semblance of wholeness with the (m)other, which replaces the severance from the Real, but quickly begins to realise that the (m)other’s attentions are directed elsewhere, and that the child is not the sole object of the (m)other’s desire (as outlined in the secondary phase of narcissism). This leads the child to experience itself as once again *lacking* something that it has lost. They can then retry to become the sole object of the (m)other’s desire. This is what Lacan describes as the ‘lost object’ of desire, the *objet petit a*. The *objet a* is the lack at the core of our being that initiates our desire; it is a mythical object that does not exist. This forces us into the realms of the Symbolic as we accept the lack at the core of our being and take up a place in the Symbolic Order’s signifying system to fill that lack (as outlined above). Many objects

can stand in for the lost object, but they never *are* the lost object, since the lost object doesn't exist. It is here that I should note that we are not trying to return to the Real, but, to the stage of primary narcissism, where we misidentified with the Other, and had a perceived sense of wholeness.

All that is to say that in the Imaginary we become alerted to the fact that we are not whole and not the sole object of our parents' desire, so we are trying to get back to the stage where we were cared for and did not know we were not whole. We can see examples of this when children become jealous or clingy when siblings are around (or arrive). It is in the Imaginary in which the formation of I is internalised, initiating the ego. It is then conceivable that it is in the Imaginary order where we, as subjects, become obsessed with the image; the image of ourselves and the image of the Other. For it is in the image of the Other that our incompleteness is most alienating. This, therefore, indicates that the Imaginary is characterised by primary narcissism as a driving force. What this means for children's grassroots football is (as we will see in the forthcoming chapters) that the children could be using it as a way to try and reconnect with their parents as the object of their desire; it is effectively a strawberry cake.

A Way Forward: A Critical Criminology of Sport

As chapter 2 highlighted, the criminological theory surrounding sport, leisure, and children is somewhat lacking in its approach and veracity. Groombridge's (2017) *Sports Criminology* attempts to bridge the gap between criminology and sport in a superficial manner, claiming that sports criminology in this form occupies a space between sports law and the sociology of sport, and that moving forward it should

include zemiology. We have seen in the previous section that mainstream theories are inadequate to formulate working explanations for individual behaviours on a collective level, and this is where Lacan becomes central to the underlying psyche of the individual on a collective level through the collective superego, policed by the Big Other. Groombridge's attempt at a sports criminology is merely unpacking the Lacanian Little Others which surround the games. As Brisman (2018) aptly states it is 'concerned with the policing of sports rather than why' (2018: 1) crimes are committed. The aim of this thesis is to take this further and explore the harms that should complement the study of the socio-legal construct which is crime. In doing this it takes up a criminological theory base which accepts the Lacanian orders and incorporates them into a working theory of crime and harm which attempts to

'escape the ontological reversal of *multipolar pragmatism*, where definitions of harm are constructed according to the limits imposed on them by the solutions approved by liberal-democratic states or social movements concerned with single issues' (Hall & Winlow, 2015: 90).

Ultra-realism

Ultra-realism offers us a way to explore current trends in crime and criminology whilst encouraging a widening of the subject of criminology to include the study of harm. Ultra-realism has wider contributions to a criminology of sport, which is beyond the scope of this thesis, but which I hope to develop over my research career. There is a need to examine how the narcissism of the violent subject, of which Winlow and Ellis speak, translates into sport and wider views on masculinity. Or the comparatives between the special liberty of the criminological entrepreneur and the traits that football teaches to name but two ways that an ultra-realist approach lends itself to looking at and examining the area of children's grassroots non-competitive football. However,

because of the restraints of this thesis, we will concentrate on the bedrock of ultra-realist theory: the pseudo-pacification process and subject.

Ultra-realism traces the historical contexts in which the superego was reoriented and examines the underlying causes, alongside the collective fallout and the change in society. Effectively, it examines the individual and structural changes which impact crime and harm. This section will explore these concepts starting with the pseudo-pacification process and ending with the pseudo-pacified subject, in a bid to allow the reader to understand how children's football is a

'system based on a culture of competitive individualism and an economic exchange relation designed to exploit and extract surplus from others and the shared environment, the pattern of social inequality based on success in profitable business is the product of the logical imperative and the subjective willingness to inflict various forms and degrees of harm on individuals and the physical, cultural and social worlds in which they live (Hall, 2012a). In other words, social inequality is one of the products of the willingness to inflict harms on others' (Hall & Winlow: 2015: 90).

Brisman's review of *Sports Criminology*, calls for sport to be situated within the economy, exploring the exploitation and ruthless individualism:

'if part of the criminological endeavour is to contemplate and explore how crime, harm and injustice are perceived and understood (see Brisman, 2014), then it would seem that a sports criminology might embrace the opportunity to investigate the platform offered for such expression by the sports stage – the court, the track, the field or the pitch' (2018: 4).

Ultra-realism allows children's football to be examined in this way because of the reorientation of the superego.

The reorientation of the superego

Although the reorientation of the superego is not necessarily an ultra-realist concept, it makes sense to place it here because it is this reorientation that has allowed the

upcoming changes throughout society. It is also key to the points outlined and explained in this chapter, because the superego in its traditional Freudian sense, and in the Lacan/Žižek sense, are both rooted in enjoyment and guilt. The superego has always promised us enjoyment and it is this promise that lies at the fundamental base of the restrictions that it imposes. With the traditional notion of the superego, we can see this repression acted out in many ways for the fulfilment of enjoyment. For example, in some religion's gratification is deferred, meaning that if you behave in an ethically appropriate manner, you will be rewarded in heaven. We can also see it in social theory, where the traditional superego is the waiting saving society that Bauman speaks of when he acknowledges the move from a waiting to a wanting society. In this he is acknowledging the shift from the traditional superego to the reoriented one. The traditional superego advocates 'sacrifice now, enjoy later'. On the surface we can see how this would translate to children's football, because if they sacrifice their childhoods now, they will be rewarded later in life with a glittering football career.

However, in the reoriented superego this deferred enjoyment is compelled to happen now and to be taken immediately; it has evolved into a command of instant gratification. So, whereas in the past we have been encouraged to save for a happy retirement, we are now encouraged to live in the moment, in the spirit of FOMO and YOLO, mentioned earlier. Everything in society has undergone this shift: we see accelerated degrees, quick promotions, instant scratch cards etc. Children's non-competitive grassroots football is no different, as chapter 5 will show, with the children being constantly encouraged to take their chance. However, because of the insatiable desire, enjoyment can never fully be achieved. Firstly, because enjoyment is commanded by the superego and secondly, gratification (or disappointment) is instant,

so they will move onto another goal - there is always another game, league, or competition.

Therefore, football has remnants of both the superego's traditional waiting game (e.g. give up your free time and your enjoyment now and be a superstar footballer in the future) whilst simultaneously encouraging instant wins and enjoyment. And these will never cease because, no matter how good the child is, there is always the next season, retaining their title, or another league. What this does then is two-fold: firstly, we lose enjoyment of the activity that we are claiming to enjoy:

“the very injunction to enjoy” Žižek writes, “sabotages enjoyment, so that, paradoxically, the more one obeys the superego command, the more one feels guilty” (Cederström and Spicer, 2015: 5).

Secondly, this dissatisfaction releases the nihilistic tendencies of a generation, creating a ‘subject who is extremely narcissistic’ (Cederström and Spicer, 2015: 15). Moreover, in chapter 7 we will see how the parents are exposed to the command of the superego and how this influences their parenting habits. No matter what they do as parents there is always something more; they are compelled by this new reoriented superego to prove that they are ‘good’ parents by helping their child fulfil their potential, whilst simultaneously experiencing the ‘continuous anxiety’ (Bauman cited in Cederström and Spicer, 2015: 39) that they too felt as a child.

The Pseudo-Pacification Process

The pseudo-pacification process is imperative to this thesis in two ways. Firstly, the pseudo-pacification process highlights the reorientation of the superego into sublimated aggression and individual competition as highlighted above. Secondly, it is contra Elias’ (1939) Civilizing Process. This is important because Elias’ work is the

foundation from which all notions and understanding of sport and sporting roles have developed from; the notion that sport has helped and continues to aid in the 'civilisation' of society. Elias (1939) and later Elias and Dunning (1993) argued that

'the competitive bodily exertions of people in the highly regulated form that we call "sport" have come to serve as a symbolic representation of a non-violent, non-military form of competition between states' (Elias, 1989 cited in Dunning and Rojek, 1992: xii).

In other words, Elias and various other scholars of sports and sociology believe that sport has regulated our state for and of non-violent encounters and that we are, as Pinker (2011) states, in the least violent epoch of history. Elias posited that sport provides a distraction from tension and a diversion to keep the masses happy:

'In the case of societies that are relatively late level of civilisation, that is with relatively stable, even and temperate restraints all round and with strong sublimatory demands, one can usually observe a considerable variety of leisure activities with that function, of which sport is one. But in order to fulfil the function of providing release of stress tensions, these activities must conform to the comparative sensitivity to physical violence which is characteristic of people's social habitus at the later stages of a civilising process' (Elias & Dunning, 1993: 41-42).

However, as outlined in various texts Hall's (2012) notion of the pseudo-pacification process is in direct contradiction to the civilising process. This is where the bedrock of ultra-realist criminology comes to the forefront of this thesis. In the empirical chapters we find that children's non-competitive football demonstrates the effects of the breakdown in the pseudo-pacification process (e.g. tackles to take other kids out) rather than that of any civilising process; to the point where we can strongly agree with Horsley *et al* (2015) who state, 'there has never been a civilising process' (cited in Hall & Winlow: 2018: 108). Therefore, this section will outline briefly the pseudo-pacification

process so that the reader is prepared with adequate background knowledge for the upcoming empirical chapters. Pseudo-pacification, as Hall (2020) points out, is not to be considered as an origin nor a source but rather a point in history whereby English culture shifted in an alternative direction:

‘contributes an important factor in the overall explanation of the country’s early pro-capitalist development – the pseudo-pacified subject, the root of today’s forms of adaptive and flimsily pacified criminality. It does not attempt to displace the standard factors behind the early development of the market economy in the transition from Feudalism to Capitalism[...]but simply to draw attention to the rather neglected culture-legal and subjective aspects that might be useful for criminological theory’ (Hall, 2020: 22).

In its most basic form, the pseudo-pacification process pertains to a shift in society due to a need for shifts in economic functionality. From the middle ages onwards, the economy needed to be stimulated to grow and trade between countries needed protection from highwaymen on the ground. Essentially, society needed to become less violent so that trade could continue to grow. However, this was not achieved in the way that Elias suggested; it was achieved by the reorientation of libidinal desires into socio-symbolic competition:

‘the sublimation of destructive and repressive physical aggression into *functionally aggressive* yet physically pacified rule-bound competition for wealth and status represented by the acquisition and display of socio-symbolic objects in a burgeoning consumer culture – this expanded the demand for *commodities*’ (Hall & Winlow, 2015: 116).

One could be forgiven at this point for wondering why the economic restructuring of the middle ages is important for children’s football. However, we must understand why symbolic competition is imperative to the underlying psyche of a capitalist society, why the image is important, and what effect this can have on the child. The pseudo-pacification process sublimated physical interpersonal violence into less physical but

more symbolic aggressive forms of economic and socio-symbolic competition, which is epitomized within children's grassroots football, as the empirical chapters of this thesis demonstrate. Pseudo-pacification, much like the participation of children in organised sports, fabricates an underlying state of objectless anxiety, which presents an opportunity for the market to manipulate, stimulate, and harness legal forms of competition back onto itself. Hall notes:

'this is a pivotal aspect of cultural development because it marks the emergence and normalisation of the type of privatised desire that could be manipulated by the external forces of consumer culture, which offered a surrogate source of social status and significance, Hall *et al*, 2008' (2020: 31)

Allowing this market intrusion into everyday life essentially set up what is known as the market economy. This is what Hall (2020) frames as a socio-economic tumor. This is whereby the process of splitting and dissolving fixed social structures, such as the family and community, is completed to leave an insecure objectless anomie in its place. For example, family time is now increasingly centred around leisure time, and in the case of fathers, usually football (see Kay, 2009). Therefore, children are exposed to the world of dissatisfaction and unattainable goals from an early age through the family, destroying the once fixed structures, such as religion.

The Pseudo-Pacified Subject

The result of the pseudo-pacification process on an individual level results is what Hall (2020) has termed the pseudo-pacified subject, which is an economically acquisitive and socially competitive, yet pacified individual. This thesis reveals that these individuals are 'coached' into these traits, which allows them to successfully navigate consumer society with a sense of what Hall (2012) coined *special liberty*. This becomes clear in chapter 5 when the children are encouraged to 'take your [their] chance'. The pseudo-pacified subject shows us that far from the claim of socialisation

into positive benefits surrounding children's football, as found in the opening chapters of this thesis, ultra-realism provides an alternative view of how this socialisation is actually one of narcissism, hyper-competitiveness, and anxiety, and rather than fostering a civilising agent in society, it produces the opposite.

In order to successfully address the aims of this thesis we must build upon the foundations set by ultra-realism. The pseudo-pacification process and the pseudo-pacified subject provide us with a much more in-depth underpinning than any of the concepts discussed in earlier chapters, however, the body of work around which it centres thus far is limited to deprivation, male violence, and working-class subjectivities. To expand on this theoretical body and to address the context in which children's grassroots football is experienced, a deviant leisure approach will be adopted as an advancement of the ultra-realist foundations.

Deviant Leisure

Deviant leisure is an emerging perspective on contemporary leisure which often stands in contention to the existing field of leisure and criminology (Raymen and Smith, 2019). It aims to recapture and reclaim the leisure concept within criminology by developing and fusing ultra-realism with that of cultural criminology, whilst 'shedding light on a broad range of contemporary problems' (Winlow: 2019: 60). My aim here is not to provide an overview of the deviant leisure perspective because the authors themselves have done this justice in other places (see Smith and Raymen, 2016; Raymen and Smith, 2019). I shall, however, outline the key points which are pertinent to my use of the framework and how it fits within the wider thesis; turning my attention first to the authors' intention for the framework, before moving onto their harm typology and how it allows a broader study of children's grassroots football.

The deviant leisure perspective invites scholars to expand the rationale of mainstream liberal dogmatism and explore the reality of a multifaceted in-depth study into the intersecting competing motivations that people experience when living within liquid modernity. As Winlow states:

‘Deviant Leisure scholars have repeatedly challenged the shallow and unworldly idealism that continues to exist at the core of youth sociology and leisure studies’ (2019: 59).

Being rooted in ultra-realism, this perspective incorporates the Lacanian psychology that is needed to bridge the gap in understanding left by the limited Freudian concepts. It also brings subjectivity and consumer and liberal capitalism to the forefront of any debate surrounding harm and leisure. The next aspect is that it answers the ultra-realist calls to return to motivation. In the empirical chapters this thesis examines motivation in several ways. It examines the initial motivation for children playing football and how this is then repacked and sold back to the children and parents, much akin to *The Rebel Sell* (Heath and Potter, 2005), to the point where they are trapped in a endless cycle (see chapter 7). The latter point Raymen and Smith (2019) consider in their theoretical chapter of the Deviance leisure handbook, is that of pro-social leisure and what form this may take; indeed, the conclusions of this thesis will heed their call and make some suggestions.

Notably, deviant leisure as a perspective has started to gain recognition because it provides the tools with which social scientists can start to assess, evidence, map, and name types of harm in a way that ties together the motivation of people whilst exposing the latent functions of political economy and consumer capitalism. However, it is still in its infancy and is missing research around the youth aspect that Winlow (above) speaks of. This thesis is the first stage of addressing that gap in youth studies.

Throughout the remaining chapters of this thesis deviant leisure will be the underlying backbone. Utilising the typology, it will show how these can be used to unpick and expose the myriad harms that can and do affect the youth that play grassroots football. For the purposes of informing the reader but avoiding any analytical detail, the harm typology is as follows: interpersonal, environmental, embedded, and socially corrosive¹⁵. Ultimately, drawing upon ultra-realism and cultural criminology, this thesis uses the Deviant Leisure framework to ‘connect everyday social phenomena to their root causes’ (Winlow, 2019: 62). It explores the construct of grassroots football, drawing on psychoanalysis to expose the way the ‘market ideology shapes the drives and desires and gnawing anxieties of the postmodern subject’ (Winlow, 2019: 62), whilst perpetuating, promoting and prolonging the need for sport.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined concepts that are imperative to understanding the empirical chapters of this thesis. It has looked at how we need to move beyond Freud and his limited understanding of the superego. We achieved this by examining the works of Lacan and his take on the different egos and their subsequent roles. We explored the world through Lacan’s triadic registers and saw how we can start to apply football to these concepts and what effect they have on a child’s personality formation. We examined how this formation has been hijacked by consumer culture, and how our social lives are grounded in guilt, particularly that of missing out and not living life to full. We then moved on to explore what a critical criminology of sport could look like with an ultra-realist grounding, rebuking the ideas of Elias, thus breaking out of his limited framework to explore how society and ourselves are pseudo-pacified rather

¹⁵ This can be explored in detail in Smith and Raymen (2016).

than civilised. This pseudo-pacification feeds into the hijacking of childhood by consumer culture and allows it to grow under the guise of competition. This is where sport, and more specifically children's non-competitive grassroots football fits in. The empirical chapters will show how, through participation, children are in a system where neoliberal values of competition are seen as a virtue and taught to children through activities such as grassroots football. The deviant leisure typologies allow us to examine culture and football as a leisure activity as well as a physical activity whilst simultaneously allowing us to explore the potential harms that a neoliberal consumer culture is creating and perpetuating through our children. The next chapter of this thesis will outline the methodological approaches and provides details of my empirical research study.

Chapter 4:

Methodological Considerations and Methodology

Introduction

This project uses a criminological ethnographic sensibility (Treadwell, 2020), which is unlike more traditional criminological ethnographies. A more traditional ethnographic approach which includes myriad observations, unstructured interviews and entails fully immersing oneself into the natural setting of the research's natural setting for a prolonged period of time, see Hobbs, 1988; Winlow, 2001; Smith 2014; Raymen, 2019 for a more traditional criminological ethnography. By adopting a criminological ethnographic sensibility in this chapter, I use the premise of ethnography without fully immersing into the culture, my methods adopted will be discussed throughout as this chapter will chart my journey as a researcher and therefore rationalise the philosophical, ontological, and epistemological underpinnings of my research design, collection, and analysis.

The overall aim of this study, in its most rudimentary form, is to explore the context of children's grassroots non-competitive football and the propensity for harm within it. Although the contention is straightforward, in the face of a mounting milieu of consumer capitalism, the reality is much more complex. Football, in its entirety, is increasingly becoming political (Cashmore, 2010) and children's grassroots football

is imbued with a nexus of pro-social, pro-health, and desisting qualities, as I have outlined in chapters 1 and 2. Given that football reflects the social-political and economic norms of a late modern society (Coakley, 2009), in exploring the complexities surrounding the game it is necessary to nuance the impact of football on children's lives in both a structural way and on an individual level. For example, the role of sport in an individual child's education or on their family relationships (Shaw and Dawson, 2001; Kay 2009) in contrast to the role sport has played in shaping the national curriculum (Smith, 2015; Jeffreys, 2012). Therefore, studying children's football in isolation of the socio-political context would not yield a reliable or valid reflection of the role of football within children's lives. It is, therefore, because of these complex relationships with society, structure, and agency that this project has employed a criminological ethnographical sensibility, because it allows the exploration of children's grassroots football in its entirety.

'Ethnography should always be informed by a theoretical perspective that understands social life as the outcome of the interaction of structure and agency through the practice of everyday life; that examines social life as it unfolds, including looking at how people feel but crafting an understanding that is always attuned to a wider context of the socio-economic, political, cultural and technological forces... a research praxis that comes into being in its doing, but that doing is always socially and situationally framed' (Treadwell, 2020: 28).

As a research strategy adopting an ethnographic sensibility allowed me to embed myself within the grassroots culture of children's non-competitive football, whilst affording me the freedom to adopt other forms of methodological techniques to further explore themes and trends which grew out of the research and the literature review in chapters 1 and 2. Simply, it allowed me to use my sensibility to adapt my methods used as the project progressed.

This chapter is spilt into four main areas: my methodological stance, the data collection and analysis, the ethical considerations and my reflexive thoughts.

Methodological Stance

It is important to understand my role as a researcher in my own project. Addressing my own ontological and epistemological position this section will explore how my underpinning informed and shaped the research project and design. This section will then lead into discussions around specific methods that I used in the project. For now, it is important to note that I adopted an ethnographic sensibility, using a mixed methods approach, which took the form of two types of participant observation; one in person at the matches of an under 9s football team, and the other in the closed online social media group associated with this team. I then completed a series of semi-structured interviews with parents of children who play football, life-long football players, coaches, and referees of children's teams and matches. These interviews will be fully addressed within the research design section of this chapter.

I approached this research project from an etic standpoint. Although I have, like most people, experienced some interaction with sport throughout my life, I would not claim to be an avid fan of a particular sport, nor do I regularly participate in any given sport. However, as a child I participated in various forms of dancing and musical theatre. I believe that these experiences bring me to a unique place of entry into the sociology of sport because I am not, nor do I proclaim to be, a sports fan. My husband, however, is in direct opposition to me; he loves sports of all kinds and embraces being a fan in all aspects of any given sport. This is a difference which is mirrored in our two children; one loves books and stories, and the other is obsessed by P.E. Yet, they both participate in drama and dancing as an extra-curricular activity. In essence, for the best part of 10 years, I have been involved with sports in a number of ways. What I

have found increasingly throughout this 10-year period, as I have grown as a social scientist, sociologist, and criminologist, is that the claims around sport and sporting participation did not make much sense to me. I am undoubtedly a critical criminologist and therefore I challenge any entity that is presented to me as unambiguously 'good', and to me this entity became sport and more specifically football.

As a parent I became aware of the football camps, lessons, sessions, and leagues, but more importantly I became more aware of the many benefits they claim to yield (which are explored in chapters 1 and 2). So, I was afforded a position of being surrounded by football in many forms in my home life, as well as being bombarded with messages which led to parental guilt from not using these football camps to improve my child's chances in life. However, being a critical social scientist, I kept seeing a disconnect with the benefits that sport has been graciously afforded within much of the mainstream media and academic literature and the propensity for harms. This disconnect grew the more I read in and around the subject the more it became an important question for me: is football really as good for children as it claims? What about the behaviour of the players? Why does it revolve around money and brands and well consumer capitalism? How does one's identity become affected by this? All this is to say that I approached this research project not as a fan but as an independent social scientist, hoping to connect the disconnect.

My own position as a social scientist should be transparent here because it explains my approach to research in general and more specifically this project. I favour an interpretivist approach to knowledge, that is to say, I prefer an in-depth approach which can uncover meaning (Jones & Smith, 2017). However, I do not believe there are multiple truths. There may be multiple interpretations of the truth, but if something is harmful it is harmful, therefore, it would be more accurate to state that I am indeed a

critical interpretivist. Sugden and Tomlinson use critical interpretivism in their studies around the global politics of football, with an aim of returning to an investigative mode of inquiry:

‘after many years of collaboration, we have developed a style of qualitative research and scholarship which, while not particularly special in terms of its single dimensions, as a totality has been seen to be relatively distinctive’ (1999: 386).

They go on to state that their approach entails six overlapping elements: historiography, ethnography, comparative methods, investigative research, gonzo, and critical sociology (Sugden and Tomlinson, 1999). These six elements are parts of a process, which I believe my thesis has used. It is this we will briefly turn our attention towards, before moving on to the research design. Four of the elements are straightforward and require little comment, whereas the investigative research and gonzo may require some further information and context from my study.

Firstly, historiography. To fully appreciate the present state of children’s football, and football in general, we must understand its history and how it has reached the stage it is currently in. This historical context is provided in chapters 1 and 2. Ethnography will be discussed in more detail throughout this chapter; in this context, it is the ‘comprehensive package of qualitative techniques’ (Sugden and Tomlinson, 1999: 387). Comparative methods have the fundamental purpose of learning more about ourselves by understanding the other (Sugden and Tomlinson, 1999). In order to achieve this the authors, advocate the use of single instances which come together to formulate a ‘broader comparative project’ (ibid: 387). I have achieved this in two ways; firstly, the combination of methodological tools allows us to form a comparative between the way parents behave online, or in person, or of how they claim to behave. Secondly, the three empirical chapters (5, 6, and 7) allow an ‘accumulative impact in

terms of a more comprehensive understanding of football cultures' (Sugden and Tomlinson, 1999: 387). To be critical is to challenge every aspect of something; to dig beneath the surface and constantly ask why something is or perceived to be the way. This is one of the fundamental aims of this thesis.

Moving on to the lesser-known areas of critical interpretivism, it is not my intention here to fully outline and explain these concepts in great depth, but rather to provide enough context so that it can be understood within the broader sense of my methodological approach and epistemological standpoint. Starting with investigative, the authors believe that investigative research is fundamental in 'the spirit' (Sugden and Tomlinson, 1999: 388) of a critical social science. They acknowledge that this is not a particularly new concept in sociology but that it has laid dormant since the 1960's when Douglas revived it from the early days of the Chicago school. Douglas argued that we must 'go beyond passive observation and embrace the investigative' (Sugden and Tomlinson, 1999: 389) and that only the natural setting of things can form the basis of truth. The truth then, for Douglas, is something which he believes lies beneath the surface; it is under the constructed self that people present. It involves seeing beyond the masks into the underpinning of realities:

'the investigative paradigm is based upon the assumption that profound conflicts of interest, values, feelings and actions pervade social life. It is taken for granted that many of the people one deals with, perhaps all the people to some extent, have good reason to hide from others what they are doing and even lie to them. Instead of trusting people and expecting trust in return, one suspects others and expects others to suspect him. Conflict is the reality of life, suspicion is the guiding principle' (Douglas, 1976: 55, cited in Sugden and Tomlinson, 1999: 389).

My overall project fits into this mode of sociology. I do not accept the information from my participants as a given truth, and the very aim of this thesis is to examine and expose the potentially harmful underpinning systemic practice of football.

The last element of the critical interpretivist framework that Sugden and Tomlinson (1999) used is gonzo. Gonzo was pioneered by journalist Hunter Thompson, who subsequently published journal titles around sport and leisure. He outlined two approaches to gonzo journalism: the method and the 'stream of consciousness personalised reportage' (Sugden and Tomlinson, 1999: 390). Thompson believed that it was imperative to get close to the action without getting too caught up in it; in a more technical sense one could argue that is it the ability to create a balance between the emic and etic approach to observation:

'by entering sports settings on his own terms, he [Thompson] was able to emphasise the nature of sports values by looking at them through the eyes of the marginal individual' (Tomlinson, 1984, cited in Sugden and Tomlinson, 1999: 390).

I share this quality - if we refer back to the start of this section I outlined my ability to stay emotionally detached from sport because I am not a fan of any particular sport, team, or athlete, therefore, I was able to look at sport, football, and children's non-competitive football, through that overlap between emic and etic. Where I differed from Thompson is that I do not believe a researcher should impact on the participants' environment. Thompson believed in watching his own impact within the scenes he entered; I did not because it would not have been helpful for this study. He advocates risk taking to gain entry and then to study what lies within, however, (as will be discussed further in the ethical considerations section) I could not possibly, given my participant group, have conducted myself in such a way and have remained ethically guided. However, the second aspect of gonzo that Thompson outlines is what Sugden and Tomlinson have termed Thompson's ability 'to interpenetrate agency and structure' (1999: 392). What they mean by this is that Thompson can connect what he finds with a 'wider social and political landscape' (ibid: 392). Throughout this project, I

seek to situate non-competitive children's grassroots football within the wider socio-political and educational landscape.

All this is to say that I have adopted a critical interpretivist stance to my approach to research design, collection, and analysis, as the remainder of this chapter will illustrate. I agree with Sugden and Tomlinson on their praxis that there may be multiple takes on reality but that 'there is an underpinning objective truth that it is our duty as social scientist to uncover and reveal' (1999: 392). There are many takes on harm and types of harm, but ultimately, if something is harmful in the most rudimentary sense it is harmful. We must then elaborate and nuance the reasons, and we have an obligation to do this in order to fully satisfy our purpose as researchers:

'take the standpoint of someone outside of those most immediately engaged in a specific conflict, or outside of the group being investigated...It is only when we have a standpoint which is somewhat different from the participants' that it becomes possible to do justice to their standpoints' (Gouldner, 1973: 56-57, cited in Sugden and Tomlinson, 1999: 392).

Taking this standpoint, this chapter will now embark on the specifics of this project.

Research Design

The overall design of a research project is closely linked to the researcher's epistemological stance (Jones, 2014). I have discussed mine at length in the methodological stance section of this chapter and it is this underpinning which informed my choice of methods and modes of analysis. This section will now discuss the data collection methods used, access to the field, and the sampling adopted, before outlining the analysis of the data collected.

Methods Employed

This section directly addresses the methods I used in my project, by inspecting the various tools used, whilst offering insight into why these methods were chosen. As I

have previously noted I adopted an ethnographic sensibility (Treadwell, 2020) with a multi-method approach (Harvey, 2015) where I used two separate forms of participant observation and some semi-structured interviews. Treadwell (2020) implores us to think of ethnography as something more than a method for collecting data or as a methodological approach. He acknowledges that in practice ethnography is simply a collection of qualitative methods (Treadwell, 2020). It is within this nexus where my chosen methods align themselves with criminological ethnography: I employed a collection of qualitative methods whilst thinking and acting with an ethnographic sensibility.

I used two different forms of participant observation, both adopting Gold's (1958) observer-as-participant role. Participant observation is a longstanding tool of data collection (Bryman, 2007). It works on the assumption that although there is a shared meaning within a specific group in society, (in my case a shared interest in their child's hobbies or wellbeing) there is a variation in the way this shared collective meaning is interpreted within the group that is being observed, and also within wider society (Howell, 2013). Put simply, participant observation acknowledges a collective interest but this collective interest also has individual reactions within it; so all parents want what is best for their child, but what that best is and how it is achieved is a variation on the collective belief. By conducting observation, I could see this collective in action and watch how the culture of children's football works (Davis et al, 2011; Silverman, 2006). This can be linked back to my critical interpretivist approach: I could dig beneath the surface to uncover a deeper meaning, go beyond the mere presentation of the selves that the parents projected (Sugden and Tomlinson, 1999) whilst also invoking the multiple versions of their truth. Also, by observing, I could achieve Thompson's ability to 'interpenetrate agency and structure' (Sugden and Tomlinson, 1999: 392). I

could situate their beliefs and my observations into the wider culture of children's football.

