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SPORTING CAPITAL

TRANSFORMING SPORTS DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND PRACTICE

Nicholas F. Rowe

Sporting Capital

In a world of competing public policy priorities, economic challenges and political uncertainty, sports development organisations and initiatives need to adapt to survive. This book makes the case for ‘Sporting Capital’ as a new conceptual model of sports participation with the potential to transform public policy and practice in sports development.

The central argument presented is that a model of Sporting Capital – with its three domains of physiological, social and psychological attributes – provides a missing framework, creating a new impetus for sustained growth in community sport by joining up the levels at which sports development is planned and implemented. Touching on important issues such as youth sport, public health, volunteering, disability, ethnicity and social inequality, it examines patterns of sports participation in relation to age, gender and social class and offers recommendations for strategic policy improvements that can be implemented by practitioners working on the front line of community sport.

Sporting Capital: Transforming Sports Development Policy and Practice provides valuable insights for all those interested in sports development, youth sport, community sport, or sport and social policy.

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Preface

Sport has always featured not just as an important part of my life but as something that has defined and shaped it. It has been integral to my sense of who I am and what I do. It has given me, and continues to give me, a deep unending well of enjoyment from both the pleasure of playing and from the camaraderie of time spent with people who share that pleasure with me. Beyond dominating my spare time leisure activities, I have been fortunate enough for sport to reach into my professional career having worked for nearly 30 years in a national strategic sports development organisation and now as a consultant to influence and shape community sport-related research.

Reflecting on my own biography, my earliest memories are of my father playing football, my mother winning the ‘Mum’s race’ at our primary school sports day and sport in all its shapes and forms being a constant topic of family conversation. As I reached junior and then secondary school age I was picked to play in a wide range of school teams, played and watched football with my Dad and spent most of my spare time outdoors either hitting or kicking a ball. In my mid teens I encouraged my Dad to play golf with me and he never looked back!

At University I found many distractions that temporarily took me away from regularly playing sports but always knew that I would return to take part when the time was right. As I got older my interests shifted from team sports to marathon running and to playing golf. And now in my retirement from full time working I have found time to challenge myself in new ways by cycling around the coast of Britain, keeping myself ticking over with regular ‘jogs’ in the countryside and spending even more time at my local golf club playing, officiating and contributing in various voluntary capacities.

Why am I sharing this with you? It is to make the important point that my experience is far from unique. Hundreds of thousands of people in this country and millions of others worldwide have had the same experience of sport in their lives and for a relatively small number participation in sport has been their source of income and livelihood. I suspect, like me, they never really questioned from a personal biographical perspective why sport

in all its forms from participating to spectating at live events, from watching on television to reading in newspapers and, for me, 'researching' and writing a book about it, came to be so central in our lives.

But what made it unthinkable for me that I wouldn't be taking part in sport throughout my life? At a personal level for many years it was a question that I never really dwelt upon. However, in my professional capacity the question of what distinguished people like me who find it difficult to stop taking part in sport from those who it is almost impossible to make participate began over recent years to dominate my thinking. This thinking culminated in my ideas around 'sporting capital'. Sport is a central part of my life and something that has given me so much enjoyment only because I have had the capacities to enjoy it and to get the most from it. Those capacities are not simple or easy to define but they may be summarised into the three 'Cs' of competence, confidence and connections. My early life experience, in the family, at school and with my peers equipped me with the basic skills and confidence needed to enjoy a wide range of sports. My experience over the years has built on that foundation to provide positive and reinforcing feedback that has maintained and enhanced this 'stock' of capacities. I have drawn on this stock to overcome the constraints and barriers that life can put in the way. The motivation to take part in sport has prevailed in the face of all the obstacles thrown at me at different stages in my life.

However, my experience is not universal. For far too many, sport is something they find threatening, difficult, intimidating and unrewarding. It is something they tolerated at school but as soon as the opportunity arose it is something of which they steered well clear. For many others sport was something that was ok to do when they were young but wasn't sufficiently enjoyable to prioritise and persist with into adulthood. Their stock of capacities to take part in sport were low and over time got lower still as they became more socially and physically distanced from sport as an active pursuit. For people like me it is difficult to understand how these people feel about sport. In a public policy context there is a danger that this lack of empathy is institutionalised in the organisations that are run by sport enthusiasts who believe that everyone would take part in sport if only the opportunity was made available to them.

