

An ethnography of lived experience: Reframing sports-based interventions (SBIs) for ‘at-risk’ girls

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Abstract

Sports-based interventions are considered to be an effective method for developing life skills to support the physical, psychological, emotional, and social development of ‘at-risk’ young people. Under neoliberal conditions, sport and physical activity have been employed to help target, manage and develop young people into responsabilized, active, global citizens. This deterministic stance that young people are viewed both ‘as risks’ and ‘at-risk’ has fuelled anxiety over this ‘risky’ and ‘disengaged’ young person. This thesis argues that the assumed risk of young people is a pervasive concept that underpins policy, practice and scholarship on young people and sports-based interventions. An inductive ethnographic methodology was employed to demonstrate how class, risk and gender shape the lived experience of ‘at-risk’ girls participating in a football-based intervention in Scotland. This involved prolonged participation-observation over nine months, formal semi-structured interviews with adult coaches and creative arts-based focus groups with young people. Braun and Clarke’s (2006; 2019) reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyse the wealth of data collected. Bourdieu’s concepts of *habitus*, *field* and *capital* were employed as a conceptual tool to better understand sporting practices as an interaction between structure and agency. Findings suggest that dominant discourses of ‘youth-at-risk’ and gender are embedded in the programme design, the ‘coaching habitus’ of the coaches that deliver the programme, and the ‘gendered sporting habitus’ of the young people. Furthermore, findings expose how neoliberal ideologies are embedded in praxis and discourses related to young people, risk, sport and gender. Finally, the thesis demonstrates how sports-based interventions serve as sites for the reproduction and dismantlement of inequalities and explain the juxtaposition between everyday reality and lived experiences of contemporary girls participating in sport.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Acknowledgments.....	3
Table of Contents	5
List of Tables and Figures	9
Chapter One: Introduction	10
Introduction.....	10
Research Aim	13
Aspire	18
Central High School (CHS).....	19
Policy background.....	20
Programme Contents	22
Programme performance	24
A note on terminology: Adolescents, youths, young people, children.....	26
Thesis outline.....	28
Chapter Two: ‘Risky’ young lives, neoliberalism and sports-based interventions	31
Introduction.....	31
‘Risky’ young lives.....	32
Risk labelling	33
Risk and young people.....	36
Risk and sport.....	39
The evolution of neoliberal policymaking in British sport	46
The emergence of neoliberalism and an overview of its effects on policy and practice	47
The emergence of ‘Sport for All’ in the 1970s	50
The late 1990s to the 2000s: ‘Raising the Game’ for ‘A Sporting Future for All’	52
Sports-based interventions	54
PYD and SBYD.....	55

Life skills	57
SBIs: Are they truly effective?	62
Conclusion	63
Chapter Three: Bourdieu, Embodiment and the Lived Experience	65
Introduction.....	65
Bourdieu	66
Theory of practice	66
Habitus	66
Capital	67
Field	69
The sporting paradox: A site for the reproduction/decline of inequalities	70
Sport and social class	70
Sport and gender	72
Situating Bourdieu in Aspire.....	73
The body	77
A sociology of the body	77
The body under neoliberal conditions	79
Lived experience	82
Conclusion	84
Chapter Four: Methodology	86
Introduction.....	86
Research Aim	86
Methodological positioning.....	87
The ethnography.....	89
In sport and physical activity	90
Participants and recruitment.....	91
Confidentiality and anonymity.....	93
Reflexivity.....	94
Pilot study and the collection of field notes.....	94
Insider/outsider positionality	97
Entry into the field: Gaining informed consent.....	98
Methods of data collection	104

Participant observation.....	104
Participatory arts-based focus groups.....	107
Formal interviews.....	116
Data analysis.....	118
Conclusion	121
Chapter Five: Aspire – A site to manage ‘risk’	122
Introduction.....	122
Influence of a coaching habitus	123
Young people’s perceptions of the programme purpose.....	131
Rosie: ‘Sporty’	133
Alex: ‘Somewhat sporty’	134
Michelle: ‘Non-sporty’	135
The relationship of the sporting habitus to perceptions of programme purpose.....	136
Traditional forms of risk.....	148
Melissa: ‘Coming from a disadvantaged background’.....	149
Ruth: ‘At-risk of disengagement and/or offending’	153
Conclusion	158
Chapter Six: Safe spaces and the gendered sporting habitus	160
Introduction.....	160
Safe spaces	161
Becoming better people – A mantra for empowerment?	173
The sporting gendered habitus	179
Diamond: The impact of external influences and peer pressure	181
Sydnie: Navigating the pressures of ‘fitting in’ with the boys	187
Toni: Challenging traditional notions of femininity and masculinity	190
Conclusion	193
Chapter Seven: Conclusion	196
Introduction.....	196
Ethnography of ‘at-risk’ girls in sport.....	197
Disconnect between perceptions and experiences.....	201
Safe spaces, the gendered body and sporting bodies	205

Recommendations and future directions.....	208
References	211
Appendix 1. Consent form for young people & parents/guardians.....	269
Appendix 2. Consent form for coaches.....	270
Appendix 3. Fieldwork information sheet for young people	271
Appendix 4. Research information sheet for parents/guardians	272
Appendix 5. Research information sheet for coaches	274
Appendix 6. Interview guide for focus groups with young people.....	275
Appendix 7. Interview guide for interviews with coaches	277
Appendix 8. Information sheet for focus groups with young people.....	279
Appendix 9. Supplement for focus groups with young people.....	280

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1. Aspire outcomes and indicators 2019/20. (Adapted from The Scottish Football Association 2020b, p. 25).....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 2. Stages of Adolescent Development. (The World Health Organization 2021).....	27
Table 3. Grouping of participants for focus groups.	110
Figure 1. Georgia’s player card. (S1 group 1, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom).....	113
Figure 2. Rosie’s player card. (S1 group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom).....	113
Figure 3. Taylor’s player card. (S2 group 1, 14/05/2019, CHS classroom).....	114
Figure 4. Maggie’s player card. (S1 group 2, 14/05/2019, CHS classroom).....	114
Figure 5. Index cards for formal interviews with the coaches.....	117
Figure 6. Alex’s player card. (S1 focus group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom)	135
Figure 7. Michelle’s player card. (S1 focus group 1, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom).....	136
Figure 8. Niamh’s player card. (S1 focus group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom)	137
Figure 9. Alice’s player card. (S1 group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom)	145
Figure 10. Melissa’s player card. (S2 focus group 2, 14/05/2019, CHS classroom).....	150
Figure 11. Diamond’s player card. (S2 focus group 2, 14/05/2019, CHS classroom)	181
Figure 12. Toni’s player card. (S2 focus group 2, 14/05/2019, CHS classroom).....	190

Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

Global acceptance that the benefits of physical activity can transcend sport itself has fuelled the meteoric rise of sport's therapeutic role in modern society (Coalter 2007). Sport has a long history of being employed as a 'tool' for developing life skills in young people (Danish and Nellen 1997; Kokko 2016; Nichols 2007). The popular use of sports-based interventions (SBIs) has been driven by the widespread belief that sport is an ideal environment to foster and support the physical, psychological, emotional and social development of young people (see Acevedo 2012; Dworkin et al. 2003; Fraser-Thomas et al. 2005). Such interventions offer attractive policy tool to address, '...seemingly intractable social problems' (Coalter 2015, p. 19). It is postulated that through SBI-type programming, 'socially vulnerable' young people gain access to new opportunities to promote life-long learning, foster social capital and develop the knowledge and skills necessary for the knowledge economy (Jarvie 2008).

Historically, sport has been considered an important site where hegemonic masculinity is (re)constructed (Hargreaves 1994). In the past few decades, however, women's and girls' participation in sport has risen dramatically (Coakley 2011). This rise has been especially prominent in traditionally gendertyped masculine sports, or sports that are highly skilled and 'aggressive' (e.g. football, rugby, wrestling) (Bryson 1987; Senne 2016). Thus, previously dominant views of young women and girls as disengaged and physically inactive have been replaced with what may be regarded as neoliberal and postfeminist discourses of progress, aspiration and individual responsibility (Azzarito 2010). These 'Future Girls' (Heywood 2007) are seen as engaging in a range of sport and health practices and occupying more male-dominated sporting spaces and positions. In addition, they are expected to successfully respond to the shifting demands of neoliberal conditions (Azzarito 2010).

Despite its predominantly masculine stereotype, football has become one of the fastest-growing sports for girls and women in the United Kingdom (UK) (Dunn and Welford 2016; Scraton et al. 1999; Welford and Kay 2007). However, existing research has warned that increased participation does not automatically reconstruct dominant, gendered values (Cauldwell 2003). While women and girls are more prominent in football and its subcultures (e.g. refereeing, fandom, media, etc.) compared to prior decades, they continue to be constrained by traditional notions of femininity and masculinity (Bevan et al. 2021; Jeanes 2011). This concern has become the cornerstone of ongoing research aiming to understand the gendered lived experience of adult female athletes attempting to navigate ‘masculine’ sports settings (see Fisher and Dennehy 2015; Ming et al. 2016). Yet, little attention has been given to girls’ lived experiences, as most studies on this population target differences in boys’ and girls’ physical education and development (see Hills 2006; Metcalfe 2018; With-Nielsen and Pfister 2011) or playground and leisure time activities (see Glover 2017; Mannay 2013).

The lack of attention given to the lived experience of contemporary girls in organised sports settings has introduced more recent efforts to utilise SBIs as a vehicle to foster ‘life skills’ (The World Health Organization 1999). It is argued that life skills is a concept lacking a universal definition (The World Health Organization 1999). Despite its ambiguity, it has remained a popular policy outcome of SBIs for young people. The underlying concept is quite simple: girls are encouraged to develop social skills, embrace competition, and support disciplined, active participation in sport, as it is postulated that this will make them develop the individual responsibility and aspiration to accept common free market society ideals (Coakley 2011, p. 77). Such SBIs are commonly executed using ‘global citizenship education’ (GCE) (Anastasiadou et al. 2021) and life-skills based education (LBSE) models (Nasheeda et al. 2019). These pedagogic strategies are employed to support young people in their development to become well-rounded, active, yet sporty citizens who mature into productive public servants (Cope et al. 2017; Danish et al. 2005; Nasheeda et al. 2019; The Scottish Football Association 2021b).

Arguably, the young developmental goals of SBIs align closely with prominent socio-political neoliberal ideals (Peck and Tickell 1994; Steger and Roy 2010). Many studies have speculated that contemporary UK sports policies have been shaped by decades of neoliberal policymaking that espoused the power of sport as a vehicle to transform individual lives and broader society (see Girginov 2017; Houlihan and Bradbury 2013; Houlihan and White 2002). This distinctive sports governance model weaves elitist ideals into the fabric of recreational sport to impose a refined definition of ‘excellence’ (Green 2006, p. 226). Under neoliberal conditions, individuals *aspire* for excellence in all aspects of life (Green 2006), even if their chosen forms of sport are ‘recreational’ or ‘developmental’ (Coakley 2011, p. 77). This strived-for competition of youth SBIs promotes a hierarchy of winners and losers, the skilled and unskilled, the productive and inefficient – a potential undermining philosophy in the development of life skills, especially for at-risk populations (Monbiot 2016). In other words, social neoliberal constructs in developmental SBIs for at-risk young people threaten to overlook important qualities like camaraderie, trust, respect, and empathy in the name of societal productivity.

The use of ‘at-risk’ as a qualifying factor for participation is common practice in social interventions for young people (Skelton and Valentine 1998). Arguably, this reflects the increasing prominence of neoliberal policy and ‘youth-as-risk’ discourse (Vasudevan and Campano 2009). Funding distribution and programme development are often geographically distributed based on rates of unemployment, poverty and low educational attainment (Connell et al. 2009). This trend reflects the emergence of a ‘youth-as-risk’ rhetoric in the 1960-70s (Henry 2001) when a surge of urban violence and ‘delinquency’ led to an increase in social interventions that targeted certain groups (i.e. young people) (Houlihan and White 2002; Spencer 2011). Over time, ‘youth-as-risk’ rhetoric shifted to ‘youth-at-risk’, encompassing a wider catchment of all young people (Turnbull and Spence 2011, p. 939). Viewed to be ‘adults-in-the-making’ (Graham 2015, p. 1537), all young people are perceived to

possess at least some risk and government oversight is considered necessary to mitigate potential adverse outcomes in the broader community (Foster and Spencer 2011; Muncie 2009).

Whilst historically, SBIs have targeted urban, minority and gang-affiliated teenage males, their application with at-risk girls presents an opportunity to: i) promote girls' life skills; ii) break down masculine gender stereotypes in physically demanding, malestream sports, like football; and iii) challenge the necessity of social neoliberalist undertones in government-led SBIs for populations of at-risk young people. This achievement can answer the call of Austen (2009), to understand, '...the applicability of such discourses to specific individuals and social groups requires further research... with regard to the lived experiences of those theorised about' (p. 2). Therefore, the ethnographic documentation of at-risk girls' life experiences can investigate the intersections between feminism, youth development, sport, and neoliberal ideologies. Increasing attention toward new femininities and the impact of neoliberalism on policy, practice, and lived experience permits deeper understanding of how girls develop and navigate their gendered identities in traditionally masculine sport settings.