By using Gold's (1958) definition of an observer as a participant, I could be open and honest about my role as a researcher and my aims of the project. This will be discussed in more detail in the ethical considerations section. Adopting the observer as a participant role enabled me to take part in what Spradley (1980) called moderate participation. This moderate role allowed me to adopt a central positional standpoint in relation to the usual pitfalls of observation, such as going native and the Hawthorne effect (see Bryman, 2015 for an overview). However, it did not mean that I was free from all obstacles or limitations and these will be discussed in the reflexive thoughts section of this chapter. However, it is useful to bear in mind Treadwell's (2020) warning when adopting such a definitive and defining role in observational methodology which requires fluidity. Therefore, as a researcher, I was ready to be more fluid in my stance and methods should the need have arisen. In my observational role, I flitted between participant and observer. It is the specifics of this that we will next explore.

Firstly, I observed an all-boys team of under 9s, -The Bears- which played in the local FA non-competitive league. They will henceforth be referred to as The Bears. I observed The Bears for an 18-month period every Saturday (weather permitting) in season¹⁶ (between 2017 and 2019. Usually I had my children (aged one and seven) with me, and I will reflect on having them in the field in my reflexive account towards the latter part of this chapter. During these observations I made field notes and used aide-memoires to help me write-up my complete field notes when I returned home.

¹⁶ A season typically ran the same as a school year.

The quality, reliability, and validity of my findings in this project are very much dependent on the quality and rigour of my field notes. I completed aide-memoires whilst out in the field using my mobile phone: they allowed me to recall some of the details of my observations and take notes on things like the demographic of match attendance and my feelings about the atmosphere. These have been used in various other studies such as Smith's (2014) study on the NTE. I did not have a specific note-taking template but I did keep in mind the guidelines set out by Loftland *et al.* (2006) who stated that notes should be concrete, I should distinguish my comments from those of my participants, they should be recalls for forgotten material, and only used for imperative data and personal impressions. I used a system of abbreviations for things I would hear regularly (e.g. 0-0 for 'it's still nil-nil' or TYC for 'take your chance' - both concepts which are discussed in the empirical chapters). I then used these aide-memoires to form the basis of my field notes.

Field notes have long been established as a method for recording data (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003) and are used more specifically in observational studies (Bryman, 2015; Smith 2014; Hobbs 1988). If I had attempted to write full field notes whilst in the field it would have interrupted any conversation or observation (Robson, 2011) so I converted my aide-memoires into field notes at home after each observation (Hobbs, 1988; Smith 2014) within 24 hours, as recommended by Robson (2011). It is common practice to write up field notes within 24 hours because if left any longer, or another observation session has taken place, the findings could be skewed or distorted, and therefore the reliability and validity would be in question.

Each time I observed The Bears I had corresponding aide-memoires and field notes. As noted, the aide-memoires were stored on my mobile which had a fingerprint secure lock on it, and I deleted them as soon as I had converted them into full field notes. I

also had field notes for every observation of The Bears, and these were saved on my laptop in password-protected files (this will be covered more in the data storage section of this chapter).

My second form of observation was also a form of observer-as-participant (see Gold, 1958) and took place online. I was granted access by the gatekeeper (discussed below) to The Bears private closed social media group page. I was added into this group during the period of 2017-2020. In this time, I collected data in the form of conversation threads, posts, and match reports completed by the volunteer coach and his deputy. In order to record and capture this data I screen-grabbed them and anonymized them before saving them onto a locked file on my laptop. I then converted the screengrabs into a Microsoft Word document: this document is therefore a transcript of these conversations and posts. I then approached these observations as I would any interview transcript and performed the same analysis on them (my choice of analysis will be discussed in the later analysis subsection). This type of observational environment is an accepted research method, and valuable when it affords insights into groups that would otherwise be impossible.

The social media observations gave me access to what Swenson called *mixed reality*; a place where ‘physical and virtual spaces fuse in lived experience’ (2018: 3). Meaning that the parents shared this virtual space where they could consolidate, analyse, digest, and discuss what had happened within the physical field of the match¹⁷. This space was initially a way of confirming what I had physically witnessed while I was at the matches, through the match reports. I use a match report in chapter 5 to unpick what the coach was *really* saying about the match, via the tones he used and possible

¹⁷ This does not always have to refer to a shared physical space.

meanings and then comparing it with my observed notes. However, viewing this in a mixed reality sense we can see that it is so much more; it adds layers of context to my findings and created additional findings and themes. As Swenson notes:

‘Viewing ethnography within a field of mixed-reality helps scholars to acknowledge how virtual conversations and connections shape material possibilities, and how, conversely, physical interactions enable the virtual’ (2018: 6).

The online observation presented me with a new take on Goffman’s *Presentation of the Everyday Self* (1956); it increased the validity and reliability of my findings and generated new emerging themes. Goffman (1956) theorised that we have a frontstage and a backstage persona. The frontstage happens in places which are generally public-facing, and in this research project the frontstage would be the parents physically at the match or training. The backstage is the behaviour which goes on in places which are largely private. For example, the closed social media group. The notion of a backstage private performance goes beyond merely being out of the view of the public; it increases validity of the personal ontologies because it is private and in a place of shared values and beliefs. However, this backdoor space also allows for rehearsal (Treadwell, 2020) and in the case of a closed online social media group, the participants could rehearse what they wanted to say and take their time in saying it because of the edit function when commenting or posting. This exemplifies that although backstage is freer for people to be their true selves, it should always be considered on a scale rather than separate dichotomies, which I took into consideration when analysing the data. This analysis is where we can clearly see me as a researcher adopting Douglas’ (1976) move from accepting things at face value and moving into an investigative zone (Sugden and Tomlinson, 1999).

Using social media allowed the physical field events (the observational sessions) to 'expand beyond their initial temporal and physical boundaries' (Swenson, 2018: 11). This expansion provided me with a more in-depth contextual analysis for the parents' justification for their child's participation, making my results more valid. However, as with all methods one must bear in mind that the participants are still presenting themselves in a competitive arena and that the researchers' judgement is imperative in gaining reliable accounts of the lived experience. All of this is to say that, using

'social media not only augment[ed] the [my] researcher's field notes and offer[ed] a new medium for participant-observation, but it open[ed] up new possibilities for designing interview questions or hosting interviews' (Swenson, 2018: 12).

Which bring us to the third and final method of data collection used in this project: semi-structured interviews.

I opted for semi-structured interviews because I had already observed some patterns emerging from my observational data and I wanted a schedule that would allow me to address these patterns with some form of structure, but I did not wish to close off other themes that could have arisen during an open-ended interview. The choice of semi-structured therefore was a perfect blend for having structure and the freedom to explore (Bryman, 2015). (See Appendix 1, 2, and 3 for interview schedules.) I interviewed 18 people before I felt I was reaching a point of saturation: this consisted of nine sets of parents, five life-long players (these were young adults under the age of 21 who had played in their childhood for at least 10 years) and four coaches and referees. I would have liked to have interviewed more referees and coaches, however recruitment in this area proved difficult.

The interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes and were a mixture of telephone and face-to-face interviews: both techniques have strengths and limitations to them.

Completing face-to-face interviews allowed me to pick up on non-verbal cues and body language (Jones, 2014) which allowed me to look deeper where necessary (Walliman, 2006). However, conducting these relied on both myself and the participant being in the same physical vicinity, which is not always possible to coordinate. Using telephone interviews meant I lost the face-to-face interaction, but it allowed me to open up the scope of my research group (Descombe, 2003). I transcribed my interviews and again stored these transcriptions in a locked file. They were fully anonymised at point of transcription. Transcription took place as soon as possible after the interview and I made a profile of the participant (Descombe, 2003).

I interviewed people from various geographical locations. Therefore, my interview sample is one which spans the UK; I interviewed people in the North, Northeast, North West, Yorkshire, South East, and South West England, as well as Wales and Scotland. My sample size is not large enough to claim any generalised representational claims, however, I believe having this range of places in my interviews allows enough scope to confidently say that what I found in the match and online analysis is representative of the UK and not merely a localised phenomenon. We will now look at how I gained access to my participants and the sampling adopted before moving onto the analysis section.

Access

The access to watch any children's football is not prohibited or regulated so any member of the public can watch the matches, as they are in full public view. That said, I could not in good ethical faith have just turned up regularly to these matches without the coaches, parents, and children knowing who I am or what I was doing; it has the potential to cause stress, worry, and anxiety for all involved. Therefore, I used a gatekeeper to gain access to both The Bears' physical and online space. Using a

gatekeeper is somewhat common practice in the areas of sport studies (Jones, 2014) and educational settings (Robert-Holmes, 2009). A gatekeeper is someone who provides access to areas that could otherwise prove impossible or tricky; in my case I could have just observed but it would have caused undue stress and I would not have had the option to join the closed media group. My gatekeeper acted in loco parentis, which means an adult in charge has been granted to act in the child's best interest in the absence of their parents (Jones, 2014).

The gatekeeper in my case was also the coach of the team, in a set-up which would be very similar to a headteacher granting me access to a school to observe the teachers (Robert-Holmes, 2009). Although I must acknowledge here that I was observing the coach as well as the parents, and I made this clear in my information sheets for the gatekeeper, parents, and children (see Appendix 4, 5 and 6). Even though I had the gatekeeper's permission, I still asked that he disseminated information sheets to the parents and the children. The parent sheet explained who I was and about the project and advised them that they could withdraw from the study if they so wished. The child sheet just explained that I will be watching them play football, but I am really watching what is happening on the side-lines just as much. Having a gatekeeper provide access, especially one who is so involved in the team, as well as conducting research near children, meant I needed to do my utmost to be an ethical researcher, and I believe I achieved that.

Sampling

My overarching sampling strategy was purposive, convenience, and snowballing. It was purposive because the participants I needed for my interviews needed to meet a certain set of criteria: they needed to be a parent of a child who played grassroots football, or a life-long player, coach, or referee for children's games. Once I had the

parameters of the purposive element, I used a mixture of convenience and snowballing. By conducting interviews both face-to-face and on the phone, it meant that I could interview anyone who fit the criteria, and I could ask them if they would ask the other parents in their team if they would contribute. I advertised for participants on various social media platforms that are used by parents and other people with links to grassroots football, for example, I posted on a referees Facebook page. I also emailed my call for participants to various colleagues and friends asking them to disseminate. (See Appendix 7 for the call for participants.) I did not get any referrals from snowball sampling, but the convenience element worked well.

Data Analysis

Analysis in its most primitive sense is about sorting data into workable groups of segments or codes, hence it is sometimes referred to as coding. Descombe (2003) states that an analysis uncovers the underlying key principles of a particular phenomenon, which is then used to provide a clear understating of said phenomenon. Qualitative or ethnographic data analysis can be seen as a messy process (O'Reilly, 2009) because the researcher is dealing with copious amounts of raw, unorganised data. Essentially, the role of analysis is to bring some order to the chaos, to make sense of the truths that the researcher has unearthed. Analysis then is the process that is used to

‘search out patterns, surprising phenomena and inconsistencies, [whereby] the researcher can generate new theories or uncover further instances of those already in existence’ (Walliman, 2005: 308).

However, to call this process messy implies and perpetuates the notion that qualitative methods of data collection and analysis are less systematic and rigorous than those of a more quantitative nature (Treadwell, 2020). However, the remainder of this section

alongside that of the methods used should clearly show how my reasoning, choice of method, and analysis were grounded in scientific decision making, and that these were indeed the best tools for the job.

Analytical Reasoning

Normally a starting point for most analysis is the findings from the previous research into your specific field (Descombe, 2003) but there were no previous studies which examined children's non-competitive football from a harm-based approach. Therefore, I could not start my research or analysis in the traditional way. This led me to exploring a grounded theory approach. The grounded theory approach is one of the influential methods developed by Glasser and Strauss in the 1960s, and its basic premise is to allow theory generation to come from the empirical data. Having empirical data meant that the findings could not be refuted because they would be grounded in that data (Descombe, 2003). It has also been expressed as the 'discovery of theory from data' (Walliman, 2005: 308).

Grounded theory, when practiced in the strictest sense, is built on the notion that the researcher will approach the topic from a blank slate, a *tabula rasa*, and the theory will fully emerge from this data in an objective sense (Descombe, 2003; Walliman, 2005). I have already noted that I was not coming from a blank slate, so I am not adopting grounded theory in its strictest sense. However, the fundamental presumption of grounded theory has progressed since the 1960s, and it is now acceptable to assume that there will be influence in some form:

'the initial questions or area for observation are based on concepts derived from literature or experience. Since these concepts do not yet have proven theoretical relevance to the evolving theory, they must be considered provisional. Nevertheless, they provide a *beginning focus*, a place for the researcher to start' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 180 cited in Descombe, 2003: 113 [original emphasis]).

Therefore, my approach to analysis could be considered as grounded in its nature. Strauss and Corbin note that the main premise of interpreting grounded theory in this way is so that the researcher can keep the data and its findings open for questions throughout (Descombe, 2003). Crow and Semmens (2008) claim that it is fully expected that, as a researcher, you will need to tailor your analysis, which could involve using a combination of elements from various approaches. The main part of my analysis was grounded in the sense that it contributed to an area that was missing within an established body of theory. My analysis 'developed concepts' (Descombe, 2003: 119).

The analysis of data in the grounded theory approach rests on the premise that it creates good explanations of complex social occurrences through a process which identifies the core elements of that social group or occurrence, and arrives at the underlying principles that explain it. In my research and analysis this is what I set out to do. I looked at children's non-competitive grassroots football, which as we have seen in chapters 1 and 2 sits within a nexus of other social phenomena, and I attempt to pull these phenomena together through my results, to explain the actions and underlying reasons for their occurrences on an individual, societal, and global level.

Analysis

The process of coding I used was again based in grounded theory. I followed the process of open coding, based on both the literature review information and on themes which emerged from the research, so I had two sets of coding in this first stage. The first set of open coding included all my raw data as transcripts, and I coded this data in line with themes I found in the literature review. I used NVIVO to organise and map these codes. The second set of the open coding was truly open in nature and the themes emerged from the data. I coded these manually by using online index cards

which I could move, colour, and add memo notes and reflective thoughts to. The reason I completed the second set of open coding manually is that I wanted to stay close to my data, build a flexible database of it, and ‘not to lose sight of data with its subtle complexities’ (Walliman, 2005: 309).

The second stage in the coding was the axial coding; this marked a shift in the coding towards the identification of key components (Descombe, 2003), so I went through both sets of codes again and started to identify the key themes by comparing them to each other, looking for any matches or opposites in thinking, rhetoric, behaviours, and attitudes. The final stage of coding, and the point where I brought the two sets of coding together, was the selective coding. This is where I uncovered what would tell the story of my participants, whilst exploring and examining the underlying actions, attitudes, and intersections with other areas of society. I could have adopted different ways of coding my data here or used different coding guides, for example, Wolcott’s (1994) three stages of ethnographic analysis: thinking, categorising, and focus (Walliman, 2005).

Furthermore, I adopted both an inductive and deductive approach to my analysis, around the two broad areas of organising information; one to remind me of the sequence of events and the second to contribute to theory generation. I followed Jalili-Idrissi in her approach: she used Hanley’s (2015) suggestion of a mix of inductive and deductive approaches to data analysis and representation:

‘this implied not just providing an ethnographic account of life within confined space, but establishing links to neoliberal order and the ongoing struggle’ (Jalili-Idrissi, 2019: 131-132)

Although I did not research confined spaces physically (Jalil-Idrissi's research took place in prisons) I did, however, examine a specific group of people in society and their relationships with the metrics of neoliberalism.

In summary, I was systematic in my approach to my analysis. Guided by grounded theory principles I organised my data into manageable units, using two distinctive different platforms: NVIVO and index cards. I then coded these into themes (as noted above, some themes were pre-defined, and others were borne out of the data). I completed this task by hand despite having my transcripts and field notes loaded into NVIVO, which enabled me to know my data inside and out. After establishing my selective themes, I constantly revisited them to create an iterative comparative analysis which formed the basis of my three empirical chapters. The grounded element of my approach led to me furthering and adding to the ultra-realist and deviant leisure framework, which is evidenced in the results chapters. Overall, my analysis achieved what Treadwell states should be done to successfully complete ethnographic analysis:

‘what is important is that those undertaking ethnography remember that the task is not simple description of a phenomena under study or the events in the field site, but that ethnography as an academic exercise must engage with theory, and it must always remain alert to the social, economic, political, cultural and technological contexts which give rise to and shape the activities and practices that are witnessed’ (2020: 171).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations lie at the heart of any research project and therefore they should be central to all aspects of the research, including design, methods, recruitment and publishing. Ethics are measured, managed, and granted through ethics committees, and in this sense, they are a regulatory body. For example, before I could undertake any empirical research, I needed to gain approval from the University of Plymouth's

Faculty Research Ethics and Integrity Committee to show that I had considered the ethical implications of my study on my participants. They granted me approval, stating that I had sufficiently considered issues that may arise in my study and that I would be expected to behave in an ethical manner throughout my project (see Appendix 8). We can examine the role of committees here as somewhat of a Lacanian Little Other, managing behaviour in the absence of a working symbolic efficiency, because if we had one we wouldn't need any regulation. This point has been explored in depth by Winlow and Hall (2012) in their critique on ethics committees. Having said this, I do believe I practiced my research in an ethically considerate and acceptable way. I used 'ethics in practice' (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004: 262) which transcends the notion of ethics simply being a form or committee. Using the British Society of Criminology (BSC) Statement of Ethics (2015) as a guide I considered the points which follow, moreover, these points are all, to a degree, underpinned by the Data Protection Act 1998,¹⁸ which ensured further protection for my participants and their stories.

Protection from Harm

As a researcher I had a duty and responsibility to keep my participants free from harm:

'Researchers should recognise that they have a responsibility to minimise personal harm to research participants by ensuring that the potential physical, psychological, discomfort or stress to individuals participating in research is minimised by participation' (BSC, 2015: 5).

This protection from harm can and should be interpreted in many ways. Everything which has been and will be covered in this, the ethical considerations section of this chapter, goes some way to explaining how I ensured the protection of my participants, their identity, their right to privacy, and ensuring they consented to being part of my

¹⁸ Today this underpinning would be the new GDPR guidelines.

research project. Harm, as we will discover in the three empirical chapters of this thesis, is a nuanced and complex concept, and while I do not wish to pre-empt the discussion here, it is important to note that there are different types of harm:

‘harm can entail a number of facets: physical harm; harm to participants’ development; loss of self-esteem; stress; and inducing subjects to perform reprehensible acts’ (Diener and Crandall, 1978, cited in Bryman, 2008: 118).

The sections that follow this will address these harms in detail. The potential for harm I wish to discuss here are the physical and psychological aspects. My duty to protect my participants and myself from harm makes up the majority part of using ‘ethics in practice’ (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004: 262).

I did not need to give a great deal of consideration to the issue of physical harm for my observation sites: these were adults observing their children alongside other parents in full public view, or they were adults using an online social media site; I did not require them to change their habits. However, I did have a duty to report any suspected physical or psychological harm of the children who were playing football to my supervisory team, the gatekeeper, and possibly the authorities, dependent on the perceived level of harm. Luckily, this duty was not tested as I never felt there was any immediate danger to the children. The full protocol is outlined in my ethical approval form (Appendix 8). The interviews followed a similar pattern and took place either by phone, or in a place agreed between the participant and me. When the interviews were in physical spaces I conducted the interview in their home, so there was no additional physical harm to the participant to consider. To ensure my own safety I informed my husband of where I was and provided him with a time I would be in contact by. Additionally, my topic and line of questioning did not involve any illegal activity or delving into any traumatic past, therefore the risk of psychological harm was minimal.

Openness and Honesty

My consent forms ultimately achieved openness and honesty between my participants and myself (Descombe, 2003). I informed the participants of my research area and the subsequent data protection issues which come as part of any research project. In the consent forms for both sets of methods I fully informed the participations using an information sheet; one which I provided directly and one that I provided via the gatekeeper (dependent on the participant group). These information sheets outlined that the participants could withdraw by a given date, if they so wish. I also informed the participants they could contact me or my director of studies with any questions or concerns, and I provided them with the information on how to do this. I did inform my participants, via the consent forms, that I was coming from a critical criminological standpoint and I used the observation data and my literature review to form a significant part of the semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix 1, 2 and 3). I believe that ensuring this open and honest rapport with my participants meant that my data was reflective of my participants' realities (Walliman, 2005): of their involvement with and relationship to children's non-competitive grassroots football.

Informed Consent

Informed consent is specifically laid out in 4.6 of the BSC (2015). Section 4.6 instructs that consent should be given freely unless there are exceptional circumstances. In this project I gained consent as an on-going process as part of my multi-level approach. I approached consent in different ways for each of the two approaches. For the first part of my project (the observation of the under 9's and the online observation in the closed social networking site) I used a gatekeeper for access and consent purposes, which will be discussed below. The second part of my study (the semi-structured interviews) I sought consent either verbally or in writing at the beginning of the interview.

Using a gatekeeper is similar to research accessing educational settings and is used frequently within sports research (Jones, 2014). Consent involved gaining informed consent from the gatekeeper who held the authority to grant me access and consent for the observations; again, this is frequently adopted in educational settings (see Holman, 2002; Robson, 2011). Although the gatekeeper held authority to grant me access and consent for my study, I requested that an information sheet (with details of the study, my contact details, and how to withdraw) was given to the parents. See Appendix 4 and 5 for this information sheet and the gatekeeper's consent form. In doing this I ensured that the participants knew who I was when I was present at the field site, that their reactions would be less guarded, and that I was behaving in a truly ethically appropriate manner by constantly re-negotiating consent (Smith *et al.*, 2009), all which also increased the reliability and validity of the data collected.

Informed consent from the participants of the semi-structured interviews followed a standard way of obtaining consent in semi-structured interviews (Bryman, 2014; Descombe, 2003). The participants were presented with the consent form either prior to the telephone interview or at the time of the face-to-face interview, then verbal or written consent was obtained from the participant before the interview started. This consent procedure ensured that the participants knew exactly who I was, where I was from, the aims of my study, how I would protect their identity, store their data, and what I was intending to do with my findings. Although these things are required in a consent form (BSC, 2015) they are also moral guidelines to ensure research data is collected in an ethically approved manner.

Right to Withdraw

The participants from both of my research samples had the right to withdraw without reproach by a given time; this is a common practice within the field of data collection

(Walliman, 2005). This gave my participants the confidence that I was being open and honest about my research aims and objectives and that should they want to change their mind, they could do so. The interview participants were given a specific date: Oct 2018, by which they could withdraw and the instructions on how to do so. I also reiterated this point at the start of each interview. None of my interview participants withdrew from my project. The participants from the observation group also had the right to withdraw and were given the information on how to do so in their information sheet. However, I must acknowledge here that I was reliant on my gatekeeper to disseminate this information to the parents of the children in his football team. I could not say with 100% certainty that this was done nor the manner in which it was achieved. But the relationship between researcher and gatekeeper is one of trust (Bryman, 2015) and I must trust that this information was shared in an ethically appropriate manner. I can claim a high certainty that the information sheet was given to the participants because no-one questioned my presence in either of my two field sites (online and at matches) and they were happy to chat to me about their child and the role of football within their lives. No-one withdrew from the observation aspect of my study.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality was a key ethical consideration within my study (Thomas, 2013) in order to fully protect my participants, and subsequently their children. I wove practices into my research design and data collection that would work towards anonymity. In the observations of the team in the field I fully anonymised my notes: I created a pseudonym for each parent, coaching staff, and child, and used these in my observations rather than their real names (which I often did not know anyway). The online analysis was somewhat different to the match days because I could access

their actual information, so in order to protect them I saved the conversation threads as a picture with a black line over any identifiable information (e.g. their names, their children's names, and the team names). Again, this meant that when I went back over my data, I myself could not name anyone specifically. For the semi-structured interviews, I anonymised the file name of the recording and the transcriptions, and after the transcriptions were completed, I deleted the recording. During the transcription process I fully anonymised the data for names, places, and clubs. No one had access to the raw data from either method of data collection and after collection everything was anonymised, including identifiable places or references.

Data Storage

Leading on from how I saved my data to ensure confidentiality I also stored my data in an ethically compliant way. This was on a locked university device, which only I could access, and as a further measure I also password protected all files and folders relating to my raw data. I deleted the original recordings from my interviews as soon as I had completed transcribing. I stored and saved my field notes under password protected files and folders, along with the conversation threads from the online groups. I did not retain any data longer than was needed and I complied with the principles and guidelines of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Reflexive Thoughts

As with any chosen method of data collection and analysis there are decisions taken in the design process which impact the overall study. I believe that I addressed these concerns as they arose. The main concern for my work is that of my subjectivity, as covered in the methodological stance section, but I do believe that my subjectivity is a point of uniqueness that I have used throughout this study. I must also acknowledge that I will never see the full picture of my chosen topic area, and that I can never fully

empathise with my participants because I do not have the cognitive processes in place nor the shared social background. However, this is accepted within methods literature as a fault in the process: we will only ever get a partial view (Luther, 1991, cited in Davies *et al.*, 2011). However, from my partial view I aimed to give the participants a voice and tell their story, and I then placed their experiences into wider social contexts in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

There is little in the way of replicability in my study because ‘social reality is not stable’ (Walliman, 2005: 122). Walliman goes on to say:

‘apart from the problems of interpreting the data, there is the fact when working in a naturalist setting, with groups engaged in everyday activities, it is impossible to repeat the situation in order to verify the research’ (ibid: 122).

A situation that further complicates the issue of replicability is that on occasions my family visited the research field with me. This was my two daughters, one of which was under two for the duration of the observational period (2017-2019) and the other who was under nine, and my husband. On occasion he provided me with some football technical terminology and context to actions or comments that I, as a non-football fan, would not have understood instantly (e.g. ‘*doing a Neymar*’ which is discussed in chapter 5.) However, I also felt that having my children on site helped with my status as a parent, which gained trust and created rapport. As a research tool, they helped negate the insider/outsider status that Pitts (2008) refers to. The use of children as a ‘prop’ to ease the respondents and to cement access is not a revolutionary concept. Zeisel (2016) speaks of how they used their children for a park setting observation. Likewise, Finch (1984) speaks of her experience as a young mother, giving her access to views and experiences which would have otherwise been unobtainable had she not been a young mother herself.

That said, replicability is not expected from ethnographic methods and there are numerous influential ethnographies where replicability is not an issue (see Smith, 2014; Winlow, 2001; Treadwell *et al.*, 2012). Considering ethnography doesn't provide a replicable environment, Spano (2005, cited in Davis, *et al.*, 2011) noted that there were no detrimental effects to ethnography and found that there is often little in the way of observer bias. I hope that the rigor applied to my three prong approach negated any limitations or ethical concerns, and that I have shown trustworthiness (Glasser and Straus, 1967 cited in Ritchie and Lewis, 2003), consistency (; Robson, 2002; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003) and the dependability of the evidence (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, cited in Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined my methodological underpinning and my methodology for data collection. The chapter started by looking at my critically interpretivist methodological stance and how this informed my study design and understanding of potential ethical issues. We then explored my research design which included two forms of observation. The first observation was in person with my family watching the Bears play for 18 months; the second observation was online observation of the Bears' closed social media group. Both equated to what Spradley (1980) termed moderate observation. After my observation I decided I needed more in-depth data on motivations and experiences, so I undertook 18 semi-structured interviews with parents of children who play/ed football, life-long players, and coaches. Collectively this formed an ethnographic sensibility, as I aim to paint a picture of the realities of these children and of their parent's motivation for enrolling them into non-competitive grassroots football. We then examined my approach to the data analysis, which primarily involved coding the data set in two different ways, ensuring I kept close to

my data, using an approach that led me to match themes and to bring it together to tell the story of my research data. This chapter then concluded with the ethical considerations and reflections on my own role in the research and the impact this would have on my results. The next three chapters of this thesis look at the story of my data and present my findings.

Chapter 5:

‘Take Your Chance! If you don’t someone else will!’

The Cold Realism of Children’s Grassroots Football.

‘Often the violent subject has been told over and over again during childhood, in a cultural form of realpolitik, that the world is a hostile place populated by naked instrumental others engaged in ceaseless competition for supremacy and recognition’ (Winlow, 2014: 37).

Introduction

So far, this thesis has explored and outlined the various benefits of children’s grassroots football and highlighted how criminology has been ineffective at dealing with the possibly of harm in everyday sports and leisure. This chapter is the first of the three empirical chapters, which explore the harms within children’s non-competitive football using a deviant leisure framework and sets the scene for the latter two chapters by exploring the harms of the wider environment of this type of football. The children in my study who participated in grassroots football were exposed to the same cold realism that Winlow (2014) and Ellis (2016) found their participants were exposed to as a child. The children in my study were not necessarily exposed to interpersonal violence and harm but using a deviant leisure framework and a deeper analysis of the unconscious, we can see the similarities within the framework of this neoliberal ideology. This chapter will start by discussing the rise in popularity of football through consumption and the media, before moving on to the metrics of non-competitive

grassroots football, which are affected by the media's presentation of the game. It will go on to expose the shallow sentiment behind the concept of non-competitiveness in a neoliberal environment, and then examine how the spirit of neoliberalism plays out on the field through the ideas of 'taking your chance', 'it's always nil-nil' and by exploring the inter-competitiveness of a non-competitive game.

The Media and Consumption of Football

The English Premier League (EPL) debuted in the 1991/92 season as a response to the declining popularity of football in the 1980s (Vamplew, 2017). It has since become the most watched league on the planet, with one billion homes watching in over 188 countries (Premier League, 2019 [online]). It was the most inspiring league found in my research, as Robert (life-longer player) shows:

'everyone likes the idea of being the next big star [...] as a younger player I wanted to be Ronaldo or Messi. The best in the world'.