It was the realisation, informed by a combination of personal and professional experience, that the motivation to take part in sport is driven by a kind of invisible 'capital' that people carry around with them that started to open my eyes to the power of this idea. That this capital is similar in kind and connected to other cultural, social and human capitals helped the idea take form and develop. In this book I have sought to take the idea of sporting capital and build it into a coherent theoretical framework that I believe has the potential to create a paradigm shift in the way public policy for community sport is conceived and implemented. I say this advisedly and without in any way seeking to diminish the challenges involved of which I am fully aware.

Writing this book has involved a journey of self reflection, critical analysis and a test of logic and personal application. The ideas expressed are in no way meant as a denunciation of all the efforts of those who have worked in sports development over the last 40 years or so, including of course my own. In fact there are many examples over those years where interventions have embraced aspects of sporting capital without assigning that label to them and without being interpreted and understood within its wider theoretical framework. However, I do believe that public policy has been held back in its potential effectiveness by lacking the coherent theoretical framework that sporting capital offers. And I believe that application of the theory could have a transformative impact on how we prioritise interventions in sport, how we design those interventions and crucially how we train and educate the workforce both paid and voluntary who are at the forefront of delivering on those interventions.

In this book I have talked about an ambition of ‘sporting capital for all’. It is a vision where everyone no matter what age, what background or gender has the basic physical skills to take part in sport in ways that are rewarding, has the self confidence and ‘can do’ attitude that motivates and maintains participation throughout their lives and has access to the social connections and reinforcing social contexts that values and supports participation. In an ideal world these physically, sport literate people will have high quality infrastructure and environments that support and nurture their engagement. Those who chose not to take part in sport perhaps because they see other aspects of their lives and use of their capabilities in those areas more rewarding will make that choice from a position of strength and not weakness. This is to view sporting capital as a form of empowerment and not as one of individual deficit or limitation.

My ambition in this book has been to challenge received wisdom by starting a debate that will lead to change. There are many routes by which change can occur. It can be bottom up or top down, it can be directive or experiential, it can be incremental or revolutionary. This book is far from definitive on this count. Sporting capital as a theory is not fully tested and many of its propositions require further research. However, I believe a synthesis of the evidence available supports its plausibility and potential to breathe new life and sense of purpose into community sports development and enhance its justification in a world of competing priorities and challenging public policy environments. I hope at the very least that the readers of this book will reflect on its key messages to challenge their ways of thinking, how they behave and relate to others in their own personal lives and, if like me they are fortunate enough to work in community sports development, to help shape and influence what they do professionally to bring about transformative change.

Nicholas F. Rowe

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The antecedents to this book go back a long way. It would not have been possible without the good fortune I had to be recruited as a research assistant many, many years ago at the then G.B. Sports Council by Mike Collins and Arthur Dye. I couldn't have asked for better mentors to induct me into the world of sport, social policy and research. They are both sorely missed and I owe them a great debt of gratitude.

My colleagues over many years in the Sport England Research Team have all played their part – they know who they are and it would not be right for me to single them out. But I thank them all for their inspiration, support, intelligence and dedication. They were influential in shaping the ideas that I have presented in this book, wittingly or unwittingly, although I absolve them of any responsibility for them.

In the nearly 30 years I worked in national sports research my paths crossed with many inspirational people. There are four, however, that I would like to thank in particular, Professors Chris Gratton, Peter Taylor, Fred Coalter and Jonathan Long. In their own inimitable ways they have all influenced and challenged me over the years, although I would also like to think that at times I might have challenged them.

I would like to express my thanks to StreetGames UK and in particular to Ceris Anderson and Jane Ashworth for their support in commissioning the original research that made this book possible. The primary research reported in Chapters 6 and 7 draws heavily on earlier work I carried out for them (www.streetgames.org/resource/sporting-capital-and-doorstep-sport-working-build-legacy-sports-participation-england) and I appreciate their permission to use it in the context of this book. I would also like to thank Oliver Nordern and Joel Williams who while at TNS-BMRB carried out the modelling work to build the Sporting Capital Index.

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Introduction

This book is about an idea. The idea is conceptualised in two simple words, ‘sporting capital’. But contained in these two words are multiple layers of meaning that span subject matter as diverse as individual human behaviour, motivational psychology, physical motor development, pedagogy, political sciences, philosophy, cultural studies and social policy. Sporting capital is not an abstract idea, but is an idea with a purpose in the sense that it is ‘a thought or suggestion as to a possible course of action’. In writing this book I have taken the germ of this idea to build a coherent theory defined as ‘a set of principles on which the practice of an activity is based’. Theories evolve and are there to be tested and challenged in the real world. The theory of sporting capital provides a framework for empirical research and a guide to policy and action. It is a theory that is very much in its infancy insofar as it has yet to undergo thorough ‘road testing’; but all theories have to start somewhere, and those putting them forward must, with an open mind, be prepared to take some bumps and bruises along the way. As we go down that road I anticipate healthy and constructive criticism but am optimistic that sporting capital will emerge as a theory whose time has come.