Research Aim

The goal of this research is to understand the experience of 'at-risk' girls (aged 11-13) during their participation in a life skills-based education (LBSE), sports-based intervention (SBI) delivered during school time to at-risk S1 and S2 pupils. This inductive, exploratory ethnography focused on capturing the prolonged day-to-day lived experiences in a one-year cycle of the programme, which has been given the pseudonym *Aspire* to protect the anonymity of the program site and its participants. The study's aim was developed in direct response to calls for a deeper understanding of *how* SBIs that employ LBSE operate in the day-to-day (Coalter 2007; Holt et al. 2009; Holt and Jones 2007; Jones and Lavallee 2009; Larson et al. 2004). In contrast to quantitative and mixed method methodologies that dominate SBI research, this work did not aim to engage in a traditional programme evaluation. Measuring

programme efficacy, outcome attainment and life skill development was not a focus of this research. Therefore, this research did not involve fixed, rigid research questions but rather a wider aim of understanding, capturing and presenting their lived experiences after 9-months of fieldwork. Experiences were contextualised through a lens informed by social work values and feminism to challenge normative discourses on at-risk girls in sport, neoliberalism, feminism, and sport history. The ethnographic methodology used to achieve this aim included prolonged participant observation, informal interviews, formal interviews with the adult coaches and creative arts-based focus groups with the young people. To analyse the wealth of data collected, reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006; 2019) was selected as an analytical method due to its ‘theoretical flexibility’ and ‘importance of deep reflection on, and engagement with, data’ (Braun and Clarke 2019, n.p.).

The Scottish Context

It has been argued that devolution has fostered significant policy differentiation amongst the devolved governments in the UK (Stewart 2004). Devolution aimed to increase the power and control of local governments, reduce bureaucracy, and decentralise decision-making and service delivery (McAteer and Bennett 2005). It encouraged the devolved states to develop policies that are designed to specifically address their unique socioeconomic conditions (Coles et al. 2016). Even though its social policy outcomes are similar to the other devolved governments and the wider UK, Scottish policymaking has distinguished itself through its decision-making methodology. This ‘Scottish distinctiveness’ emphasises the role of interpersonal relationships in the organisation and delivery of social welfare and education (Mooney and Poole 2004). This thought reinforces assumptions that Scotland is collaborative and ‘...more committed to social democracy’ (Mooney and Poole 2004, p. 459). Devolution highlighted how this group identity could exacerbate social exclusion and inequality whilst also providing an opportunity to incorporate the voices of the ‘disadvantaged’ in policymaking (Scott and Mooney 2009). However, over time, ‘...identity politics has been transformed from differences between groups and related social exclusion to a greater focus on a more essentialist

and social democratic notion of “Scottishness” (Scott and Mooney 2009, p. 381). Thus, tackling poverty is viewed to be integral to developing a more unified and prosperous Scotland.

In 2008, the Scottish Government proposed *Achieving our Potential* (AoP), an approach to reduce inequality and empower individuals, the community and Scotland as a whole (The Scottish Government 2008). The AoP framework outlined the joint approach between the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) to address inequality and poverty. Funding devolvement aimed to allow local authorities to make decisions that suit the needs of their constituents (The Scottish Government 2008). Scott and Mooney (2009) argue that this partnership with COSLA is evidence of the desire of the Scottish Government to shift responsibility to local authorities. Thus, paradoxically, whilst the Scottish Government has emphasised its priorities of social exclusion and social justice in its policymaking, it remains tethered to the broader neoliberalist UK framework. This tension becomes evident in Scottish education and child protection policies.

The ‘Ambitious, Excellent Schools’ agenda (The Scottish Executive 2004) represents how Scotland’s approaches to education policymaking have sometimes been contradictory. In this report, the influence of neoliberal thought is paramount. For example, the foreword states,

In ambitious, excellent schools, young people get the best opportunity to realise their full potential. We want all Scottish schools to be truly excellent. We want them to reach higher and we will support them in doing so, ensuring that no individual or community is left behind in the process. (The Scottish Executive 2004, p. 2)

However, it continues to emphasise that:

It ranges across actions to heighten expectations, to give more freedom for teachers and schools, greater choice and opportunity for pupils and better

support for learning and to create tougher, intelligent accountabilities. (The Scottish Executive 2004, p. 3)

The emphasis on ‘choice’ stresses increased diversity in comprehensive academic provisions; however, ‘...within a framework that stressed the centrality of the principle of comprehensive provision’ (Arnott and Ozga 2016, p. 4). Thus, individual choice is encouraged, but only through delineated provisions aimed at enhancing academic achievement and, ultimately, the well-being of individuals and communities as a whole.

Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) is a children’s policy framework that promotes children’s well-being in Scotland (The Scottish Government 2012). Grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), GIRFEC promotes a rights-based, child-centred approach to child welfare policy and practice (Coles et al. 2016). Through early intervention and prevention, GIRFEC builds on a broader government commitment to reduce inequality and improve outcomes for all young people (The Scottish Government 2012). A person-centred perspective characterises it through universal services to, ‘...ensure they can develop, reach their full potential, and become successful, confident, and responsible citizens’ (Coles et al. 2016, n.p.). It has been argued that GIRFEC reflects the ‘Scottish distinctiveness’ towards policymaking through its cooperative approach to developing and implementing policy (Mooney and Poole 2004). Principles of social justice and prevention have characterised this policy through evidence-based, solution-focused initiatives.

All of Scotland’s 32 local authorities have been tasked with implementing GIRFEC (The Scottish Government 2012). As a result, the rate and extent of implementation of children’s services have differed across the authorities (Coles et al. 2016). To ensure consistent delivery of GIRFEC across the country, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 was introduced (McCormack 2014). This legislation touched on a broader range of policy areas, including kinship care, care leavers and early education (The Scottish Parliament 2014). In addition, it provided a more

comprehensive understanding of children's well-being by using the 8 SHANARRI well-being indications (The Scottish Parliament 2014). However, it has been argued that the use of the SHANARRI indicators only reflects a standardised and specified image of well-being (Coles et al. 2016). This contributes to the ongoing debate regarding 'youth-at-risk' discourse, which positions *all* young people as inherently subject to risk, in one form or another (Vasudevan and Campano 2009). This highlights the embeddedness of neoliberal concepts in policy for children and young people in Scotland.

GIRFEC is grounded in notions of resilience and emphasises the role of resilience as a protective factor in children's well-being (Coles et al. 2016). Recent consultation on statutory guidance has suggested that additional clarification on 'well-being' is essential (Tisdall 2015). In addition, it has been argued that GIRFEC and other children's policies fail to address the wider sociopolitical and structural causes and effects of poverty and inequality (Ben-Arieh 2006). Therefore, this emphasis on resilience and individual strengths does not account for broader challenges that may keep children and young people in conditions that perpetuate risk and need. This contributes to broader discourse on the dichotomous nature of risk and resilience. Joseph (2013) argues that resilience is a form of governmentality that emphasises individual responsibility:

...these approaches conceptualise the social order in such a way that is consistent with neoliberal practices of governance. A belief in the contingency and complexity of adaptive systems supports the sociological view that society is moving away from enduring social relations based on such things as class, nation-state and social identity in favour of a view of the world as comprising individualised consumer-citizens with their own life-pursuits. Resilience fits with a social ontology that urges us to turn from a concern with the outside world to a concern with our own subjectivity, our adaptability, our reflexive understanding, our own risk assessments, our knowledge acquisition, and above all else, our responsible decision-making. (pp. 39-40)

This resilience-focused, asset-based approach to policy on children and young people only emphasises the development of a more resistant, ‘stronger’ young person (Davidson and Carlin 2019). Resilience discourse has been criticised for its neoliberal undertones, perpetuating the assumption that individuals are responsible for overcoming adversity (Joseph 2013; Ungar 2006). It is argued that, ‘...the “Scottish approach” over-emphasises individual assets and actions, shifting attention away from the structural determinants of health, education and well-being inequalities across the life course’ (Davidson and Carlin 2019, p. 2). ‘Resilience’ and ‘adaptation to adversity’ is commonly measured through the achievement of defined competencies in academic, recreational and sporting endeavours (Gilligan 2006). This trend has been especially prominent in risk-based interventions that pervade academic and sport settings. The SBI used in this present research, *Aspire*, has been born from this trend.

Aspire

The pseudonym *Aspire* reflects the everyday language used by staff when speaking with participants, as well as the importance of ‘aspiration’ and the rhetoric of individual responsibility that pervades youth development and SBI discourse (Pimlott-Wilson 2017). Through structured football programming delivered by licensed coaches, *Aspire* aims to develop the ‘person first, player second’ (The Scottish Football Association 2016, p. 1). This ethos of life skill development is reflected in its target outcomes, in which young people should, ‘...build their capacity and confidence, increase physical and social skills, improve behaviour and aspirations, increase their overall wellbeing, increase school attendance and attainment, and reach positive destinations’ (The Scottish Football Association 2020a, n.p.). The programme focuses on ‘targeting’ young people in S1 and S2 who have been identified to be ‘at-risk’ of exclusion, at risk of offending, or coming from disadvantaged backgrounds (The Scottish Football Association 2016). Participating schools serve local communities impacted by multiple indexes of deprivation (The Scottish Football Association 2020a).

Situated within the Scottish Football Association's (SFA) National Strategy for the Grassroots Game as a 'Skills for Life' programme, Aspire is,

...first and foremost a project aimed at developing the social and academic skills of young people during their first and second year of high school. We work on the basis that many skills developed while working in a football environment are transferable to school, work, and social situations. (The Scottish Football Association 2012, n.p.)

Regarded as a traditional SBI, Aspire assumes that if, '...the pupils get football every day, that is the hook...' to increase school attendance and engagement (The Scottish Football Association 2018, n.p.). This engagement permits a secondary outcome: the development of transferable 'skills for life' (The Scottish Football Association 2020, n.p.).

Central High School (CHS)

Nestled between two semi-rural villages in the Scottish Lowlands, Central High School (CHS) serves over 1000 pupils living in one of the most deprived areas in the country (The Scottish Government 2020b). In the most recent Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), its catchment area reports high school poverty rates, families applying for crisis grants and support from local foodbanks, high levels of unemployment, and chronically low income (The Scottish Government 2020b). The SIMD is often used to target 'deprived' populations that could benefit from intervention programmes focused on the reduction of socioeconomic inequalities in health (Fischbacher 2014). This particular Aspire site is located in a local council authority that reported the 6th-highest child poverty rate in Scotland with, ~25% of young people aged 16-19 experiencing disengagement in education and work (The Scottish Government 2020b). Therefore, indicators from the SIMD indicate that this local authority is a prime target for additional funding support and intervention-based programming.

For local authorities that are characterised by economic deprivation, additional funding support aims to target individual schools with additional support needs. For

example, the Pupil Equity Fund aims, ‘...to use education to improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty, with a focus on tackling the poverty-related attainment gap’ (The Scottish Government 2022). This funding is ring-fenced for specific schools based on Free Meal Entitlement and focuses on supporting interventions that seek to improve literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing outcomes (The Scottish Government 2022). Central HS is one school that has benefitted from this funding, focusing on initiatives that improve approaches to family engagement and targeted interventions focused on supporting documented support needs (Clackmannanshire Council 2019). Therefore, this location demonstrates an exceptional need for conducting an LBSE intervention aimed at retaining young people in educational attainment and the workforce.

Policy background

In 2008, Aspire was developed by the Scottish Football Association in partnership with the Scottish Government’s CashBack for Communities initiative (The Scottish Football Association 2020b). The CashBack for Communities initiative is a Scottish Government programme that reallocates funds recovered from criminals under the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) to support programmes for young people that, ‘...expand young people’s horizons and increase the opportunities they have to develop their interests and skills’ (CashBack for Communities 2021, n.p.). Its policy aim is summarised as follows:

The long-term aim of CashBack is to contribute towards achieving the national outcomes of the Scottish Government as they relate to Justice, but it also links in with health via increased physical activity amongst young people and informal education on the benefits of healthy eating and dangers of drink and drugs (Ahmad 2010, p. 9)

As a result of this partnership with CashBack for Communities, Aspire offers a diversionary activity for ‘at-risk’ young people to promote physical health and prosocial behaviours whilst simultaneously acting as a deterrent to anti-social and criminal activity.

More importantly, CashBack for Communities reflects the UK's neoliberal governmentality where sport serves as a policy tool to introduce social neoliberal ideologies. Such strategies were common in the 1960-70s, alongside increasing rates of crime and gang behaviour in urban inner cities (Coalter 2007; Green 2006). Under neoliberal conditions, deviance became enmeshed with poor educational attainment and disengagement in post-education employment (Simmons and Thompson 2013). As a result, young lives became subject to scrutiny and pervasive notions of risk (Austen 2009), perpetuating a reductionist approach to young lives (Brotherton et al. 2010). Despite this assertion, programmes like Aspire have benefitted from widespread support due to its perceived 'transformative effect' described by Justice Secretary, Humza Yousaf:

CashBack is a unique and potentially life-transforming programme that helps expand young people's horizons and supports them to realise their ambitions and reach their full potential. (Scottish Financial News 2020, n.p.)

Under this set of ideals, Aspire offers the opportunity to challenge how notions of risk hold (or do not hold) prominence in the lives of young people.