Therefore, the impact it has on the popularity of the game must be examined first, in a chapter on the environment of football. We can start to theorise the popularity of the Premier League through Veblen's seminal work *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1965 [1899]) which determined that consumption is a signifier of social class; studying the drives and motivations of leisure through the 'symbolic competitiveness of "conspicuous consumption"' (Raymen, 2018: 48). The Premier League's partnership with Sky altered football from a working-class, poor, struggling game to one of elevated standing and honor by creating an air of exclusivity. The Premier League is the pinnacle of this symbolic competition; winning the Premier League is the ultimate dream or goal for English football clubs and many people are willing to part with their hard-earned cash to support it and be part of it. By using Veblen's notion of

conspicuous consumption, we can clearly see how Sky and the Premier League created their brand, organised their product, and sold it to the masses. Sky manufactured desire, monopolised the market, and along with the Premier League became the envy of the footballing world:

‘the EPL has a transitional significance, it is seen by many of the nations as an exemplary form of neoliberal, securitised and commodified elite sport, to be studied and practicably replicated’¹⁹ (Giulianotii, 2011: 3297).

This monopolising strategy was successful to the point that football was revived and became one of the most popular sports in the world, as Katie (a parent and coach) states

‘they all want to be professionals one day’.

This is true for one of my life-long players, Jonah, who plays semi-professional football and is still trying to make it. Through what he termed post-fandom, Steve Redhead (1997) demonstrated how the exclusivity of this conspicuous consumption encouraged fans from lower economic status²⁰ to become indebted to Sky: firstly, through a subscription-only basic service, and then through an additional cost for the sports package. We can start to see how this could be systemically exploitative and harmful on a structural level. Masses of people enter into a contract with a television provider (which cannot be cancelled without incurring a charge) so if a person’s financial status changes their monthly bill will still stand. The Premier League encouraged and perpetuated this distinctiveness by choosing to sell the rights to a subscription-based television broadcaster. Today the harm and systemic exploitation of the Premier

¹⁹ Due to changes in the communications law and to avoid any such monopolization or, the replicability of the PL’s success is somewhat limited in scope.

²⁰ Football is well known as a working-class game.

League is worse²¹; football fans must subscribe to three subscription-only services, two of which require an extra payment for sports²². The football fan then has no choice but to choose (Giddens, 19991) at least one, if they still wish to show their support to their team.

Through distinction and broadcasting rights, conspicuous consumption is embedded with the Premier League, meaning we can start to examine the motivations of fans willing to pay the extra to support their teams, even throughout an economic crisis and recession. A football fan's dedication to their team is a complex psychological study, which is beyond the scope of this thesis, but for the children in my study, the theme of distinction and prestige is strong. By looking at the role models and teams supported by the children and life-long players in my study, it is evident that the coverage of the Premier League has been successful in cultivating their tastes; Beckham, Gerrard, and Pickford were amongst the popular names (each representing a different Premier League club). Connor, who is a parent and occasional referee for children's grassroots games, offered an apt analysis of why his son Lewis, who is 10, supports a Premier League team:

'oh he says [Lewis], I want to support a team in the PL, there is no point in watching Stainsville [local team], they never win anything, they're rubbish', Connor goes on to comment that 'I mean that's kids for you isn't it, all about the prestige, supporting the local club takes dedication, he will get it as he grows up!'

Connor offers us a very rudimentary commentary on a child's view of football; it's all about the prestige, the distinction, and the conspicuous consumption of that symbolic competition; the metrics. Without the allure of a title or Cup, Lewis simply had no interest in dedicating his time to it. Although Connor makes an important point about

²¹ Although monopolization should never be endorsed in a post-liberal neoliberal society, because we all need a choice.²² Sky Sports and Amazon.

local teams requiring dedication, some could argue all teams require some form of dedication. More notable is the age difference between Connor and Lewis. Connor is of a generation that can remember and visualise football before the EPL whereas Lewis, like everyone born after the late 1980's, cannot envision football without the Premier League being a pivotal part of it. Therefore, the younger generation have a very different reference point of football. This generation have only experienced the mediated trade-off between qualities that the Premier League prides itself on, such as fairness, and the competition for ratings and income from advertising revenue. Essentially, Lewis and many like him will have only experienced the televised games of the Premier League because the lower leagues are not broadcast as widely. However, the Premier League provides a mediated version of the game, which Bale (1998, in Scrambler, 2005) rightly claims are the new reference point for any football fan.

Due to the winning of the Premier League being symbolic (a point we will return to shortly) and the original reference point being lost, we must here apply Baudrillard's (1984) concept of simulacra to address the Premier League's impact on football and its fans. Baudrillard (1984) defines a simulacrum as a copy of a copy without an original or authentic reference point; it is something that is so far removed from the original that it is an object or an item within its own right. Baudrillard himself uses examples such as chicken nuggets, Disney Land and, Las Vegas, however, we can readily apply the Premier League to this concept. In this sense it is a product which is so far removed from its original reference point, and many reference points throughout history (see chapter 2) that it has become a whole new game.

The EPL could not exist without the marketisation of broadcasting, nor would it be as prolific as it is without the aggressive advertising associated with it at the hands of

Murdoch in its infantile state. The EPL today is a form of entertainment as well as sporting excellence. It is a nexus of sporting ability, entertainment, and advertising²³, and would not be what it is today without any of those components. But it is also not the same game that Connor and many other parents would have consumed. Football has progressed technologically, and the mediated version includes big screens and enhanced camera angles, ensuring you do not miss a thing whether in a stadium or at home (Dixon, 2016). Therefore, the experience is no longer real; it is a mediated version of the real²⁴. Previously you could not have experienced all the angles in the game, or paused, rewind, and examined again; it is not the same game. The real game and the hyperreal game have now imploded together to disguise the fact that this is now the *authentic* reference point for anyone consuming the game. This is more prominent in the current footballing climate with the introduction of VAR²⁵ which is dividing football fans throughout the country, as the erosion of the original reference point continues.

To examine football this way is to view it as a commodity. Due to everyone's experience being subjective and relative, Bale (1998) argues that football is an individualised experience of a collective environment; consuming football is a one-dimensional subjective experience, although everyone is watching the same match. For example, what I may see in a match as subjective violence²⁶, a fan or player may see as a legitimate tackle or manoeuvre. It is not uncommon for opposing fans to interpret a tackle differently. An example from my field work of watching an under 9's

²³ Advertising has surpassed advertising itself into the players and clubs advertising products within the market and beyond.

²⁴ This is not to be confused with Lacan's Real which will be discussed later in this chapter.

²⁵ Video assistant referee. Introduced into the EPL in the 2019/20 season.

²⁶ See Žižek (2008) and his triad of violence for a definition.

team in the Northwest of the UK, shows how two people can be consuming a subjective experience:

'I disagreed with the referee, more than once today. But his decision to allow a corner! As a parent I felt that tackle was harsh. The boy was laying down crying! Rubbing his ankle and to me that would validate my concerns about football being aggressive. However, more shocking to me than the ref allowing the free kick and ignoring the child on the floor is not as you would imagine the parents' reaction to this [they all just seemed to get on with the game] is my husband's²⁷ reaction to this! David, does have a tendency to embody a crazy hulk like character when watching any football, but, being married to him and having children with him I assumed that being a parent and the boy having physical injuries would trump the 'rules' of the game. So now I am sat here pondering my life choices as he informs me that I have no right questioning the decision of the ref, it was of course a decision, and I shouldn't be so naïve, it was a legitimate tackle – whatever that means!; the boy was simply pulling a Neymar' (Authors field notes, 08/18).

This excerpt epitomises Bale's point, and even two people of similar socio-economic and political status, and who in fact live in the same household, have two very different opinions on what is happening. My husband saw a child emulating a world-class player to gain an advantage in the game, and I saw a little boy injured and hurting. So, football is a one-dimensional subjective experience as Bale would indicate, drawing on a range of varying emotions, so when there are hundreds of thousands of people consuming a match, the game will always be individualised on a collective level.

While most scholars around fan-based consumption can see the above as losing the original reference point of the game (Bale, 1998) or losing the real (Baudrillard, 1984, 1998) or the Disneyization of the game (Bryman, 1999; Redhead, 1997), Christopher Lasch (1979) would argue that this is needed to complete the cycle of sport. Lasch (1979) argues that the loss of the real or of sport does not lie with its consumption, but in its over trivialisation, including spectators. He believes that for sport, including

²⁷ It should be noted that David, my long-suffering husband, is a life-long football fanatic

football, to give us any positive attribution it must be taken seriously, and that this is the product of a cycle, which spectators complete through a process of a shared illusion. If we accept Lasch's argument, it is then in the role of spectators that completes sport, and without their over trivialisation football loses its *raison d'être*. Even though footballers need spectators to bask in their mastery of skill, the mediated version of the game encourages spectators to take part in an overstated popularity contest. For example, at the time of writing this chapter there has been a recent explosion in the media about Rooney versus Hardy - not the players themselves, but some drama with their wives. This media coverage is what Lasch spoke of before its time; it adds nothing to the game nor can spectators glean anything of the mastery of the sport from it. In this sense late modernity has over trivialised spectatorship and sports, including football, are paying the price; the meaning of the game and its reference point is becoming more skewed. And it is this version of media coverage that is normalised for children.

The shared illusion that Lasch believes is necessary to keep sport running as a serious endeavour, is similar to Žižek's call for symbolic efficiency. Symbolic efficiency is what is required to ensure the smooth running of the Big Other²⁸- signs and symbols must, through the Symbolic Order, work to full capacity to ensure a high level of symbolic efficiency. During times of high symbolic efficiency, the Symbolic Order provided a shared consensus of meanings and values which adhered to the Big Other, however, because the Big Other is only real insofar as people believe it is real, it is effectively a shared illusion. As outlined above, through the subjective experiences of consumption, we can already see how the shared illusion of the Big Other is collapsing. It is starting to accept itself as dead or no longer real, but this means that the Symbolic Order, the

²⁸ See Chapter 3 for a breakdown of this terminology.

shared notions of values and ethics, are dead also. This is because there is a diminished level of symbolic efficiency and everyone is acting in an individual way of bringing their children up.

If we had a shared notion of ethics and values there would be no need for this thesis; everyone would act according to the Big Other and know what it means to be a good coach and parent, and exactly what children get from playing grassroots football. However, in the wake of a fragmented Symbolic Order, brought on by postmodern critique of universality, the meaning of good and flourishing itself is questioned (see Raymen, 2019; Lloyd 2018), so action and motivation to act becomes lost in a sea of fragmentation. We can see this again in the introduction of VAR. The referee's authority in a fully functioning Symbolic Order was not called into question, yet, with technological advancements the authority of the referee is now questioned and relies on two video assistant referees. Although VAR is still a contested issue in the EPL its mere introduction denotes the fragmentation, much like the wavering of belief in professional doctors that Winlow and Hall (2011) highlight in their paper on ethics committees. Through the decline of symbolic efficiency (due to the Big Other not being able to supply meaning to a grand narrative) Little Others have tried to replace the Big Other to offer prohibitive rules by which people should live. However, they are unsuccessful due to the fragmentation. There can be no successful Little Others without the ruling authority of the Big Other. It would be easy to assume that FIFA is a Little Other of football supplying the prohibitive rules and governing the game, however, Little Others cannot replace the value system: the Symbolic Order of the Big

Other, therefore FIFA cannot be seen as a Little Other; The Respect²⁹ guidelines however can and will be explored as this in chapter 6.

What is important here is the decline in the symbolic efficiency, the death of the Big Other, and fragmented Symbolic Order, in relation to identity formation. Identity formation in late modernity is problematic, due to the decline in the shared illusion of social reality; gone are the days when identity was tied to a profession or predicted life-trajectory. Identity formation is a key theme in this thesis (and explored further in chapter 7) because it relates to what children are getting from playing grassroots football and feeds into their motivations for playing this sport. Identity is formed from an early age by identifying with an Other; this stage is repeated throughout the life-cycle as identity is malleable, especially for children. When the Symbolic Order is in disarray the individual is without any shared meaning or values and this leaves them open to the possibility of facing the terror of the Real. As a result of the objectless anxiety, the individual in turn becomes anxious and insecure:

‘without the shared ideological illusion of the Symbolic Order -embodied by the Big Others’ network of institutions - we are left without any meaningful substance through which to construct reality and confront the trauma of the void that exists at the core of the subject [this results in] crushing anxiety, uncertainty and disabling ontological insecurity as they scramble for a set of frail symbols and meanings’ (Raymen, 2019: 140).

Put simply, without any shared belief in the Big Other, society is socially corrosive because there is no sense of shared responsibility, right, or good. The Premier League and the mediated version of football are what children believe to be the true game, and they attempt to emulate it in the hopes of one day being part of it. But the Premier League epitomises neoliberal environments: it creates markets where there are none,

²⁹ Respect is the FA's programme launched in 2008/9. It provides tools and guidelines around the game.

and it is built on competition and winning, which are the values that children are being taught from the top. The next section will demonstrate how metrics and the need to win are inescapable within football, no matter the level

Metrics are Inescapable

*‘Onto the big derby next week against *****. **It’s a MUST win!**’* (Grant, coach of the Bears, in the social media group)

Metrics are a form of data which essentially records social life (Beer, 2016). They are deeply engrained in society because we measure everything; everything is a comparison, and these measurements are encouraged by society, especially within the realms of sport and leisure. For example, many of us measure our daily steps, monitor our sleep patterns, and use reward charts with our children. This data allows and encourages us to make comparisons against others:

‘metrics facilitate the making and remaking of judgements about us, the judgements we make ourselves and the consequences of those judgements as they are felt and experienced in our lives’ (Beer, 2016: 3).

What Beer means is that people use the metric information around us to shape our world; we check league tables for schools and universities, and we have sports leagues. The worth of the team is judged on their metrics, their performance, their ranking. In his text he explains how metrics are now more prevalent in society since the switch to a neoliberal economy, and are now an *‘embedded’* feature of society:

‘metrics are now embedded, multi-scalar and an active component of our everyday lives; they are central to how lives are ordered, governed, crafted and defined’ (Beer, 2016: 4).

Metrics cannot be escaped; everything is measured, compared and ultimately evaluated on their metric standing. The Bears experienced this when they were moved

into a different league mid-season. The following was the announcement on their private social media page:

Grant: *News just in we have moved (I suspect promoted) into another league. Looking at the other teams and it is a much harder standard with the likes of ***, **** and *****. I can only suspect that this is due to our great results and performances in the first half of the season. **** and **** have been promoted too. Much tougher second half of the season now. First game isn't until the 21st so when school is back, we will be training Wednesday and Saturday. Need to push on we're in with the big boys.*

Response: *really good cant wait*

Grant: *its been confirmed it's a promotion (various emojis)*

Response: *hard work has paid off now its time to show them what we're made of.'*

This shows us that even the non-competitive element of children's grassroots is still metric based. The Youth Football Position Statements (2020) claim that under 11s are not in leagues and that their results cannot be published because it can detract from what children want in the game and reflect more what the adults want. However, Grant and the parents who responded to his post, clearly show us that in their minds, the Bears were in a metric-based league competition based on performance, rather than as an organisational tool. This was quite typical across my research. Anna, a parent of Bea who had been playing grassroots football for eight months, commented that it did not really matter that the scores were not published because the children knew anyway. What this essentially shows us is that the leagues are quite metric based, and either way it does not really account for the children measuring their team's successes or winnings.

Competition

Everything is rooted in metrics, and therefore everything is competitive. Competition is an important element in this thesis because it is linked to every aspect of it. It is present within the underpinning of the benefits of physical activity, which were outlined

in chapter 1. Competition is also a major factor which must be taken into consideration when exploring the justification for increased competitive elements throughout our education system and society. For example, it was Major who brought P.E. into a core national curriculum status, and along with it, he brought in benchmarks which included how competitive the child should be by each stage (Department of Education, 2013). Competition is also present within the parents' justification for enrolling children in football as my study found; they want their children to be able to navigate life in a neoliberalist society (Schor, 2004; Bakan, 2011; Erickson, 2015) which we see in an example from Leo below. It is also experienced through the game itself. Football at any level, regardless of the justification that the FA use, is competitive; it's a game and the object of a game is simply to win. This section will show examples from my research how children's grassroots non-competitive football is a form of what Pemberton (2016) calls coercive competition³⁰.

'He loves it, he loves playing with his friends, he loves being part of a team, he thrives on the competitive nature of the game' (Katie, parent of Sam and coach to Sam's team)

What we see here with Marie and Sam is that the competitive element of the game is part of the fun for the participants. Sam thrives on the competitive element of the game and he was not the only one of my participants that enjoyed the competitive element. Robert who is a life-longer player of football told me enthusiastically that winning and losing are just the highs and lows of football:

'really you never want to lose you always wanna win. [...] It's not nice for you to lose because it brings you down and you've got to pick yourself back up no who you play, but obviously winning games is absolutely ecstatic. It's one of the best feelings in the world. So, it's the highs and lows of football.'

³⁰ Coercive competition is a generative context of harm, which is not confined to economic activity but extends to all areas of social life and tends to undermine forms of social solidarity.

Speaking to the competitive element there, Robert articulates the emotional attachment to the competitive element of the game, but what he is also saying is typical of life in general. The resilience you require to ‘pick yourself back up’ and the emotion you feel when you’re winning has traces of the cold realistic view of ‘that’s life’.

Socio-Symbolic Competition

Competition in football is largely based around the metrics of the game, and leagues which are dependent on winning. But my question is, which brings us back to contemporary criminological theory, what are they winning?

***‘Danny:** the one – they enjoyed the game, but they wanted to win the league. That’s the most important thing. You get a couple of good wins under your – under your belt of a decent team then it gives you the motivation to go further and you just want to do it’.*

Danny is a coach for under 18’s and has over 15 years’ experience in this role. He talks about how winning the league is the aim of the football season, then any tournaments. This was a frequent theme in my results: Jonah, a life-long player said, *‘I just like to win’*. However, the league is not a physical thing, and although one could argue that a trophy from a tournament is tangible, what they are really winning or wanting to win is the boasting and bragging rights that come with the winning. The status that a win offers any team or player is what is really on offer. In this sense, football has become a marker of success, of being the best; in essence it is socio symbolic.

In chapter 3 we examined the role of pseudo-pacification. The pseudo-pacification process explained the reorientation of the collective subliminal drives into socio-symbolic competition; football epitomises this form of competition. However, football

in this sense is not a civilising agent, as Elias and Dunning would claim, it does however show us pseudo-pacification in action. Football under pseudo-pacification can be described as projecting a ‘civility that pacified subjects principally follow in order to allow the intensification and democratisation of socio-symbolic competition in emerging markets’ (Hall, 2020: 29). On the surface it seems that we are civilised or pacified, but in reality, we will do anything to have that socio-symbolic status. As we will see now with Grant and the Bears.

‘Grant: Onto the big derby next week against * it’s a must win***

Parent 1: [In response] I am pretty sure you said the other night you may put your hand in your pocket

Grant: that is for the game next week

Parent 1: no, it was definitely this week as well I’m sure you said £5 a goal

Grant: anyone else feeling nervous, excited, can’t sleep thinking about formations, tactical changes ahead of the biggest derby of the season so far?!! Forget about the Auld rivalry of England v Scotland we have the game of * v **** on Saturday morning. One more sleep!***

Parent 2: [in response] bring it on

Parent 1: can’t wait

Parent 3: gonna smash em, hahaha’

These two extracts from the Bears social media group shows some hypercompetitive elements for an under 9’s non-competitive grassroots game. Grant (the coach) offering children £5 a goal in the match against their rivals (with whom they shared a pitch with and were part of the same school) indicates the necessity for this status. This incentive is problematic in a number of ways. Firstly, it indicates Grant’s and the parents’ investment into the status of their children winning this match; it shows how far they were willing to go, or what they were willing to accept, to gain this status. Moreover, it shows the harms which are associated with the game; the children were no longer playing for fun as a team, they were playing individually for £5 a goal against friends who they attended school with. They were learning skills, but not the ones that are

claimed in the earlier chapters of this thesis. They were being taught how to be the ideal pseudo-pacified subject, as this chapter will continue to unpick.

Inter-team competition

Because of the overriding socio-symbolic competition (the need and want to win) the competition between teammates was striking. Not only were they competing to score goals when they were offered £5 a goal, but when observing the Bears, I found the inter team competitiveness quite striking. The following is an example from the Bears social media page:

***Grant** [on training]: lack of engagement, being giddy, not listening, laughing and so on made both Tim and myself feel like we had failed the boys. Upon reflection, a few had failed themselves and the team. I put pressure on them as I know how good we can be and all I ask for is focus for one hour on a training day and to take the game seriously on a match day. Been in this game for a long time and tonight was by far the worst training session I have been involved in. Looking at the other teams on the other parts of the pitch and we were a laughingstock.*

***Tim** [in response]: very disappointing training last night and I echo Grant's frustration. We have been trying to talk to the lads about earning the right to play and that starts at training but when we have 5 or 6 not focused then it spreads. We have a lot of competition for places at the moment, so the lads need to come work hard and enjoy. We have a good group of footballers who are fun to coach, but they need to give all and want to improve.'*

We can see the socio-symbolic competitiveness shining through when Grant stated they were the '*laughingstock*'. We can sense the tension that must have been present in the training session. But what interested me most was Tim talking about '*earning the right to play*', and the '*lot of competition for places*'. Whereas competition for places is not uncommon in sports, it should be unusual for FA grassroots non-competitive children's leagues. The FA's commitment to a child friendly game sets out that children should be on a system of rotating substitutions to ensure they get 50% of playing time

(FA, 2017). This is because the game at this age should not be competitive, however, nowhere in Grant's or Tim's comments is the implication of fun as the main objective of the game.

When children did not get their 50% playing time they noticed and looked to themselves for reasons why. This will be picked up in chapter 7, but for now it is useful to illustrate that at best the FA recommendations are naïve. I asked Louise, who is parent to Lillie (who had been playing for a year and half) what her worst memory is surrounding Lillie and her football playing:

'Um, the only thing that sticks out to me is when, she only got a couple of minutes on one game, and we don't know why. Like— and she was absolutely heartbroken that she didn't get as long the others, and that was probably the only thing. And she'd come home and she did cry [chuckles] because she didn't get long on the foot— on the pitch. And she was just a bit frustrated'.

Louise indicates here that not being picked first or getting much match time is cause for distress, and psychologically affects Lillie to the point where there is an outburst of emotion. Within the stipulations of grassroots football set out by the FA, all children should experience 50% of game time. Here we can return to the Bears, when Grant was worried about the size of the squad as he wrote on the media page *'you know we have a big squad this year which is going to mean a lot of competition for places'* (Grant, coach and parent), so the solution to ensure every child present had 50% match time was as follows:

'info I will be rotating the team each week to accommodate game time for all. I will text you today if your son is in the squad if you do not receive a text today, they will be included in next week's game'.

This negates the point of having 50%, match time for all, if 'all' means excluding members of your team. Therefore, the children in the Bears were experiencing

exclusion from the match day experience as well as feeling like they were not good enough for the squad. This is indicative of what I found in relation to competition for places. One parent, Anya, explained how those who did not have actual match time could play a *friendly* match after the *main* match. One could argue that these choices were made randomly, however, Stu (who is a parent of Ste and the manager of an afterschool football club in the school where he teaches) clarifies this point for us:

‘GG: *Can you voluntarily join it as well, or is it just?*

Stu: *What I tend to do, is I tend to actually have trials for the football team. People can come to football training, but when I actually choose the team, I do it on the best players basically to be in the team’.*

Stu is important here because he is a teacher who voluntarily runs the football team, and he is also a parent of Ste who is 7 and plays football. He is upfront about his motivations and shows how competitive children’s non-competitive games are. From Stu’s input we know that children understand that it is the better players who get the game time, who get picked for the team and the *real* match. Not only do they internalise this and enhance it into a project to avoid the terror of the Real, but they are aware that everyone else understands this symbolism. So, the damage to their pride and confidence must be taken into account when looking at possible psychological harms. As James (life-long player) aptly notes, when other players (children) are left on the bench you sometimes feel sorry for them and then it reaches a point where it is no longer fun:

‘you would have poor players on the bench that wouldn’t really play that often when their parents come to watch and they stand 45 minutes just to watch their son play five minutes of football that’s when they leave because it’s not fun for them’.

What James is also addressing here is the decline in the symbolic efficiency. The rhetoric of positivity, pro-social, pro-health promises the parents were sold about their children's participation in grassroots football is pierced by the subjective individualistic metric-driven coach. It was a common theme in my research findings, that players needed to earn the right to be on the team, which is a socially corrosive embedded harm under the deviant leisure typology, because children are encouraged to compete against their team mates for match time. They have to take their chance.

Take your Chance

'You have to take your chance when it comes' (Armer³¹, 2021)

'*Take your chance*' was immeasurably repeated at various volume levels across a variety of matches by Grant and the parents on the side lines, even though, as we will see in chapter 6, this convenes the Respect guidelines because it is side-line instruction. It was used in several ways, for example, Grant would often vocalise to certain players that it was '*their ball*' and to '*take it*'. He frequently accounted wins and losses to those who took their chances: '*the only difference was they took their chances and we need to do the same*' (Grant, Match report, Spring 2017) and also his deputy Tim '*Sounds like it was a game of the winner was the team who took their chances*'. This rhetoric is rife in football up to the highest levels: you will often hear EPL coaches in post-match interviews saying that they did or didn't take their chance, depending on the outcome. It is also a concept that is rife in grassroots football. Ian Rush³², who is now the Elite Performance Director of the FAW (Football Association

³¹ Jack Armer is a player for Carlisle UTD FC

³² Ian Rush is a former professional footballer, he is still the leading goal scorer for Liverpool FC, he made appearances for the Welsh national team.

Wales)³³, produced a piece for *The Coaches' Voice*³⁴ entitled 'Taking Chances'. In this piece he acknowledges there is too much pressure on children, but he attributes it to not taking enough chances; he believes that 'they get scared to have another go' (Rush, 2020). He uses the examples of popular former EPL players, such as Michael Owen, to show how taking more chances will result in more wins, and that it is needed for survival and is the key to success.

Take your chance(s) therefore is an ethos throughout football and a trait which is embedded into late modernity: this can be seen through the popular acronyms of YOLO³⁵ and FOMO³⁶. It is an ethos by which a generation now live, the *carpe diem* effect. But it goes further than living in the present day; it is rooted in the notion that if you do not take your opportunity someone else will, and they will benefit. As Tim reminds us: '*the winner was the team who took their chances*'. We can see through the taking your chance rhetoric how football (as one of many areas in life) has socialised and continues to socialise children into what Hall (2020) terms a pseudo-pacified subject. The pseudo-pacified subject is the outcome from the pseudo-pacification process outlined and examined in chapter 3. It is essentially 'the normalised subjectivity that became the functional outcome of the pseudo-pacification process' (Hall, 2020: 28). The pseudo-pacified subject is functional because it uses the latent sublimated aggression to drive consumerist culture through socio-symbolic competition³⁷. Taking one's chance plays into the hands of a consumerist society,

³³ The FAW trust according to their website was a registered charity from 1996 and is responsible for the development of football in Wales (2020 [online]).

³⁴ This is an online subscription platform which delivers content from elite coaches to coaches of all levels.

³⁵ YOLO- you only live once

³⁶ FOMO- Fear of missing out

³⁷ Football in general is an example of this re-directed socio-symbolic competition which drives consumer capitalism. We only have to examine the number of football related products sold per annum or the consolidated gate fees taken over a season.

because it encourages little regard for the consequences of one's actions; in taking your chance you are trying to stop anyone else taking what is yours. As Grant reminds us *'it's your ball, take it'*.

Take your chance speaks to all of my data, in essence, because it is the underpinning of the game at all levels, including (and maybe more so) children's grassroots non-competitive football. This is because those who are playing at an elite level have already taken their chance to get where they are, whilst children are still acquiring these life skills. So, it is more important for them to prove they can do what needs to be done in order to take their chance. These chances for children in grassroots football are either getting a goal or taking a tackle.

Tackling

When I asked Anya what her proudest moment was, watching Alice play football, she answered, a tackle:

'The first time I saw her tackle the ball cos it took so long... and you know you could just see it almost when she turned from just being there to being part of something, to be there to be a football player and then she started picking up skills, so that was really nice'.

Tanya echoed this sentiment about Tina:

'To see her going from tiptoeing around the ball and worried she was going to get knocked over to full force flying somebody else over and being concerned if she is going to get hurt or not, that physical confidence to see has been amazing'.

Tackling, for parents, was a massive source of pride *'I feel really proud of her [Denise] she is a feisty wee thing and she is getting stuck into tackles'* (Donna, parent). Tackling is one of the cornerstones of footballing skills but using a lens of deviant leisure and ultra-realism we can see tackling to be representative of something more.

Tackling in itself is not an aggressive or violent act, yet it is often situated in environments which make it aggressive, for example, Rick (life-long player) believes tackling is a more aggressive form of football '*it was a bit more aggressive with tackling*'. Furthermore, in my observation's tackles were usually the main cause of tension or disagreement on the pitch. Tackling became an action that could absorb traits in its own right, for example, Grant's match reports³⁸ frequently described tackles as being '*harsh*', '*tricky*', '*nasty*' or '*shocking*'; indicating that the tackles themselves possess these traits rather than the people performing them. This means that tackling in grassroots football is at best oxymoronic; on one hand they are a source of pride for parents, a technical skill to be celebrated, and on the other they can be nasty, shocking, and harsh. From the stance of the child being a transcendental materialist subject³⁹ tackling can be seen to be cultivating socially corrosive harmful brain paths⁴⁰ where the child is being taught and encouraged to be aggressive enough to win the ball but not too aggressive that they will be booked for it. This notion has remnants of Hall's (2012) take on the transcendental materialist subject⁴¹, where he examines Stein's (2007) notion of 'be aggressive, but don't take it too far, stop at point X' (Hall, 2012b: 199), which could be an instruction manual for tackles. Take the tackle, be aggressive, take your chance, but stop before you hurt anyone, or before the referee notices and punishes you for it.