In the contested world of ‘sports development’ (Houlihan and White, 2002; Collins, 2010a; Houlihan and Green, 2011; Hylton, 2013) I have come to the view, after more than 25 years of working at a national level bridging public policy and research, that the lack of a coherent theoretical foundation has limited its impact and by inference undermined its justification. These may be harsh words, but the evidence, referred to in Chapter 2, of the decades of stagnation in participation rates in sport and the apparent inability of governments, policy makers and practitioners to make significant inroads into structural social inequalities associated with age, gender, class, ethnicity and disability support this contention. This is despite substantial investment of public monies combined with the undoubted efforts of many well-meaning individuals, amongst whom I include myself, who believe and continue to believe in the transformative power of sport, the justification for state intervention and its ability to make a difference. Coalter (2007b, p. 7) makes reference to the need to “de-mythologize sport”

and refers to “the sport evangelists who have invested much in their professional repertoires”. In this book I am replacing this fuzzy mythological and evangelical narrative policy framework with one that is coherent, testable, capable of rational argument and, crucially, offers the potential to deliver results on the ground. In doing so I am hoping to take the surplus emotional power of sport and all those who promote it and harness it into a shared and effective theoretical framework for action.

I am aware that sporting capital as a theory will be open to the academic challenge of being reductionist in the pejorative sense of this word. And yes, it is possible to present sporting capital as a straightforward intuitively attractive idea. However, rather than apologising for its simplicity I would argue that this is a necessary attribute if theory is to be translated into an effective call for action. The apparent simplicity of the theory is, I believe, a strength and not a weakness. I would counter the reductionist argument by contending that behind its simplicity the theory is embedded with a sophisticated recognition of the complex systems (multiple not singular) that impact and interact to shape human sporting behaviour. At one level sporting capital is a micro theory that relates to the individual, his or her identity, predispositions, motivations, personal qualities, physiology and preferences. At a meso level sporting capital is about parental, family and peer influence, local institutional contexts, pedagogical frameworks, neighbourhoods and communities and local environments. At a macro level it is about broader socio-cultural contexts, shared value systems, national identities, public welfare and quality of life. In this sense sporting capital may be characterised as spanning and synthesising a ‘society in leisure’ approach which draws on structural forms of explanation and a socio-psychological approach that focuses on individual motivations, benefits and satisfactions (Coalter, 1997).

This intersection of disciplines and geographies is, I believe, an inherent strength of the theory. But it poses in turn a particular challenge for the author. I do not claim expertise across this multiplicity of disciplines, very few if any could, and I apologise in advance to any readers with specialist knowledge in any given area. My ambition in this book is big but it is limited. It is to provide an introductory narrative, supported by an initial foray into empirical evidence, for the idea of sporting capital at a level that is intellectually sound, intuitively compelling and that translates into an agenda for change and action. In order to do this I weave together a number of threads from a range of disciplines but only insofar as they are relevant to my general thesis on sporting capital. Readers who want text book, discursive and or critical overviews in say the political context of sport development and its history (Houlihan, 1997; Gratton and Henry, 2001; Houlihan and White, 2002; Houlihan, 2014; Houlihan and Lindsey, 2014; Grix and Phillpots, 2014; Grix, 2016), the psychology of sport, exercise and physical activity (Biddle and Mutrie, 2008; Weinberg

and Gould, 2015), the sociology of sport (Giulianotti, 2005; Maguire et al., 2002; Jarvie and Thornton, 2012), sport pedagogy (Kirk, Macdonald and O'Sullivan, 2006; Tinning, 2008; Armour, 2013) and international comparative experience (Van Bottenburg, Rijnen and van Sterkenburg, 2005; Nicholson, Hoye and Houlihan, 2011; Hoekman, Breedveld and Scheerder, 2011; Van Bottenburg and De Bosscher, 2011; Hallmann and Petry, 2013) should look elsewhere.