In a report commissioned by the Observatory for Sport (OSS) in Scotland in 2019 offered numerous 'harrowing insights' about the 'gender gap' in Scottish sport and physical activity participation (Rowe 2019). After about ten years of age, girls' participation in sport drops markedly throughout adolescence (Rowe 2019). By age 13-15, approximately 55% of girls do not participate in sport and only 11% meet physical activity guidelines (as of 2016) (Rowe 2019). This represents a 22% decrease in girls meeting recommended physical activity guidelines from ages 8-10 to 13-15 (Rowe 2019). As a result of this 'gender gap', girls have become popular target populations for interventions aimed at increasing physical activity and participation in sport. This served as part of the rationale for the creation of this girls-only SBI.

At its inception in 2008, Aspire selected 12 secondary schools to host the inaugural cohorts of the programme and has grown to reach 44 secondary schools in the past decade (The Scottish Football Association 2018). Despite this growth, the majority of Aspire sites serve

a population comprised of boys: only 10 of 44 schools (23%) have a dedicated girl's-only programme. Of the 1,236 pupils involved in the 2019/20 cycle, only 374 (30%) were girls (The Scottish Football Association 2020a). Additionally, all sites, whether mixed, girls-only or boys-only, follow the same programme design and outcomes. Thus, Aspire provided a novel opportunity to investigate a significant lack of critical consideration of girls' unique experiences across all programme aspects. To gain a deeper understanding of the lived experience of girls participating in a girls-only programme, Central High School's (CHS) girls-only programme was selected as the field site for this research.

To address the needs of this population, CHS offers numerous school time provisions, with Aspire being one of its longest standing sites. CHS was one of the first schools in Scotland to offer separate girls-only and boys-only Aspire programmes. This division departed from the typically limited female participation. Therefore, this research selected CHS as a field site to explore issues of gender and social status whilst also investigating the interaction of social neoliberal ideologies and feminism within the girls-only cohort.

Programme Contents

Aspire is a prominent part of the SFA's National Strategy for the Grassroots Game as a 'Skills for Life' programme intending to nurture life skills and football technical development. The programme employs a three-pronged educational strategy that features: 1) regularly timetabled football sessions, 2) theory sessions and 3) participation in training that leads to a qualification (The Scottish Football Association 2016). While individual schools are permitted flexibility in their design, each Aspire programme must incorporate these core components.

Football sessions are strictly recreational, excluding formalised, league-based competition. This departure from a competitive-based environment gives, '...every player – regardless of ability – every chance to fulfil their potential and develop skills that come through participation in sport' (The Scottish Football Association 2016, p. 3). Football sessions are timetabled into pupils' schedules and occur three

to five times weekly (The Scottish Football Association 2020a). Sessions are delivered by an SFA-licensed coach and aim to develop four key areas:

- 1) Technical Skills (e.g., passing, shooting, control, finishing, etc.)
- 2) Tactical Skills (e.g., defending, attacking, 4v4, etc.)
- 3) Physical Skills (e.g., stamina, strength, speed, agility, etc.)
- 4) Mental Skills (e.g., mental strength, focus, discipline, etc.)

(The Scottish Football Association 2016, p. 3)

Growth areas delivered through football sessions are supplemented with classroom-based theory sessions, which, ‘...have been mapped by education professionals against Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) in order to assist the school to map the progress of the pupils in Aspire alongside their other subjects’ (The Scottish Football Association 2016, p. 3). Using football-related themes and topics, classroom sessions cover holistic educational attainment, including: i) literacy and numeracy (e.g. match report writing and the business of football); ii) sport psychology (e.g. goal setting and positive mindsets); iii) health and wellbeing (e.g. diet and nutrition); and iv) evaluation (e.g. self-awareness and performance analysis) (The Scottish Football Association 2016). Theory sessions assist young people in extrapolating football-based skills into real life contexts in a safe and inviting environment.

The final prong of Aspire’s educational strategy involves young people’s participation in the Youth Scotland Dynamic Youth Awards (DYA). The DYA aims to translate attainment into qualifications for professional development and workforce productivity for at-risk young people. Through peer and self-assessment, young people (aged 10-14) can earn credit towards further accreditation through the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Participation in DYA, ‘...encourages young people to take increasing responsibility in their own future...’, and, ‘...continuing participation and increasing responsibility’ (The Scottish Football Association 2016, p. 3).

Programme performance

To measure the successful execution of its LSBE approach, Aspire has defined life skill development as the primary programme outcome. The most recent 2019-20 cycle demonstrates the perceived ongoing success of the programme (Table 1). These statistics demonstrate a high level of outcome attainment. However, they are deduced from the perspective of adult stakeholders only. An external (and only) evaluation available on Aspire utilised a mixed method approach to collect evidence from participants and adult stakeholders (Ahmad 2010).

Outcomes and Indicators	Percentage of Young People Achieving Outcome
Build their capacity and confidence	98%
Increase physical and personal skills	100%
Improve behaviour and aspirations	90%
Increase their overall wellbeing	96%
Increase school attendance and attainment	98%
Reach positive destinations (via improved community links)	90%

Table 1. Aspire outcomes and indicators 2019/20. (Adapted from The Scottish Football Association 2020b, p. 25)

Ahmad's (2010) external evaluation employed a mixed-method approach, including self-reported questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and passive observations. Young people were asked open- and closed-ended questions about why they thought they were selected for Aspire and if there were, '...any concerns regarding their behaviour before they were selected' (Ahmad 2010, p. 5). Parents were asked questions regarding behavioural and school-related changes observed as a result of participation in Aspire and perceptions regarding why their child was included in the programme (Ahmad 2010). On the other hand, teachers were asked about, '...their

views and opinions on delivering these activities and perceived ‘attitude’ changes’ in the young people (Ahmad 2010, p. 6).

While informative, this methodology and the study’s results face several limitations. Firstly, only 10 of 184 participants (5.43%) were girls, significantly underreporting their lived experiences. Secondly, no information specified if girls participated in a mixed boys/girls or girls-only programme, which could significantly impact their developmental processes and engagement in Aspire. Thirdly, this programme evaluation used distinctly different focus questionnaires for participants and parents compared to coaches. The questionnaires for participants and parents included similar questions regarding knowledge of the purpose for referral and school attendance and achievement-based questions. However, coach questionnaires only focused on football-based and life skills-based parameters. This prevented a much broader examination of the programme’s purpose among all persons involved in its execution and success.

Ahmad (2010) did acknowledge a limitation to the number of semi-structured interviews completed in an attempt to, ‘...cause the least disruption to the young peoples’ and teachers’ school routine (p. 7). Whilst Ahmad (2010) explained that interviews with parents and pupils would be too time intrusive, she failed to explain why only external stakeholders at the school were involved in semi-structured interviews, not coaches. This evaluation was also completed while Aspire was still a relatively new programme, warranting the need for this research to explore similar programme goals almost a decade later. Finally, observation data appeared to be from only one visit to each of the six participating schools. They focused on what appeared to be process-oriented phenomena related to the *doing of* football. This introduces the need for in-depth examination and observation of young people’s lived experiences.

The limitations of Ahmad’s (2010) evaluation represent the disconnect between its funding body (CashBack for Communities) and its organising body (The Scottish

Football Association). As discussed previously, the outcome of Aspire is to increase mass football participation alongside life skill development (The Scottish Football Association 2018). CashBack, however, is, ‘...informed by an understanding that sport and leisure activities have an important role in preventing anti-social behaviour’, to prevent ‘youth offending’ (Ahmad 2010, p. 10). Therefore, despite reports that Aspire is efficacious at realising both the Scottish FA and CashBack outcomes (see Table 1; Ahmad 2010), there is limited knowledge on gender-specific (particularly girls) experiences, prolonged lived experiences, and the nuanced aspects of participation that fall outside the normative catchment of SBI and funding evaluations. The Aspire evaluations have, to date, failed to address what Coalter (2007) describes as the ‘unquantifiable’; the more abstract, hidden qualities of sport participation. This thesis, therefore, answers the call set forth by researchers to, ‘...access what goes on within programs; what youth experience, how development occurs, or what effective youth practitioners do to support development’ (Larson et al. 2004, p. 541).

A note on terminology: Adolescents, youths, young people, children

The terms adolescent, child, youth and young person are often used interchangeably, with slight definitional and categorical variation across sectors and cultures. Adolescence is generally defined as the transitional phase of life between childhood and adulthood (Lerner et al. 2006). In this period of development, individuals experience biological maturation and transition through significant changes in social roles and expectations (Curtis 2015). Adolescence has been theorised in terms of biological, moral, psychosocial and cognitive development. Often, these theories of adolescence depict this phase of human development as a series of staged, age-dependent phases. A thorough overview of these models goes beyond the purposes of this thesis, but it is essential to note. The use of reductive age-based categorisations of adolescence does not consider potentially significant cultural differences and the complex nature of contemporary adolescence (Lesko 2012). Table 2 displays a helpful example of how these age-dependent stages are often depicted. Employed as an educational tool in a participant handbook for one of

WHO's Integrated Management of Adolescent and Adult Illness (IMAI) modules focused on working with adolescents and young adults living with HIV (The World Health Organization 2021). Despite predominantly operating in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, IMAI employs a primarily Western model of adolescence. Therefore, the use of this age-based, staged model may be inappropriate for the individuals and communities being served (Sawyer et al. 2018). This example emphasises the importance of thoughtful consideration of terminology and the cultural and contextual implications of use.

Stages of Adolescent Development			
	EARLY 10-15 years	MIDDLE 14-17 years	LATE 16-19 years
Growth of body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secondary sexual characteristics appear Rapid growth reaches a peak 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secondary sexual characteristics advance Growth slows down Has reached approximately 95% of adult growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physically mature
Growth of brain (Prefrontal cortex)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brain growth occurs Influence on social and problem solving skills 	
Cognition (ability to get knowledge through different ways of thinking)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses concrete thinking ("here and now") Does not understand how a present action has result in the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thinking can be more abstract (theoretical) but goes back to concrete thinking under stress Better understands results of own actions Very self-absorbed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most thinking is now abstract Plans for the future Understands how choices and decisions now have an affect on the future
Psychological and social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spends time thinking about rapid physical growth and body image (how others see them) Frequent changes in mood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates their body image Thinks a lot about impractical or impossible dreams Feels very powerful Experiments with sex, drugs, friends, risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans and follows long term goals Usually comfortable with own body image Understands right from wrong (morally and ethically)
Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Struggles with rules about independence/dependence Argues and is disobedient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Argues with people in authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moving from a child-parent/guardian relationship to a more equal adult-adult relationship
Peer group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Important for their development Intense friendships with same sex Contact with opposite sex in groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong peer friendships Peer group most important and determines behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decisions/values less influenced by peers in favour of individual friendships Selection of partner based on individual choice rather than what others think
Sexuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-exploration and evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forms stable relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mutual and balanced sexual relations

Participants manual: IMAI one-day or orientation on adolescents living with HIV (World Health Organization, 2010).

Table 1. Stages of Adolescent Development. (The World Health Organization 2021)

These terms are often bounded by age ranges in a legal and policy sense. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines *adolescents* as individuals between the ages of 10 and 19 (The World Health Organization 2021). The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) defines all individuals under the age of 18 years old as a *child* to adhere to dominant legal ages for adulthood (The World Health Organization 2021). Scots Law is grounded in this UNCRC charter and maintains

the use of *child* for young people under 18 (The Scottish Government 2021). In addition, the UN also employs the term *youth* for individuals aged 15-24 years, and *young people* for individuals aged 10-24 years (The World Health Organization 2021). WHO explains the distinction between the use of these categorisations:

We have, therefore, decided to focus on adolescents in a publication that has *adolescents* in the title. So, we avoid defining “adolescent” (10-19), “youth” (20-24) and “young people” (10-24) by age spans and then using the words interchangeably. (The World Health Organization 2021, n.p.)

Scottish Government policy papers often employ the terminology ‘children and young people’ (see The Scottish Government 2018a). This is evident, for example, in its National Policy on Protecting Scotland’s Children and Young People. This phraseology is embedded in the document:

How we protect our *children and young people* is fundamental to enabling them to reach their full potential, by allowing each child to be safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included. (The Scottish Government 2018b)

Whilst *young people (or person)* cover an extensive age range, this term was deemed the most appropriate for this research despite participants aged only 11-13 years. The use of a broader, less age-restrictive term allows consideration of potential differences in biological and social maturation within the programme. It buffers the reliance on age-based divides that only fixate on defined social roles of childhood, adolescence and adulthood, further accepting the variance and unpredictability of this transitional phase (Gordon 2016).

Thesis outline

This chapter has introduced the overarching aim guiding this research and presented the case study selected to achieve this aim. The selection of Aspire’s LSBE, football-based SBI, was guided by existing calls seeking a deeper understanding of the day-to-day processes and lived experience of ‘at-risk’ girls participating in these types of intervention programmes (Coalter 2007; Jones and Lavalley 2009). This review of Aspire will examine not only the lived experience of the young people but

also the interconnection of critical themes such as feminism, neoliberalism, sport culture and youth development.

Chapters Two and Three provide a contextual backdrop to this research by outlining the key conceptual areas of this study. Chapter Two unpacks historical and contemporary perceptions of 'risky' young lives and discusses the evolution of neoliberal policymaking in sport and youth policy in the UK. This chapter concludes with an overview of sports-based interventions. Chapter Three shifts focus toward key theoretical and conceptual lenses that have proved valuable in exploring the relationship between everyday life, women and sport. It will introduce Bourdieu's (1984) concepts of *habitus*, *field* and *capital* while providing an overview of literature related to the sociology of the body and the concept of the lived experience.