Drawing on Sullivan (1953) Hall (2012) explains how a gradient is used from the 'good me', through the 'bad me', to the 'not me'. This is what tackles are asking children to do: ignore the complete disassociation of the 'not me' but invoke a lite version of the

³⁸ Available to me through the closed online social media group for his team.

³⁹ The transcendental materialist subject was developed by Johnston (2008) where he found that the hardwiring of the brain is actually fluid and changes depending on the stimuli, therefore learned behaviour is rooted in what he termed plasticity. The transcendental materialist subject is then born a blank slate with the propensity to be both good and evil.

⁴⁰ It is beyond the scope of this study to actually see what is happening to the child's brain paths as they are taking harsh tackles, but it does open an avenue for further research.

⁴¹ See chapter 8 of theorising crime and deviance 2012b.

aggressive ‘not me’. We can see where football fits in cultivating these traits, as Hall explains:

‘When this transition is made, we can see that the specific narcissistic motivations that fuel the quest for self-aggrandizement, social distinction and subsequent economic expansion are generated and operated at the socio-cultural level’ (2012b: 199).

Football in this sense is reproducing the motivations and distinction at the socio-cultural level. The problem with Stein’s notion, as Hall (2012b) points out, is that it is psychological in nature, and psychological theories tend to see aggression as a disorder that deviates from the norm. Whereas we can see that football is truly a deviant leisure in the sense of Smith and Raymen’s concept of deviant leisure (2016; 2017; 2018; 2019a; 2019b). As outlined in chapter 3, aggression is not a trait which deviates from the norm but is the norm. The aggression is not deviance in the sense that it is adrift from the normative embedded order, but deviant in the way that it is normative and embedded and reproduced through leisure activities such as children’s football. Hall (2012b) explains that capitalist culture needs a normative order to hold this drive in check. This, again, is where we can see football prevail in culture, Hall explains:

‘Capitalist culture does not want a mass of disordered psychopathic killers, but, in central and nodal positions in its political infrastructures and markets, it does require functionally ruthless individual undertakers in crucial positions who are willing to take the lead in disregarding others in order to get things done’ (2012b: 199).

Not only does playing football enhance the child’s college or university application (Weininger, Lareau & Conley, 2005) but it enables them to practice their aggression in a ‘personalised state of exception’ (Hall, 2012b: 196). To take their chance, where children can transgress the ‘good me’ into the lite version of the ‘not me’ in order to perform the undertaking of ‘getting things done’ which, as we have seen in this study, is celebrated by parents and coaches. However, this is not just an issue in children’s

football; we allow it in wider society. We celebrate those who are good at tackling by giving them multimillion-pound contracts to play for certain teams. It is embedded and reproduced by this culture so that we can call ourselves winners, in a purely symbolic sense, of course. Using this critical lens, we can see football as systemically raising what I have termed capitalist undertakers⁴². Undertakers who ‘will get things done regardless of the harm inflicted on others’⁴³, put each other through tests and develop a set of complex cultural signals’ (Hall, 2012b: 204) to signify their cultural and symbolic capital. Grassroots football perpetuates and exacerbates this undertaking.

Essentially, football, through tackling, produces a ‘morally flexible self whose brutal double can be brought into play at will when needs must’ (Hall, 2012b: 200), as demonstrated aptly through Lillie:

‘GG: *So, what do you think she gets from it?*

Louise: *Um, Lillie is very, uh, she used to be really shy and if anyone said anything to her, she’d cry. She just literally cried. So now she’s still-she’s like tiny. She’s tiny for her height and age. She’s, uh, she goes in and barges into like 13, 14-year-old lads now and she’s just not fussed at all. She’s not bothered, so her confidence has grown dramatically higher. It’s still there now like she gets barged out the way and pushed over and she argues back with them now. And you can see that in herself and skill and her confidence and everything’.*

Grassroots football indoctrinates through processes of socialisation, through tactics like tackling, the moral acceptance of the ‘lite version’ of the aggressive ‘not me’ (Hall, 2012b: 202). This, however, is not the only trait of competitive individualism that football related consumer culture uses to indoctrinate the psyche of the children who partake, as the next section demonstrates.

⁴² This is like the notion of Hall’s (2012b) criminal undertakers, taken from the Sombartian notion of undertaking.

⁴³ In this instance the harm would be interpersonal, symbolic, and socially corrosive under the deviant leisure typology.

Confidence to 'take your chance'

Confidence was overwhelmingly used to justify participation in grassroots football. All of the interviewed parents spoke about confidence in positive and celebratory tones; everyone was happy to see their child growing in confidence on the pitch. Louise (parent) exemplifies this:

'she used to be really shy and if anyone said anything to her, she'd cry. She just literally cries. So now and now, she-she's still-she's like tiny. She's tiny for her height and age. [laughs] Sorry. She's, uh, she goes in barge in like 13, 14-year-old lads now and she's just not fussed at all. She's not bothered, so she, her confidence is dramatically higher. It's still there now like she gets barged out the way and pushed over and she argues back with them now. And you can see that in herself and skill and her confidence and everything. She's just like, oh, um, she can run all day now.'

And Marie:

'I love seeing the pure joy on his face and seeing his confidence building and just see how he is with his friends'.

Confidence was also noticed in other tasks, as in having the confidence to do something that they previously would not have had. This was not always necessarily football specific:

'They are better at listening and following instructions. They are more confident too' (Katie, coach and parent).

These examples align with the literature outlined in chapter 1 where the benefits of sporting activities and extra-curricular activities were examined. Football, in this sense, is a form of concerted cultivation (discussed in chapter 1) by parents to enrich their children's lives with skills outside the academic realm (Bodovoski and Farkas, 2008). This confidence can lead to increased improvement in non-cognitive skills which align with the hidden curriculum. These include but are not limited to: task persistence, following instruction, group work, dealing with authority, higher levels of work

orientation, increased self-reliance and autonomy (Bodovoski and Farkas, 2008; Covay and Carbonaro, 2010; Weininger, Lareau and Conley, 2005; David, 2005). Confidence is key in these areas if the children are to succeed in life, as many parents would tell you, and as Connor (parent and referee) does. Football is preparing Connor's son, Lewis, for life, as Hall explains:

‘we must see intimate familial relations as at least in part ideological and neurological preparation for the social and economic relations that the parents foresee the child experiencing in later in life’ (2012b: 194-195).

This is an argument that is embedded throughout this thesis. But what we are seeing here as Hall (2012b) goes onto explain, is the shift from a secure fixed future path to one which is riddled with uncertainty, insecurity, and precariousness (see Bauman, 2005; 2009; Standing, 2011) and this is what parents are preparing their children for:

‘Connor: you know when you get the knock backs in life for instance I don’t know say he expected to get into a school team and he didn’t this one year; those types of setbacks strengthen your resolve you know: I have to try harder. You know when it comes to later in life if you get a job interview if you have had a similar experience you know the next will work out or whatever you do things differently so you get the right resolve so that’s kinda where that comes in; learning to dig deep when things are going against you and its exactly the same on the sports field really’.

By preparing children for a life set against a backdrop of competition (see Lloyd, 2018; Hall et al, 2008; Hall, 2012b) parents must allow their child the confidence to ‘do what needs to be done’ to, in the words of Grant (numerous times), ‘take your chance’. Confidence in this sense is about more than a mood boost or being more social, or autonomous or academically focused; it is about invoking the sublimated libidinal drives which will allow you to invoke a sense of entitlement, the scale of ‘not me’.

Wider Implications of Take Your Chance

Taking your chance has explored the idea that you must be willing to do what needs to be done in order to get where you want to be and speaks to the cold realism found in Winlow's (2014) and Ellis' (2016) work around the violent masculine subjectivities that they found in their research. In these pieces of research, the father figure was preparing their boys for life, much like we have seen through the likes of Connor; grassroots football is preparing their kids for the world that awaits them. As Winlow aptly states:

‘Many entirely normative and functional men also expose their charges to a process of ‘toughening up’. The basic essence of this process is to encourage the boy to move away from childish things and to separate themselves from maternal comfort so that they might be better equipped to engage with the ceaseless aggressive competition of the social field, and to prepare them for the inevitable disappointments and frustrations that await those who don’t fight hard and dirty, who don’t display a daemonic drive to win at all costs’ (2014: 41).

We can see through the parents in this study they are simply preparing their children for life, but in doing this they are also undergoing a form of self-congratulation. The tackle can be seen as a representation of their parenting success. The children have taken on board what they need to get done and how to take their chance, therefore the parents are the kind of parents who have been successful in preparing their children for the world of consumer capitalism. It is in this sense that the competitive element is coercive, reproducing socially corrosive, interpersonal, and embedded harms. Simply put, this is a pseudo-pacified variant of cold realism in an era of competitive individualism and market competition.

Football is a ‘zone of exception’ where this disregard and competitive narcissism is practiced, encouraged, and celebrated; a place much like society where you adapt and ‘survive’ (Rush, 2020) or don’t take your chance and fail (Lloyd, 2018). Through

football children are experiencing the schizoid socialisation, and it is giving them a sense of what Hall (2012a) terms special liberty. Special liberty according to Hall and Winlow is the

‘dark side of liberal individualism, a sociopathic anti-ethos that consists of a sense of entitlement felt by an individual who will risk harm to others in order to further his own instrumental or expressive interests’ (2014: 91).

In encouraging children to ‘*take their [your] chance*’ football causes this entitlement to be exacerbated and celebrated, after all it is ‘*your ball*’, your chance, and if you do not take it someone else will. Essentially, special liberty is pan-legitimised in zones of exception where a sense of importance and righteousness are given free-reign; self-reflection in this state is nullified (Hall, 2012b). We can then start to unpick the harms which can result from this entitlement, because although they take place in a ‘zone of exclusion’, the traits that are being etched into the brain paths through plasticity will become the child’s neutral reaction (Hall, 2012b; Johnston, 2008).

Through the deviant leisure harm typology, we can see how interpersonal harm, embedded harm, and socially corrosive harm may result from the pan-legitimised special liberty encouraged throughout grassroots football. The harm can be interpersonal on a basic level; players sometimes injure other players physically. This is not restricted to grassroots and is often found in the higher levels of football (e.g. the Suarez biting scandal between 2010 -2014). There was also clear evidence of interpersonal harm throughout my results, as this snapshot of a match report by Grant shows:

‘*The only negative was a late shocking tackle on Player A which was only punished with a foul – I do hope he is ok*’ (early 2017 season)

There was an incident that I witnessed during my observations, where a child was targeted by the other children. As a parent I found this really disturbing, as I describe in my field notes:

'Leo was what I can only describe as targeted today. He is clearly the best scorer on the pitch, but he looks sad still, I worry that he really isn't enjoying playing and that no-one is listening to him. What follows is a conversation I heard between him and his mum-

Leo: *can I come off please? They all keep getting me in my bad ankle*

Leo's mum (LM): *no the team needs you to score, run faster away from them or try to keep out of their way*

After 5 more minutes Leo went down again

Leo: *mum my ankle really hurts now, we are winning there is not long left it is ok I need to come off.*

LM: *you need to learn to deal with this Leo it's just the way football works.*

Leo spent the last 5 minutes of the match sat at the side-lines, with his head down, rubbing his ankle, he wasn't remotely interested in the game.'

From these examples we can discern interpersonal harm. I am not contending that football encourages harm on purpose or as part of the game itself, but in this environment, it can facilitate it, through special liberty, increased confidence, a sense of entitlement and the rhetoric surrounding taking your chance. What also struck me in the conversation between Leo and his mum was the embedded harm of grassroots football. She told him it was the way things are in football, as if it was a natural or even expected occurrence that the stronger players would be besieged by other players. This is a form of embedded harm that is so integrated into the culture that to question its authority there is unthinkable: it's just the way football works. From the previous discussion on cultivating life skills, we can speculate that what Leo's mum is really saying is that this is how life works and you need to be able to deal with it. She is toughening the boy up in the way in which consumer capitalism encourages.

However, this is not the way football works. The aim of the game is to score goals and (as seen in chapter 1) the reasons for its popularity are linked to physical fitness, a decrease in sedentary lifestyles, and to improve social and cognitive skills. One could argue that what Leo experienced was not the aim of football at all, but the aim of a commodified version of the game where children must take chances. One cannot imagine football without these entrenched harmful behaviours, and some would argue (as seen in chapter 2) that football has become less harmful and violent since its bloodthirsty parish days (See Birtley, 1993). Nonetheless, these harms are present and could be avoided if we accepted an alternative way of organising the environment of the game. As it stands, football suffers from the same capitalism realism that Fisher (2009) speaks of; it is easier to see the end of the world than it is to see the end of capitalism, just like it would be easier to see the end of football than it would to imagine it in any other way. Leo also shows us how football can actually be socially corrosive, as opposed to the pro-social rhetoric that surrounds it. Leo was experiencing a lack of social cohesion and solidarity from his team and his mum.

It's Still Nil-Nil.... It's Always Nil-Nil

Teamwork was another justification for the parents enrolling their children into grassroots football. It is present throughout the literature (seen in chapter 1) that playing a team sport encourages teamwork skills, which can be transferred and thus useful in adult life. For example, David (2005) explored the concept of creating social networks outside of school and Covay and Carbonaro (2010) examined studies that demonstrated teamwork builds up better interpersonal skills. For Donna the team aspect was very attractive to her as a parent, because Denise competed in several individual sporting activities, but football allowed her to gain confidence in being part of a team:

'I think the team aspect of it is good because a lot of the sports that she does is individual, and I think the confidence of being a member of the team is growing her physical confidence'.

Likewise, Robert (a life-longer player) felt he gained teamwork as a skill from playing in his younger days:

'GG: *what skills do you think you gained from it [football] other than the ball skills?*

Robert: *Teamwork, hundred percent, because you have got to work with someone even if you don't necessarily like someone. You have got to work with them and try and work around the problems you may have with them'.*

Moreover, the Respect guidelines promote the 'benefit of the team' and for young players to 'encourage my teammates' (FA, 2020 [online]). However, as will be discussed in chapter 6 the respect guidelines are ambiguous and do not offer any replacement for the fragmented symbolic order. Children's non-competitive football at grassroots level is a socially corrosive and embedded harm through a deviant leisure framework. This is because the fragmented symbolic order in consumer capitalism valorises competition over social cohesiveness (Lloyd, 2018). The competitive nature that epitomises neoliberalism is in direct tension with promoting teamwork. The liberal economy of society has fragmented once solid community identities (see Standing, 2011) and thus we are left with a sink or swim individualism (Southwood, 2011) that grassroots football encourages.

Teamwork is said to be promoted through grassroots football; however, my results show that this is not necessarily what is happening. The increased competitive nature of the game is evident:

'Anna: *he loves it, he loves playing with his friends, he loves being part of a team, he thrives on the competitive nature of the game.'*

The competitive nature of the game is where the benefits of football can start to be unpicked and debunked. As outlined above, the game cannot escape the metrics of the environment. It is not about playing, it is about winning, because if you don't win you effectively cannot operate within the league system or the regulations of the game. This competitive nature embodied itself throughout my fieldwork stage with a saying that was repeated over and over in every match regardless of sides. Whenever a goal was scored, and sometimes in play, the children would shout to each other '*it's still nil-nil*'. This confused me at first, not being very savvy in the technicalities of football, I did not understand how I had watched goals being scored yet the children were shouting it's still nil-nil. It's still nil-nil embodied their attitude to every game, every play, every goal; it embodied grassroots football for me. Essentially, it is the ethos of playing the game no matter what the score. In other words, as if it was still nil-nil. It is in this we can see how teamwork is at best a utopian rhetoric that has embedded itself around sport in general, and more specifically grassroots football. This will be demonstrated two-fold. Firstly, the individualised nature of the game and viewing the self as a lifelong project, and secondly, the socially corrosive effects of competitive individualism which seeks to socialise the lighter version of the aggressive 'not me' personality dissociation.

Conclusion – The Environment of Football

Football at any level does not happen in a vacuum; it is affected by culture and culture, in turn, is affected by it. We must understand the importance of the environment on football and vice-versa. This chapter has explored how the media's impact on the game has pushed it beyond anything it was before the Premier League. The popularity of this mediated version of the game have left it as a simulation. It is this simulation which now encourages children to take up the sport in the hopes of one day becoming

a professional player. My participants have demonstrated how the idea of a non-competitive game of football is impossible as the game is trapped in a neoliberal metric maze. Metrics are embedded within society and we cannot escape them. This chapter has shown that even when the metrics are not overtly used to measure success, they are still used to measure success. We saw this in the case of Anya who showed us that the children know who won regardless of any scores being kept or recorded. Furthermore, we saw through Grant and the Bears that the metrics are still the organising principle of the game, whether the FA permit it or not. The practice of excluding players from the main team and using *friendly* matches highlight how in reality it is not primarily based on fun but on winning. This embeds socially corrosive foundations in a child's mind, I can work as a team insofar as it doesn't impact on my success or winning. Football then, creates this form of coercive competition where it is generating these contexts of harm. We explored how football creates a zone of exception where we can invoke a lite version of the aggressive me, who can be called upon at any time when someone is threatening my success. Football prepares the child to step over into this area of doing what needs to be done. Parents celebrate their success as a parent, through their child's willingness to do what needs to be done. This chapter has simply shone a light on the cold realism that parents encourage their children to learn by taking their chance. Because if they don't, someone else will. Or as Winlow states:

'The 'toughening up' of the child by parents who truly believe themselves to be acting in the child's best interests is deeply suggestive of the transformation of civil society and helps us to see what the continuation of liberal capitalism further into the 21st century will mean for collective life. This expectation of perpetual struggle and competition is closely related to the elevation of money – and the social recognition and envy it brings – to the primary source of value these days. I will not labour this point any further, other than to say processes of toughening up the child, and equipping that child with the wherewithal to engage in symbolic forms of violence, both reflects and extends trends towards

anti-sociality, and reduces the potential for Aristotelian 'human flourishing' (see Dews, 2012)' (2014: 41-42).

Chapter 6: Parenting through sport and have a little Respect

'They fuck you up, your mum and dad.

They may not mean to, but they do.

They fill you with the faults they had

And add some extra, just for you' (Larkin, 1974).

Introduction

This chapter examines the role of parenting through sport. Building on the notion by Kay (2009) of fathering through sport, this empirical chapter will look at the reasons parents have for enrolling their children into non-competitive grassroots football. It looks at the gendered aspect of children's grassroots football and its implications, before moving on to examining the benign skills which are often cited as a justification for participation and contrasting them against the actual skills which were outlined in chapter 5. This chapter will then explore the rules of Respect and why the FA thought they were needed. It will also evaluate what, if anything, is gained from having the Respect rules in place and the effect this has on children and childhood.

Parenting Through Sport

The earlier chapters of this thesis have shown that parents enrol their children into a plethora of sporting activities for a variety of reasons (Bodovoski and Farkas, 2008; Covay and Carbonaro, 2010; Weininger, Lareau and Conley, 2005; David, 2005), and the findings presented here are similar to that of the literature already discussed in these earlier chapters. The parents in my study enrolled their children into football to allow their child to reap the benefits one would normally associate with a variety of sports, as Jan (parent of Jenna) explains:

'I think it helps there with their academic work on the basis that playing football the stress as it relaxes her it puts her in a good mood a kind of emotional lifts her and reduces anxiety and distract her from worry and for all those reasons plus the physical benefits of exercise on increasing mood for all those reasons I think it makes a really big difference'

Jan is not alone; as seen in chapter 1 there are benefits to the physical activity element in sports, and football is thought of as a positive, beneficial activity for their child. Similarly, Anya, a parent to Alice (aged 6) believes that football can be used to benefit her daughter:

'Developing skills her coordination she plays she's their 2nd goalie so she is kind of specialising a little bit as well and learning a bit of confidence as well. Originally she wouldn't have gone to tackle people and she would just kind of Prance around the pitch and run after the ball and now she's getting in there and she's confident in her skills and she will go and tackle'.

The benefits (as suggested in the literature in chapters 1 and 2) are not limited to social benefits - there are also health benefits, as Katie, a parent and coach who is also a physiotherapist, asserts, *'football provides a chance to be active within a team environment; it also aids motor and social development'*. These are but a few benefits that were listed by my participants. The others also bear a resemblance to that of the literature outlined in the earlier chapters. These include, but are not limited to, the

development of skills; social and mental agility; pride; resilience; confidence; teambuilding; interpersonal skills and building relationships. Reflecting the earlier literature these benefits, which the parents claim come from their child partaking in grassroots football, often came at a great cost to the family (Wheeler and Green, 2018). This cost could be financial or time and often both. Tanya summaries how her life is a balancing act for her three children's activities⁴⁴:

'oh you want me to start moaning about that[...] well she [Tina] can take up to a good 5 days a week by running around with her and then with the other two who have their commitments, so I would say in a week we will probably get Sunday afternoon, so it massively impacts our time'

But Tanya felt it was important to be doing this now because Tina will be off to university in a couple of years. She continues:

'sometimes I do need to lay down in dark rooms because there is always something, I think it works, I mean we don't mind because they benefit from it and what they need like it's their time right now so we do that now with the view that we have plans for when they are off and doing their own thing'.

Tanya's account is representative of others in my study and indeed the wider literature.

What we see through Tanya is what is typified by Fletcher:

'what we see here are a series of examples of parents making quite significant short-term and long-term life choices to ensure that children have access to sport and other opportunities. The particular moral accounts are bound up with wider notions of putting the family (the children in most cases) first' (Morgan, 2013, in Fletcher, 2020: 191).

This is bound up with intersecting notions of what it means to be a good parent⁴⁵ and how to provide the best for your children. Coakley (2009) argues that it is no longer

⁴⁴ It should be noted here that only Tanya's 16-year-old daughter Tina plays football. Her other two children, one boy and one girl, have different organised activities.

⁴⁵ I do not intend here to suggest that any parent who does not enroll their child in an activity is not a 'good' parent, nor do I have the room to debate what constitutes a good parent, I am simply stating that this is what my findings and the literature suggest.

sufficient just to socialise our children. Instead, we must develop them as a whole and provide opportunities for their growth, through activities such as football. Again, Tanya epitomises this point:

'because there is only so much academically they can learn in school and working with other people and sometimes, I have had to share and co-operate and work together to achieve a goal is an invaluable life lesson and you really want them to take those qualities into life later on. They will be so much better people to co-operate with, if they learn to work as a team from a young age. I just see the other alternative benefits in terms of overall benefits and in terms of what she [Tina] gets from it as well as the health and fitness angle, because obviously it keeps her doing exercise'.

This section has demonstrated that parents enrol their children into grassroots football for many reasons. Often these reasons are to benefit the child in some way later in life, reassuring the parents that they are preparing their children for life. It is on this point that we can return to the concept of purposive leisure (outlined in chapter 1). The parents in my study were using the grassroots football as a way of cultivating their children into desired skills and often using it as a form of leisure time for the family. Some used it as a way for fathers to spend time with their children, while it was also a social gathering or a form of fun exercise for siblings, as Marie (parent) pointed out:

'so, we all go on a Tuesday and little can have the freedom as well. So there is sort of wider family benefits of it really just on a Tuesday night where she can go off on her bike and just see some of her friends and have a bout of freedom because they don't get the chance of free play very much, so it's working for both of them in that respect'.

Football in this way is also purposive leisure. Where the parents are hoping for their child to be successful in the future by enrolling them in sporting activities, they believe they are giving them the best chance at life on their own. This then allows the parent to judge their own success as a parent from the successes of the child. We can trace this through history where we start to see the pseudo-pacification of society.

Pseudo-pacification and parenting

There is link between the pseudo-pacification process and parenting. This is the impact of economic restructuring and the change in property laws and ownership which accompanied the restructuring of the economy from the 14th century onwards (Hall, 2020). This change impacted on culture and familial relations; a casting out of one's children from the defensive family unit into the competitive marketplace as an individual. In reality this meant that children were no longer protected under the cloak of the family name and needed to prove themselves in the world. The role of the parents within this family moved from one of unconditional love to one of preparation for the real world: a 'coaching' role (Hall, 2020). Hall (2020) continues to outline how high infant and child mortality rates were before the 18th century, which meant that to become accustomed to loss, parents subconsciously created a psycho-cultural defence mechanism. This defence mechanism, as Aries (1996) tells us, is a restrained sentimental attachment to their children. This restrained sentiment was added to by the socio-legal changes around property laws and a competitive cultural capitalism which was starting to emerge. In essence, the children in the family were not cared for in the same way that we would expect children to be cared for today (Hall, 2020). We have looked at the consequences of the western change of attitude towards the child in chapter 1, where we saw the introduction of child laws and child protection. However, the hardened subjectivity of the parents in pre-industrial times have led to what Hall claims are 'fundamental criminological implications which up to now are under researched' (2020: 26-27).

The implications this has had on parenting are far reaching and too wide for this thesis, but what we can examine here is the role of the parents' restrained sentiment, and the coaching of the parents. In my research some of the parents I spoke to and observed

were also coaches, so in an immediate sense those parents had a dual role. The parent as a coach needed to invoke this restrained sentimentality in order to coach the rest of the team, but he also needed to be a father to his son. This happened most often with Grant and his step-son Will. I would watch Grant regularly coach Will and his friends, and I would not have been able to tell that Will was Grant's son until it was clear from match reports and my growing relationship with Grant. This made me ponder, if I was teaching or coaching my daughters would I want to be so detached from them in that setting that no-one would see the family relationship? The more I thought about it the more I found it to be quite sad. I could see quite clearly how Grant was able to restrain his sentiment for his son in favour of the game. I questioned Grant one day about how he manages this dual role, and he simply said he coaches as if Will is just another one of the boys. But he did go on to say that it affected their relationship at home.

Grant: *Will and I didn't speak all weekend after last weekends match you know?*

GG: *I had no idea... what happened?*

Grant: *well, when I didn't pick him to play or sub him in, he was upset on the way home and we had words about how he never gets picked first,*

GG: *oh, bless him*

Grant: *I told him if he scored as well as Leo, he would be playing every week. We haven't spoken since then'*

I found this particular exchange upsetting. But it does show how serious Grant took his role as coach, and as such he was just preparing Will for life with a pinch of cold realism (see chapter 5). But using the history of the pseudo-pacification process we can see how and why Grant acted as he did. As Hall aptly states:

'Substantive love, rights and security were replaced by the gestural culture of sentimentalism and an educational ethos based on the obligation to prepare

the individual for a tough and insecure independent life in the competitive world of commerce. The norm of 'tough love' evolved as a sublimated and economised form of child-rearing, disparaging and degrading any type of dependency that might linger into adulthood' (2020: 27).

I did find examples where the coach was unable to separate their feelings for their own children, and this had a negative effect on the team, as Jonah explains through his worst memory of football:

*'erm worst memory of football. there has been quite a few [laughter] erm yeah probably when we got to the quarter finals of the cup and we played ***** and we got to penalties and we got beat on penalties and we kept them out all game and we were parking a bus and hoping for the best and we managed extra time and then the penalties and the erm managers son who was cocky and had an ego and thought he was better than everyone ended up missing a penalty that could have won us the game and we went onto lose on penalties which wasn't good'*

Jonah and James, who were best friends, life-long players, and were interviewed at the same time, spoke about the manager's son quite often. This was clearly a vivid part of their footballing memories growing up, and how the nepotism shined through for them. James put the manager's son getting played over him all the time as the reason he left. They also commented on how this looked to Jonah's parents and grandfather, who Jonah describes as *'an absolute nut job when it comes to football'*. Jonah's grandfather again shows us what Hall (2020) meant when he stated that those who continued to get family support would bring shame and ridicule:

'our manager had a son that played midfield and he would always play over me particularly didn't agree with his son playing over me and so my grandfather would always be the manager's ear telling him I should be on the pitch or when his son made a mistake you would laugh at him or he would shout at him telling me was terrible or slow'.

What the manager and his son experienced was the embarrassment of the son not being able to do what needed to be done. He was not being coached in the way that

Grant was coaching Will or the way the other parents were coaching their children for life, therefore he was an embarrassment for giving his son continued help. These examples come together to show the impact that the pseudo-pacification had on parenting and we will return to this in chapter 7 with the pseudo-pacified subject.

Nostalgia

When invoking memories of childhood, we usually remember a nostalgic version of Lareau's (2003) free play⁴⁶. It is no surprise that in my interviews I found that sporting practices, and more specifically football, were bound up in early family memories or experiences. These memories and experiences sparked a shared bond between family members; one which facilitated and allowed these experiences to flourish over the years and across generations:

'Louise: she [Lillie] originally started because of my dad. Um, we lost my dad to cancer, but she [Lillie] was really close to him and he loved football. So, I thought at first it was just a way for her to be close with him'.

This is similar to Tanya who believes Tina got involved because of her father's love of the game:

'she knew her dad liked football and you know watched football overtly... so whether there was an influence from her dad or not subconsciously I don't know'.

And Stu who claims that he has *'always had a love of football, obviously since an early age and influenced by my family'*. This was also typical of the life-long players, with Rick talking about how he wanted to play with his older brothers and the goal his dad had set up in the garden:

'my older brothers played and my dad set up a little goal in the garden so it was always just kicking a ball with them and at 4-years old it was a ball and pretty exciting and I got to be like my older brothers; I got to be like them'.

⁴⁶ Outlined in chapter 1

Robert and Jonah were no exception, with Jonah acknowledging his family played to a *'high level'* and Robert commenting that his family *'sort of bred football into me'*.

It is clear from this data that football is a way of trying to recover the lost object which created the restricted sentiments, from the section above. The children and the parents are using football as a way to try to bridge this restriction and regain unconditional love. Therefore, football in this sense is an intergenerational tool which creates and fosters better relationships within the family, giving them a common activity which they can play, consume, and enjoy together, and these findings are indicative of the literature surrounding participation (see Fletcher, 2020). It is worth spending a little time here exploring how parents are using sport as an apparatus for improving their children's lives and what this means in a time of consumer capitalism.