My hope is that those in the academic world pick up the gauntlet to establish an evidence base that challenges and builds the theory in the contexts and disciplines in which their expertise lies, and ideally in multi and interdisciplinary collaborative research frameworks. But beyond this, and crucially linked to it, my ultimate ambition, and the reason I have written this book, is the hope that the theory will be used in applied settings by those who shape local policy and practice and by those who deliver it at the 'front line'. Their experience of how the theory can be applied to practice, what works, how and why and in what context is crucial and I pick this issue up in the final chapter. I am a realist, however, and although I would prefer to see a national sport development framework with sporting capital at its core driven by a growing evidence base, I recognise that change in this direction, if it occurs at all, is likely to be a slow, messy and incremental process. My experience to date in sharing my ideas with local sports development practitioners, for example in South and West Yorkshire, has been a positive one stimulating constructive debate and an appetite to translate the theory into practice. It encourages me to believe that a 'bottom up' approach, if that is indeed what is required, to influence a paradigm shift in national policy is certainly not out of the question.

Of course some would say that sporting capital is not a new idea, and I would agree that none of its constituent parts are 'new'. Other researchers have emphasised the interdependencies and impact of intrapersonal, biological/physical, psychological, social and structural/ecological factors in the decision to participate in sport (see for example: Henderson, 2009; Sallis, Owen and Fisher, 2008; Bailey et al., 2010). Stuij (2015) in research on the impact of different social class backgrounds on young people's socialisation into sport makes reference to 'sporting capital' as a form of cultural capital linking it to Bourdieu's concept of the habitus. It would be surprising if nearly half a century of public policy focus and research had not yielded such insights and relationships. I do believe, however, that as a coherent theoretical perspective that can facilitate a radical shift in public policy, sporting capital theory as presented here brings something significant and new to the table. In Chapter 4 I examine other theories that have at times surfaced in the policy context of sport, and conclude that at best they are partial, in some cases more descriptive than explanatory and in others cases ill-fitting when borrowed from other fields, particularly and currently, those of behaviour change and physical activity.

In the 28 years I worked at Sport England rarely did a month pass where we didn't have anguished discussions about the scope and meaning of the word 'sport'. As Coalter (2007b, p. 7) says, "sport is a collective noun which hides much more than it reveals. . . . There are almost endless variations of sport processes, mechanisms, participants and experiences". The COMPASS project (UK Sport, 1999), examining comparative participation rates in different European countries, found that one of the greatest conceptual and practical difficulties encountered in attempting to make meaningful international comparisons of participation in sport concerns the way sport is defined. These national variations in definition are as much a consequence of cultural differences in the understanding of what sport is as they are about how the measurement of sport is operationalised. Van Bottenburg, Rijnen and van Sterkenburg (2005, p. 15) in their analysis of sport trends across the European Union made the observation that,

Sport has become a strongly differentiated and diffuse phenomenon, which is practiced for many different ends, in diverse ways and in divergent contexts and organisational forms. How people experience sport is also related to this. More than ever before, people have the tendency to label their activities as 'sport'. This is furthered by the fact that sport has been 'upgraded' in both a social and cultural sense during the past few decades. One of the consequences of this is that sport in the year 2004 encompasses a broad spectrum with the Olympic games at one extreme, as the ultimate manifestation of organised competitive sport, and at the other, all kinds of physical activity that people (in contrast to fifty years ago) perceive as sporting behaviour.

Various through the last 30 years or so the scope and definition of sport in England, at least as it applies to government policy, intervention and measurement, has swung between a very wide one that encompasses practically anything that moves (Council of Europe, 1992) to one that is more narrowly defined to exclude for example walking and certain types of cycling and or certain types of games such as darts or other activities that didn't meet thresholds of physical intensity (Sport England, 2004, 2008). Of course there is no absolute right or wrong answer. As referenced above, sport is a cultural phenomenon; for example in some countries bridge, a card game, and chess, a board game, are defined as sport, in Finland 'hunting moose' is a sporting activity. However, the scope of the definition of sport in a policy context cannot be ignored as it impacts on its policy leverage and impact. For example a very wide definition of sport embracing physical activity extends its relevance to public health and specifically to the obesity policy domain increasing potential funding opportunities and political influence. However, such a wide definition also increases the potential for sport policy to lose its focus, to dilute its impact by spreading investment

too thinly and to undermine its relationships with its more traditional core constituencies and stakeholders. These tensions and dilemmas undoubtedly go a long way to explain the yo-yoing of national sport policy over the last 30 years or so between 'big sport' and 'smaller sport' policy domains.