Chapter Four outlines the methodology and ethnographic design of this study. This includes an overview related to the epistemological and ontological stance, researcher positionality and reflexivity. It accounts for the phases of fieldwork, including entry into the field, obtaining and re-negotiating consent and termination. The chapter then discusses data collection methods, including prolonged participant observation, informal and formal interviews, and creative arts-based focus groups. It concludes by summarising the selected method of data analysis: a reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006; 2019). The use of Bourdieu's concepts will, '...attempt to make sense of the relationship between the objective social structures (institutions, discourses, fields, ideologies) and everyday practices (what people do, and why they do it)' (Webb et al. 2002, p. 1). Integrating Bourdieu in this analysis and context provides an opportunity to challenge normative risk discourse about young people to learn about, '...how these labels are actively interpreted and contested by young people' (Fraser and Atkinson 2014, p. 158). This principle lies at the crux of this research: discourse *about* young people is rarely constructed *by* young people.

Chapters Five and Six present the key themes generated through the reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006; 2019) whilst introducing some of the stories and made material of the young people. Chapter Five focuses on the primary theme of Aspire as a forum for life skill development. This analysis compares the perceptions of the coaches and the young people as it relates to the programme purpose and notions of 'being at-risk'. Chapter Six expands on this evaluation using an in-depth examination of themes related to the gendered, embodied experiences of the girls in the programme.

Finally, Chapter Seven provides a discussion and conclusion that exposes the hidden ways in which neoliberal ideologies are embedded in praxis and discourse. These conclusions underline this study's primary aim: to understand better how SBI programming serves as a site for the reproduction and dismantlement of inequalities and how notions of aspiration are juxtaposed with the everyday reality and lived experience of contemporary girls. This chapter also addresses the broader implications of this present research and provides recommendations for future research.

Chapter Two: ‘Risky’ young lives, neoliberalism and sports-based interventions

“...who are functionally illiterate, disconnected from school, depressed, prone to drug abuse and early criminal activity, and eventually, parents of unplanned and unwanted babies. These are the children who are at high risk of never becoming responsible adults.” (Dryfoos 1990, pp. 3)

Introduction

In a contemporary society increasingly characterised by ‘uncertainty’, popular constructions of ‘youth-at-risk’ have dominated discourse about young people (Kelly 2000). Risk-oriented language is enmeshed in scholarship on young people (Foster and Spencer 2011). The ‘problem of adolescence’ views young people, ‘...through the usually accepted lenses of “hormones out of control,” as delinquents, or as “irrationally subject to peer pressure”’ (Lesko 2012, p. xiv). This reductionist view perpetuates the rhetoric that *all* young people are inherently ‘at-risk’ (Tait 1995). Kelly (2000) argues that, ‘...the view that all young people are potentially at-risk signals a historically novel development in attempts to regulate youthful identities’ (p. 465). Under neoliberal conditions, young people are operationalised to engage in ‘projects of the self’ and ‘responsibilization’ (Beck 1992). Therefore, policy and practice have become increasingly ‘obsessed’ with using intervention models to regulate undesirable, delinquent behaviours and outcomes (Kelly 2000; Sukarieh and Tannock 2008).

Central to this thesis is understanding how broader socio-political ideologies and scholarship shape contemporary sports-based interventions. This present chapter will outline the key themes that shape this. It will begin with an overview of dominant discourses that perpetuates the view that young people are inherently risk-laden. It will continue by charting key political shifts that shaped the evolution of neoliberal policymaking in British sport from the 1960s to the present. The chapter will conclude with an overview of academic scholarship on life skills and sports-

based interventions. Despite the interconnectedness of the fields of youth development, education, sport policy and sport and physical activity, there is a paucity of thorough overviews that critically analyse how the fields complement, disrupt and interact with one another. This has contributed to the disconnect between how we theorise about young people, how we speak about young people and how we work with young people (Danish et al. 2006). Therefore, this overview attempts to answer calls by Lesko (1996) to ‘de-naturalize adolescence’ by unpacking dominant discourses on young lives to understand the ways in which adolescence is viewed, researched and politicised today.

‘Risky’ young lives

‘The ready construction of young people into numerous public problems – most recently, violent Internet-addicted suburbanites, teenage mothers, and urban criminals – suggests that teenagers are complex and malleable accomplishments with broad political and social effects. (Lesko 2012, pp. 3-4)

In this quote, Lesko (2012) touches upon what Foster and Spencer (2011) describe as, ‘...an indelible, axiomatic connecting line drawn between youth/young people and the future’ (p. 128). A social construction of young lives views this period of development as only significant in relation to their future outcomes in adulthood (Lee 2001). Therefore, young people are viewed as ‘human becomings’ instead of ‘human beings’ (Uprichard 2008, p. 304). Management of this relationship between ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ is pervasive in policy and practice regarding young people (Uprichard 2008). Under conditions of late modernity, young people are urged to *become* more self-determined and individualised (Beck 1992). Thus, this positions the development of young people as a public problem; young people are simultaneously a source of anxiety and future progress (Lesko 2012). This is the central concept that underpins this research; young people are viewed ‘as risks’ and to be ‘at-risk’ in contemporary society (Beck 1992; Young 2007). Arguably, the social construction of adolescence (and young people in general) have been shaped

by five dominant discourses in the Western world: ‘...storm, becoming, at-risk, social problem, and pleasurable consumption’ (Raby 2002, p. 425). Therefore, this section will demonstrate the ways in which these dominant discourses about ‘risky’ young people, ‘...work together to create a web that traps teenagers, in that any activity they undertake can be swept up into these discourses of adolescence, and consequently dismissed’ (Raby 2002, p. 425).

Risk labelling

Labelling, or assigning a categorisation or description to individuals and/or a group, is a practice that pervades academic scholarship, policy and practice with young people (Bernburg 2009). Labelling theory addresses the impact that label imposition has on individuals. It assumes that individuals labelled as ‘deviant’ will be subject to new problems and reactions from others due to the stigma attached to these labels (Becker 1963; Bernburg 2009; Lemert 1967). Labelling theory was initially criticised for its simplicity and lack of empirical evidence (Gibbs 1972; Gove 1970). Despite this concern, it has been readily used in attempts to understand the relationship between identity formation and dominant institutional and cultural structures (Jenkins 2008). It has remained popular in discourses of crime, mental health and young people (Sjöström 2017).

Becker’s *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (1963) is often cited as one of the most important early contributions to labelling theory. Becker (1963) argues that formal and informal rules are often broken, but there is significant variation in whether or not someone becomes labelled as deviant or an ‘outsider’. He emphasised that labelling is often not defined by the quantity or quality of infractions but rather by the reactions of others. The influence of others was central to Rosenthal and Jacobsen’s (1968) study on teacher expectations and student academic performance. Popularly coined the Pygmalion Effect, Rosenthal and Jacobsen (1968) found that academic performance correlated with the expectations of their teachers. This occurred because,

When we expect certain behaviors of others, we are likely to act in ways that make the expected behavior more likely to occur. (Rosenthal and Babad 1985)

Whilst this study has been criticised heavily for its methodological failings, it remains a seminal work in understanding the impact of external expectations on identity and deviance.

Labelling is a central construct in understanding the formation of individual and collective social identities for certain groups in specific settings. For example, Ferguson (2000) compared how school staff identified a group of 11-12 year-old American Black males in relation to their peers. These young people were identified as, 'unsalvageable', 'bad boys', 'bound for jail', and 'at risk for failure and school punishment' (Ferguson 2000). This study provides an excellent example of the relationship between what Jenkins (2008) defines as 'nominal' and 'virtual' identities (p. 99). A nominal identity, '...is the label with which the individual is identified' (Jenkins 2008, p. 99). In Ferguson's (2000) study, deviant vocabulary (e.g. 'unsalvageable', 'bad boys', 'bound for jail', etc.) implied a nominal identity characterised by deviance. Jenkins (2008) emphasises the prolonged nature of nominal identities; the realisation of this deviant identity requires, '...a cumulative labelling *process* over time' (emphasis in original, p. 99). As a result of these chronically negative perceptions, the young people reported that these labels only reinforced and perpetuated these disruptive behaviours that school staff sought to reduce (Ferguson 2000). This manifestation of prescribed labels, or their experience of living as the nominal identity, is the virtual identity (Jenkins 2009, p. 99). These nominal and virtual identities can vary significantly over time and from context to context; most importantly, '...the nominal and the virtual are aspects of the same *process*' (emphasis in original, Jenkins 2008, p. 99).

It has been argued that the process of identity formation is impacted by the internalisation and reproduction of *doxa*, or the, '...set of core values and discourses which a field articulates as its fundamental principles and which tend to be viewed

as inherently true and necessary' (Webb et al. 2002, p. xi). Language holds a significant role in the *doxa*, arguably, sustaining risk-oriented discourse about young people (Bourdieu and Eagleton 1992). This reproduces a broader regulatory and punitive system towards young lives, manifested in neoliberal policy and interventions within spaces frequently occupied by young people (i.e. school, sport, community services, etc.) (Whitely 2010). This legitimises what Fernandes et al. (2018) coins as a *neoliberal welfare doxa*, in which the 'penalisation of poverty' has become central to the British welfare state. Neoliberalism and its effects on policy and practice surrounding young people will be discussed later in this chapter. However, it is helpful to note that neoliberal ideologies have played a central part in promoting the idea that young people are agents to be 'fixed' for the sake of broader society (Hopper and Iwasaki 2017). Therefore, young people are inherently 'risky'; common labelling practices in policy and practice reproduce this assumption (Case 2006).

Risk labelling often occurs due to diagnostic, bureaucratic or best practices (Carr et al. 2006). These non-specific terms capture a range of young people categorised based on pre-existing health factors, race, gender or predisposition towards specific life outcomes (Austin 2009). This trend is common throughout policy and practice and includes a range of terms (e.g. at-risk, high-risk, underserved, vulnerable, etc.), often used interchangeably (Austin 2009). Despite the widespread use of the term, there is a lack of a universal understanding of what 'at-risk' truly means (Dryfoos 1991). To mitigate this confusion, some studies explicitly outline how risk is viewed in relation to the group and context of the study. For example, Sulimani-Aidan (2017) defines risk in relation to adverse life events (e.g. leaving care, past abuse and neglect) and specifically connects those adverse life events to specific potential barriers to success (e.g. non-existent parental support, poverty, low educational achievements and experience, etc.). However, as Foster and Spencer (2011) warn, risk (and resilience) labelling in any form can be limiting:

Granted, the language of risk and resilience does, in some ways, relieve young subjects of responsibility for factors that might be beyond their

control. However, this vocabulary is not much less stigmatizing or normative than labelling some young people ‘problems,’ ‘hoodlums,’ or ‘delinquents,’ and it leaves little room for critical social researchers to question their own relationship to governments, state intervention, and dominant assumptions about *young people* and *youth*. (p. 128)

Inspired by this caution, this thesis aims to dissect the unidirectional, power-laden nature of risk labelling in policy and practice with young people. Despite my background in social work and youth development, I quite often used risk-laden terms (i.e. disadvantage, underserved, at-risk, high-risk, targeted, etc.) with little intentional thought. This was primarily guided by organisational norms and best policy practices. At the beginning of this research process, I suddenly found myself grappling with the potentially reductive nature of certain labels, specifically those associated with ‘risk’. This chapter will attempt to disentangle the meanings behind some of the ‘labels’ used throughout this thesis in an attempt to, ‘...be intentional about choice of language so that our words reflect and empower people and communities’ (National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health 2013, p. 2). This will be achieved by outlining how ‘risk’ has been applied to scholarship on young people, within sport settings and on girls as gendered subjects.

Risk and young people

Popular discourse about young people centres around ‘risk’ and ‘uncertainty’ (Kelly 2000), a praxis that has persisted since the earliest notions of this ‘new’ phase of human development (Hall 1904). The ‘father of adolescence’, G. Stanley Hall, asserted that the stages of individual development correspond with the stages of the evolution of the human race (Hall 1904). This theory was built on the principles of Darwinism and the theory of recapitulation, and it is in this period that, ‘...the higher and more completely human traits are now born’ (Hall 1916, p. xiii). This characterises individual maturation as reflective of the movement of society from a primitive, barbaric state to a civilised one. This view vilified those who deviated from societal and biological predeterminations of the ‘civilized’ and mature adult (Hall 1916, p. 216). Hall himself placed the onus on wider society to, ‘...burn out

the vestiges of evil in their nature' (Hall 1904). He described this transition as a period of *Sturm and Drang*, or 'storm and stress' (Hall 1904). This a time, '...when all young people go through some degree of emotional and behavioural upheaval before establishing a more stable equilibrium in adulthood' (Arnett 2006, p. 186). In the century since Hall's (1904) theories emerged, certain assumptions about adolescence and young people have lingered (Lesko 1996; 2012).

It has been argued that dominant views of adolescence as 'storm and stress' are solely a social construction rather than a universal stage of development (MacLachlan 2004). This can be explained by the variance amongst societies in how and when young people progress from childhood to adulthood and dependence to independence (MacLachlan 2004). Understanding the historical, societal and political conditions that underpin lived experience uncovers and challenges dominant assumptions of 'risky' young lives (Sarigianides 2019). These deficit assumptions centres notions of instability, overt displays of emotionality, irresponsibility, selfishness, unpredictability and inability (Lesko 2012; Vasudevan and Campano 2009). This reductionist view of young lives perpetuates a deterministic stance that posits that all young people are 'at-risk' of detrimental outcomes that lead to increased difficulty in adulthood (Koball 2011).