Late Modernity, Parenthood, and Grassroots Football

In late modernity, the changing roles of once fairly clear and defined notions of gender roles within childrearing have also become somewhat fluid in a late-modern capitalist culture, and once male-dominated assumptions are being challenged. However, sport is a keyway in which fathers can achieve a strong emotional bond with their children (Kay, 2009). Although gender roles have changed and continue to do so, the main message from the literature is that fathers exert more control and are therefore a 'more important socialising agent' (Edwards and Gorely, 2010, in Fletcher, 2020: 73).

Moreover, one could rightly deduce that even from the empirical data used thus far in this thesis, there is a dominant male force within children's football. The team I followed showed no exception to this in their coaching line-up and they very much demonstrated Fletcher's (2020) analysis of front and backstage practices. The front and backstage practices are the gender divisions within sport where the females,

usually the mother, performs all the duties backstage such as the driving, washing of uniforms etc, which was reinforced by Wheeler and Green's 2018 study. Whereas the men usually take on more of a frontstage coaching role. This was indeed true of the Bears where the coaching staff were male, even through the changes to the staff and voluntary line up. The frontstage staff were male and the wife of the coach, Claire, performed administrative tasks around the club, collecting membership information, washing uniforms, organising fun days, and general preparation tasks. It should be noted here that the team consisted of only boys, but having said that, every coach we encountered on opposition teams were also male, and throughout my participants there was only one whose child had a female coach (who was brought in after some controversy around the male coach). I also interviewed one female coach, all of which reinforces the gendered divisions that are rife within football, although it should be noted it is getting better. We shall now examine the controversy around Tina's male coach:

*'Actually its quite interesting the guy that set-up ***** girls football club which is actually quite a big club, basically set it up with some of his mates so some of the people that came to coach actually didn't have the appropriate coaching qualifications some of them weren't CRB checked and I think what you seen as a result of that are some issues which a properly trained coach would not have contributed to. Previously they [the girls on the team] looked like they hadn't broken a sweat and he gave them a bag of sweets as a reward, it's like what the heck mate make them work and give them a piece of fruit... so they had a wet fish of a bloke who didn't really know what he was doing there and wanted to be mates with them all and they chewed him and spat him out, but now they have Paige and she is fab, she makes them work and doesn't take any nonsense' (Tanya, parent)*

For Tanya and Tina, the gender of the coach was not so much an issue as him being underqualified to coach a team of teenage girls, which suggests that gender is irrelevant as long as the quality of coaching is good.⁴⁷ Here we can also see how the

⁴⁷ It does start to open up a debate around who is qualified to coach teenage girls.

Respect campaign and guidelines- which will be outlined fully in the latter half of this chapter- have started to penetrate football, because Tanya thought it pertinent to mention the CRB⁴⁸. Katie, similarly, did not see gender as an issue in her coaching,⁴⁹ she simply decided to do it and gain her qualification because her son wanted to play and there were not enough volunteers.

Although gender **was not an issue** there are some interesting patterns from my research. Firstly, every parent I spoke to as a parent only were female, there was one female, Katie, who had a dual role of parent and coach. This could indicate that indeed on the whole, mothers are still performing backstage duties around football, which we see through Dawn *'I just helped him along the way for transport reasons I suppose'* and Tanya hinted that Tina's father is present at most games in her interview, talking about her husband being at the actual games and his passion for the game:

'I can't have a conversation with him on the phone if he is watching one of her matches, because halfway through the conversation he starts shouting stuff on the pitch. I can't talk now I'll have to call you back at half-time, he is so high rate and he gets much more passionately verbally at the side of the pitch, but not in a bad way he is always like come on girls, you can do it, get in there. Quite a few of the fathers do it and get passionate about it and shout about it [...] so yeah he does get excited about it but she [Tina] finds it funny, I don't think he embarrasses her or anything, I think he is, but she doesn't' (Tanya, parent).

This is something that resonated with me from my observational fieldwork. Although the gender balance at pitch side was usually equally male and female (and when the balance did tip, it was more towards a female presence) the male presence was

⁴⁸ CRB changed to DBS in 2012 but Tanya specifically mentioned CBS and I did not want to correct her.

⁴⁹ Although there was an issue with lack of respect for her decisions which will be covered later in this chapter

notably more ‘*verbally passionate*’ as Tanya calls it. As I recalled in my field notes from watching a Cup day⁵⁰:

‘what I am noticing today is that the men are much more invested in the game than the women, the women are all huddled together in their separate groups, under tents, dishing out their home-made food, flasks of tea and coffee. This makes me unpopular with Izobelle and Ada-Rose⁵¹ who undoubtedly highlighted my misgivings as a parent for not providing adequate seating, snacks or drinks. But beyond my parenting limitations it drew me to a pattern, the women were there but not necessarily present. The men however, David included, were pitch side, watching tentatively, everything they could. There were just floods of shouting, the shouting was usually framed in a positive sense but due to the amount of teams playing this created quite a volume and I had to take the girls away from line to the mothers on more than one occasion. The children on the pitch must have felt inundated. (Author’s field notes, early summer, 2017).

These observations would suggest that although the gender presence is visible in the game and times are changing, one is inclined to agree with Fletcher’s (2020) analysis that though the roles of fathers may have evolved over time, they are still on a practical level seen at the frontstage of footballing activities.

This then begged the question of what happens in lone-parent families and how this is negotiated through football. Quarmby (2016) found that lone parent families do not offer the same support as two-parent middle-class families, and from my own experience of having two children in two different sets of organised activities as a two parent family, I cannot even fathom how I would negotiate this as a lone parent. From my interviews there were two participants that disclosed they were lone parents⁵², and although they are different in the stages of their children’s participation there were some resounding barriers to participation for them to navigate. Therefore, it is worth

⁵⁰ This was basically a one-day tournament where all of the FA teams played against each other in a day at the same location.

⁵¹ Izobelle and Ada-Rose are my two little girls who frequently attended football matches with me, they were 8 and 1 at the time of collection.

⁵² Dawn was not a lone parent for all of Dominic’s childhood, but her husband worked away, and he took the weekends for his own leisure time, so she she felt like and effectively was a lone parent.

spending a little time here exploring their lives. Firstly, Louise, who is a lone parent to four girls. Her oldest, Lillie, currently participates in an all-girls team in the Northeast, and her second oldest, Lolly, was planning on joining the club as soon as the next season started. Dawn's experience, on the other hand, is a little different to most of my participants for a number of reasons. Firstly, her son, Dominic, is an adult now, so Dawn's account is retrospective. Secondly, Dominic, at the time of data collection, played as a first team player in a Premier League club⁵³, however up until he began an academy in year 9, he played grassroots football.

Firstly, Dawn talks about the logistical complications of a Saturday morning:

'our Saturday Mornings used to be quite fun because one had to be on the field to play football and another one had to be in a totally different area of the town to practice for his ice hockey... what I used to do was is drop one off first then drop the other then I'd have to go back and get that to do the other one'

As we move on into the interview, we can see Dawn making sacrifices in her work and social life so that Dominic could follow his passion, which reiterates the earlier point that children's participation can come at a cost to a family that is not solely financial:

'when he [Dominic] first started, it was only a couple of nights a week he had to go training. I work full time. I actually dropped my hours at work to be able to accommodate his training. Instead of finishing at half-past five I started to finish at half past four so I could go and get him from my mom and dad's house to take him to football and things like that. Then, as I say, initially it was two nights a week, but then when he moved up to a higher age group, it went from being a Monday and a Wednesday to a Tuesday and a Friday night. Not only did I have to go to my boss and say, "Actually, can I switch days where I work?" I ended up going down to working only three days a week to be able to accommodate the football. Then he went from two nights a week to three nights a week, I have to go to my boss again and say, "Can I do flexi, spread my days over to be able to accommodate the football?" My boss has always been fine

⁵³ Dawn and Dominic's experience is included because the time she tells me about lead up to journey of Dominic getting into an academy and then into youth squads and eventually a EPL team. Although the data from entering an academy is present because my focus is on grassroots football, I use it only as background information and not as an example of experience within grassroots football, whereas his experience before the academy is based on grassroots and therefore relevant.

and allowed me to do it. The only downside of that, due to being the way the current climate is, I work for the local authority, there hasn't been an opportunity for me to increase'

She also comments how she could not drink on a weekend night because she would have to be up in the mornings to take Dominic to games and training. It is through Dawn that we can clearly see that 'fatherhood is evolving but in practice very little had changed, mothers were the domesticated organised side whereas fathers were the fun irresponsible side' (Fletcher, 2020: 153). Louise is a little different, she had no one to provide the irresponsible side and often relied on other members of the team to pick and drop Lillie off for practice and games:

*'but during away games, I've never been to one. So, using the Facebook site on their group, I can kinda get a lift there and you can go in team four or five people. I'll also pick her up, we'll walk to come and get her. And they literally I think everyone at the team has picked **Lillie** up at one point and that that's just—it's lovely, it is. It's lovely and they've—they've never let her miss out. Even training, they come pick her up at training'*

What makes Lillie interesting here is what seems to be a need for her father's approval as we have seen in the section previously:

'She [Lillie] likes to score now when we show – she tries a bit harder and she likes people coming to watch. She likes that everyone cheers her on like in the final all the parents had come, even her dad came, and it's a miracle. Even he came to watch so yeah. It was nice, it's nice for her to get some attention from him'.

This reinforces the literature surrounding fathers having a bond through sports (Kay, 2009; Coakley, 2009; Fletcher, 2020) but it also suggests that mothers play an integral part by facilitating participation in grassroots football, and without this facilitation participation would not be possible. Because of this, we can think of parenting through sport rather than a gendered concept of fathering through sport. Where there are two parents present, they may play different roles in facilitating this participation, but Fletcher found that each of these different roles still contributed to a parenting aspect:

'both fathers and mothers spoke of spending quality time with their children in sport-related settings and this way was certainly not considered to be any less

important than other more widely accepted parenting practices, such as helping with homework or offering a shoulder to cry on' (2020: 153).

Therefore, we should try not to diminish the contribution that any parent makes to the parenting load and accept that in reality they may play out in different ways. Reducing this to a gendered phenomenon would be a mistake, as Dawn and Louise have both shown they can perform dual roles, and indeed Tanya has shown how this works in co-operation rather than in tension for the children. It would be much more accurate to think of the various roles as front and backstage as Fletcher (2020) found in his recent study. It is more apt to thinking of parenting in a way of parenting through sport as opposed to merely fathering through sport. Essentially, all parents wanted were to prepare their children for life in the way they believed to be the most beneficial to their children, and their personal family make-up did not affect this desire. It is these benefits which are examined more closely in the following sections of this chapter.

Trading Values

It has long been argued that the exchange economy can be applied to areas outside of the fiscal economy. We trade-in lifetime for labour-time and in turn receive pay. We then trade our money for necessities and any surplus is directed towards leisurely consumer items. However, in a state of late modernity in which our identity is tied so closely to our consumption patterns (Smith, 2016; Hall et al., 2008; Lloyd, 2018) these leisurely consumer items must hold more value than just monetary. This is a concept which is explored by Baudrillard (1998) when he claims that items take on a whole new meaning and value once they are consumed. Throughout my findings, it became evident to me that children's grassroots football is one such item. This goes beyond a mere statement that the individual is a footballer, or wearing a team's football shirt, or even buying products such as a mascot experience day. Parents in liquid modernity

are increasingly looking for a return in value for the time they have spent organising their children's leisure practices. As Katie notes '*ultimately it's a huge commitment but definitely worth it*'. This section examines one of the skills the parents believe they are providing for their children through the participation in grassroots football, whilst noting what they may be trading or exchanging in the deal, for example time (Wheeler & Green, 2018).

As one would imagine, when I asked parents about what they believed their child was gaining from playing grassroots football, they indicated that their technical skills have increased, as Anya says about her 6-year old Alice:

'I think she is developing skills her coordination she plays she's there 2nd goalie so she is kind of specialising a little bit as well and learning a bit of confidence as well originally she wouldn't have gone to tackle people and she would just kind of Prance around the pitch and run after the ball and now she's getting in there and she's confident in her skills and she will go and tackle'.

And Donna in relation to her 15-year old Denise, '*and obviously her footballing skills you know ball control and what have you*'. These are just two examples of many from my interviews. They also included comments around increased confidence as Anna says about her team '*they are more confident too*'. Listening skills, performance skills, motor development, teamwork, academic improvements and technical skills, are examples of the skills that are often cited around the benefits of sport and these are the skills with which parents believe they are overtly helping their children. What is striking here is if we compare them to the skills that are actually being taught (as discussed in chapter 5) they are in direct tension. The cold realism that they are being taught, as we have seen with Leo, is leaving them feeling isolated, insecure, and hyper-individualised, as will be shown in chapter 7. As Winlow found:

'The child who is socialized in a micro-climate of insecurity and fear, and subject to an external cultural field that encourages tough masculinity, will often encounter deeply traumatic events that resonate throughout his adult life' (2014: 42).

There was one skill which was highlighted by Katie, and that was to teach the children respect. She felt that the team had grown, and they were learning to respect each other, other teams, and adults, and that this was achieved by regulating their behaviour on the field:

'we spoke to them about respecting other people's feelings and they have been gracious in defeat when winning'

This made me wonder if respect was a superficial, externally imposed action that the children needed to participate in to be able to play, or if it was really altering something in the psyche of the children because the 'violent subject rarely experiences genuine remorse (Winlow, 2014: 37). We will now explore the notion of respect more specifically the Respect campaign.

Respect

'Respect' is the FA's campaign which aims to tackle, challenge, and change undesirable behaviour in football, especially grassroots. Introduced in the spring of the 2008 season Respect was a reaction to the decline in referees wanting to officiate games at grassroots level. The guidelines are fundamentally aimed at parents, coaches, and spectators of the game. Respect includes guidelines, toolkits, regulations and physical barriers at the games. The FA needed to create a balance for encouraging desirable behaviour rather than becoming too punitive; if they became too punitive, they would risk the popularity of grassroots football (Brackenridge et al, 2011). The FA decided that the Respect campaign would therefore be marketed and delivered as an ethos; a way of thinking and behaving that would eventually seem natural to all involved.

The FA believed that behaviours would need to be nudged⁵⁴ in their wanted direction. Through the premise of nudging the FA devised a programme which invoked the emotions of their target groups (parents, spectators, and coaches) and use these emotions to regulate their practical behaviour on the side of the pitch:

'Local clubs, coaches, players and spectators can now utilise a range of tools and materials designed to promote better behaviour during matches. Posters, leaflets, codes of conduct and training packs can all be obtained from the FA's official website. Used correctly, these materials can help the people responsible for running grassroots football to gradually modify the behaviour of players and spectators. Instead of concentrating on punishment, they try to develop empathy of what abused players and officials go through during a match' (Cox, 2014).

However, the Respect ethos was **scantly found in any of my field work**, and my participant observation findings directly contravened the ethos on several occasions. The Respect campaign from its outset attempted to plaster over a systemic problem. We, as a society, are living within a fragmented Symbolic Order, with limited symbolic efficiency; if we were living in a time of a unified Symbolic Order there would be no need for a Respect campaign. What would be deemed as acceptable behaviour would not be fragmented or relative and subjective, it would be a unified notion of good that everyone would instinctively follow (Raymen, 2019). For example, under this diminished symbolic efficiency, a coach may feel that it is acceptable to call a referee an '*utter twat*', whereas if we experienced a unified notion of good and what it means to be a good coach, person, and role model, individual judgment would be removed. It would be unheard of for a coach to call the referee an '*utter twat*' in an under 9s non-

⁵⁴ The basic premise of Nudge Theory (Sunstein and Thaler, 2008) is that behaviour could be influenced, controlled and essentially nudged by promoting desired behaviour and strategically placing products including football. Football in this sense is a product which is promoted as pro-social, pro-health and pro-educational.

competitive game. Drawing on a match report from Grant, published on their closed social media page, we can see this did in fact happen:

*'Match Report ***** 4- *****2*

*[the opposition] saw their advantage saw 'the wounded animal' that was [the team] clearly hurting with [various children's names] taking hard tackles and knocks that were more fitting for MMA cage fight. With no protection from a young, inexperienced and "utter twat" of a referee (direct quote from gaffer when arguing with him at full-time) [the opposition] continued to bully and got three rather quick-fire goals in the second half. This game was over for [the team] however not before *** scored again near the end to give the gaffer a selection headache next Saturday.*

All in all, tough game, tough conditions, tough love from the gaffer but we will improve and bounce back next Saturday' (Match Report, 2018)

Grant did in fact call the referee 'a twat' numerous times, and one of the parents commented that they believed his (Grant's) 'veins would pop right out of his neck' (Claire, parent, under 9's team). It is through this we can start to unpick the respect ethos and see-through real-life experiences to what is happening on a grassroots level.

The Respect ethos tackles four key areas to challenge behaviour and attitudes. These are: 1) codes of conduct for players, referees, coaches and spectators (Appendices 11-14); 2) designated spectator areas; 3) the captain taking responsibility for communication with the match officials, and; 4) the referee managing the game (FA, 2008; Sky Sports 2008; Brackenridge et al, 2011). Due to the space limitations this chapter will address various points from the first item. The FA commissioned a pilot study assessing the success of the above suggested changes, conducted by Brackenridge et al (2011) and found that these were successful to varying degrees. However, they did state that the data did not have a solid baseline from which to accurately assess, nor was the completion rate towards the end of the pilot useful in establishing a full consensus. The players' code of conduct is aimed at young players

and boasts recommendations that encourage playing for the benefit of the team, play fair and be friendly, play by the rules and respect the referee, always shake hands with the other team, listen carefully to the coach, and the encouragement of teammates. However, my results show that even these basic premises are ambiguous and problematic.

Playing for the benefit of the team is an undefined concept; what is the benefit of the team? Without a clear concept of what the '*benefit*' is the children are immediately put in a situation where they are experiencing a dialectical tension between structure and agency. The structure of the game, of society, or of grassroots football comes from a different place of motivation. The agency of the child is to play football because they like the game, or they want to be a professional EPL player when they grow up. Moreover, in chapter 5 we saw how the notion of teamwork is in direct competition with individualised notions of taking your chance.

The next objective listed is for children to *play fair and be friendly*. The concept of playing fair is somewhat difficult if you do not understand the rules of the game. By this, I mean the overall objective of the game, not rules in a tactical sense. If the objective of the game is to win then, simply, that's what children are trying to do. However, parents enrol their children into grassroots football for many reasons, without the children having any idea of the objective of the game. We have seen through the adaptation of Lareau's concept of cultivation, that parents choose activities which they believe will provide their child with the skills which will best equip them for adult life. Therefore, for the children the objective of the game is somewhat obscured and playing fair becomes ambiguous. What is 'playing fair' when

the objective is to get the most from this activity for your child. It seems ironic that the Respect campaign is preaching fairness when the aim of the activity is systemically unfair. In other words, if each child has different skills and attributes, what does playing fair look like? This concept is further complicated by its environmental setting. We must not forget that these skills are being cultivated through a game of football, which begs the question: what does fair play look like in football? The Respect campaign offers little in the way of practical advice on what fair play is and how it could be achieved.

The FA does attempt to balance this by claiming that each child should have 50% playing time on the pitch (FA, 2017) but as we have seen (in chapter 5) this does not always happen. Grant stated that parents would get a text if their child was selected to play on a certain week, but he assured them if they were not selected for one week they would be included in the next week's line-up. Moreover, Grant states at one point that he had been given a '*selection headache*' for the following week, so not everyone got 50% match time each game, and this was embedded within their practice, which contravenes the FA guidelines.

In reality this is being ignored, or a workaround is in place by way of additional friendlies, which as the FA puts it, does not foster a team spirit, and nor does it lend itself well to instilling a *playing fair* ethos, which the Respect campaign encourages. It does, however, clearly highlight the tensions within the Respect campaign, because it could be argued that Grant was simply coaching what is best for the team; and as players the children should always '*Play your best for the benefit of the team*'. It's possible that playing your best for the benefit of the team is playing in a friendly or

missing a week to play the week after, depending on the fixture lists. The choosing of players and having friendlies creates an evident distinction and tension between the Respect campaign, football, and the cultivating of skills from the hidden curriculum. It is the children who are constantly exposed to and are living through this tension of competing intersections, whilst the coaches, the FA, and parents are busy deciding which one of them is the most dominant reason for the children to be playing; essentially, what is the objective of the game.

Respecting a referee is difficult when the objectives of the game are ambiguous. The referee is ensuring that the game is played according to the technical rules of the game. I did watch referees in action over an 18-month period and whilst I witnessed a number of incidents involving them, including disagreements over decisions, the majority of their justification came in the way of 'I am the referee, you will respect my decision'. However, in the Northwest I went to watch Stu's son play a match, and what follows are my field notes:

*'the referee, he made a bad call. Now if I can by this point in my work call a bad call, he as a coach should be able to. It made no sense to me; he gave possession to the wrong team. So, I am stood just like the poor kids on the pitch wondering what the f**k. I turned to David and asked if it was me or was the ref blind... that was it, I realised I too had turned into one of "those" people! David agreed- unbeknown to him my little identity crisis- I was having the ball was given to the wrong side. Now luckily, I was stood near our teams (Stu's sons) coach when the ref came over and explained that actually he didn't have a clue who should have had possession because he didn't see the last touch so being afraid of being seen as bias -because it turns out the ref was actually the other teams coach- he gave it to us, the other team. Now one might say this didn't matter much and it happens all the time but there was this one boy, the boy who felt like he had been wronged by his own coach because if they had last touch he could only have been his fault. He sobbed and said sorry and was frightened he had let his team down, but the ref (his coach) couldn't tell him that he had made the wrong call because play continued on before anyone had realised the impact. Luckily it was close to half time and the boys' mother*

*reassured him that it was ok, and they were still winning so all was good⁵⁵. Then it happened again, but in reverse, the ref (their coach) gave them possession when it should have been our team, well this poor lad! He couldn't cope with the injustice of it and when he was calling his coach out for making the wrong decision again, he received a warning to be removed from the pitch, which he was -almost voluntarily in my opinion. From an outsider's point of view this boy just couldn't deal with the wrong calls being made, which side they landed on seemed almost irrelevant to him; there were rules to be followed and they were not being followed, with about 5 mins left the boy was walked off crying his little heart out by his mother who promised the coach he would be better next week! What!!! It wasn't the boys' fault he was right! The ref then came back to our coach and said I think it's only fair that I evened out the wrong call from earlier. Fair ha what an absolute joke this guy was and I found myself empathising with the young lad who had been removed and I could feel my emotions and sense of injustice rising, fair on what planet was any of that f**king game fair?!' (Author's field notes, July 2019)*

For a game which is supposed to enhance social skills, promote teamwork and cohesion, and is achieved through having fun, the game I witnessed was the opposite. The boy internalised the loss of possession;⁵⁶ he felt wronged by his coach, the technical rules of the game were not followed, and his mum claimed he would be better next week, meaning she fully endorsed the coach/ref's decisions. The Respect campaign claims you must 'play by the rules and respect the referee' (Playing your part, FA, 2020) and whilst this particular incident could be seen as a one off, Connor, who refereed on occasions, explained that as a referee you don't see anything but colours and often guess at the call:

'I mean I have ref'd I refereed a few development games and once you've been a ref you realise that it is quite hard because when you're out there all you see is colours, you don't see teams you don't see names you see colours you see just see a blue shirt and a white shirt. The hardest thing is the foul thing, is quite easy to know who to give a free kick too and if someone scored the hardest thing is knowing who had the last touch of the ball going out you probably don't even know. The players kind of know this themselves they'll go and pick the

⁵⁵ because the objective is to win isn't it.

⁵⁶ internalising loss is a theme which I have written about elsewhere (see Gallacher, 2020) and which is picked up in chapter 7.

ball up and if nothing is said they like oh that is be who it was then [laughter] erm so I think yeah its its not easy for the referees.'

From this it is easy to see what I had experienced in the match I watched. However, whereas Connor indicated he would have listened to the children, knowing they know who has possession, the referee in the game I experienced clearly did not have the experience nor confidence Connor possessed to correct the call. This would suggest that it happens on a regular basis and because of this it is clear that more research is needed into referees and how children, coaches, and parents respect their decisions.

It's all just a bit of fun

Interestingly, no-one seems to know what the overall objective of the game is other than the children having fun, of course! From my research having fun was the second most common justification for children playing football⁵⁷ and Marie exemplifies many of my parents when she claims '*it's just about having fun really and seeing his mates*' (Marie, parent). But having fun is not part of the youth's code of conduct; it is however, part of the parents' code of behaviour (FA, 2017). This is striking to me as a researcher - it is almost like the parents need reminding that it is in fact meant to be a *fun* game for the children. The indication is that having any literature which aims to govern and nudge the parent's behaviour suggests that it was a problematic area. One of the guidelines which are pertinent in this chapter in relation to parents and spectators is the physical Respect barriers, not only does the need of physical barriers lead us to questions around harm, but the effectiveness of them tells us more.

⁵⁷ The first, as discussed in chapter 5, is because their children wanted to be EPL football players.

Stu saw his entry into the world of coaching (and refereeing) as a natural progression as a male teacher⁵⁸. Secondly, because he coaches school football, he does not have the respect barriers, although he does not see this as problematic:

GG: *Do you have to have respect barriers?*

Stu: *Not in school, no. Possibility we should have them, but I don't feel the need to have them.*

GG: *Do you think that they are in use specifically where they're good?*

Stu: *I think for Sunday League and Saturday League, I think they're more useful because if you're playing on huge pitches, where there's lots of games going on, then I think it is important to have that barrier. As I say, schoolboy football, I think it's different when you're running it in skill teams.'*

Stu clearly feels that the barriers are there as a way of physically separating games, whereas according to the FA, they are implemented to discourage unwanted behaviour, like directing from the side lines. Stu does not necessarily see this behaviour as problematic, which also shows that he has not undergone FA coach training because the guidelines indicate that multiple voices of direction can be confusing and the Youth Football guide recommends that parents 'don't issue instructions from the touchline' (2020: 5).

GG: *Have you ever had the situation where a parent goes to instruct from the side line*

Stu: *Probably, they have, but you don't mind if it's actually positive on them or if they're concentrating on their own child. It doesn't really bother me if the child or the children are still following my instructions. Yes. Parents have done that; it doesn't bother me if it"*

Although Stu does not necessarily see it, the respect barriers would prevent this confusion for the children, more so if the children attend afterschool football and a

⁵⁸ I could have added in a gendered analysis here and demonstrated how the world has moved on from the conceptions that Stu is talking about, however, I felt it was important to represent my participants' voices and opinion, and experiences from the ground level. Therefore, whilst I acknowledge that this comment could be more nuanced, this is not the point of the thesis and nor do I see it as relevant to the points I am presenting here.

football league, where these directions are in direction opposition: school does not mind instruction whereas the FA forbids it. This can be confusing for both the children and the parents. Moreover, he spoke of a time when the physicality of the barriers would have been useful. This incident occurred when Stu was refereeing a school game and came from me asking about his most memorable experience:

***GG:** What's the most memorable thing you can think of from refereeing a game?*

***Stu:** Obviously, you remember the tough parents that you sometimes get on the sidelines that mightn't agree with your decisions. As a referee you got to make a decision whether you're going to put up with this decision or this interference or do you stop. At times when you have parents who been quite vocal, I've actually stopped the game and gone over to speak to these parents and say, "Look, I'm the referee and I'm giving up my time. If you want to do a better job, here's the whistle." Try and get them to button up more easily.*

***GG:** Did they button up or--?*

***Stu:** Yes. To a certain degree because obviously if they can see that again, that you are trying to provide an avenue for their children to play football, you are giving up your time. They really for the sake of it and you're not getting paid. I did find out after that, basically, one the of the parents that I found out that were a drug dealer.*

***GG:** Do you ever feel intimidated as a ref?*

***Stu:** As I said, as a skilled teacher, refereeing in schoolboy games, no, because obviously hopefully you've got the fact that you've got some authority. You're not just a referee-*

He believes that having that added extra authority of being a teacher aids him in experiences where actually the physical barrier would have been useful for him. However, this is not always the case. Katie, who is a parent and a coach of a FA grassroots team, felt that the respect barriers made very little difference and that as a female coach, the dads felt they could influence her decisions through intimidation:

***GG:** do you think they make any difference as a coach? Or a parent?*

***Katie:** um, we have absolutely no issues with overzealous parents!! I can imagine they would be a huge help if this was a problem. I have felt intimidation on a couple of occasions by opposing teams' dads and I haven't felt the barriers helped in this situation'*

What is striking about Katie is her belief in the respect barriers even when she directly contradicts herself. She believes firstly that they would be a huge help if she had encountered any problems with parents but then without prompt she tells us of a time when she had encountered problems and explains how the respect barriers did not help the game in anyway, although the physical barriers worked as we will see they didn't prevent the need for them. Later in the conversation I asked her what happened with these dads, she explains:

***GG:** you said earlier about some of the dads of the other teams being intimidating, could you tell me a little more about it please?*

***Katie:** my decisions in a game situation have been questioned and ridiculed on two occasions*

***GG:** how*

***Katie:** heckling from behind the barrier. I ignored it and let the game go on'*

She did not offer any more information than this on the incidents. However, she does not feel that the barriers helped in this situation and she chose to ignore the comments and let the game carry on. The overall aim of the Respect campaign, and more specifically the physical barriers here, are providing little in the way of changing behaviour as it claims. From Stu we can see that adults outside of the FA grassroots organisation have little idea of their actual purpose - he felt it was a physical separation from numerous on-going games. From Katie we can see that they do not negate the heckling or unwanted behaviour and she carried on as if they were not present, so they worked in the sense that the parents did not get too physically close but they did not change the behaviour of the parents who were heckling. It is here we can return to Connor who provides a clear insight into how he believes behaviour could be changed and why the current climate of respect is failing. He believes that there needs to be a change in behaviour, but he can see the systemic problems within the football

organisation. Connor believes that the behaviour needs to be filtered down from the top, only then can you tackle grassroots:

***GG:** do you think the respect barriers and stuff make any difference?*

***Connor:** no it doesn't because it's got to come from the top stars in the world you see in the world cup all the players surround the referee it wouldn't happen in Rugby you just wouldn't do it you'd prob get [hand in head making a phee sound] you'd prob get chinned, the ref would prob chin ya, he would just get rid of you straight away if you didn't address him as sir. You should start addressing them as sir and it would probably go a lot more different. Ok so rugby origins in public school boy things, but that doesn't mean that football can't aspire to that, and there is absolutely no reason why it shouldn't and no matter how many millions you spend on a Respect campaign till something is done or actually professional players are punished for surrounding the ref or arguing every decision it won't change anything.*

***GG:** What I noticed with the World Cup is the coaches mouthing swear words at the refs and all of them kids watching it*

***Connor:** well that's it. The example has to come from the very top and since FIFA haven't done anything about it or don't address it, you know it's like accepted and it shouldn't be accepted. As soon as you issue that first red card it will stop it instantly would because no one would dare do it anymore and then respect would just filter down I don't see how it's that hard to do. I don't know what it is its crazy.'*

Connor aptly describes the need for a working Big Other; if it was unacceptable it would not happen - if it was not accepted by the authorities it would soon filter down. What Connor is addressing is the death of the Big Other and a fragmented symbolic efficiency. We explored this concept in chapter 5 and it is here we can see it come to fruition. The FA, FIFA and other governing bodies of football cannot be a little Other but, this chapter thus far has demonstrated that the Respect campaign can indeed be examined as a Little Other. Little Others tend to be regulatory bodies which try and govern and shape our behaviour - Respect does this by claiming it is an ethos. By claiming to be an ethos the Respect campaign is attempting to change and alter behaviour both on the pitch and at the side-lines, moreover, being an ethos demonstrates its aspiration of providing a Symbolic Order for us to operate within, therefore its aspiration lies in being a Big Other. However, we know that there can be

no Big Other with a fragmented Symbolic Order so the Respect guidelines will always be just that: guidelines. This is clear from the online match report from Grant at the start of this chapter, where he calls the referee a twat. If we had a unified Symbolic Order this would not be an issue because guidelines would not be needed to try and govern this behaviour because we would all know what behaviour was acceptable. Guidelines as a Little Other did not help when Grant's emotions overcame him, and he called out the referee. In a world of declined symbolic efficiency without the rule of the big Other, the Little Others are doomed to fail because they cannot fill the void of symbolic order that the big Other brings, and whilst it wants to replace the Big Other it cannot. Little Others, like the Respect campaign, are too subjective and orientated on managing and governing behaviour.