It is important that I make clear from the outset that sporting capital is unapologetically a 'sport policy theory' rather than a physical activity theory. The salience of the theory to sport is its strength, not its weakness. One of the three pillars (domains) of sporting capital is the social connections that people have in and through sport which in turn encompasses the institutional context for sport in the broadest sociological sense. Sporting capital as a theoretical construct applies in particular, but not exclusively, to all 'organised sport' even if that organisation is limited and outside of for example a formal club setting. It includes in its scope team sports, individual sports, recreational walking, recreational cycling, road running and a wide range of health and fitness activities. However, it is less applicable to physical activities where the motivation is concerned with other instrumental outcomes such as DIY or housework, transport as a primary purpose, gardening or other hobbies or artistic activities that have a physical component (see Khan et al., 2012, p. 60 for a useful conceptual model of the relationship between sport, exercise and physical activity). Although sporting capital has an application to elite sport performance insofar as a pre-condition of becoming an elite athlete is an initial developmental process to build high levels of sporting capital, the focus of the theory is not at this level. It is, however, worth noting the link made in Chapter 3 where I discuss the transferability of 'capitals' and how, for elite professional sports people, sporting capital becomes one and the same as 'human capital' insofar as it is marketable and acquires economic value.

The apparent cyclical shifts in how sport is defined in public policy have been at least matched by the concurrent shifts in the rationale for public investment in sport (see for example: Coalter, Long and Duffield, 1988; Coalter, 2007a; Coalter, 2007b; DCMS and Strategy Unit, 2002; Collins, 2010b; Grix and Carmichael, 2012). It could be argued that the justification for public investment in reality lies somewhere on a spectrum between at one end what has been termed 'sport for sports sake' to at the other end 'sport for good' i.e. sport as an instrumental means to achieve other social, educational, economic and public health outcomes. The political context in which sport policy is acted out has perhaps inevitably presented national sport policy as unequivocally at one or other end of this spectrum although the reality is always more nuanced. Hylton and Totten (2008) suggest that sports development intervention exists along a continuum that ranges from at one extreme an emphasis that is purely sport-related development outcomes to at the other extreme initiatives that are predominantly focused on community well-being. It could be argued that this politicisation process of sport policy with five to 10 yearly seismic shifts in positioning, at least in

the rhetoric of sport if less in the reality, has worked to the overall detriment of achieving sustained impacts on mass participation or delivering wider public policy outcomes (Houlihan, 2011; Collins, 2010b).

Recent experience is illustrative. Sport England was categorical in its '2008 to 11 Strategy' that it was 'sport first' and 'health and other outcomes second',

In the future Sport England's role will be to focus exclusively on sport. Sport can and does play a major role in achieving wider social and economic benefits – notably on the health front. However, the driving force behind the strategy and investment is to address the needs of sport participants across the country. This provides a clear distinction with the physical activity agenda being driven by a number of departments, including the Department of Health and Department of Transport.

(Sport England, 2008, p. 1)

Eight years on, post the London Olympic Games and missed sport participation legacy targets, the latest Government and Sport England strategies (H. M. Government, 2015; Sport England, 2016) have swung the pendulum firmly back towards both a very wide definition of 'sport', which extends well into the informal domain of physical activity, and an instrumental 'sport for good' orientation. This shift is presented unequivocally by the Minister for Sport in her foreword where she states,

At the heart of this new strategy sit five simple but fundamental outcomes: physical health, mental health, individual development, social and community development and economic development. It is these outcomes that will define who we fund, what we fund and where our priorities lie in future. It sets the pathway for sport and physical activity for the next decade and beyond.

(H. M. Government, 2015, p. 1)

An outside interested observer might be less sanguine about the longevity of this newest emphasis in public policy for sport.

It is important to understand where sporting capital theory sits in relation to these changing policy contexts. We need to be clear that 'sporting capital' exists in the same way that say human capital exists, independent of whether government prioritises it, invests in it, values it in its own right or values it as a means to achieving something else. Sporting capital provides the fundamental building blocks that underpin individual motivation to take part in sport. Whether the rationale stops at sport for its own sake or extends beyond this to sport for good, building sporting capital is the primary means to achieving both these ends and in the latter case has the added benefits associated with the transferability of capitals. The simple logic is as follows:

government intervention to increase sporting capital and extend its reach to a wider cross section of people leads to more sustained participation which in turn leads to improved health, education, social cohesion, economic benefit and so on. Of course this simple logic is in reality far from simple and is beset with issues of cause and effect, claims, counter claims and 'over claims' and with what Coalter (2007b) has termed the issue of 'necessary and sufficient conditions'.