Neoliberal discourses and the emergence of the 'risk society' have reinforced this relationship between young lives and risk (Beck 1992; Giddens 1991). According to Beck (1992), the development of a risk society is the natural outcome of industrialisation and late modernity. He argues that the changing nature of modern society gives rise to an obsession with the prevention and management of risks that were created by the progression of society itself (Beck 1992). Individuals were considered to have increased access to choices regarding lifestyle, social memberships and identity due to these shifts towards increased freedoms, the weakening of traditional class and gender restraints and increased opportunities for choice (Beck 1992). Within this surveillance state, 'freedom' was considered to be an opportunity to manifest of risky behaviours that had negative consequences to

individuals and communities (Vasudevan and Campano 2009). Some considered engagement in these risky behaviours to be a temporary escape from the challenging realities and uncertainties of daily life (Tomlinson 1998). In discourses of crime, it has been suggested that participation in criminal behaviour should be viewed as indulgences (to foster feelings of excitement and escape) rather than acts of resistance (Muncie 2009). Therefore, engagement in risky behaviours and practices became associated with the pursuit of enjoyment, pleasure and excitement in a society characterised by uncertainty, surveillance and control (Austin 2009; Tomlinson 1998).

As a result of the emergence of this risk society, all young people are viewed to possess some forms of risk and must be monitored to mitigate potential adverse outcomes to themselves and the wider community (Foster and Spencer 2011; Muncie 2009). This increase in anxieties about risk and risky behaviours has given rise to increasingly intrusive forms of regulation (Muncie 2009; Scraton 2004). Negative assumptions towards young lives have perpetuated a discourse that imposes individual blame onto young people for displaying behaviours that are viewed as undesirable (Vasudevan and Campano 2009). Arguably, however, this reductive view does not consider the role of wider social conditions that create risk (Vasudevan and Campano 2009).

Whilst the notions of risk in relation to crime and deviance have received significant attention in youth studies, the impact of an evolving society is of particular interest to this thesis. Young people today are considered to be exposed to more risks compared to previous generations (Furlong and Cartmel 2007). This includes barriers to economic independence, increased demand for a highly educated and skilled workforce, rising costs of housing, uncertainty over occupational futures and aspirations, and delayed/expedited transitions into normative conceptions of adulthood (Furlong and Cartmel 2007; Wyn and White 1997). As a result of an increased understanding of the role of structural barriers that drive these challenges, recent research has given attention to the lived experience and negotiation of these

challenges and risks within the everyday lives of young people (Cooper 2011; Cushion and Jones 2006; Kennelly 2017). Therefore, whilst previous research was dominated by inquiry on the ‘deviant’ and ‘criminal’ youth of the working class, sociological inquiry into risk and young lives now recognises the intersectional and gendered nature of lived experience (Parker 2007).

Aligned with ‘youth-at-risk’/‘youth-as-risk’ rhetoric (Turnbull and Spence 2011, p. 939), the ‘risky girl’ is viewed both *as* a risk and *at* disproportionate risk (Barron 2011). Within this ‘risky girl paradigm’, girls are targeted, ‘...more for their imagined potential to harm or be harmed than anything they have already done’ (Fyfe 2014, p. 47). Therefore, within the current neoliberal risk society, girls are viewed as agents that require management, surveillance and regulation in order to become ‘responsible citizens’ (Beck 1992). Harris (2004) argues that the emergence of ‘girl power’ discourse, ‘...encapsulates the narrative of the successful new young woman who is self-inventing, ambitious, and confident’ (Harris 2004, p. 17). This ‘can-do’ girl is inundated with ‘girl power,’ resilience, opportunity and future possibilities (Harris 2004). In contrast, the ‘at-risk’ girl requires protection and is fragile and passive (Harris 2004). Gonick (2006) argues that these contrasting discourses, ‘...participate in the production of the neoliberal girl subject with the former representing the idealized form of the self-determining individual and the latter personifying an anxiety about those who are unsuccessful in producing themselves in this way’ (Gonick 2006, p. 2). This thesis aims to demonstrate the ways in which these regulations and anxieties manifest in the girls’ experiences in sport, especially through empowerment discourses perpetuated by sports-based interventions.

Risk and sport

In the sociology of sport, the use of risk has been used primarily in literature related to high-risk and adventure sports (see Atkinson 2019; McEwan et al. 2019), injury (see Emery 2003; Fuller and Drawer 2004; Howe 2003), SBI-type interventions and community-based transformations (see Danish and Nellen 1997; Fernández-Gavira

et al. 2017; Frey 1991), identity formation (see Donnelly et al. 2007; Miller 2009; Wheaton 2004) and social and economic stratification (see Humphreys and Ruseki 2006; Taliaferro et al. 2020). In sport, risk is primarily viewed as a measurable and objective phenomenon instead of being employed as a social construct (Frey 1991; Giulianotti 2009). This is most apparent in literature on high-risk and adventure sports, where risk-taking is an assumed aspect of participation and is often associated with an individual's need for adrenaline seeking (see Atkinson 2019; Brymer 2002; Robinson 2004). However, existing research has argued that there is a misalignment of this assumption with traditional conceptualisations of risk (see Soreide et al. 2007; Storry 2003), an overly targeted research focus on risk only (Brymer et al. 2009; Brymer and Oades 2009), and a disconnect with the actual lived experiences of high-risk and adventure sport athletes (Brymer and Oades 2009).

High-risk and adventure sport athletes are often perceived to be selfish, individualistic, narcissistic and tend to be men (Bennett et al. 2003; Davidson 2008; Elmes and Barry 1999). However, research that investigates the relationship between participation in high-risk and adventure sports with lived experience reveals that the meaning-making that is involved with risk transcends sensation-seeking. For example, Pain and Pain (2005) note that whilst risk is an inherent aspect of participation, the pursuit of risk is mitigated by high levels of care, training, self-awareness, and control. Therefore, within the sporting subculture of high-risk and adventure sports, traditional assumptions regarding risk are incongruous with the lived reality of its participants. This reinforces the call set forth by labelling theory, in which risk labelling should be accompanied by an understanding of the ways in which institutional and structural discourses affect presuppositions regarding risk (Spencer 2011).

Risk is often presented in a dichotomous manner, for example, '...function/dysfunction, order/disorder, control/deviance, social organization/social disorganization, balance/unbalance, conflict/consensus, and equality/hegemony'

(Frey 1991, p. 140). Thus, risk has been viewed as something to be managed and limited to reduce risk to the wider social world. Therefore, the pervasiveness of neoliberalist notions of control and surveillance also transcends into the sporting sector (Coakley 2016). This present thesis is less concerned with traditional notions of risk in sport (i.e. risk of injury). However, it is focused on the role of the risk society and risk labelling on the lived experiences of young people. It has been noted that this represents an area of research that has been exiguously touched upon (Austin 2009; Giulianotti 2009). More research is required to understand the suitability of risk discourses on certain populations within sport subcultures, especially in relation to the lived experiences of individuals and groups being studied (Austin 2009; Giulianotti 2009).

A review of existing research that investigates the association of risk, sport and lived experience appears to be surprisingly diverse, topically, theoretically and methodologically. Despite this diversity, it appears as though 'risk' is more often employed in its more traditional form (i.e. risk of physical harm). Specifically, for girls in sport and physical activity, research focuses heavily on persistent global trends that girls are 'at risk' of disengagement from sport and physical activity. It is well-documented that there is a 'drop-off' in girls' participation in sport and physical activity during adolescence (see Baker et al. 2007; Labbrozzi et al. 2013; Manna 2014). As a result, adolescent girls disengaged from sport are considered 'at risk' of poor medical, mental health and life outcomes (Pfeiffer et al. 2007). Therefore, adolescent girls 'at risk' of this disengagement or girls that have already disengaged have become popular targets for public health interventions to increase widespread participation in this population group (Eime et al. 2018). Research on this population (girls aged 10-18) has been dominated by quantitative survey-based inquiries and time-restrictive case studies investigating participation rates, retention rates and motivation for engagement in order to inform future programming and to track improvements in participation rates (see Allender et al. 2006; Eime et al. 2013; Slater and Tiggerman 2011). Arguably, this methodological preference is grounded in state-led priorities to, '...inform policies and strategies to promote lifelong

participation, which are priorities of both sport management and public health domains' (Eime et al. 2020, n.p.).

Existing studies of this population have provided a vast range of explanations for this 'drop-off' in participation in older girls. For example, in a study investigating barriers to physical activity in adolescent girls aged 11-14 in the United States who were not physically active reported that self-consciousness was a commonly reported barrier in this group (Robbins et al. 2003). Additionally, findings showed that girls reported little motivation to be active (Robbins et al. 2003). Whitehead and Biddle (2008) reported similar findings in their study on British girls (aged 14-16). In an exploratory focus group, girls were asked to discuss their perceptions of and motivations for participating (or not participating) in physical activity (Whitehead and Biddle 2008). Findings also revealed that as girls became older, their goals and priorities outside of sport changed, which led to a significant decrease in interest in sport (Whitehead and Biddle 2008). In another focus group completed with Australian girls of the same age, girls reported that they withdrew from sport because they lost interest, felt a perceived lack of competence, insufficient time to commit to sport, bullying, concerns about appearance and image, and discomfort in playing traditionally 'masculine' sports (i.e. football, rugby, etc.) (Slater and Tiggemann 2010). These common barriers to participation have long been considered to be primary deterrents to girls' retention in sport and physical activity. Despite this knowledge, the growth of girls' participation has been slow (Women in Sport 2019). Therefore, recent calls to, '...broaden our knowledge to gain a more holistic understanding of what really matters in teenage girls' lives' (Women in Sport 2019, p. 12) have led to an increase in research employing ethnographic and creative methodologies to explore their worlds inside and outside of sport (Krane and Baird 2005). These inquiries have yielded insight into a number of under-theorised aspects of girls' lives in sport.

As marginalised and gendered subjects, girls have historically experienced resistance to their participation in sport and physical activity (Hargreaves 1994).

This long-standing marginalisation, alongside the extensive focus on poor rates of participation and the persistent barriers that reinforce this trend has positioned girls to be inherently ‘at-risk’ in sporting spaces. Recent challenges to the, ‘...essentialist assumption that girls “just aren’t interested” in sport’ have shifted focus towards new potential barriers to participation to mitigate this risk of disengagement (Cooky 2009, p. 261). More vital awareness of female-related needs and barriers has been central to this new wave of insight into the needs of ‘sporty’ girls.

A critical part of the transition from childhood to adulthood is the experience of going through puberty (Eccles et al. 2003). Despite its instrumental influence on girls’ lives, its impact on their experience in sport and physical activity settings has been incredibly limited to date. Impacts on competitive performance dominate literature on sport and puberty (see Sims 2018; Tønnessen et al. 2015), sport specialisation, biomechanics and injury (see Balgrove et al. 2017; DiCesare et al. 2019; Feeley et al. 2015; McKay et al. 2019) and psychological well-being (from a sports psychology perspective) (Jacobs et al. 2017; Kipp et al. 2018; Moore et al. 2016). These studies have focused almost exclusively on competitive and elite youth athletes, with limited attention paid to the ‘everyday’ girl involved in sport and physical activity. Arguably, these areas of research have limited applicability to recreational sport participants.

However, the recent focus on the broader needs, concerns and motivations of girls in sport has led to new areas of research, including breast health, the impacts of social media and body image (Azzarito 2010; Gilbert 2001). Additionally, popular media has brought into prominence gender-specific concerns, for example, issues of menstruation. One such example can be found on Nike’s website:

Puberty and periods shouldn’t be the reason girls lack an active life, but with all that’s going on – from periods and breast development to body odour and hair growth – puberty can be a lot to come to terms with. All of this can affect girls’ self-esteem, motivation and even enjoyment of sport. (Nike 2021, n.p.)

There has also been an influx of social media and awareness campaigns to promote girls' participation in sports. Always, an international brand of feminine hygiene products recently collaborated with Sported Foundation, a UK charity that promotes sport and physical activity for young people (Always 2021; Sported 2021). The 'Fuel Her Future' campaign, '...highlights the long-term benefits girls get from participating in sport' (Sported 2021, n.p.). A study commissioned by Always reported that 28% of girls felt they were not good enough, and 22% did not feel encouraged to keep playing sport (Sported 2021). These campaigns highlight a shift in wider society towards the normalisation of previously 'taboo' topics related to the experiences of girls and women.

In the last decade, breast health and breast knowledge have become an area of interest in sports literature. One study investigated the influence of the breast on sport and exercise participation in school girls in the United Kingdom (Scurr et al. 2016). Survey data showed that 73% of respondents aged 11-18 reported at least one breast-specific concern in sport (Scurr et al. 2016). Additionally, 46% of girls reported that their breasts affected their participation in compulsory exercise (Scurr et al. 2016). One Australian study of 16-year-old girls participating in a regional sport academy found that access to an education booklet increased bra knowledge and fit, and the level of breast support (McGhee et al. 2010). Burnett et al. (2015) investigated the influence of breast movement during exercise in females across the lifespan. Survey data on bra fit, physical activity, breast pain and breast history supported previously reported research indicating that breast movement in exercise is a barrier to many women to physical activity (Burnett et al. 2015). Respondents reported difficulties finding the right sports bra and being embarrassed by the excessive movement of their breasts (Burnett et al. 2015).