The Respect campaign to this effect is a failing Little Other; a failing regulatory body that is attempting to regain some control. But as Connor notes, without this coming from the top down (from FIFA or the FA) in his opinion it will not work. However, this thesis would contend that it needs to come from higher than any managing body - it needs to come from a unified Big Other. The Respect campaign, and more broadly grassroots football, claim to instil values such as fair play and learning to respect authority when the authority is '*guessing*' because there is no ruling Big Other. My point here is that football as a catch all objective is failing and employing the deviant leisure typology of harm, we can start to see harms creeping to the forefront.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the notion of parenting through sport, moving on from the gendered concept of fathering through sport, to look at how parents may perform

different roles and duties in relation to football but ultimately both parents from my study contributed to the children's football in one way or another. Where the child was part of a lone parent family, the parent drew on the wider community of their child's football network, enlisting help with the travelling and so on. My study found that male parents tended to be more '*passionately present*' and in doing this were contravening the Respect guidelines. Parents used the justifications (outlined in chapters 1 and 2) for enrolling their children in football, which concentrates on the manifest benefits of physical activity, such as confidence, fun, increased wellbeing, and creating habits for life. But, nowhere did they address the manifest benefits such as preparing their children for life on their own in a hypercompetitive consumerist society. The justifications and manifest benefits are weakened when compared to the latent benefits outlined in chapter 5; the cold realism of toughening up the children for the world. We then explored how through various Little Others they are trying to replace the fragmented symbolic efficiency. Respect was employed as an ethos in 2009 to try and control the behaviours which were happening within children's grassroots football, however, as a Little Other, Respect cannot replace the unifying meaning that the Big Other would offer us, and is therefore doomed to fail. As my results indicated, Respect is not practiced or enforced because ultimately the metrics rule the game, therefore shared ethics cannot. The next and final chapter will explore the effect that the environment of non-competitive grassroots football has on a child's identity formation.

Chapter 7: Me, Myself and I. Identity formation through children's grassroots football.

'While the market has created more affluence, it has also systematically encouraged most individuals to be discontented and dissatisfied with their lives, thus maintaining the "dream" and the steady flow of money into consumer markets' (Hall *et al.*, 2008: 22-23).

Introduction

This chapter is the final of the empirical chapters and brings together the journey we have been on with children's non-competitive grassroots football. In chapter 5 we explored the environment of non-competitive grassroots football and in chapter 6 we examined the parents' justification for participation and the trading of skills that they believed their child was getting. It also examined the Respect campaign and what this did or didn't bring to football. This chapter examines the formation of the child's identity and what effect the findings from my research has on this formation. With children's mental health being at an all-time low, it is imperative that we examine childhood and childhood activities in a critical manner. This chapter does that by looking at the child as a transcendental materialist subject and questions how children's non-competitive football can add and/or create anxiety and stress. This in-depth analysis of the subconscious allows us to move beyond the Cartesian notion and start to inspect the derailed maturation process, and how this can create two forms of ego and narcissism. In turn, we can look at what this means for the child and assess the contribution of

children's grassroots football to the solicitation of the trap of consumerism. This chapter finishes by exploring how children's grassroots football is predicated upon a dissatisfaction of desire and how this has penetrated the football market alongside the effect on childhood.

Identity

Identity formation is imperative to this project; to fully situate any possible harms we must explore the effect that children's non-competitive grassroots football is having on the formation of the child and their personality. In chapter 5 we discovered that the environment used to construct reality and confront the trauma of the void that lies at the core of the subject, (see Raymen, 2019) leaves the subject. In this case it is the child with crippling anxiety and failing ontological security. Robert (life-longer player aged 21) explains:

'it's erm never want to lose the game, it's the same for every kid you see them a bit nervous before we go'.

Through things like team selection, '*earning your place*' and trying to get £5 a goal we can see how the pressures on a child may result in harm and confusion, and with children's mental health disorders in the spotlight, childhood needs to be scrutinized. The figures on children's mental health are reflected in the current mental health reports within the UK, mental ill health is also the largest of burden of disease within the UK (MHFA, 2019). This means that the cost of mental ill health is higher than the diseases that sport is claimed as preventing in outlined in chapter 1. According to the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) there were 82 million cases of anxiety in the UK in 2013, and nearly half (43.4%) of adults believed they suffer or have suffered from a diagnosable mental health condition at some point in their life (Mental Health Org, 2019). In 2016 these figures as these figures indicate we are experiencing a world

without functioning symbolic efficiency, however, because this thesis is concerned with children, we should also examine their mental health. The MHFA reported that 12.8% of young people aged between 5 and 19 meet the clinical criteria for a mental health disorder (MHFA, 2019) and we must take into consideration the dark figure of those who have not sought help for their problems or have yet to be diagnosed. This is important here because the MHFA also states that 75% of mental health problems develop before the age of 18. We need to examine some of the micro, meso, and macro factors which contribute to ontological insecurity. We saw this in chapter 5 through Leo: although I cannot confirm if he was suffering from a mental health condition, he was not happy or enjoying the game, clearly stating that he '*didn't want to play anymore*', we could see how if his feelings like this persisted and he had little support from mum how this could be a potential mental health issue.

My results clearly indicate that football does not always counter any mental health or physical health problems (as some of the literature in chapter 1 claims). I shall outline in the next section, through the use of the child as a transcendental materialist subject, how grassroots football can actually add to anxiety and stress for a child. Firstly, we should explore Tanya's story. Tanya is a parent of a 15-year-old girl, Tina. Tina started playing grassroots football at 11 years-old, when she (and her parents) felt that training four times a week as a competitive swimmer had brought on undue stress. Believing that football would be less of a commitment, and less competitive, Tanya agreed to Tina joining the local team. At the time of my research Tina was training or playing football at least five times a week and was involved in competitive league and cup matches. Tanya and Tina are pertinent here because they show how football can be just as stressful as other competitive sports or activities, and that in wanting a break from competition Tina became entangled with something far more demanding. This is

not a new concept - David (2005) explores the rights of children in elite competitive sports - what is new and original in this study is that it explores the grassroots football movement, whose participants are not elite level football players nor Olympic level athletes, but are children who attend a local or school football club. The next section will outline the transcendental materialist subject in a bid to address possible sources of anxiety, as well as how this relates to the structural formations which have led to increased anxiety.

Transcendental Materialist Subject

The transcendental materialist subject is essentially an individual within society. Transcendentalist notions of the subject overtake those of the Cartesian cogito by claiming there is being before structured thought and that knowing this allows for an analysis of the subconscious (Winlow, 2014). It essentially puts structure and agency in tension with each other based on the Lacanian tripartite of reality (Lloyd, 2018). Put simply, the transcendental materialist subject shows us that the brain is not hardwired and rigid, but is malleable, and based on the cultural input from the Symbolic Order of the Big Other in a perpetual cycle. But, as we know, symbolic efficiency is in a diminished state, therefore there is no dominant Symbolic Order and the Big Other is dead. So, in a bid to escape the Real (the void of nothingness at our core) individuals attach themselves to any social order, because any symbolic order is better than none (Hall, 2012b). Thus, the subject uses anything to try to unite itself and fill this lack, therefore any order is better than no order. We will explore this in two ways in this chapter: firstly, we examine identity formation of the transcendental materialist subject before moving on to the self as a neoliberal project.

Identity Formation

In order to fully investigate the formation of a child's identity we must explore the child as a transcendental materialist subject. In doing so we will fully explore the derailed maturation process and the impact this interruption has on identity development in childhood and beyond. To achieve this we will return to the Lacanian mirror stage (outlined in chapter 3) whilst exemplifying through my findings the pertinence of this concept and how it surpasses the level of analysis which is found in socialisation processes or one dimensional analyses of the subconscious and being.

As a transcendentalist subject the child is born with no affliction of any kind, meaning that it is not inherently good or evil, but has the capacity for both (Lloyd, 2019). By adopting a Lacanian schema, Hall *et al* (2008) illustrate that the subject (the child) is born prematurely compared to other animals; human beings are born incomplete. The premature birth, inevitably, renders the subject to fundamental feelings of inadequacy and dependence. The child experiences this as being unable to control their bodily or motor functions and needs to rely on an Other, which is usually the mother, for survival. As Hall outlines below, this leaves the infant searching for something, anything, which will aid in its own survival:

‘all human beings are born prematurely and totally helpless, and from the moment of birth the infant is tormented by a terrifying pre-symbolic sense of the entire absence of an ability to survive without the aid of others of the same species... the subject is at its core, as Lacan knew, driven by a sense of *lack*; down there at the epicentre is a void, an abyss that exists as the terror of the Real in the pre-symbolic Imaginary, which by its very nature has no initial idea of what it requires to fill it and end its torment’ (2012b: 376 [original emphasis]).

What Hall addresses here is the fundamental sense of lack which the subject feels as it is born. The child is born into a world which has yet to hold any meaning for them, so they are always searching for a way to fill this sense of loss and lack, to once again

become a unified whole. This is where the mirror stage intersects with the subject. It is important here that we allow a small recap of the mirror stage to refresh our knowledge, before proceeding onto the mechanisms which work to produce identity formation, the cycle of derailment of the maturation process, and the trap which it is caught in within consumer culture.

The mirror stage (outlined in chapter 3) accounts for how the subject uses an image, any image, with which they identify and start to build their identity around. We saw this in previous chapters with Lillie who got into football because of her grandfather, with Jonah because his family is heavily into football, and with Rick:

'I got to join with my older brothers, it was pretty exciting, my dad put us a little goal up in the garden, so we were always just kicking a ball into it'

For Rick, his best memory was playing in the garden with his brothers. He commented how football is still their main bond, and that his brothers always meet at his parents' house to watch important matches. Rick was not alone, Anna told us how her son is copying his dad:

'he is copying his dads' team, he now likes the floss because the older boys did it when they scored, so I think his dad and the older boys are his role models'.

Through my participants we can clearly see from an early age that children are identifying with an Other. For Lillie it was her grandfather, for Rick his brothers, and for Scott, (Anna's son) it was his dad and the older boys. It is this identification with an Other which is imperative here. Firstly, it is usually a caregiver that they model themselves on, as demonstrated by Lillie, Rick, and Scott. They model themselves on this Other because they (the child) think that this Other (the caregiver) is whole, complete, and in control of their bodily functions and motor skills. Moreover, the child must recognise something of themselves in the Other, which allows the child to consolidate their image with that of the Other in a way of almost admiration; the Other

to the child subject seems to embody a whole, a completeness which the child craves.

What we can also see here is how the parents affect their children's choices and that children want this positive reinforcement from their parents. This is an example of Žižek's take on the Freudian example of Anna. In chapter 3 I outlined the child's relationship with a consumer object, which reinforces their relationship with their loved ones. This was achieved by examining Žižek's take on Freud's analysis of Anna and her strawberry cake dream. I demonstrated it through my daughter's love for Sunderland AFC because of my husband's unwavering devotion to them. Through my participants we can see how this analysis can be applied to the children's love of football. Annabelle, my only female life-longer player, commented that:

'my family wanted me to enjoy it as much as them and my brother is as sporty as me. I have definitely been encouraged by my parents to play sport. I have just been surrounded by it and its always just been a positive thing',

This is supported by Tanya, who said the following when I asked about Tina's love of the game:

'she knew her dad really liked football and you know watches football overtly and she would watch it with him and then one day she said she would quite like to try it [...] if there was an influence from her dad it could have been possibly subconsciously'.

Tanya and Tina show us a couple of things here. Firstly, her dad was her route into football; it was something they shared together, and it could aptly be described as the front of stage processes that Fletcher (2020) spoke about in chapter 6. Secondly, it shows us that the mirror stage is not just present in specific biological stages in life, it can happen at any time. And thirdly, the Tanya and Tina example really shows how it is her dad's positive reinforcement that keeps her motivated in the games:

'Tanya: I can't talk to her dad when he is at the match because he is so preoccupied, he will start a sentence and then start shouting at the girls from the side. Its nothing bad, just encouragement like telling them if something was good and to keep going. I find it totally embarrassing but Tina quite likes it I think'.

The fact that Tina's dad is instructing from the side-lines is a contravention of the Respect rules, but more importantly what we can see is that Tina likes it. This is where we return to the strawberry cake dream: it is not the instruction Tina likes, but that shared bond between her and her father. The positive reinforcement that binds Tina and her father is football. Football in this sense is a commodity.

Returning to the child's need for wholeness and completeness, we can see how they also model themselves on role models. We can see this when the children were talking about their role models - the Premier League players or successful footballers which had made it and had their lives together. They were seen as whole:

'GG: do you or did you have any role models?'

Robert: when I was younger yeah, maybe Ronaldo or Messi, you know the best in the world. I used to think they had it all'.

Robert exemplified most of the findings, they were around past or present stars of football: Bale, Gerrard, Shearer, and Pickford. The children felt that they had it made, and were therefore whole, unlike the children. In the mirror stage, the child believes that if they mimic the Other, they too can enter the symbolic order of society and be fully unified.

When, in the mirror stage, the child assumes the Other, the mirror image of themselves or a role model, the child foremostly gains mastery over its functions, yet, this comes at a price for the child. For the child to reach this point it has projected outwards its imaginary conception of itself, and it has recognised itself in either an actual image or an Other; then, as this image is reflected back, the ego splits into two: the child and their image, although the child recognises both simultaneously (Hall et al., 2008). The child, as Bailly notes, immediately knows that this is an unreality whilst simultaneously

experiencing the powerful emotions of their own wholeness at the same time, and often feels like 'this is not me, and this is me' (2009: 30). It is in this splitting and simultaneous recognition that the child feels trapped by the image of 'this is not me but is me'. For example, Leader and Groves (2005) use the idea of the image of the child crying, stating the child believes that if the image or reflection cries the child believes that they must also cry. Therefore, it is in the realisation of this process that is fundamentally alienating for the child, and to avoid such alienation and despair the ego is tasked with maintaining an illusion of competence and mastery (Hall et al., 2008) which is the image of a sense of self.

However, in this stage the child's recognition is actually one of misrecognition and this forms what is known as the ideal ego. The ideal ego lies in the Imaginary realm of Lacan's tripartite registry and is formed when the child believes the Other is them or they are a mini version of them. This results in the obliteration of the notion of the self and an Other; they are as one. For example, a child in my study may believe they are Gerrard; they are a Premier League player and are just waiting for the world to realise it, or for them to be discovered. In the ideal ego or the Imago the subject is enticed into a stimulation that allows them to return to being whole, complete and have a mastery of their functions. In other words, the child can return to a state of primary narcissism where the difference between the subject and the void at their core did not exist. Which is its primary goal: we are inherently wired to try to unite ourselves by closing or filling in the lack (the void at the centre of our being). This is achieved by assimilating into one's environment and assuming the symbolic order to make sense of things by being the Other, who we perceive to have accomplished this. But as already noted the ego is split, and it is this splitting (paired with the realisation that they are indeed themselves and not themselves) where the child is starting to realise

that it can distinguish itself from others. When this occurs, the child is maturing away from its primary infantile need to reconnect with itself or is accepting that there is a void at the centre of our being: this is when the ego ideal is formed. The ego ideal lives in the realm of the symbolic and is usually the self that we want other people to see. It can distinguish between itself and others, which means it can distinguish that it is not the Other but can be similar. It is what governs behaviour which is acceptable to the dominant Symbolic Order. For example, in terms of my child participants it would be saying they played like Gerrard rather than they were Gerrard: they can differentiate between wanting to be like an EPL player and believing they are an EPL player. It is in this differentiation in which consumer culture, and the advertising platform for players as role models has profound effects on children.

Firstly, we can see how the advertising platform is used to influence children:

***Lana:** he is at the age [Joe] where he wants all the named football boots, shirts and gear. He is wanting to dress himself and style his hair every day, he thinks he is a football star'.*

Then secondly, we can see from Lana and her son Joe that the advertising has a massive impact on Joe and his identity formation. He feels like he needs the latest gear and that this forms who he is as a football star. Joe recognises a quality or trait in whichever football star he is modelling himself on and this then reflects back on him through his behaviour. The star is the other, and because Lana comments that Joe thinks he is a star, Joe would be still in the stage of the ideal ego. He has not yet matured into the stage of secondary narcissism into the ego ideal; this will happen when Joe sees himself like a star rather than as a star already.

The Interruption of the Maturation Process

This next section, having outlined the complexities of the mirror stage in the formation of identities (and the split egos) in the previous section, will address how consumer culture interrupts the maturation process and how, through the deviant leisure typology, these formations of identity are perpetuated for consumer culture and can be deemed as harmful. Consumer culture, according to Hall *et al.*,

‘is a supplier of a procession of Imago models that promise to recognise and reflect the self in a primary narcissistic relation, yet, ultimately, are unable to keep that promise’ (2008: 179).

In simpler terms, consumerism offers children an array of Others that people can reflect on, which the Imago (ideal ego) encapsulates into their identity. In relation to football, this is a parade of images of players who are perceived as whole and complete by the subject because they have everything that anyone could want from life. We can see this in Katie’s comment from chapter 5:

‘ultimately they all want to be professionals one day’.

The professional players reflect an image of a unified successful whole which is reflective of the dominant Symbolic Order⁵⁹, and we know that our collective (if there is such a thing anymore) sense of right and wrong and whole and incomplete is tied to that of the market rather than any notion of a moral good (Raymen, 2019). However, this form of identity is built on in the Imaginary realm and therefore applies to the ideal ego. This is because the subject has not passed through maturation, whereby the childish wants and concerns would be replaced by more mature concerns, where the child would mature away from the infantile narcissistic need of the Imago. This is what

⁵⁹ It should be noted here that although the symbolic order is fragmented consumerism offers the closest efficiency level to a whole fully functioning order.

would happen in previous eras of society, when identity was more fixed. Therefore, we must assume that consumerism affects the maturation process (Hall et al., 2008; Hall, 2012b; Smith and Raymen, 2016) as will be exemplified below.

In a state of fluidity the child is solicited by consumerism and then trapped into the perpetual loop of trying to fulfil the primary narcissistic need for unification, because each of consumerism's offerings (whether it be an object or a role model) comes up short, and will always come up short. We know this because the lack at the core of our being can never be reunited; we can never return to the Real or ever be whole. Moreover, consumerism needs to keep itself functioning; it needs to preserve this state of dissatisfaction, so that it can run as business as usual (McGowan, 2016). Football as a game within this fragmented Symbolic Order is the ultimate cause of dissatisfaction because it is never complete (we return to this point in the next section). This shift is explored in Bauman's (2001) notion of a wanting not waiting society; it is what Hall (2010b) explores in depth in *the Solicitation of the Trap*. This enables narcissism to be freely released into the order of society:

‘this relationship between consumer goods and the construction of the self in late modernity is of great importance. So encompassing is the ethos of consumerism within (late) capitalist society that, for many individuals, self-identity and self-realisation can now be accompanied through material means as self-laundering? Thus, identity, as Christopher Lasch (1991) brilliantly pointed out, takes on the form of a “*consumption orientated narcissism*” (Hayward and Yar, 2006 cited in Hall et al., 2008: 174 [emphasis added]).

This consumption orientated narcissism has affected the maturation process and we can now explore how this is affecting the many children who are currently participating in football activities. It is through Robert (a life-longer player, aged 21) we can see how he, as a transcendental materialist subject, transcended the imago into the accepted normative, albeit fragmented, symbolic order of consumerism:

'yeah, you do, I think everyone does like the idea of being the next big star but its soon you realise that it's very hard. It's a very hard life to the top because everyone's just some people are just ridiculously talented, and you just think how on earth did they get that good. But, you know, you soon realise as you get older people started just separate and become just see that they are so much more talented than the others and then its kind of lose the dream of being the best player because you know how good you have to be to get to that level'.

What Robert is showing here is that his lack of natural talent compared to others forced him to face the Real in that he would never be good enough. He was not Pickford, Bale, or Beckham, he does not reside in the Imaginary, and as he accepted this, he transcended into a healthier ego ideal, which governed his behaviour and ambitions alongside it.

However, if we take the example of Jonah, who is a couple of years junior to Robert we can already start to trace how this shift between the ideal ego and ego ideal is being experienced within society. Jonah is currently playing for a semi-professional team and is still experiencing the solicitation of this trap where he believes he is (and forms his identity around being) the Other: a professional player. He suffers some dissatisfaction in only playing for a semi-professional team but it is enough to keep the imago churning, to stop the maturation process of him accepting that he will eventually have to settle for this level of professionalism or transcend into the ego ideal and perhaps find some other vocation in life. As Hall notes:

'the enthusiastic consuming subject, with its primal sense of lack constantly provoked, inflated and denied alleviation and maturation by the remorselessly efficient and inventive advertising industry, is not simply an effect of post-war economic dynamics but the essential force at the epicentre of the system' (2012b: 372).

It is the constant dissatisfaction that Jonah experiences that keeps the ideal ego (and consumer capitalism) in business. Jonah has a family history in the football industry, so he has experienced, more than any of my other participants, being embedded in

the culture which is selling this dream to him. However, for Jonah it is more than a dream that has been sold to him via advertising: it is a birth right. Now, linking the semi-professional player to the ideal ego is fairly straightforward and somewhat expected, so we will delve deeper with a former player who no longer participates in playing football and demonstrate how he too is locked in this perpetual cycle of consumerism through football and advertising. James is Jonah's life-long friend and played in the same school and local teams as Jonah. James, however, did not have the fundamental belief that he was made for footballing stardom. He explained how he ceased playing the physical game of football as he entered into his teenage years and how other things became his priority. He did, however, keep consuming the game as a fan and through his games console:

'From the age of about 12 till now it's all been about the Xbox is in play stations and stuff a lot of people who could have went far that I know just lost interest and stuff because they would rather just stay at home on their Xbox'.

James is commenting on the ever-growing popularity of games such as FIFA⁶⁰, which is boasting 'unrivalled authenticity' (EA, 2019). Consuming football through games such as FIFA takes out all of the positive rhetoric associated with physical activity that football boasts, leaving a hyperreal modified version that appeals to the masses. It is a media construct to enable participation and consumption anywhere, anytime, by anyone. But what does this mean to identity formation? James exemplifies here how the mediated forms of the game have grown in popularity; we can see how EA Sports has capitalised on the undertaking of the spirit of neoliberalism by conquering the electronic mediated version of football. This also indicates that James (along with other

⁶⁰ FIFA is a hit game manufactured by EA Sports. At the time of writing FIFA 20 has just hit the market. Within a month of release, it has reached 20 million players (ea.com, 2019)

consumers of the game) are stuck in the trap of the imago, except the imago is no longer restricted to the Imaginary realm; it has been constructed or coded into the symbolic.

FIFA 17 through to 19 insisted its players were the Other that you misidentify with in the mirror stage, therefore we can see one returns to the mirror stage right up to adulthood (Hall *et al*, 2008). In FIFA 17 you become Alex Hunter, you grow your career, make decisions, manage your social network, train, and essentially live out your own personalised dream. In FIFA 18 this expands to Alex Hunter and Danny Williams and you complete your life-long dream however you see fit. In keeping up with the growing call for equality, and not wanting to alienate the female football fans, in FIFA 19 you could be Kim Hunter also fulfilling your dream. FIFA 20 has taken this a step further and removed the Alex Hunter and friends career mode and fully assumed the role of the imago. You can create an avatar of yourself, making you the world class player:

‘more than 30 official leagues, 700+ teams, and 17,000+ authentic players. Play in any of the 90 licensed stadiums across the globe, and experience exclusive access to the world’s biggest competitions’ (EA, 2020).

Your skill set on a physical pitch no longer restricts you from being a world-class player - you can achieve this from the comfort of your own home and become a superstar of your own *Imaginary* world, which is heavily grounded in the symbolic world to give it the authenticity that FIFA seem to be so proud of.

But even FIFA is predicated on dissatisfaction otherwise what reason would they have to go beyond FIFA 20. This dissatisfaction eventually led James to return to competing in more physical football and he currently plays 5-aside with Jonah on a weekly basis. This is indicative of McGowan’s (2016) notion of the system being predicated upon

dissatisfaction. If we do experience a sense of fulfilment from objects or attaining a goal it is soon forgotten and we have moved on to our next desire, our next object, our next football match. As many of my participants said and Lucy epitomises: '*there is always next week*'. From this we can fully realise the plasticity effect from a heavily mediated culture around football, and through the use of role models predominantly, we can see how these may under a deviant leisure perspective be constituted as harmful. They are used as a tool of the Other, there for us to openly misrecognise ourselves in and therefore become part of the solicitation of the trap. So, when we do not transcend into maturation or when this is as fragmented as the symbolic order it can become problematic. These problems are being experienced in society on different levels. It affects the parents of the children in my study, but also, it affects the children in my study twofold, once from their parents as primary others, and through popular media culture and role models as secondary others.

When children fail to obtain a healthier ego ideal the trauma of the Real awaits, closer to that of the Imaginary than that of the Symbolic. This is where the children finally realise that they are not a superstar professional player and they need to find an alternative other to give themselves and their lives meaning. This can be seen in the depiction of the players in Calvin's (2017) hit *No Hunger in Paradise*, which traces the murky world of the Premier League for children who have been spotted, and relays the tales of the cut-throat intensity that happens behind the scenes. Calvin also looks at what happens to those who do not make it. We can draw similarities here with Lewis, the son of Connor. From an early age Lewis attended a regional variation of what is more commonly known as Soccer Tots. From the age of four he was a star striker, scoring winning goals against teams much older than him. Wanting to nurture and grow this talent, his family enrolled him in various other football related programmes.

He has been playing football for over half of his life now and is involved in football related activity six days a week; Connor estimates that they spend at least £100 a month on this. Lewis has attended several different clubs in the region due to various reasons and disagreements with the style of coaching and management. He has experienced elite training with an academy, he attended training with ex-Premier League players, and is currently in a development league because of the aforementioned reasons. Lewis is important here because the expectation that he would be a natural and progress to great heights in football never materialised. He bounced from team to team trying to find somewhere that would recognise his talents and attending specialist sessions for training his chocolate leg⁶¹. He became despondent with the game and Connor explained how he had taken a summer off so he could decide if he wanted to continue to pursue playing. However, instead of confronting the Real, the void, and accepting that he may just not be a Premier League player, or even a professional player, he now plays in a different position, hoping continuously that he will be discovered.

Lewis' experience may not seem that harmful but when he, like Jonah, faces the trauma of not being a Premier League star or playing to the heights they had imagined, this will cause a traumatic response. We saw earlier in the chapter how mental ill health figures are rising and how the fragmented symbolic order is leading to increased anxiety. The forceful removal of the imago can also be mentally harmful to a person - they may question their whole identity, become depressed, or they may continue through life with a belief that they are someone, that the world owes them this fundamental right. What we do know is that, as Raymen and Smith (2017) point out, identity is much more fundamental than a temporal fluid identity. Lewis, like my other

⁶¹ This is a slang term which denotes one's weaker foot in football

participants and many others who participate in non-competitive football, are experiencing what Žižek (2006) terms systemic violence: violence which is embedded into culture to ensure the smooth functioning of our neoliberal economy. It should come as no surprise that it is also an embedded harm under the deviant leisure paradigm - harmful leisure practices which are embedded within legitimate and familiar consumer markets (Smith & Raymen, 2016; Raymen, 2017; Raymen and Smith, 2019a; Raymen and Smith, 2019b). Football is an embedded practice within society, and we will now explore what this means for the individual.