The principal position that I take in this book is that: 1) having the requisite level of sporting capital is a necessary condition to participate in sport at all and particularly to do so over the life-course; 2) that, left to their own devices most people in advantageous social, economic and cultural contexts will build high levels of sporting capital and participate in sport regularly throughout their lives with all the attendant benefits that this brings; 3) that many people in less advantageous circumstances will live their lives having never achieved the levels of sporting capital that makes participation in sport an attractive proposition that sustains their interest and engagement; 4) that many more who achieve modest levels of sporting capital experience slow attrition in those levels over time as age, life transitions and external barriers intervene to the point that militates against participation; and 5) that public policy intervention can, if directed in the right way, lift the level of sporting capital amongst those who would otherwise fall below the threshold required to engage or re-engage in active and sustained participation in sport.

The focus of this book is on sport policy in England and that is where the majority of my personal experience lies. However, over the years in the context of my research with Sport England I have been engaged in extensive European wide debates on sport policy particularly as it impacts on levels and patterns of sport participation and related social trends (UK Sport, 1999). Where appropriate I occasionally refer to these wider European experiences and draw on evidence from outside Europe. For those readers from beyond these shores I would emphasise the universal nature of sporting capital as a theoretical construct. Although socio-cultural contexts vary from country to country, the building blocks of sporting capital as they apply to each individual remain the same albeit with limitless permutations. However, to the extent that levels of participation in sport are different in different countries it is reasonable to postulate that overall aggregate levels of sporting capital also vary. In Chapter 6 I present statistics on the levels of sporting capital in England. My hypothesis, as yet untested, is that a similar study in say Sweden, Finland, Denmark or Norway where participation rates are higher than in England would reveal higher aggregate levels of sporting capital across the population and importantly higher levels amongst women, ethnic minorities and lower socio-economic groups. Once established, unpicking and understanding the root causes of these differences would provide useful comparative insights that could support more

effective public policy intervention in all countries concerned and I discuss this more fully in Chapter 9.

I firmly believe that there are clear, tangible recommendations emerging from sporting capital theory that are relevant to policy and practice. At a macro level the theory challenges prevailing policy emphases that have focused on supply, increasing opportunity, simplistic views on social marketing, the impact of major events and influence of role models, at the expense of more sophisticated demand side and individual capacity building intervention. The theory also has a lot to say about the structural inequalities in sports participation that relate in particular to social class and gender and their antecedents. At a micro level, through better profiling and assessment of individual levels of sporting capital, project designers and practitioners will be better able to intervene in ways that engage and meet individual needs based on current levels of sporting capital (see Chapters 8 and 9). This will impact, for example, on the types of sports and fitness activities offered, the style of delivery, including levels of competition and emphasis on intrinsic and or extrinsic motivational delivery, and the mix of gender and abilities in groups and teams. At its heart, however, sporting capital theory is not just a theory confined to individual behaviour change but embraces a system wide approach to intervention which integrates national policy with social and environmental circumstances, institutional frameworks and personal values, beliefs and traits (see Chapter 3). To this extent sporting capital theory sits within the broader socio-ecological model of behaviour referenced earlier in this chapter.

It is important to clarify what may be considered omissions from this book. The theory of sporting capital is, I would contend, a universal one insofar as whatever the context and circumstances that might apply sporting capital exists as embodied characteristics and capacities that impact on an individual's sporting behaviours. Everybody has a certain level of sporting capital although the permutations of the building blocks of that capital in relation to the psychological, physiological and social attributes and capabilities are unlimited. In this book I have focused my attention on the relationship between sporting capital, age, gender and social class as significant structural factors in society with known relationships to participation in sport. I have purposefully omitted any detailed reference to the importance and impact of sporting capital on sporting behaviours of people with a disability not because I in any way have placed this as a lower priority but because I would be unable to do the subject matter justice in the context of this book. I have in Chapter 9 made reference to the importance of prioritising research to further explore this relationship between sporting capital and participation in sport. Similarly I have omitted specific exploration or empirical analysis of the relationship between sporting capital and participation in sport by people from different ethnic groups or of people

with different sexual orientations. Again this is not to deny or devalue that relationship or its importance as an area of public policy but has been made to avoid drawing superficial conclusions particularly where they are limited by the empirical measures that define these groups in standardised ways that do not reflect their homogeneity and the different cultural contexts that influence their behaviours. This concern is highlighted by Long et al. (2009, p. 57) in their systematic review of the literature on Black and other ethnic minorities and sport,

The constant cry from the researchers is for policymakers to recognise such differences and not treat minority ethnic groups as a homogeneous category. In particular the research stresses the importance of listening more closely to particular cultural and religious needs, such as those of some South Asian women, while recognising that these needs are not representative of all South Asian women.