Another area of contemporary research in women and sport focuses on menstruation. Historically, discourse on sport and menstruation has focused on its impact on the performance of elite (and predominantly adult) athletes (see Findlay et al. 2020; Forrest et al. 2020). New areas of research include the use of oral

contraceptives to reduce hormone-related barriers to exercise participation (Schaumberg et al. 2018), tracking menstrual cycles to decrease sports injury (Oleka 2020) and evaluating the safety and comfort of hygiene products during exercise (de Araujo et al. 2020). Additionally, qualitative research has investigated the effects of menstruation on recreational and elite athletes. For example, Harvey et al. (2020) conducted focus groups with girls (aged 13-15) to learn more about their, ‘...experiences of, barriers to and facilitators of being active during menstruation, experiences in physical education/sports teams; and talking with others about periods and being active’ (n.p.). Girls reported that they felt underprepared to be active during menstruation and lacked knowledge and support (Harvey et al. 2020). Concerns about leakage, feeling exposed and required physical education kit for specific activities (i.e. leotards and swimming costumes) led to an avoidance of physical activity (Harvey et al. 2020). Finally, girls reported that menstruation’s physical and psychological symptoms were significant barriers (Harvey et al. 2020).

More recently, social media has become a significant aspect of modern young lives (Hamm et al. 2015; Swist et al. 2015). However, little attention has been paid to its role in mediating or acting as a barrier to sports participation. In a report by Women in Sport, the need to feel socially connected was identified as an integral aspect of girls’ lives today (Women in Sport 2019). This report linked social media use with identity formation:

We observed a tendency to ‘layer’ their social media, with numerous apps and multiple social media profiles; those which are a more honest reflection of who they are and only accessible to trusted friends and family, and other profiles for their wider circle of friends which they carefully curate to ensure they are worthy of ‘likes’ and comments. This illustrates that girls are very mindful that what they share online, portrays the best version of themselves and many don’t typically view participation in sport as a worthwhile currency to share with others. (Women in Sport 2019)

The report continued by emphasising that the high value of social media could provide a helpful avenue toward future engagement in sport (via stronger peer connections and social media influencers) (Women in Sport 2019).

A recent analysis of risk discourse on young lives in sport has also emphasised the impact of adults in the construction of cultural and political discourses on risk (Laurendeau and Konecny 2015; Messner and Musto 2015). This has created a landscape in which, ‘...kids are navigating worlds created by adults and governed by rules enforced by adults, including adult fears about “risk”’ (Messner and Musto 2015, p. 346). These discourses of risk have embedded notions of social inequality into youth sports without providing adequate attention to the daily experiences of young people who occupy these socially subservient positions (Ferguson 2000; Laurendeau and Konecny 2015; Messner and Musto 2015). Therefore, the imposition of adult-oriented notions of risk onto the understandings of lived experiences of young people risks the creation of a worldview that reflects the meaning-making of adults, not children. Meaning-making experiences in sport are considered to be significant contributors to the ongoing (re)construction of identity in young people (Annersted 2001). Embodied social experiences mediate this process within a setting shaped by existing sociocultural and political contexts (Annersted 2001). Thus, by challenging traditional notions of deficit risk models and situating young people within an appropriate social, political and historical context, a new understanding of the lived experience of young people can be explored (Messner and Musto 2015). To help achieve this aim, the next section will outline the ways in which neoliberal policymaking has affected the contemporary use of sports-based interventions as a means to reach ‘at-risk’ young people.

The evolution of neoliberal policymaking in British sport

Conceptually, neoliberalism has been challenging to define due to the messy nature of the range of ways in which it has been conceptualised, discussed and studied (Thorsen 2010; Wacquant 2012). Despite its definitional ambiguity as a theoretical and political concept, there is a lack of scholarship that approaches,

‘...neoliberalism from a sympathetic or even neutral point of view’ (Thorsen and Lie 2006, p.1). As a result, the use of neoliberalism in political and academic scholarship has, ‘...become an imprecise exhortation’, rejecting the dominance of capitalism and consumerism, and the decentralisation of the welfare state (Thorsen and Lie 2006, p. 1). Thorsen and Lie (2006) continues by advising against uncritically accepting popular opinion that, ‘...we live in the age of neoliberalism’ (Saad-Filho and Johnston 2005, p.1). Therefore, in an attempt to intentionally understand the ways in which neoliberalism has shaped and become embedded in modern sports policy, this section will outline relevant vital political events from the 1970s to the present.

Three periods of significant political shifts in the UK have been given substantial attention in sports policy literature; the emergence of neoliberal policymaking in the 1970s, the shift away from a Conservative government to a Labour-led state in the late 1990s, and New Labour’s ‘Sporting Future for All’ in the 2000s (Green 2006). These shifts from ‘sport-as-welfare’ to ‘sport for all’ have shaped modern sports policy and programming (Houlihan and Bradbury 2013). This section aims to outline these political and ideological shifts to establish a historical and political context that frames current attitudes towards the use of sport as a social tool for ‘developing’ young people. This ideology is a key feature of Aspire and sports-based interventions generally.

The emergence of neoliberalism and an overview of its effects on policy and practice

The political landscape of post-World War II Britain was characterised by modern liberalism and Keynesian economics (Peck and Tickell 2007). In the 1970s, however, high inflation, rising unemployment and increasing government deficits due to high public expenditure led to widespread criticism of Keynesian economics (Tomlinson 2007). Therefore, in response to the apparent failure of modern liberalism and the welfare state, neoliberalism emerged as a political solution to the economic and political instability of the time (Coakley 2011; Farnsworth and Irving

2018). Following a literature review on scholarship on the topic, Thorsen and Lie (2006) proposed a definition of neoliberalism that considers it to be, ‘...a loosely demarcated set of political beliefs which most prominently and prototypically include the conviction that the only legitimate purpose of the state is to safeguard individual, especially commercial, liberty’ (p. 14). This fosters a belief that the state should be dramatically reduced in size and strength, and systems governed by free market rule and free trade should be implemented (Thorsen and Lie 2006; Wacquant 2012). Central to a neoliberal ideology is the relationship between the free market and the advancement of ‘human well-being’ (Harvey 2005, p. 2). As political deregulation led to the privatisation of social programming, the burden of social responsibility and risk shifted from the state to individuals, organisations, local communities and the private sector (Brenner et al. 2009; Coakley 2011; Dubal 2010). This fostered the promotion of what Brenner et al. (2009) coins, projects of the ‘entrepreneurialization of the self’ (p. 199). Thus, the moral tenets of active citizenship and individual responsibility became valorised as welfare state solutions to reduce economic dependency (Hartman 2016; Verhoeven and Tonkens 2013). Under the guise of the ‘freedom’ that a neoliberalist ethos espouses, individuals are supported through reinvestment in pathways to the labour market (via education and training opportunities), not welfare benefits or social services (Hartman 2016; Taylor-Gooby and Leruth 2018). It has been argued that these ideological shifts have had pervasive effects on social programming *for* young people (i.e. promotion of social interventions focused on education and pathways to employment) and discourse *about* young people (i.e. promotion of individual responsibility and global citizenship, and the vilification of diversion from normative pathways) (Lens 2009; Mitchell 2001).

Arguably, the effects of this continued shift towards privatisation of the market and the dominance of staunchly conservative ideals have reinforced the belief that contribution to society is synonymous with engagement in the labour market (Brotherton et al. 2010; Garrett 2008). Brotherton et al. (2010) explains:

Policy around young in the United Kingdom in recent years has been predicated on two key assumptions, both of which it can be argued are framed by neoliberal discourses: Firstly, the growth of a view of young people as ‘human capital’ who need to be developed for an increasingly flexible and uncertain labour market; key to achieving this is the requirement that they are engaged in ‘purposeful’ activity. A second key assumption is that they are simultaneously both in danger and dangerous and hence that wider society needs to both protect and be protected from young people. (p. 193)

There are multiple issues with this streamlined pathway toward entry into employment (Wyn 2014). Firstly, this ‘efficient’ route to employment promotes the paradoxical neoliberalist messaging of freedom and choice (Hartmann and Kwauk 2011). Under these conditions, freedom and choice are indeed only viable within a predetermined, constrained set of assumptions, rules and evaluations (Ambrosio 2013). Compulsory school is the locus of this trend for young people (Ambrosio 2013; Luke and Wood 2009). Additionally, it has been argued that neoliberalism and its resultant policies employ sexist, oppressive and socially constructed assumptions of adolescence onto young people (Wyn 2014). Thus, the blame and responsibility for failure to successfully engage in the hegemonic labour market falls only onto the young people themselves (Luke and Wood 2009).

Economic instability, delayed entry into traditional adult roles, compulsory schooling and a shifting social landscape have transformed the ‘age of adolescence’ (Lesko 2012). Alongside these significant changes, the dominant neoliberalist tenets of a strong work ethic and employability have cemented their place in British education policy (Ambrosio 2013; Hursh 2005). This is evident in the language used throughout the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence (*CfE*), in which four outcomes are identified; children will be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors (Curriculum for Excellence 2004). Gamal and Swanson (2017) argue that,

In the Scottish *CfE*, global citizenship is ‘embedded’ across the curriculum as an overarching theme and educational value. ... Global citizenship acts as a broad umbrella to fulfil curriculum intentions across the school years, and it frames a stated ‘whole school’ and ‘integrated’ approach to learning thereby justifying modernist progressivity, which the term global citizenship has come to signify in general in the global domain. The ‘whole school’ and ‘integrated’ discourse is associated with governance and management discourses, and advocated through overtures to ‘life skills’ and ‘relevance.’ (p. 18)

This argument highlights two important and interrelated concepts of particular interest to this present research; the production of young people into ‘global citizens’ and the popularity of a life skills rhetoric as a means to an end.

The emergence of ‘Sport for All’ in the 1970s

It has been argued that the publication of the European ‘Sport for All’ charter in 1972 played a significant role in embedding neoliberalist tenets into British sports policy (Green 2006). Alongside the publication of this charter, the GB Sports Council was formed to be autonomous bodies, serving as the primary distributor of grant funding, addressing the needs of facilities and collaborating with local authorities (King 2009). Its establishment exposed broader neoliberal intentions, in which the central government distanced itself from the day-to-day organisation and delivery of sporting provisions (King 2009). Arguably, this represented one of the most significant neoliberalist-inspired transformations in sports governance and management in modern Britain, in which, ‘...sports development was located within a broad welfare state discourse best reflected in the egalitarianism of what was later to be referred to as the “Sport for All” campaign’ (Houlihan and White 2002, p. 24).

As a policy tool, ‘Sport for All’ aimed to encourage increased physical activity participation for ‘disadvantaged’ groups (namely, young people, the elderly, disabled people and individuals from economically deprived areas) to enhance overall well-being (Henry 2001). To achieve this aim, there was a rapid explosion in

the development of new leisure centres across the country (Collins 2002). This significantly increased access to recreational sport opportunities for previously underserved areas and populations (Collins 2002). However, despite these seemingly positive outcomes (with respect to individual and community development), the tenuous relationship between ‘development through sport’ (i.e. sport-as-welfare) and the ‘development of sport’ (i.e. elite, commodified sport) festered (Houlihan and White 2002, p. 24). These tensions became more apparent as the role of sport in the welfare state expanded in the late 1970s and 1980s.

By the end of the 1970s, England was faced with a surge of urban violence and a transition to a Conservative-led government (Henry 2001). As a result, the policy focus for ‘Sport for All’ shifted from the ‘disadvantaged’ to the ‘troublesome’ (Hartmann and Kwak 2011; Henry 2001). This ignited a move from more general activity promotion campaigns to targeted interventions aimed at controlling the wider unrest plaguing the inner cities at the time (Green 2006). This emphasised increasing participation for particular groups (i.e. young people) to counteract youth ‘delinquency’, vandalism and disengagement (Houlihan and White 2002). This occurred alongside a Conservative-led reform that bolstered requirements for performance measurement and competitive distribution of support for public programming (Costas Battle et al. 2017; Houlihan and White 2002; Wilson and Hayhurst 2009). A significant consequence of this has been the pervasive push toward monitoring and assessment in all aspects of everyday life (Newman 2011). This is a critical provision that has persisted over time, directly influencing how funding allocation and programme evaluation are conducted for sports-based interventions and community development schemes today (see Coakley 2011; Green 2006; McGimpsey 2018). These changes have significant relevance to *Aspire*, namely, the targeted aim of engaging *only* ‘at-risk’ young people and the documented emphasis on meeting pre-determined outcomes of participation.

The late 1990s to the 2000s: ‘Raising the Game’ for ‘A Sporting Future for All’

By the late 1990s, the use of sport as an intervention tool to increase widespread participation of targeted population groups became embedded in British sports policy (Houlihan and White 2002; The UK Sports Council 1982; White and Brackenridge 1985). At the same time, wider recognition of the potential economic benefit of widespread recreational participation in sport gained prominence in public opinion and policy (Green 2004). As John Major assumed the role of the leader of the Conservative Party and Prime Minister in 1990, sport experienced renowned governmental interest due to his personal interest in the sector (Green 2004). His influence led to the development of the Department of National Heritage (DNH) in 1992 and National Lottery funding in 1994 (Girginov 2017; Green 2004). This reflected an interesting ideological shift towards a ‘surveillance state’, in which the state significantly increased its reach into the delivery of sport (Houlihan and White 2002, p. 57).