The Self as a Neoliberal Project

We can see that collectively we have entered a Faustian bargain; we have traded our collective sense of good and unity – found in the Big Other - for individualised hope and desire. This desire can never be realised because we will always have that lack at the centre (Hall, 2012; Raymen, 2018; Lloyd, 2019) and we do not know how to fill it. So, we try to fill this void through objects, knowing that they will never bring us what we are missing. McGowan (2016) argues that it is the promise of future satisfaction that we desire, which keeps the wheels on desire and therefore capitalism moving, knowing we can never achieve it. Because when we do, it is a fleeting moment and we move onto the next desire. We use consumer items as a symbolic construction of who we are, promising ourselves one day, living in the hope of a better future. Yet when we receive the items or the symbolic recognition, we achieve nothing with them because ultimately, they cannot reunite or fill in the lack at our centre.

This is where football is relevant to the transcendental materialist subject. Football provides a system where the subject is ushered into the culture of a league-based system, which is predicated upon future satisfaction, especially grassroots football

which traps the children into the sense of ‘one day’. When the players achieve that satisfaction, it is a fleeting moment before they are training and desiring the next win, or retaining a title, or being promoted. As James pointed out:

‘we played all of our cup games and we got to the final and we went down but we lost on the day it was just heart breaking. It wasn’t very nice to it at all [...] yeah because we lost it’s just you win all them games you put all that hard working and lose the last game fall at the last hurdle so [...] but then you always remember there is next year and now you have a point to prove’

The possibilities in football for manufacturing desire are endless, and as McGowan notes the promise of next time is as alluring as achieving the promise. Football is part of a wider systemic culture which is feeding back into the individual, ingraining its ideology through action thus making it a more embedded action within culture. The more children are cultivated into this way of life the more normalised it becomes. So, the neoliberal symbolic order is perpetuated by football and normalised through the lack of completion, because football is a project which will never be completed or realised; there is always another game to be played. But because the Symbolic Order is not working to capacity, the attachment is again fragmented and individualised which is resulting in anxiety (Raymen, 2018). It is in this sense of development that we can, using a deviant leisure perspective, begin to contextualise the harms surrounding children’s participation in grassroots football.

Deviant leisure, as outlined in chapter 3, is a theoretical perspective drawn from ultra-realism and cultural criminology. It explores interconnected harms which ‘emerge at the intersection of consumer capitalism and some of the most mundane and culturally celebrated forms of commodified leisure’ (Raymen and Smith, 2019: 116). Football sits within this celebrated form of commodified leisure, as highlighted at the start of this thesis. Using football as a project which can never be realised is a psychological

harm under deviant leisure. This is because in viewing football in a way that encourages and perpetuates a neoliberal culture of the promise of future satisfaction, children are being cultivated into becoming projects themselves, constantly preparing for their future or indeed the next game.

As I have touched on elsewhere (see Gallacher, 2020) competition in a neoliberal state of late modernity entrenches the subject to take on the self as a project, as a form of competition which engages in symbolic ways of consumer sovereignty (McGuigan, 2014). Grassroots football, and more specifically the intention of playing as if it is nil-nil, (as seen in chapter 6) elucidates this, as Scharff (2016) argues neoliberal administrations develop practices and behaviours which enact the vision will take on a competitive entrepreneurial form. Grassroots football encourages an individualised form of competition because the self is seen as an on-going project of improvement. Firstly, one must play to the point where no matter the score you must always be better (*'it's still nil-nil'*) and secondly, if your team loses you internalise what you could have done better or what you did well, to improve on for the next game. It is a project of individualised competition and improvement. In essence, the children adapt, thrive, and improve, or perish and quit (Lloyd, 2018). This is something that Jonah and James spoke about when I asked them about the rotational substitution they used to endure:

Jonah: *yeah we did [have rotational subs] but erm some would get put on the bench. You would have poor players on the bench that wouldn't really play that often when their parents came to watch and they stand for 45 minutes just to watch their son ply for 5 minutes of football that's when they leave because its not fun for them.*

James: *and once you're in a situation where you actually have to pay subs to play and you get the average of 1 game a season you'd be paying what £20 a month for a whole season and only playing 1 game equivalent that's when the parents aren't happy either.*

Jonah: *so, then they leave and its just what happens isn't it'.*

It is clear from Jonah and James that the competitive nature of the game ended in adapting and improving or perishing and ultimately leaving, so therefore the pseudo-pacified subject⁶² is a reformed type of hardened subject (Hall, 2020) which is ruthless in their competitiveness and their self-improvement. This is what we found (in chapter 6) that the parents are really wanting from their child, although they may be disavowing that fact. We can then further apply the deviant leisure harm typology and see clearly how socially corrosive the competitive nature of a non-competitive league is. Not only are the children encouraged to pulverise their competition by playing as if it is always nil-nil, but they are then told to improve themselves in a way that further enables the competitive nature of neoliberalism by embedding the values of the self as an on-going project,⁶³ which then further feeds into the competitive cycle. And parents are paying for the pleasure of their child to gain these survival skills, after all, the lite version of 'not me' are found at the highest tiers of the business world (Hall, 2012b).

It is here where we can return to Tanya and Tina. Tanya and Tina are pertinent here because Tanya stated that when Tina's team loses, she [Tina] tries to figure out what went wrong, rather than accepting that the other team may have just been more skilful. Tanya offers a plethora of justifications of why Tina's team may have lost. This ranged from Tanya believing that some of the children are ringers and older than they claim to be, and that ***** girls eat more to ensure they are more intimidating. But what is striking and most relevant here is that Tina analyses the reason why they lost. Tanya is not alone in stating that her child wants to work out what has gone wrong and how the loss could have been prevented. When actually, as is shown throughout this thesis

⁶² Which is a transcendental materialist subject at heart or in the brain as the case may be

⁶³ See Gallacher, G (2020) 'Sporting Success? A critical criminology of children's grassroots football' for an in depth reading on this.

(and explored in chapter 6) the game is predicated on winning, therefore someone has to lose. Rick, who is a life-long player, speaks of the disappointment you feel when you lose, which also explains Tina's feelings, *'you just feel like an idiot cos it's your fault you feel disappointed, disappointed in yourself'*. Anya also commented on how her daughter looks for things to improve for herself. Jonah echoes the notion that loss is individualised, and that you have to assess if you were good enough and what you can improve on *'but you were asked to judge your own individual performance in them games rather than team performances'*. This is something which Louise, who is parent to Lillie who is eight years old and has been playing for a year and a half, speaks of:

'then she'll come off and she'll be disappointed in herself sometimes, she's like "I could have done better", then I say well never mind, there is always next week. Then after half an hour – yeah she's back to normal'.

Loss here is an unencumbered factor for self-motivation, and it could be argued that there is no harm in this, and it is a perfectly reasonable reaction. But it is this embedded normalisation which is problematic and potentially harmful. By attaching and perpetuating the fragmented symbolic order of neoliberalism, football is providing an ideal environment and culture for children to be cultivated into a role of the neoliberal self (see Gallacher, 2020). The neoliberal self takes on one's self as a project, shown in Scharff's (2016) work on the psychic power of neoliberalism. From 60 in-depth interviews with self-employed musicians, she explored how neoliberalism is experienced on a meso level. Although she interviewed adults who were essentially their own tools of income, we can use a deviant leisure perspective of harm to see how this notion of yourself being a project of improvement is encapsulated by children's grassroots neoliberal football. Her participants, just as mine, saw setbacks and losses as an opportunity for a learning experience, a chance to work on something

to improve your chances next time, because in the words of Louise, *'there is always next week'*. We should appreciate that for Scharff's participants the setbacks and losses of income would have tangible consequences on their ability to provide for themselves, whereas with the children of my study the consequences seem on the surface much more positive. They are often framed in the way of resilience building or *'learning how to lose (this has been difficult for them) and how to win graciously'* (Katie, coach and parent). However, Connor epitomises this sense of resilience and training for life:

'erm, yeah. he he [sigh] its hard to erm say really. there is all those experiences really, you know when you get the knock backs like for instance I don't know say he expected to get in a school team and he didn't this one year and those types of setbacks strengthen your resolve you know I have to try harder you know when it comes to later in life if you get a job a job interview if you have had a similar experience you know the next one will work out or whatever or you do things differently so you get the right resolve so that's kinda of where that comes in learning to dig deep when things are going against you and its exactly the same on the sports field really'.

Connor is using the loss as a way for Lewis to learn, which is an example of the cold realism that we saw throughout chapters 5 and 6, and which is very prominent in grassroots football - the idea of the sports field preparing your children for life, and that you are just helping that process along. However, the reality of children's non-competitive grassroots football is predicated on promises and ideals that will likely never come to fruition, and this is harmful for the development of the child. As Lasch notes *'this is a deeply lonely world where you are surrounded by ideals and self-images'* (cited in Cederström and Spicer, 2015: 14). Scharff (2016) found that when narratives were absent regarding structures, the fragmented symbolic order, anxiety, and doubt prevail. Gill (2007 in Scharff) further argues that when competition is internalised (e.g. when my participations were looking at themselves for reasons where they could improve or why they lost) this internalisation denotes a deeper level

of exploitation (in Scharff, 2016) and this is because it makes the subject totally responsible for their lives. It was their chance and they should have taken it. This means that they are growing up with a heightened sense of self-responsibilisation and as Cederström and Spicer (2015) note, with responsibility comes an intense feeling of anxiety, or as Bauman (2009) states, it produces ‘perpetual self-scrutiny, self-reproach, self-depreciation and continuous anxiety’ (Cederström and Spicer, 2015: 39).

The children in my study where exposed to this continuous anxiety and deeper level exploitation because they were encouraged to reach inwards and find their motivation, to be responsible for their self-improvement, to take their chances and play as it was always nil-nil. And when they didn’t, they needed to compete for a place on the team and beat their friends whilst working on themselves at home, as Grant put out in the Bears’ social media group:

***‘Grant:** for those who are not playing this week we will send you some areas for improvements to be made for you to work on before training. We expect these to be completed, we need to start and take our training serious’.*

The idea and reality from what I discovered is that these experiences which encourage insecurity are what Southwood (2011) called the nature of things, because they are natural. I would further this by claiming they are encouraged and cultivated into children’s lifestyles. Furthermore Žižek (2000) claims that the relationship that the children have developed with themselves, where they are based on ideals, will turn violent and result in a ferocious superego. This is not like the previous notions of the superego where we were struck by guilt for doing something; this superego is telling us to be better, do better, and to attain this ideal goal. However, it cannot be attained, and the superego is disappointed, constantly telling us we could have and should have

done better. Moreover, it can never be achieved because it is commanding us to do so (Cederström and Spicer, 2015: 15). This disappointment does not only come from yourself but also your peers, and it is therefore also embedded within the practice of children's grassroots football, as Rick explains:

'on a gameday it was a little bit more competitive, it was taken a little more seriously, whereas I know I was only a kid but you could do a training session and then you could shoot from 40 yards and go miles wide and no one would say anything or tell you off where as if you did that in a game there would be more discipline to it.'

GG: *how where you disciplined in a game?*

Rick: *erm, so to be honest [pause] even, everyone so even like your team mates would have a moan at you if they were in a better position, erm, or your manager would just wouldn't have a go at you but would tell you, erm, how to improve your game... [pause]'*

We can see from Rick and Grant that this idea of the self as a project to work on is encouraged by others, compounded by others, and is a natural part of what I call a neo-liberal game.

Conclusion

This chapter sought to address the effect of children's non-competitive grassroots football on a child's identity formation. Whilst this is an in-depth summary and analysis, it is also only the tip of the iceberg and we should be prepared to use this as a way of dipping our toes into the proverbial water. What this chapter has demonstrated is that an activity which is deemed as pro-social, pro-education and pro-health is contributing to the all-time high of mental ill health in children. This is an aspect which could be explored further and deeper. I found through my participants and that football can be good and positive, especially the physical activity element, but it also has a propensity to be harmful and to cultivate hardened subjectivities which are truly neoliberal. Deviant leisure provided us with an apt framework to fully explore these harms and

understand how they become embedded within everyday practice. By looking at the child as a transcendental materialist subject we explored how our sense of self and ego is formed. We fully explored the Lacanian mirror stage and how this affected my participants - we could through Jonah, James, and Robert see the effects of a spilt ego and being trapped either in the Imago or transcending into the Symbolic.

We then explored how the children functioned in this space whilst building their identity. We saw how the children are coached to win and care about the metrics, more so than the appearance of a fair game, by returning to the notion of 'it's still nil-nil'. Tanya's husband demonstrated how the Respect guidelines are contravened on a regular basis and how this was seen as positive reinforcement by all of the family. Tina felt it bonded them closer. We also examined the idea of Anna and her dream about the strawberry cake as a substitute for the positive reinforcement she felt from bringing her parents' joy. This spoke to all of my participants and even my own daughter, as demonstrated in chapter 3. The result is that children continue to partake in activities which they perceive bring their parents joy, and when they don't want to continue (like Leo from chapter 5 and Connor's son Lewis) the justification of 'this is life' or of building resilience is invoked. This chapter finished with the exploration of the self as a neoliberal project of betterment and constant dissatisfaction. The self as a project has many harmful implications for a child's sense of identity because they will believe that dissatisfaction is a commonality in life, and that they can use their aggressive version of the *l'entrepreneur* to get where you want or need to be. It's ok if the tackle is harsh because it's the accepted rules of the game; just like it's ok to embellish your injury by pulling a Neymar. The neoliberal subject or the pseudo-pacified subject has, as Hall argues,

'become accustomed to this continuing trauma as if it is the natural way of things. [...] As George Simmel argued, the individual caught in this maelstrom of unpredictable events without guidance is constantly exposed to the temptations of impulse (Simmel, 1978). If impulse can be sublimated, dragged away from the dangerous territory of acting out autonomously in everyday reality and cathected to an order of symbols, it is a powerful psychological force in the expansion of demand in the capitalist market place' (2020: 35).

This is what football has achieved. It is the set of symbols which is expanding the market for such activities and mediated versions of the game, such as FIFA 20.

Conclusion: The Final Whistle

‘They enjoyed the game, but they also wanted to win the league. That’s the most important thing. You get a couple of wins under your belt. Then that

gives you the motivation to go further and you just want to it' (Danny, Coach for over 15 years)

Introduction

This thesis set out with one simple aim: to explore the potential harms that are culturally and ideologically embedded within children's non-competitive grassroots football. Throughout this thesis we have explored these potential harms and examined how they have come into being. In achieving this goal this thesis has contributed to a gap within criminological and football studies literature; no-where is children's non-competitive grassroots football studies from a harm-based approach. As we discovered in the literature review chapters 1 and 2, sport in general and more specifically football is rarely spoke of in anything other than victorious tones (Rojek, 1999; Smith and Raymen, 2016; Raymen and Smith, 2018,2019).

The First Half: Current Literature

Our first task in chapter 1 was to discern where the benefits which are celebrated within sport come from. These benefits included, academic benefits, social benefits, health benefits and wellbeing benefits, however, these benefits as we found are tied to the physical activity within the sport rather than the environment of sport itself. Bendiksen, *et al* (2014) found that benefits and improvement to children's health only occurred when there was high intensity physical activity. This finding was in contradiction to most studies which boasted the benefits of sport, however, rarely is how these benefits are achieved highlighted, nor are the methods of eliciting these benefits, therefore we cannot extrapolate the core movements which truly hold these benefits so we could produce a more effective way of disseminating them. This results in what we discovered in chapter 1, all sport is good for you because of these benefits.

Football is Medicine (FIM) illustrated the extent of these beliefs in society that football is an unwavering, natural, good. Whereas, it is indeed the physical activity element that is good and the environment, as I have demonstrated with my empirical chapters, has a propensity to be harmful to children. It is this environment which I have shown under a deviant leisure framework to be harmful to children and their childhoods.

Once we discerned the difference between sport and physical activity, we then, explored where football for children was also a leisure activity. Children consume football in many ways aside from playing the game in a physical sense. We have seen in the results how James consumed it through a gaming device, Tina watched it with her father, Joe consumed it through the products tied to it. In society there are again many ways in which football is generally consumed, this includes things like match experiences, birthday packages, cakes, key rings, baby kits, Covid -19 masks, mugs the list is endless. If there is a product available there will be some form of football variation of it. Children then consume football as a leisure pastime to bring them joy, bring them closer to family members or friends and to give them a sense of belonging. When you consume football in this way, you have a team, a place, people who get you, we can see this when any World tournament is on, people in their respective countries come together to support their team and each other. The children in my study were not only participating in or had participated in grassroots football, but they were also experiencing it as a leisure activity with their families, so we needed to take the

parents rationales into consideration to enable a fullest picture of possible for this phenomena.

This left us with children's grassroots football at a juxtaposition within leisure, sport, wellness and consumerism. Through this juxtaposition we discovered how football is used as vehicle by society through various government schemes to deliver these

celebrated benefits, we discovered how education is being taken over by these private coaches and firms leading to a commodification of education, one which I predict will be furthered in the future with Premier Leagues Primary Stars making and delivering their own branded resource sheets for schools. This privatisation of PE and children's competitive football means that at its heart it is and always will be a business, a business which is based in evaluative metrics. This is where our journey with the Bears comes to an end, the team after being 'promoted' lost players after players including to my delight Leo, and eventually folded because although there were non-competitive team in a non-performance related league when Grant wasn't hitting them metrics they folded. The business of children's education as shown can be harmful because of the concentration on the neoliberal metric driven environment, if a business does not make money its not viable, so then what happens to the children who have become invested in that activity or team? They are left with the guilt of not being good enough to keep a team afloat, which again as Gill (2005) noted denotes a deeper level of harm.

Chapter 2 brought us the current climate of sports criminology or lack of it one should say. We explored the contribution of sports literature to the cannon of criminological work. Groombridge (2017) provided us with an overview of sports criminology, however, it was a series of chapters which addressed, firstly the micromanagement of sport and secondly, the overt forms of criminology, such as cheating. There was a lack of critical ideas and thought throughout. Therefore, Groombridge's contribution should be seen as a very small step in the right direction. I addressed Brisman's (2018) call for more critical thought around sport throughout this thesis. We then explored the use of sport within criminology as a tool of diversion and desistance by examining the work of Meek and Jump we found that football and boxing have a propensity to offer a diversion from a life of crime, but this does not work for all, therefore this begs the

question which part of it works? Is it the physical activity element? Or is that used as a vehicle to re-direct their desire into socio-symbolic goals and therefore rendering them into the Symbolic Order.

Injury Time

What we found in the two literature review chapters and what is most important to this thesis and its wider contribution to knowledge is that sport in general is understood using Elias (1939) and later Elias and Dunning (1992) frame work for the Civilizing process and sportization. This means that no matter the contribution to criminology sport is framed from its axiomatic groundwork as something which is inherently good, and one which works to the benefit of society. This is where my main contribution to original knowledge is placed, as demonstrated throughout, this claim by Elias and Elias and Dunning is somewhat inadequate to fully situate the subject within a consumerist neoliberal society. This is addressed by looking at an alternative framework in which we can place sports, one which is more equipped to deal with the ontological realities of consumer culture.

Half Time – Planning the New Formation

To place sports criminology in a more suitable position for us to be able to analyse its contributions to knowledge and understanding we looked at ultra-realism and deviant leisure as a more robust and relevant framework for today's subject. By adopting Lacan over Freud, we examined how the subject is formed within Lacan's tripartite of reality and how this has re-orientated our collective superego. This reorientation then diverts our raw subliminal energy into socio-symbolic forms of competition, it is this then that informs our sense of self and our moral relativism. However, as we seen this sense of self can never be complete and we are adrift in a sea of socio-symbolic forms of

symbols and meanings, leaving the subject searching for meaning in any of these social orders. This is where I found that football fits in, it provides a pseudo symbolic order for those adrift. It is a perfect pseudo symbolic order because it allows the subject to redirect their libidinal desires into a form of socio-symbolic competition that will never be realised, and this continues to turn the wheels of consumer capitalism. This becomes more problematic and increases the propensity for harm when the consumer capitalism hijacks the maturation process and thus the move from a primary to a secondary stage of narcissism and this is what my project addresses.

The New Formation

We then examined my projects logistics and the approach I used to find my data and analyse my data. I outlined that I was adopting an ethnographic sensibility which meant that I was adopting broadly ethnographic methods, such as participant observation and in-depth semi-structured interviews, but I was not fully embedding myself within the culture because it would have been impossible for me to be able to do so. I adopted a critical interpretivist approach my data set and we explored the idea that there are multiple truths within children's football rather than an overriding one and these truths intersected with other forms of identity along the way. We then explored how I recruited and carried out the observations and interviews. I spent 18 months with The Bears

a weekend and in their social media group and my interviews spanned the country from Scotland, to Wales and from the north to the south, it is for these reasons I would not claim any generalisability to my study but I would also say that if the study was increased in size and became more representative the findings would be similar and then it could be generalised. My aim however was to make this thesis a step in the right direction for fully understanding the intersection between consumerism, neoliberalism and children's non-competitive sports. Which I believe I have achieved.

The Second Half

This is where my thesis makes an impact on my original research questions and aims. Through my empirical chapters I show that children's non competitive football has the propensity to be harmful under a deviant leisure typology, which I also found to be the best way of exploring and addressing these harms. This is because it allowed me to examine under the surface of both the subject and society to see what is happening on a micro and macro level. By examining this we also looked at the effect of the political economy on shaping and perpetuating these harms, especially in relation to the creeping commodification of education. These harms were highlighted throughout the empirical chapters by looking at the environment in which children's non-competitive grassroots football is residing in. From chapter 5 we saw that neoliberal traits were celebrated throughout the game and that the children were cultivated into these traits throughout football. For example, take your chance looked at how children are taught how to take their chance before someone else takes it from them, this instils hyper competitive, 'dog eat dog' ruthless individualism ethos that ultra-realists warn increases anxiety and corrodes a sense of community. Not only are the children encouraged to take their chance, this is then celebrated as a trait of confidence for which the children are rewarded. Moreover, they were encouraged to play the game as if it was always nil-nil. This takes the non-competitive game into again hyper competitive realms, not only are the children asked to take their chance, but they are then encouraged to continuing taking that chance until the end of the match. These are very competitive skills and seen as virtues in neoliberal terms (Beer, 2016). This chapter sets the environment which children's non-competitive grassroots football is set.

Chapter 6 then moves onto the way in which this environment has impacted the ways in which parents respond to the game and how they use sport in general and children's football more specifically to this project as parenting through sport. We discovered that parents may have different roles within the parental-sport relationship, however, both are valuable. The fathers tended to be more passionately involved in their children's footballing pastime, which is hardly surprising because football, although there are changes coming through, is still seen as male dominated arena. This passion was often uncontrollable at the side lines and formed part of instructions and directions to the players. These directions were not always negative, but they were still in contravention of the Respect guidelines set out by the FA because they could confuse and inundate the children. We then examined these Respect guidelines to see if they achieved anything other than an empty gesture which must be fulfilled, rendering the Respect guidelines as an Little Other trying to micro manage aspects of the game in the absence of the Big Other or any symbolic efficacy. What the Respect guidelines do show us is that it is the parent's behaviour which needs examining because it is the adults that most of the recommendations are aimed at. Without the undesirable behaviour, with a collective sense of right and wrong, with a Big Other that is alive, there would be no need for these guidelines.

Moving on to chapter 7 we brought the ideas from chapter 5 and 6 together and examined the impact of children's non-competitive football on the transcendental material subject. We explored the impact this had on children and their mental health and how the environment could create more anxiety within children, as we seen in Leo. We found that consumerism through football as a vehicle is hijacking the maturation process and children are being held in the solicitation of the trap which impacts their ability to mature into adulthood in a significant way. If a child is confronted

with the terror of the Real or the truth that they are not as they see themselves this could have devastatingly traumatic effects for the child. So we are in a position where the child is encouraged to dream big and take their chance to find that they, cannot make it, they are not in fact special and do have to settle, like we seen in Robert. This chapter also addressed the harms in which children are exposed to through the perpetual cycle of neoliberalism on their sense of self by looking at the child as a neoliberal project of the self and how this then perpetuates further and deeper levels of harms.

Full Time

Overall, this project has addressed the aims set out, it has outlined how children's non-competitive football is harmful to children using a deviant leisure perspective. These are not the things like violence pitch side, or the coach calling the referee a twat. These harms are embedded within our culture as shown throughout, they are seen as celebrations of neoliberalism, rather than the propensity of harm. The harms are interpersonal because of the encouragement of harsh tackles, taking their chances and doing what it takes to get the job done. They are also socially corrosive harms because they are encouraging competition instead of cohesiveness, when coaches are offering £ 5 a goal, and performances are individualised by the child then there are through football being encouraged to compete against each other, against the other team and against themselves.

Post-Match Commentary – Future Recommendations

This thesis has shown throughout that harm is present within children's non-elite sports and leisure time activities and this warrants further study into this area, my aim was to provide a stepping stone into this under researched area so that we can start

to assess and understand and then extrapolate where the benefits lie within sporting activities and how we can start to process these in way that is not deemed as harmful. The research was not without limitations, I did not have a representative sample from across the country and my sample size is limited. In order to make these results more generalisable I would recommend that the sample size was increased, the number of researchers are increased and that there were more referees within the study. I also think there is potential to look at the differences in age and gender in relation to my initial findings. The study could also be increased by looking at the children's physical and chemical reactions to matches, for example we could measure their stress levels when someone shouts, or a tackle is taken etc. Nonetheless the findings which are presented are reliable and valid and provide a platform for us to move forward as a discipline to incorporate this harm-based approach into a critical criminology of sport, starting with the neoliberal game.

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List of Conference Posters

Gallacher, G. (2019) *Sporting Success? An examination of children's football*. University of Plymouth Faculty of Business Doctoral Conference. 10th June. University of Plymouth: Plymouth.

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Gallacher, G. (2018) *Deviant Leisure: A Study into Children's Leisure*. iSPER: Social, Policy and Enterprise Research in an Era of Globalisation and Discontent. 23rd January. University of Plymouth: Plymouth.

List of Publications

Gallacher, G. (2020). 'Sporting Success? A critical analysis of the neoliberalisation of children's grassroots football', *Antigone*.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Referee Questions

Themes

Motivation

1. How long have you done this job?
 - a. How did you get started?
 - b. Was it a life-long ambition?
2. Why do you do this job?
3. What do you get out of it?
 - a. Is it for career progression? – if so how long are you on child's games
 - b. Do you have a child who plays? - if so link to parent's questions
4. What is the best part of your job?
 - a. Why is this the best part – will allow their values to show through

Communication

5. How is communication
 - a. With parents
 - b. With coaches
6. Which is more difficult? Why?
7. Are there any improvements you can suggest?
 - a. Why?
8. How do you feel about parents being banned from games or prohibited from talking?

Football – and them

9. Is football your passion?
10. Did you play when you were younger? – if so link to retrospective questions
 - a. Why did you stop?
11. Do you play any other sport?
 - a. Which do you find the best? Why?

Misc.

Want to leave these till last so that they have been processing their experiences

12. What is the worst thing you have seen as a ref?
 - a. Why was it the worst?
 - b. What does it mean?
13. Best thing you have ever seen?
 - a. Why?

Wellness

14. Do you believe in the concept healthy body healthy mind?
 - a. What does it mean to you?
 - b. How does it influence your life?

Appendix 2

Questions parents

Themes

Motivations

1. Why do your children go to football?
 - a. Does the child want to? Why? How do you know?
 - b. Do you want them to? Why?
 - c. Do both want? Alignment of parents and child's wishes? If yes how does this materialise? If not, how does this materialise? Tensions?
2. Is it a competitive league?
 - a. Why did you make this choice?
 - b. How does it work?
3. Do you think they get anything out of it?
 - a. If so what? Expand into key areas of benefits
 - b. If not, why do they go?
 - c. Skill sets? Socialisation? Why examples
 - d. Does this facilitate this?
4. What influenced your decision to send your child to football? (over another sport- do they do other sports?
 - a. Fitness? Wellness? Socialisation- skills for life?
 - b. But why football – again probe their past/ get talking about football team fan etc was it the child or the parent?
 - c. Was it expected – gender roles? Friends? advertising? Fame?
 - d. Just a hobby? Why this one?
5. Why is football the best for facilitating above named things?
 - a. Probe their past
 - b. Compare to other sports
6. What do you get out of it?
 - a. Feeling as a parent?
 - b. Accomplishments?
 - c. Good or bad feeling?
 - d. How does affect your worth/identity as a parent?
7. Contrast to technology society-
 - a. Did they just want child to play actual sport rather than e-sport
 - b. Obesity
 - c. Fresh air
8. Do you believe in the concept of healthy body healthy mind?
 - a. What does this mean to you?
 - b. How does it affect your parenting decisions?
 - c. How is it shown in society?

Parenting

9. How do you find watching your child play?
 - a. Do you get anything from it? What? Example
 - b. What do they get from you watching?
 - c. Does it enable communication between you both? Shared bond
10. How do you feel after a match?
 - a. Does this change according to result? How?

- b. Does it affect you for a pro-longed period?
 - c. Does this affect your relationship?
- 11. Do you watch your child train?
 - a. How does this make you feel?
 - b. If not, why not?
 - c. Does this show that only matches are important?
- 12. Do you ever give pointers?
 - a. To you child?
 - b. Your child's coach?

Parenting and the coach

- 13. What do you want from your coach?
 - a. What is the ultimate goal for your child?
 - b. What is the ultimate goal for you?
- 14. What is the communication and contact between yourself and the coach?
 - a. How has it evolved?
 - b. Why?
- 15. How do you feel your coach treats your child?
 - a. Examples of behaviour
 - b. Do they treat all children the same? – are matches on a rotation?

Parents and the child

- 16. How does your child feel after a match?
 - a. How does this change according to result?
 - b. Does it affect your child for a pro-longed period?
 - c. Does it spill into other aspects of life?
- 17. How does your child feel/behave after training?
 - a. Compare this to matches
 - b. Which do you feel they get the most from?
 - c. Why?
- 18. Have you noticed a difference in your child since they started?
 - a. Personality traits
 - b. Behaviours
 - c. Attitude
- 19. What do you think drives your child in their performance?
- 20. What drives you in their performance?

Misc.