In closing this introduction let us not forget in our academisation of sport that at a recreational and mass participation level it is driven by the sheer pleasure and enjoyment it brings. Enjoyment is derived from the mastery of skills, by overcoming personal challenges, stretching oneself physically and mentally, working collaboratively as part of a team or just being with friends and, for some, from satisfaction and or status associated with competitive success. (Wankel and Kreisel, 1985). Tay and Diener (2011, p. 363) in their empirical analysis of needs and subjective well-being (SWB) across a sample of 123 countries concluded that, “people need to fulfill a variety of needs, it is likely that a mix of daily activities that includes mastery, social relationships, and the meeting of physical needs is required for optimal SWB.” Wankel (1993) suggested that an emphasis on enjoyment of LTPA (leisure-time physical activity) may have significant positive outcomes in two ways. One is its importance to leisure-time physical activity adherence and the second is through countering stress and facilitating positive psychological health. When sport ceases to be enjoyable, it is likely to cease to be a leisure choice. It is my contention that having high levels of sporting capital is fundamentally linked to the enhanced capacity for sport to be enjoyable and that achieving high levels of sporting capital is within the reach of most if not all individuals in developed societies. Achieving high levels of capital including human, social, cultural and sporting capital enhances the capacity for individuals to ‘thrive’ through self actualisation (Maslow, 1954), enhanced well-being and improved quality of life. It is linked to a philosophy of empowerment. Taking part in sport is always going to be a leisure choice, but it should be a choice made from a position of strength and capacity and not a negative one framed by limitation whether physical, psychological or social.

Structure of the book

Chapter 2. The public policy challenge for community sport: the need for a theoretically driven paradigm shift

This chapter sets up the central contention of the book that sports development, both as a profession and as a wider field of public policy, has lacked a coherent theoretical foundation for its work. It argues that having a more coherent and robust theory to underpin sports development policy and practice is not just a nice to have discourse for academic debate but a fundamental prerequisite for effective public policy. In setting up this argument the chapter includes a broad overview of the challenges that public policy ambitions for sport have faced since the Great Britain Sports Council was established in the early 1970s to the present day post London Olympic legacy concerns with sedentary behaviours and increasing levels of obesity. The argument is made that despite large amounts of public investment we have failed to ‘shift the curve’ of participation in sport in England or make significant inroads into structural inequalities. The chapter concludes by introducing the reader to the sporting capital conceptual model and proposing that ‘sporting capital’ offers a new lens on sport behaviours and their determinants that the author believes has the potential to unlock the door to improved understanding and in turn more effective public policy intervention that could transform the sporting landscape in England. The universal nature of sporting capital suggests that it could equally be applied to sports development policy and practice in other developed countries, albeit contextualised by their differing socio-economic, political and cultural contexts.

Chapter 3. Sporting capital – what is it, how does it relate to other forms of human, cultural and social capital and why is it important?

This chapter provides a detailed explanation of the theoretical construct of ‘sporting capital’ as “*the stock of physiological, social and psychological attributes and competencies that support and motivate an individual to participate in sport and to sustain that participation over time*” (Rowe, 2015, p 45). It explains how sporting capital theory is distinctive from, but related to, theories concerning human, cultural and social capital and explores the qualities that make them transferable. The model of sporting capital with its three domains of the physiological, psychological and social are explained and the theoretical propositions that underpin it are elaborated. The central contention that higher levels of sporting capital will predict both current and future participation probabilities is introduced. The proposition is made that people with high levels of sporting

capital are much more likely to engage in lifelong participation than their peers with low levels of sporting capital. Other important characteristics of sporting capital that relate to public policy are introduced to include the relationship between sporting capital and barriers and constraints to participation and its relationship to health outcomes, volunteering and transferable skills.

Chapter 4. Theories of sport development and behaviour change – why do we need yet another theory?

This chapter addresses the potential challenge that rather than lacking a sound theoretical foundation, although invariably not made explicit, sports development policy and practice has over the years been influenced by a number of theoretical constructs. A brief review of each of these theories concludes that their application to the public policy domain of community sports development is a not a perfect fit. The ‘sport theories’ are orientated towards elite sport success and associated talent identification, development and pathways and say little about the determinants and influences that lead to inactivity, drop out from sport at an early age or a failure to sustain sporting activity through the life-course. The theories borrowed from the wider health and physical activity public policy domains have their strength in being grounded in the fundamental drivers and determinants of behaviour change but lack the cultural and institutional specificity that distinguishes sport from informal exercise and activity in everyday life. The chapter concludes that an effective theory of sporting behaviour and its determinants must embed the very nature of sport as a synthesis of the physiological, psychological and social realities that shape an individual’s sporting behaviours within the cultural context in which they live. It argues that sporting capital does this by addressing the sport specific factors that are influential in both the decision to participate in sport at any given time and most importantly the likelihood of sustaining that participation over time.