The Sport Council’s publication of a new report, *Sport: Raising the Game*, proved to be a crucial turning point in British sports policy (The Sports Council 1995). Mass participation and ‘Sports for All’ was no longer a priority of the Sports Council. But rather, the focus shifted entirely towards school and performance sport (Girginov 2017; Houlihan and White 2002). Schools became the primary sites for traditional, competitive sport delivery. This was reflected in the National Curriculum for Physical Education, in which,

...stronger links between schools and clubs will ensure that all those with an interest in sport have every opportunity to develop and maintain that interest. Sporting competition exists to encourage sports men and women to excel and we want to ensure that talented competitors at every level have the support necessary to allow them to exploit their talent to the full. (The Department of National Heritage 1995, p. 34).

As a result, schools held significant responsibility in the development of young people at all levels of sport (Green 2006).

Throughout the past two decades, young people have remained priorities within sport policy and practice (Green 2007). Schools were considered integral settings to support young people to, ‘...discover their talent and their potential’ (The Department for Culture, Media and Sport 2000, p. 2). As a result, on-campus facilities were improved, specialist sport colleges were developed, after-school sport was expanded, and school sport co-ordinators were dispatched to run inter-school sport and provide links to wider community resources (Girginov 2017; Houlihan 2000; Houlihan and White 2002; Phillpots 2013). As a result, schools faced amplified pressure to increase sport participation across a range of abilities and interests (Oakley and Green 2001; Phillpots 2013). ‘Sport for All’ has become an, ‘...inclusive, generic descriptor for those structured, supervised physical activities that take place at school, and during the (extended) school day’ (Bailey et al. 2009, p. 2). Therefore, this increased the role of schools in promoting and facilitating access to more comprehensive sports-based community resources for young people (Harris and Houlihan 2016). Arguably, this strengthened the relationship between schools, local councils, national governing bodies and grassroots clubs (Green 2006). These partnerships were popularly viewed as a method to achieve unity across sport policy and delivery (Houlihan and Lindsey 2012). The strengthening of partnerships between schools and community resources proved to be critically important during the education reforms and budget cuts of 2010 in Scotland (Houlihan and Bradbury 2013).

Since the Scottish education reforms of 2010, school sport funding has significantly decreased (Houlihan and Bradbury 2013). This has not only influenced rates of school-age participation in sport, but has shifted a large portion of school sport funding responsibilities to charitable organisations, community partnerships, SportScotland and sport governing bodies (for example, the Scottish FA (Houlihan and Bradbury 2013; Research Scotland 2017). The Scottish FA (SFA) has considered its investment to be integral to reach school-age children (Littlefield et al. 2003). This age group has remained a constant focal point in the SFA’s strategic

framework (Littlefield et al. 2003). For example, *The Power of Football*, the most recent national strategic plan for football in Scotland, states:

Participation will remain a cornerstone of the work we will deliver. We have committed to creating a dedicated long-term participation strategy, Football For All. ... To inspire the next generation, we will launch a new Football in Schools programme available to all Primary Schools across Scotland providing free resources and training, creating more opportunities and pathways into *lifelong* participation for all children. (The Scottish Football Association 2021b, emphasis in original, n.p.)

Thus, schools are a critical site to foster this modern ethos of 'Football for All' in Scotland. 'Football for All' insists on,

...growing the game... to grow the scale and diversity of football participation in Scotland by increasing recruitment and retention of participants, regardless of age, gender, background or ability. (The Scottish Football Association 2021a, n.p.)

Under the same strategy arm is 'Skills for Life', which was briefly described in Chapter One. The emergence of a 'Skills for Life' charter reflects the increasing role of sports-based interventions for specified target populations in Scotland.

Sports-based interventions

'The presumption that sport can help to address the multifaceted aspects of social exclusion (e.g. reduce crime, increase employability, improve health) and contribute to community development and social cohesion implies that participation in sport can produce outcomes which strengthen and improve certain weak, or negative, aspects of processes, structures and relationships, or change negative behaviours thought to characterise deprived urban areas.' (Coalter 2007, p. 19).

This quote by Coalter (2007) explains why sport has cemented its place in society as an ideal location for social intervention. Sport intervention programmes are believed to be an effective method to help develop young people experiencing social

disadvantage by tackling the issues of anti-social behaviour and crime reduction (see Bailey et al. 2009; Coalter 2007; Dagkas 2016; Nichols 2004, 2007; Smith and Waddington 2004). In the UK, government influence on SBIs has been driven by the desire to promote citizenship whilst promoting the social benefits assumed to be associated with sport participation (Coalter 2007). This philosophy contrasts significantly with 'traditional sport development', which is concerned with the achievement of certain sporting outcomes and impact to foster increased and more equitable participation and the development of sporting skills (Coalter 2007, p. 20). However, to achieve 'sporting inclusion', 'underprivileged and at-risk' groups must also have access to opportunities for participation in sport (Collins and Kay 2003).

Used as a 'tool' to reach 'at-risk' and 'underserved' young people, SBIs operate under the assumption that sport is a suitable setting to develop transferable 'life skills' (Cronin and Allen 2015). Whilst life skills as a construct is poorly defined, its popularity as an outcome has proliferated in policy and practice (The World Health Organization 1999). Despite a lack of definitional and processual consensus on what life skills development entails, this concept grounds the philosophies of SBIs with 'at-risk' young people (Coalter 2007; Petitpas et al. 2005). This section will describe how positive youth development and sports-based youth development have embraced a life skills-based education approach to youth development.

PYD and SBYD

In the 1980s, a significant shift occurred in the youth development sector (Eccles and Gootman 2002; Fraser-Thomas et al. 2005). The branch of positive youth development (PYD) was born out of the movement away from the traditional, deficit-based view of adolescence toward a strengths-based perspective (Eccles and Gootman 2002; Fraser-Thomas et al. 2005). Inspired by a rejection of, and dissatisfaction with, dominant risk-laden discourse on young people, this North American concept views young people as assets with existing strengths and interests to build upon (Damon 2004; Lerner 2002). Its primary ethos views young people as 'resources to be developed' rather than 'problems to be solved' (Holt et al. 2012, p.

98). Grounded in developmental systems theories, this perspective emphasises the ‘natural plasticity’ that all humans possess (Lerner 2002). The potential for change is possible because of the relationships that exist between individuals and their biological development, psychological characteristics, family and culture (Lerner et al. 2005). Acknowledgement of the variance in the protective and risk factors that impact young people is emphasised in this strengths-based perspective, recognising and building upon the potential of young people rather than focusing on their deficits (Arnett 1999). This highlights the dissonance between traditional and PYD-informed approaches to youth development; the former focuses on control of and reactivity to problems, whilst the latter emphasises the importance of person-centred approaches and interactions (Damon 2004). As an approach to youth development, PYD focuses on creating programmes that promote young people’s development, the enhancement of the health and well-being of young people and developing their life skills (Jones et al. 2011).

In the 1990s, a sports-specific branch of youth development, sports-based youth development (SBYD), emerged in the United States (Petitpas et al. 2005). Developed in response to record-breaking levels of obesity in American youth and the widening socioeconomic gulf between low-income and middle-class families, SBYD employs a sporting model that contrasts significantly with mainstream, competitive and organised sport (Michellini and Thiel 2013). It is defined as out-of-school-time programmes that use sports to foster life skill development in young people (Perkins and Noam 2007). It is closely aligned with a community youth development framework, in which programmes provide long-term positive and supportive relationships with adults and peers (Perkins and Noam 2007). Perkins and Noam (2007) outline three essential components to these programmes; opportunities to develop and nurture positive relationships amongst young people and adults, the identification, targeting and utilisation of appropriate educational tools and strategies, and a programme experience that is specified to the needs of the young people themselves. Grounded in the tenets of inclusion and participation, SBYD uses sport as a tool for engagement to promote holistic development in a

range of life domains (Petitpas et al. 2005). SBYD programmes aim to build upon basic PYD principles by promoting developmental assets, increasing protective factors and reducing risk factors (Coalter 2013).

Sports-based youth development programmes are guided by life skills-based education models and aim to provide empowerment and growth opportunities for ‘at-risk’ young people (Perkins and Noam 2007). The popularity of sports-based life skill development in practice has led to the proliferation of sports-based youth development programmes (and, arguably, sports-based interventions in general). As a result, significant attention has been devoted to understanding how programmes can most efficiently and effectively foster life skills (Gould and Carson 2008). However, as Ronkainen et al. (2021) argue, ‘...it has been rarely questioned what ‘a skill’ or learning actually is, and what else sport can teach us besides these competencies’ (p. 5).

SBYD has yet to become a distinguished sector by that name in the UK. However, many sports-based interventions share the core theoretical principles and practices discussed in SBYD research (Ronkainen et al. 2021). As a result of cultural variation and terminological differences between the US and the UK, the remainder of this thesis will exclusively use the term ‘sports-based intervention’ (SBI) to describe any programme grounded in PYD, SBYD and/or sports-based life-skills education principles.

Life skills

The phraseology ‘life skills’ or ‘skills for life’ are ubiquitously used in policy and practice. Presented as both a product and a process, it is widely postulated that life skill development can reduce inequality, prevent negative life outcomes and provide young people with the tools they need to be successful in life (The World Health Organization 1999). Arguably, despite its widespread use, life skills are a poorly understood concept with no universal definition that remains, ‘...open to wide interpretation’ (The World Health Organization 1999, p. 3). Therefore, this section

aims to provide an overview of the concept of life skills and how it has been employed to date.

UNICEF defines life skills as, ‘...transferable skills that enable individuals to deal with everyday life, and to progress in school, work and societal life’ (Hoskins et al. 2019). The World Health Organization expands on this definition,

Skills are abilities. Hence it should be possible to practice life skills as abilities. Self-esteem, sociability and tolerance are not taught as abilities: rather, learning such qualities is facilitated by learning and practicing life skills, such as self-awareness, problem-solving, critical thinking, and interpersonal skills. (The World Health Organization 1999, p. 3)

The World Health Organization continues to emphasise that life skills are essential for,

...the promotion of healthy child and adolescent development, the primary prevention of some key causes of child and adolescent death, disease and disability; socialization; and preparing young people for changing social circumstances. (The World Health Organization 1999, p. 4)

This long-form definition suggests that engagement in risky behaviours can be mitigated if competency in a number of transferable life skills is developed. Literature across UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Health Organization presents ten specific life skills: problem-solving, critical thinking, effective communication skills, decision-making, creative thinking, interpersonal relationship skills, empathy and coping with stress and emotions (UNESCO 2004). The World Health Organization further categorises these skills into three domains: critical thinking and decision-making skills, interpersonal and communication skills, and self-management skills (The World Health Organization 1999). However, these skills are not viewed as distinct competencies but as interconnected and constantly evolving (The World Health Organization 1999).

Regardless of the ambiguity surrounding understanding life skills as a construct, life skills-based education (LSBE) models have been readily adopted by British

educational and social policy programming (Nasheeda et al. 2019). A life-skills based education model is defined as, ‘...an attempt to build the human capacity to deal with problems and opportunities that arise in daily lives’ (Prasetyo et al. 2021, p. 1). Parry and Nomikou (2017) identify six key components of a life-skills based education that fosters the ‘most effective form of learning’; active (learning by doing), interactive (use of discussion and debate), relevant (focus on real-life issues), critical (encouraging young people to think for themselves) and participative (young people have a say in their own learning) (p. 5).

The ready adoption of life skills-based education models appears to be unsurprising within a neoliberalist frame. An emphasis on the development of transferable skills for life has become less attentive to the production of moral citizenship but, rather, more focused on developing the physical, intellectual and technical skills required for success in the modern labour market (Nasheeda et al. 2019). In the sporting sector, the promotion of the skills for life paradigm has been justified under the auspices of the transformative effect of sport (Gould and Carson 2008). Employed initially as a social policy tool for recreational and mass sport participation, the use of LBSE in sport has dramatically changed over time due to rapid and significant changes in British sports policy between the 1970s and the 2000s.

Neoliberal policymaking in the UK has repeatedly emphasised the importance of life skills development in young people as a policy outcome (Hodge and Danish 1999; Miller and Kerr 2002). The development of certain life skills in childhood and adolescence has been used to predict several later life outcomes, including academic success, employment, prosocial behaviours, physical health and mental health (Kautz et al. 2014). For policymakers, the development of life skills has been identified as a solution to disengagement and poor attainment in education, crime prevention, anti-social behaviour, unemployment and poor health outcomes (Heckman and Mosso 2014). This is demonstrated by its explicit promotion as a policy tool, for example, in a report published by the British Council:

Democracies need active, informed and responsible citizens, who are willing and able to take responsibility for themselves and their communities and contribute to the political process. ... While certain life skills may be acquired through our everyday experience in the home or at work, these do not suffice to adequately equip citizens for the active role required of them in today's complex and diverse society. (Parry and Nomikou 2017, p. 4)

To achieve this call, the report implores that one must engage in 'citizenship education' (Parry and Nomikou 2017, p. 4)

Anastasiadou et al. (2021) argue that a 'global citizenship education' (GCE) can be understood as a threefold concept; a qualification, a socialisation process and a stance. *Qualification* refers to the acquisition of skills and knowledge required to participate in the market economy (Anastasiadou et al. 2021). The *socialisation process* relates to wider theoretical, ideological and social forces that inform a critical global *stance* that rejects structural oppression and the reproduction of inequalities (Anastasiadou et al. 2021). This approach to pedagogy has been, '...described as a direct response by education systems to the nature of the modern, globalized workforce', and '...to social changes brought on by broader global processes such as immigration' (Goren and Yemini 2017, p. 170). Despite its widespread use in modern formal education, GCE has been subject to criticism. Firstly, concept's ambiguity has prompted questions surrounding its applicability, efficacy and methods (see Bamber et al. 2018; Goren and Yemini 2017). It has also been criticised for its tendency to foster educational regulatory environments where young people are expected to develop into conforming, obedient and responsible citizens (Gamal and Swanson 2017). Despite these criticisms, GCE has been identified as an ideal method for fostering life skill development and is widely used in social interventions and programming for young people, especially in sport settings (Bamber et al. 2018).