- 21. If you could suggest improvements what would they be?
 - a. To child's football in general
 - b. To your team
 - c. To your child

Appendix 3

Retrospective Questions

Themes

Historical Context and Current levels – Football

1. How long have you played football?
 - a. How old were you when you started?
2. Why do you play football?
 - a. Why did you start playing football?
 - b. Why did you continue?
3. Did your parents encourage you to play football?
 - a. Did they encourage this over other sports?
 - b. Was it your lead?
 - c. Did it create a bond between you?
 - d. Who took you to football and training?
 - e. How many times a week did you play/ train?
4. How many times a week do you play/train now?
5. What benefits do you get from playing?
 - a. Over other sports?
6. What are the specific benefits you feel you get from football?
 - a. Do you think you could get these any other way?
 - b. Why don't you?
7. What is your most prominent memory of football as a child?
 - a. Why?
 - b. What emotions does it invoke?
 - c. Also ask best and worst
8. Does your coach/ did your coach encourage a healthy lifestyle?
 - a. How?
 - b. Why?
9. Do you have any experience of children's football? Volunteering/ family
 - a. Still ask what they think it entails?
10. Can you think of any negative effects of football?
 - a. Playing
 - b. Watching
 - c. Why?

PE

11. What was your experience of PE at school?
 - a. What do you feel were the objectives of PE?
 - b. What did you enjoy the most in PE? Why?
 - c. Do you know much about PE now? – if so follow up on differences

Benefits /Wellness

12. Do you believe in the concept of healthy body, healthy mind?
 - a. What does this statement mean to you?
 - b. Why?
 - c. How do you think it is promoted in today's society?
 - d. How do you think this is achieved?

13. What other ways do you keep up your fitness?
 - a. Keep healthy?
14. What does keeping healthy involve?
 - a. Do you have any fitness trackers/apps?
 - b. Diet?
 - c. Enjoyment?
15. Which activity do you enjoy the most?
 - a. Why?
 - b. Does it align with fitness?
16. When did you become self-aware about the benefits that physical activity could entail?
 - a. Now?
 - b. Age?
 - c. What was the dominant ideology?

Appendix 4



Gate Keeper Information Sheet **and Consent Form**

Title of the Study: *Sporting Success? : a study into children's leisure activities.*

Reason for Contact

I would like to invite you to assist me in conducting a research study. Before you agree you need to understand why the research is being conducted and what exactly it entails for you and the participants. Please read the following information, and ask questions if anything presented is not clear or if you require additional information. Finally, please take the time required to decide whether you would like to assist me in facilitating this research.

Information on who I am and what the study is about

I am a PhD student at Plymouth University and I am completing this study to gain my Doctorate. The purpose of this study is to explore children's leisure activities from a grass roots perspective. I would like to learn about the processes and work that goes into a children's football team and how these are reflected in practice and what this means for the children involved.

What I need your assistance with

As a gate keeper who acts in loco parentis, I would like you to grant me access to your football matches, and training sessions. I would like to observe your full team in both matches and training. I would like you to disseminate the information sheets to the parents and children in your team so that they are fully aware of who I am and what I am doing, and gain assent from these parties to be involved.

What taking part in the research will involve

This will involve myself and my family members (my partner, and my two children) watching your weekly football matches and myself watching your training sessions. I will not engage in any form of research conversation with the children but I shall converse with parents about their experiences of children's leisure. Participation is voluntary for the conversations, however, if access is granted to observe I will have to observe the whole team, but, the data will not be used in the final thesis for those who do not consent to be part of the study. If consent is given all participants have until October 2018 to withdraw. This can be achieved by emailing myself on the email provided below.

I do not envisage any risks in taking part in this study for the children or the parents. The next steps are the signing of this form to grant me access, and then I would just need information on the whereabouts of the weekly matches and training sessions.

Who will have access to data from the research

The data collected from this study will be completely anonymised with pseudonyms used from the outset. My director of studies will have access to my field notes once a month and is looking for my objectivity in these (rather than content). The results will be used in my final thesis but again the identity of the participants will be completely protected.

The data will be stored on an encrypted USB drive, and encrypted and password protected on one drive. My handwritten field notes will not be accessible to anyone other than myself and will be kept in a locked draw set at my home. All data will

comply with the Data Protection Act (1998). Post study the data will be kept for 2 years following thesis hand in and then destroyed per university procedures.

There are some instances where I must break confidentiality and these relate to the protection from harm to the participants. For example, if I witness any harm or if any is reported to me I will have to follow this up with the relevant authorities, this will follow strict protocol procedures depending on the severity. If possible, I would come to yourself as the gate keeper and my supervisory team in the first instance. If I need to break confidentiality I will also inform the participant that this must be done and why.

What will happen to the results of the study

The plans for dissemination of the findings of this study is to add to the theoretical frame work under ultra-realism. I plan to do this via publications and presenting of my findings to the academic community. It will also form my PhD thesis which will be submitted to gain my Doctorate status.

Who should you contact for further information

Myself in the first instance. I can be contacted via email:

grace.morrison@plymouth.ac.uk. If you wish to speak to my director of studies regarding myself please contact him via email: oliver.smith@plymouth.ac.uk.

Thank you,

Grace Morrison

Consent to facilitate research

voluntarily
agree to help facilitate this research study.

**LAW
CRIMINOLOGY
GOVERNMENT
WITH
PLYMOUTH
UNIVERSITY**

- I understand that even if I agree to help now, I can withdraw until October 2018 without any consequences of any kind.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that I will assist in giving access and gaining assent from the parents who attend my football team. I will provide Grace with the relevant information on the times and locations of the training and matches, weekly. Also, I will disseminate the information sheets to the parents and children so that they are aware of Grace and will assist her in anyway.
- I understand that all data collected in this study is confidential and anonymous.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Grace Morrison, PhD student, Associate Lecturer, BSC Hons, MSC.

Grace.morrison@plymouth.ac.uk

Dr Oliver Smith, Reader in Criminology, Deviant Leisure Co-ordinator.

Oliver.Smith@plymouth.ac.uk

Signature of gate keeper

Signature of gate keeper

Date

Signature of researcher

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

Signature of researcher

Date



Information Sheet for Parents

Hello, my name is Grace, and I am a PhD student at Plymouth university. I am studying children's leisure and have been granted access to observe your child's football team. This has been given by the coach.

I would just like to tell you a little about what I am doing and why, what you need to do and what I am going to do with my findings. I am looking at children's leisure in today's economic and political climate and have chosen football as a key activity. I will simply be watching the football matches and training sessions, I will not be engaging in conversation with your children for research. I would like to speak to you on occasions, so feel free to strike up a conversation, or ask me any questions. I am a parent also and will often bring along my two children and my partner to watch.

Because I have been given access to the team I will be observing all the team, however, if you do wish to have your (or your child's) data included in the findings of my final thesis you may withdraw up until October 2018. Please note that if you chose to do this I will still be observing, just the findings relating to you will be omitted. This can be achieved by contacting your coach.

The protection of your and your children's identity is of utmost priority to me and all findings will be anonymised, protected and no-one will know who you are or what team I was observing etc. All data will be stored privately on encrypted drives (but will have been anonymised first).

The findings of this study will form my PhD thesis, hopefully resulting in my Doctorate. I do not envisage any consequences for you or your children from this study.

Thank you for your time and speak soon, hopefully, Grace.

Appendix 6



Information sheet for Children

Hello,

My name is Grace and I am student at university. I am going to be watching you all train and play football for the next year. I will be at most matches with my husband and my two little girls. You do not have to do anything different or say anything to me, I just wanted you to know who I was and why I am watching your matches and training.

If you would like to know anything else please speak to your parents, coaches or myself.

Thank you and have a great season!

Grace

Appendix 7

Call for Conversations about Children of all

Do you have children who play football?

Do you Coach a child's Team?

Have you refereed a child's game ?

If you can answer yes to any of these

lets have a conversation I



I am looking for participants to Network conversation with me about their experiences. The session should not last more than an hour and can take place via phone, in person or IM

TM will form part of my doctor. I am still looking at children's leisure, leisure and sporting activities.

If you would like to have a YDice in this upcoming article, please feel free to contact me on one of the methods below:


Grace.morrison@tpfyllou.ac.uk

grace_gat1K

****If you are interested in this conversation, please contact me at the following email address: grace.morrison@tpfyllou.ac.uk



Appendix 8

 <div style="text-align: center;"> Faculty of Business Academic Partnerships Faculty Research Ethics Committee APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL OF RESEARCH </div>		(For FREC use only)													
		Application No:													
		Chairs action (expedited)	Yes/ No												
		Risk level -if high refer to UREC chair immediately Cont. Review Date	High/ low / /												
		Outcome (delete)	Approved/ Declined/ Amend/ Withdrawn												
1.	Investigator/student *Note:1 Grace Ann Gallacher		Student - please name your Director of Studies or Project Advisor: Dr Oliver Smith and Course/Programme: M/Phil/PhD Criminology												
	Contact Address: 14 fountains Crescent Plymouth PL2 3RA														
	Tel:07867311294 Email:grace.morrison@plymouth.ac.uk														
2.	Title of Research: The cultural Injunction to enjoy: a study into children's leisure activities														
3.	Nature of approval sought (Please tick relevant boxes) *Note:2 <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> a) PROJECT: <input type="checkbox"/> b) PROGRAMME <input type="checkbox"/> (max 3 years) </div> <p>If a) then please indicate which category:</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>Funded/unfunded Research (staff)</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Undergraduate</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>MPhil/PhD, ResM, BClin Sci</td> <td>*</td> <td>Or Other (please state)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Masters</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>			Funded/unfunded Research (staff)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/>	MPhil/PhD, ResM, BClin Sci	*	Or Other (please state)		Masters			
Funded/unfunded Research (staff)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/>												
MPhil/PhD, ResM, BClin Sci	*	Or Other (please state)													
Masters															
4.	Funding: a) Funding body (if any): Plymouth University b) If funded, please state any ethical implications of the source of funding, including any reputational risks for the university and how they have been addressed. *Note: 3														
5.	a) Duration of project/programme: *Note: 4 3 years b) Dates: 10/16- 10/19														
6.	Has this project received ethical approval from another Ethics Committee? N a) Please write committee name: b) Are you therefore only applying for Chair's action now? No														
7.	Attachments (if required) <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>a) Application/Clearance Form</td> <td>Yes / No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>b) Information sheets for participants</td> <td>Yes / No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>c) Consent forms</td> <td>Yes / No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>d) Continuing review approval (if requested)</td> <td>Yes / No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>e) Other, please state:</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>			a) Application/Clearance Form	Yes / No	b) Information sheets for participants	Yes / No	c) Consent forms	Yes / No	d) Continuing review approval (if requested)	Yes / No	e) Other, please state:			
a) Application/Clearance Form	Yes / No														
b) Information sheets for participants	Yes / No														
c) Consent forms	Yes / No														
d) Continuing review approval (if requested)	Yes / No														
e) Other, please state:															

- *1. *Principal Investigators are responsible for ensuring that all staff employed on projects (including research assistants, technicians and clerical staff) act in accordance with the University's ethical principles, the design of the research described in this proposal and any conditions attached to its approval.*
- *2. *In most cases, approval should be sought individually for each project. Programme approval is granted for research which comprises an ongoing set of studies or investigations utilising the same methods and methodology and where the precise number and timing of such studies cannot be specified in advance. Such approval is normally appropriate only for ongoing, and typically unfunded, scholarly research activity.*
- *3. *If there is a difference in ethical standards between the University's policy and those of the relevant professional body or research sponsor, Committees shall apply whichever is considered the highest standard of ethical practice.*
- *4. *Approval is granted for the duration of projects or for a maximum of three years in the case of programmes. Further approval is necessary for any extension of programmes.*

8.	<p>Aims and Objectives of Research Project/Programme:</p> <p>Children's participation in organised sport and after-school activities have become unquestionably beneficial for childhood development; studies such as Covay and Carbonaro (2010) and Change 4 life campaign highlight these perceived benefits. However, alongside these irrefutably positive outcomes these activities can produce a variety of other unintended outcomes, which from a critical perspective in a neo-liberal consumer culture, can be realised as harmful. This has recently been established within the field of criminology via the theoretical concept of deviant leisure.</p> <p>Deviant Leisure, draws on forward thinkers within cultural and ultra-realist criminology, and it attempts to highlight how individual, social, economic and environmental harms are embedded within societies structures and therefore within many accepted and normalised forms of leisure (see Smith and Raymen, 2016).</p> <p>Many acclaimed pro-social socialisation processes (see Weininger <i>et al</i>, 2015; Covay and Carbonaro, 2010; Bodovski and Farkas, 2008; Lareau and Weininger, 2003; and McNamara Horvat <i>et al</i>, 2003) can be understood as emulating some of the more socially corrosive characteristics of neoliberal culture: competitiveness, individualism, and aggressive competition, whilst cultivating narcissistic traits and increasing anxiety. Using the deviant leisure perspective it is possible to analyse such harms.</p> <p>Using qualitative data from a children's football club, this research aims to illuminate the demands and claimed anxieties brought to bear on parents and children within organised leisure. This will be achieved by observing, evaluating and analysing the interactions and relationships on display in these social worlds. It will examine associations and communications between the children,</p>
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	<p>their peers, their parents- paying special attention to the relationships between the parents and their peers.</p> <p>The concept of sports maintaining a role in social order is not new; Elias (1939) largely framed his 'Civilising Process' on this concept. However, critical criminologists would consider it as part of a 'Pseudo-pacification Process' (Hall, 2012), in which underlying violent energies are sublimated and redirected into the perpetual obligatory cycle of consumer capitalism, creating what Smith and Raymen (2016) term hedonic realism. This is the inability to see beyond the established social order where leisure identity is tantamount with hyper-competitiveness and consumer capital. These behaviours are not only embedded into normative behaviours but are bound to what Zizek (2008) calls the 'the cultural injunction to enjoy' – where the hedonistic search for pleasure is now a duty bound act within this hyper-competitive society. This is where the results of this research will be framed to create original and insightful knowledge on previously unexplored areas of social life.</p>
9.	<p>Brief Description of Research Methods and Procedures:</p> <p>This study overall will utilise what Harvey (2007) coined as an 'embedded multi-method approach' (cited in Davies et al., 2011: 173), similar to Harvey's it will employ: observation, social network analysis, the use of 'on the wing discussions' (Robson, 2011: 324) and field notes. This will allow themes to emerge and to be explored and assessed against the deviant leisure framework.</p> <p>Observation has long been used as a research tool within criminology (see Noaks and Wincup, 2004) because it affords an 'insight' into shared cultures (Van Maanen, 2011, cited in Davies, et al: 200 and Silverman, 2007, ibid: 201). Moreover, it allows this to take place within natural environments, and encourages contextualisation from the participants (See Becker, 1958, cited in Burgess, 1984). Furthering this it has a proven record for studying children in their natural setting (Rolfe, 2001 and Lindon, 2003). Although, I am studying parenting, children must be present for this, therefore, they must be considered within my approach. I am also taking my own children to my research sites, this method has been used by Zeisel (2006), in their park studies and my</p>

observation is aligned with the work of Finch (1984), who found that being a young mother afforded her access to views that otherwise she would not have been able to observe.

Field notes have been long established as a data collection method, often used in conjunction with observation (see Bryman, 2001, Burgess, 1982c, 1984, Loftland and Loftland, 1995 and Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). My notes will be written up post research in accordance with best practice, for example Robson (2011) suggests that notes should be written up within 24 hours and I should not commence another research session whilst the previous notes are uncompleted. This is to limit the possibility of distortion and subjectivity (pp. 328). To further this point my Director of studies will have monthly access to my notes to ensure I am not going native (see Hobbs, 1988). Cosgrove and Francis (2011) utilised aide de memoirs within the field on their PSCO study, as did Smith (2014) in his ethnography of the night time economy, I have opted to follow in suit as I do not wish to interrupt the flow of conversation or make my participants feel uneasy by interrupting them to record data (See Robson, 2011). I shall take aides' de memoir on my mobile phone, so I could be perceived as writing a text, this will allow my participants to continue in their natural environment. These are being used instead of infringing on the privacy of my participants and recording sessions.

Football

I will be observing (with my family), as an observer as participant (see Gold, 1958), the weekly football matches of an under 11's FA approved non-competitive team in the SW. The team are all male and aged between 7 and 11, they all pay to be trained, to be part of the team and for that team to be part of the FA. I have gained access through a gate keeper and informed consent has been gathered by such.

I will be observing the interactions between parents (on the side-line), coaching staff and the children on the pitch, using this as data to forge any themes that arise in respect of social harm, secondary socialisation and deviant leisure, whilst exploring them within an ultra-realist framework.

I am going to discard my first four weeks of notes within this area, because I must firstly, build up a rapport with the parents, and allow them to be comfortable in my presence, by discarding the first four weeks the effect of me being there should have been eliminated. It will also allow me to gain an understanding for the research site, and after the 4-week period I should be able to not

take actions out of context and be sensitive and reflective to my participants ontology (Davis, et al, 2011).

Following Zweig (1948) I plan on following up any observations with a 'conversation with a purpose' (Burgess, 1984: 102) creating a social interaction that the participant (the parents) will be in control of, this will negate any possible harm and allow free conversation, rather than adopting a formal interview tone. Resulting, in a more valid, reliable and in-depth insight into this social world. Although my chosen methods may create a lot of unused data, it is the most appropriate for my research circumstances, aims and objectives.

I gained informed consent from a gate keeper whom acts in loco parentis of the children who will then disseminate the information of the study to the parents, the children will be informed of my presence at the matches and training sessions. The potential ethical implications for this are addressed in detail later.

The sampling adopted in this research area is purposive and convenience, with access granted through a gate keeper, I needed a candidate which would allow me to observe their team of under 11 boys and the interactions during matches and training. A form detailing my objectives will be supplied to the gate keeper, parents and children. From this sample, I will choose which parents to have discussions and conversations with depending on the interactions observed. I envisage this research decreasing in March 2019.

Limitations

As with any research project there are limitations to my chosen methods. In order to be fully transparent and ethical I feel these should be outlined here with the safeguarding I have adopted to overcome some of the limitations.

	<p>I am utilising myself as a research tool, and I need to ensure that I am remaining true to my aims, I will never be completely objective there is no 'tabula rasa' (see Roseneil, 1993 in Davies et al, 2011: 296) in social science research. I will be acknowledging that my ontological reality and my interpretation on my participants ontological reality will reflect this. I have built in checks of my director of studies checking my field notes on a monthly basis, this is to ensure I am remaining as objective as possible, that I am not going native, but giving my participants a voice.</p> <p>These methods do not give replicability, social reality is not stable enough (see Walliman, 2005: 122) and no one will have my ontological standpoint to interpret these worlds. This is the case in most research which requires observation as a research tool (see Smith, 2004 and Winlow, 2001). It is for this reason that I am not concerned with replicability, but with reliability and validity. I believe the checks I have in place with my director of studies will go a long way to ensuring that I am being reliable and valid in my findings.</p> <p>I am also utilising observation in a multi-method approach with 'conversations with a purpose' (Burgess, 1984: 102) in a bid to not only explore themes in more detail but to increase the reliability and validity of my findings.</p> <p><i>Specify subject populations and recruitment method. Please indicate also any ethically sensitive aspects of the methods. Continue on attached sheets if required.</i></p>
10.	<p>Ethical Protocol:</p> <p>Please indicate how you will ensure this research conforms with each clause of the University of Plymouth's <i>Principles for Research Involving Human Participants</i>. Please attach a statement which addresses each of the ethical principles set out below.</p> <p>(a) Informed Consent:</p>

Although there is no legal framework underpinning consent in social research (Robson, 2011), to behave in an ethical manner there are various regulations that should be adhered to when conducting research. The British Society of Criminology (2015) is most pertinent to my research, chapters 4 and 6 are relating to the issue of consent by participants, stating that it should be given freely, except in exceptional circumstances (BSC statement of ethics, 2015: 6).

Football Matches

Although these matches are in full public view, and therefore consent would not be required to observe (See Smith et al, 2009), I do wish to speak to the parents so consent should be sought. This is also to reduce harm to the children playing matches (in the way of emotional anxiety – a stranger watching every match may cause unnecessary psychological harm if no reason is given).

Access to matches, training sessions will be sought through a gate keeper acting in loco parentis in the first instance (See Robert-Holmes, 2005). This is usually a method adopted in an educational setting and because of the contractual agreement between parents and my gate keeper, they are within their rights to assume consent (see Homan, 2002; Robson, 2011). However, because I would like to be open and honest with my participants and build up a relationship of trust I would like to gain assumed consent in the way of providing them an information sheet on the research and informing them of a general overview of the study, their rights as participants, data storage, data usage and confidentiality.

Moreover, because I am observing the parents, the children are as a result being observed, to align with their rights as participants (See UNCRC article 13 and 17), I will provide them a separate information sheet, detailing that I will be attending matches and training until March 2019.

All participants including the gate keeper will be given contact details for myself and informed of their right to withdraw.

(b) Openness and Honesty:

I am an ethical researcher, I am being open and honest, gaining multi levels of informed consent, providing a general overview of my aims and methods.

Note that deception is permissible only where it can be shown that all three conditions specified in Section 2 of the University of Plymouth's Ethical Principles have been made in full. Proposers are required to provide a detailed justification and to supply the names of two independent assessors whom the Sub-Committee can approach for advice.

(c) Right to Withdraw:

The participants within the football research area have the right to withdraw from the study until April 2019, this is timed because if they withdraw any later, I will not have time to replace my findings in line with my thesis hand in. this information, along with how to withdraw – via an email to myself- will be outlined in the information sheets provided to the participants. It will also be explained that if they withdraw the data that I have collected from them will not be used in my final thesis but will be collected continuously till March 2019, this is because of the nature of my research it cannot be taken in isolation. It will also be stored in my field notes until 2 years after my thesis submission, the data protection and storage will apply to this. After this time, all data collected will be destroyed as per university policy.

Note that this section should also clarify that participant's data will be destroyed should they withdraw, in accordance with best practice.

(d) Protection From Harm:

Although information gathered should be considered as confidential (Thomas, 2013), as a researcher in the field I have an ethical and moral duty to protect my participants from harm. I do not envisage my observations causing any harm to my participants, as a member of the public I could observe the football matches, but everyone will be fully aware of my presence, which

negates any psychological harms of being observed by a stranger. That being said, because I am researching in the vicinity of children, I feel there is more to be done in this area.

If any of the participants are at risk of harm or report any harm to myself I must act on this information. This will be clearly stated on the information sheet to the children. It will state that although I will endeavour to respect confidentiality that any serious harms must be and will be reported to the relevant authorities. Depending on the severity I will contact the gate keeper in the first instance, whilst updating my supervisory team, as soon as possible. If it is an immediate severe harm I will go to the relevant authorities, such as, the local safe guarding team, or child protection team. In order to judge the harms, I need to be clear on what constitutes a risk or harm and the level (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003), to have a holistic view on this I will use the policies outlined in the 2014 policy paper *safeguarding children and young people*. if any of the points outlined in this paper are compromised I will enact my protocol outlined above.

I should note at this point that I have held an enhanced DBS check for over 10 years, have experience in working with marginalized groups in society, such as disabled children/adults and those who have experienced the criminal justice system first hand. I also held enhanced security clearance at my previous post of employment and I am fully confident in my ability to spot, assess and deal with any potential harms on my participants.

(e) Debriefing:

I will debrief in detail with the gate keeper in the instance of the football matches, this will cover any issues that have arisen within the data collection stage of my study. This will take place post March 2019 when the collection stage has ceased. I will offer debriefing to the parents and children if they require it, it will allow them to address any issues they have had, contextualise any information and ask any questions they may have about the study or data collection. In the instance of the children it will allow me to bring our relationship to a natural end.

(f) Confidentiality:

To maintain the confidentiality of my participants and data two areas will be discussed here: anonymity and data storage. Breaking my participants confidence has been discussed in the section protection from harm, as this is the only case in which it would be broken.

In accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998) I will endeavour to protect my participants identity and confidence at all stages of my project (See Thomas, 2013 and Davies et al, 2011). This will be achieved by ensuring that all data is anonymised so that no clear identifications can be made. This will take the form of withholding some information in my write up, for example the area of the UK that the study is taking part in. All participants will be given pseudonyms and only I will have access who is who, because I am not asking for signed consent forms the real identity of my participants does not need to be recorded anywhere.

The data storage follows a strict procedure of being held in short hand note form on my mobile phone which is only accessible via finger print. These notes will be written up within 24 hours and then removed from my mobile. Once these are written up into a note book, these notebooks will be held in my locked cabinet draws at home. At this point all data will have already been anonymised so no-one could be identified from them, these will be in raw format. These notes will then be typed on to a word document, saved only by date, and stored on an encrypted USB and backed up via encryption on my university one drive. My director of studies will have monthly access to these typed notes to ensure I am remaining objective. All findings and discussions around my notes will also be electronically stored and backed up this way. All forms of notes (except those on my mobile) will be held for two years post thesis hand in and then destroyed as per university policy.

(g) Professional Bodies Whose Ethical Policies Apply to this Research:

The British Society of Criminology (2015)

<http://www.britsoccrim.org/documents/BSCEthics2015.pdf>

	<p>The committee strongly recommends that prior to application, applicants consult an appropriate professional code of ethics regardless of whether or not they are members of that body (for example, Social Research Association . http://www.the-sra.org.uk/ethical.htm Market Research Society http://www.mrs.org.uk/standards/codeconduct.htm British Sociological Association http://www.britisoc.co.uk/equality/). Applicants MAY choose to write "not applicable" in the "Relevant Professional Bodies" section of the Ethical Application Form. However, it is very rare that there would be no professional/academic code of ethics relevant to a given research project. If based on the information written in other sections of the form, FREC considers a particular professional code to be of relevance, then the Committee may make its consultation and adherence a condition of acceptance.</p>																		
11.	<p>Declaration*:</p> <p>To the best of our knowledge and belief, this research conforms to the ethical principles laid down by Plymouth University and by the professional body specified in 6 (g).</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Name</th> <th>E-mail (s)</th> <th>Date</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Principal Investigator:</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other Staff Investigators:</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Director of Studies (only where Principal Investigator is a postgraduate student):</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Name	E-mail (s)	Date	Principal Investigator:				Other Staff Investigators:				Director of Studies (only where Principal Investigator is a postgraduate student):			
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Other Staff Investigators:																			
Director of Studies (only where Principal Investigator is a postgraduate student):																			

*You will be notified by the Research Ethical Approval Committee once your application is approved.
This process normally takes around 3-4 weeks.

Reference list

Bachman, R. & Schutt, K. (2017) *The Practice of Research in Criminology and Criminal Justice*. (6th edn). London: Sage.

Davies, P. & Francis, P. & Jupp, V. (2011) *Doing Criminological Research*. Sage: London.

Denscombe, M. (2003) *The good research guide: for small-scale social research projects*. Berkshire: Open University Press.

Hobart, C. & Frankel, J. (2009) *A Practical Guide to Child Observation and Assessment*. (4th edn). Cheltham: Nelson Thornes.

Renzetti, C. & Lee, R. (1993) *Researching Sensitive Topics*. London: Sage.

Roberts-Holmes, G. (2005) *Doing your early years' research project: a step-by-step guide*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.

Smith, O. (2014). *Contemporary Adulthood and the Night-Time Economy*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Smith, O. & Raymen, T. (2013) Deviant Leisure: a Criminological Perspective.
<https://deviantleisure.wordpress.com/2016/03/14/deviant-leisure-a-criminological-perspective/> accessed on 29/11/2017.

Thomas, G. (2013) *How to do your research project: a guide for students in education and applied social sciences*. (2nd edn). London: Sage.



Please Answer Either YES or NO to ALL Questions Below.

If you answer YES, please provide further details.

Do You Plan To Do:

- Research involving vulnerable groups – for example, children and young people, those with a learning disability or cognitive impairment, or individuals in a dependent or unequal relationship

Answer:

Yes – I intend to study parents via observation which inherently involves observing children.

- Research involving sensitive topics – for example participants' sexual behaviour, their illegal or political behaviour, their experience of violence, their abuse or exploitation, their mental health, or their gender or ethnic status

Answer:

No.

- Research involving groups where permission of a gatekeeper is normally required for initial access to members – for example, ethnic or cultural groups, native peoples or indigenous communities

Answer:

Yes- my access to the football matches and training is via a gate keeper acting in loco parentis.

- Research involving deception or which is conducted without participants' full and informed consent at the time the study is carried out

Answer:

No.

- Research involving access to records of personal or confidential information, including genetic or other biological information, concerning identifiable individuals

Answer:

No.

- Research which would induce psychological stress, anxiety or humiliation or cause more than minimal pain

Answer:

No.

- Research involving intrusive interventions – for example, the administration of drugs or other substances, vigorous physical exercise, or techniques such as hypnotherapy. Participants would not encounter such interventions, which may cause them to reveal information which causes concern, in the course of their everyday life.

Answer:

No.

**Completed Forms should be forwarded BY E-MAIL to FOBResearch@plymouth.ac.uk,
Secretaries of the FREC.**

Please forward any questions/comments or complaints to:

Rosemary Omusi or Michelle Bickell,

Cookworthy Admin Hub, Cookworthy Building room 307, Plymouth University, Drake Circus, Plymouth, PL4
8AA

Tel: 01752 584979 or 01752 585888

Updated: 22/09/16

Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC)

Ethical Review Form for Committee Members Only

Name of Applicant:

Student / Staff / Other:

Name of supervisor or PI:

1) Is there enough detail for you to review the application? **No / Yes**

(If No, then send application straight back to FOBresearch@plymouth.ac.uk)

2) Has the applicant identified and addressed all ethical issues associated with the project?

No / Yes

3) Are project aims clearly expressed? **No / Yes**

4) Initial Outcome (see the box below):

Outcome	Please tick [X] and provide comments in box below
A) Full approval	
B) Approval subject to conditions (see below). These must be met and communicated to the Ethics Committee before research can start.	
C) Reject & invite re-submission (see below).	
D) Request for further information and/or changes to the application to allow the committee to make a decision	

(see below). Once an application has been re-submitted, it will be considered as a new application.	
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5) Please provide comments regarding your decision:

Committee Member's Name: _____ Date: _____

Return to: Rosemary and Michelle, Faculty of Business Research
(FOBresearch@plymouth.ac.uk)