Chapter 5. Sport participation over the life-course: linking the evidence to sporting capital theory

In this chapter I review the evidence on determinants of participation in sport across the life-course through the lens of sporting capital theory. In doing so I ‘sense check’ the theory and point towards the implications for policy and practice that flow from the new perspective it provides. This chapter takes the propositions that flow from the theory of sporting capital and explores the evidence that is relevant to those propositions. Central to the idea of sporting capital is the proposition that having more or less of it impacts not just on an individual’s current probability of playing sport but also on the likely future prospects of sustaining participation into middle

and older age. The orientation of this chapter is, therefore, to take a life-course approach to participation in sport, starting with what we know about the determinants of sport (and physical activity) in the very young, and reviewing the evidence of how early experiences impact on and track through into adulthood. The chapter includes sections on: 'sport through the life-course'; 'the early socialisation process – starting young'; 'the early learning motivational climate'; 'the importance of fundamental movement skills'; 'the importance of interpersonal relationships – socialisation beyond the family'; 'barriers and constraints – the context for participation'; and 'an ageing population – sport participation into older age'.

Chapter 6. Sporting capital in England: from measurement process to painting the landscape

This chapter explains the challenges involved in 'pinning down sporting capital' into a set of quantifiable measures. It explains how the theory was translated into an empirical model built and tested using primary survey data collected in Sport England's large-scale population-wide Active People Survey. The reader is introduced to a 10-point 'Sporting Capital Index' and the modelled relationship between sporting capital and participation rates in sport are demonstrated. Summary statistics are presented to provide a 'landscape' overview on the levels and distribution of sporting capital in England and the importance of the findings for policy and practice are highlighted.

Chapter 7. Sporting capital in England: understanding the impact of age, class, gender and sporting preferences

This chapter explores in more depth the distribution of sporting capital across different groups in the population, variations in the building blocks of sporting capital and the implication for levels of sustained participation in sport. It shows that there are structural variations in the levels of sporting capital that in turn explain variations in participation rates and raise broader concerns about the challenges involved for public policy. The second part of the chapter examines how people's frequency of participation in sport and the types of sports they are likely to participate in are affected by their levels of sporting capital. It shows how sports that are more competitive, technically demanding and requiring greater organisation are likely to be attractive to those with high levels of sporting capital but less so for those with low levels. A different sporting capital profile for 'fitness-related sports' shows them to offer a greater appeal as an entry into sport for those with low levels of sporting capital. The implications for the roles of national governing bodies of sport and for public policy more generally are discussed.

Chapter 8. Building sporting capital: applying the theory to policy and practice

This chapter takes the preceding theoretical and empirical discussion and explores the implications for policy and practice. At a macro level it explores the ingredients that might make up a national sport strategy that applies and structures its approach around the core theoretical constructs of sporting capital. This includes recommendations for the roles and responsibilities of the key agencies that impact on community sport outcomes and the implications for the ‘agents of change’ in the paid and voluntary workforce. At the micro level of project design and intervention it examines what this would look like if sporting capital ‘principles’ were applied and makes practical suggestions to help guide those in the front line of sports development. A brief exploration is made of the relevance and potential broader public policy application of sporting capital and its links through the transferability of capitals to wider social and health outcomes.

Chapter 9. Where do we go from here? Applying, refining and testing the model of sporting capital

Although acknowledged to be in its infancy, it is argued that sporting capital theory is plausible both in its internal logic and in its parallels with other well-established theories and concepts of human, cultural and social capital. Large claims are made for the potential impact sporting capital theory can have on public policy outcomes for sport. Initial empirical analysis has provided results that are promising and consistent with our broader understanding of the social profile of sport and the nature of differing sporting experiences. However, it is acknowledged that to become accepted as mainstream thinking to underpin public policy the theory requires to be systematically challenged, tested and refined through research. This chapter sets out a research agenda to include specific recommendations for ‘strategic’ research and for a programme of sporting capital-led intervention-based evaluative research to test and refine the theory in different settings to establish what works for whom and in what context. These settings could include comparative international research that might yield fascinating insights and explanations for the variability of sports participation across different countries. If successfully applied, sporting capital could become a universal language of sports development and the foundation for achieving our shared ambitions for sport in society.

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