Danish and Donohue (1995) defined life skills in a sporting context as the valuable skills and attitudes learned during sport participation that can be transferred and

applied to everyday life. It includes three dimensions; physical life skills (e.g. proper posture), behavioural life skills (e.g. effective communication) and cognitive life skills (e.g. effective decision-making) (Danish and Donohue 1995). Danish et al. (1996) expanded on this definition, defining life skills as the behaviours, skills, principles, and attitudes learned during sport that is applied to adult pursuits, including defining and refining individuality, discovering other skills and interests and transferring these principles to other domains of life (Danish et al. 1996). Transferability is a key feature of sports-based life skill acquisition (Pierce et al. 2016). The process of acquiring and transferring life skills has only been discussed as a unidirectional process that occurs from sport to other domains of life (Pierce et al. 2016). Therefore, current understandings of life skill development in sport neglect to consider how life skills acquired in other life domains may be applied in sport. As a result, attempted modelling of the acquisition process and transferability has been a focal point in sports-based life skills and SBI research (Petitpas et al. 2004; Pierce et al. 2017).

Research has indicated that young people can learn a range of life skills in sport settings, including teamwork, social skills, personal responsibility, respect, leadership, commitment, discipline, perseverance, time management, communication, independence, resilience, self-awareness, mental toughness, decision making and organisation (Fraser-Thomas and Côté 2009; Holt et al. 2006; Holt et al. 2008; Strachan et al. 2011). In a review of positive youth development in sport research, Johnston et al. (2013) indicated that self-esteem, personal responsibility, motivation/effort, teamwork, goal setting, time management, emotional self-regulation, communication, social skills, leadership, problem-solving, decision making and planning were the most commonly discussed life skills. Cronin and Allen (2015) investigated life skills development through sport in Scottish youth athletes. Findings revealed that athletes scored highly on indicators for self-esteem, positive affect and satisfaction with life (Cronin and Allen 2015). Additionally, findings showed that coach autonomy support had a positive association with the development of athletes' skills, social skills, cognitive skills and goal setting (Cronin

and Allen 2015). Coach autonomy support involves displaying coaching behaviours like listening to athletes, providing opportunities for athletes to share their feelings, allowing athletes to contribute to the training routine, encouraging asking questions, encouraging independence and initiative and displaying confidence in athletes (Cronin and Allen 2015).

SBIs: Are they truly effective?

Despite the widespread belief that sport is a suitable setting to foster positive youth development, several researchers have remained apprehensive about the assumption that SBIs are as effective as they are documented to be (Eccles and Barber 1999; Ewing et al. 2002; Fraser-Thomas et al. 2005; Martin et al. 2017; Petitpas et al. 2005; Ronkainen et al. 2021). For example, in an analysis of the British *Positive Futures* sport programme, Kelly (2011) argued that by emphasising individual deficits and de-emphasising structural inequalities in sport-based interventions, reductive understandings of intricate processes are legitimised. Arguably, this perpetuates the current preoccupation in policy, practice and research to focus on outcome analysis (Ronkainen et al. 2021). Haudenhuyse et al. (2013) attests,

It remains important to analyse outcomes, but such measures outcomes need to be understood from the perspectives and the experiences of young people participating in sports-based contexts. Analysing outcomes without taking into account the experiences and contexts in which such outcomes are facilitated, will create limited insights in how sports could potentially generate an added social value for youth, and in particular socially vulnerable youth. (p. 477)

Therefore, in order to gain a deeper understanding of how ‘socially vulnerable’ young people experience sports-based interventions, if these interventions are ‘effective’ and if these interventions are relevant to their lives, the analysis should be grounded in the experiences of the young people that participate in these programmes (Coakley 2011).

Many of the claims that SBIs are effective at meeting the needs of ‘at-risk’ young people are substantiated by heavily anecdotal claims. They have not been subject to thorough and rigorous evaluation (Kelly 2001). Additionally, existing qualitative research tends to have small sample sizes with data collected over a short-term timeframe. In fact, some have identified that limited knowledge of the longitudinal effects of participation is a shortcoming to present research (Cameron and MacDougall 2000). Statistical evidence is often based on questionnaire-style self-report measures of the available quantitative research. Smith and Waddington (2004) contend that,

It is also argued that these methodological weaknesses are exacerbated by the absence of any clearly articulated theoretical rationale for these schemes, which means that, even where success for them is claimed, it is unclear what specific aspects of the schemes account for that claimed success (p. 279).

Therefore, this present research can contribute to this limitation in existing knowledge. Its use of multiple qualitative methods alongside prolonged-participant observation will provide insight into the longitudinal effects of participation in this particular sports-based intervention. Additionally, its focus on the classed and gendered lived experience will highlight the ways in which discourses of risk and gender impact participation and life skill acquisition.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the literature related to ‘risky’ young lives, the influence of neoliberalism on British sports policy, positive youth development, sports-based youth development and contemporary concerns regarding the barriers to participation in sport and physical activity in girls. Together, it has illustrated the conceptual backdrop that has led to the proliferation of sporting schemes and programmes in the UK in the past two decades. This trend is grounded in the overwhelming acceptance of sport as an appropriate social intervention to reduce risks related to young people (e.g. crime, delinquency, exclusion and drug abuse). The widespread belief that SBIs and sport in the

community schemes ‘work’ in reducing risk has led to significant funding and widespread support from local councils, governments and funding bodies.

As ‘adults-in-the-making’, young people have remained political priorities for surveillance, intervention and regulation (Graham 2011, p. 1537). This chapter demonstrated how shifts towards neoliberal policymaking and preference for risk-factor analyses as evaluation for SBIs maintained this structural relationship between risk and young lives (Connell et al. 2009; Goddard and Myers 2016). This relationship has been maintained by predetermined outcomes guiding policy on interventions for young people (Morgan and Costas Battle 2019). Whilst the linkage between ‘risk’, intervention and outcomes are often displayed in a black and white manner, the lived reality of this process is complicated, messy and diverse. This present research is dedicated to documenting, analysing and presenting this lived reality as it relates to a group of girls and their coach in a small Scottish town.

Until recently, the intersectionality of sport intervention programmes has not been subject to critical evaluation (Flintoff 2018; Watson and Scraton 2013). Research on spatially situated practices, interactions and performances can advance our understanding of how SBIs work as a site for the discursive generation of certain ways of being. Bourdieu’s concepts of *habitus*, *capital* and *field* can be a useful tool in addressing this aim. This will be the focus of Chapter Three.

Chapter Three: Bourdieu, Embodiment and the Lived Experience

Introduction

This chapter reviews the theoretical concepts used to address the research aim of this ethnography. Namely, it will discuss Bourdieu's (1978) concepts of *habitus*, *field* and *capital*, embodiment and lived experience. Although presented as distinct sections, all three of these concepts are strongly interrelated, particularly in respect of this present research. Chapter Two demonstrated the role of 'risk' in young people's regulation, surveillance and experiences (Connell et al. 2009; Goddard and Myers 2016). Bourdieu's (1978) concepts of *habitus*, *field* and *capital* help to create an understanding of the relationships between objective social structures (i.e. discourse, institutions, cultures, ideologies) and everyday human interactions and experiences (Webb et al. 2002). Employment of Bourdieu's concepts can help explore the ways in which class distribution, gender and resultant lived experience in relation to sport can affect individual identity and experience (Webb et al. 2002).

Social, political and cultural influences inherently shape the corporeal practice of sport. This occurs through processes of embodiment or the subjective actions, experiences and states of the body that occur through social interaction (Barsalou et al. 2003). Fundamental to this concept is the role of the body as lived experience (Bourdieu 1984). Especially within sport and physical activity settings, the body is considered the locus of lived experience, agency and action (Bourdieu 1984). Grounded in phenomenological traditions, the use of the lived experience as a sociological concept has risen in popularity in feminist and ethnographic inquiry (Hinterberger 2007; Kruks 2014). Generally, lived experience involves the embodied, everyday experiences of subjects situated within particular social and political contexts (Barbour 2004). Integrating Bourdieu's concepts in analyses of the lived experience can help contextualise the impact of dominant discourses related to class (and gender).

Bourdieu

Theory of practice

Bourdieu's theoretical concepts seek to understand the 'practical logic' of everyday life (Power 2015, p. 48). His approach to sociological inquiry aims to challenge the dominant modes of thinking by defying normative boundaries in social science research (Wacquant 1992). This research study of *Aspire* aligns with Bourdieu's interdisciplinary and inductive empirical approach by 'visiting' the fields of physical education, sport, education, youth development, sociology and social work. It values the diversity of knowledge that multi-modal methodologies and interdisciplinary enquiries can generate (Webb et al. 2002). Bourdieu's tendency to visit various academic fields further distinguished his research from traditional sociologists (Webb et al. 2002). As a result, Bourdieu has written extensively on a range of fields, including art, education, sport, media and popular culture (Grenfell 2014; Medvetz and Sallaz 2018). Embedded in each field is a distinct set of discourses and approaches to language (Webb et al. 2002). Thus, this interdisciplinary approach is useful because it provides a theoretical framework that considers the worldview of each field, what is valued and what the dominant ideals are within each field (Webb et al. 2002). Therefore, Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus*, *capital* and *field* are considered to be highly applicable to a range of fields and academic inquiries (Grenfell 2014; Medvetz and Sallaz 2018).

Habitus

Bourdieu first defined the concept of *habitus* in *Distinction*:

It expresses the first result of an organising action, with a meaning close to that of words such as structure; it also designates a way of being, a habitual state (especially of the body), and in particular a predisposition, tendency, propensity or inclination. (Bourdieu 1978, p. 562, footnote 2)

It is 'durable' yet 'generative', formed in relation to social fields (Bourdieu 1984). It encompasses, '...our predisposed ways of thinking, acting and moving in and through the social environment' (Sweetman 2009, p. 493). It is a '...strategy-

generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations' (Bourdieu 1977, p. 72).

Central to this concept is the role of the body in the socially constructed and unconscious internalisation and display of embodied values and dispositions (Bourdieu 1984; Sandford and Quarmby 2018). These dispositions that produce individual perceptions, predispositions and practices (Bourdieu 1984). Bourdieu considers these dispositions to be manifested through individual tastes (Bourdieu 1984). According to Bourdieu, habitus is the embodiment of class; members of different social classes possess certain cultural and physical dispositions that are internalised, performed and reproduced by individuals in their daily lives (Warde 2006). Thus, Bourdieu posited that class position is often unconsciously revealed through preferences for activities and the pursuit of certain forms of *capital* (Warde 2006). Bourdieu (1984) linked the concept of *habitus* to the *bodily hexis*, which involves the embodied displays and actions that are unconsciously developed through social class. These embodied displays include posture, body shape, body presentation, mannerisms, accent and language (Warde 2006). They are unconsciously learned, internalised and reproduced over time through lived experiences (Bourdieu 1990; Warde 2006). Therefore, the bodily hexis represents in part the relationship between individual practices, social class and gender (Bourdieu 1990).

Capital

Capital is constructed of the forms of economic, social and cultural resources that individuals have access to and acquire through interactions with others (Shilling 2004). Capital has many forms: economic (e.g. money), cultural (e.g. taste, educational attainment, qualifications, ways of speaking and physical appearance), symbolic (e.g. reputation, prestige, honour) or social (e.g. social status). What is considered capital is dependent on what is considered valuable in certain fields (Bourdieu 1984). Varied forms of capital are relational and are considered assets (Webb et al. 2002). These assets help constitute the habitus and are influenced by

the type and quantity of capital available (Reay 2018). Therefore, habitus is converted into different forms of capital and shaped by existing capital (Warde 2006). Generally, the value of specific forms of capital is determined within particular fields and can overlap with other nearby fields (Webb et al. 2002).

Cultural capital is associated with a particular field's cultural norms and conventions (Webb et al. 2002). However, what is considered cultural capital is not fixed, or immutable (Reay 2018). Cultural capital comes in three states; embodied, institutional and objectified (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). In Bourdieu's framework, power is linked closely to cultural capital (Webb et al. 2002). Power underpins the competitive nature of human life, determining the growth and destruction of fields, the production of cultural meaning and the distribution of cultural capital (Webb et al. 2002) as fields are motivated by and transformed by internal competition and self-interest (Webb et al. 2002). Thus, those in positions of power can designate what is 'authentic' capital, or rather, what is valuable within that field (Webb et al. 2002). This serves to perpetuate and reproduce dominant social relations and institutional structures.

Social capital is defined as,

...the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.
(Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 119)

Social capital fosters access to resources that are made available through certain group memberships. According to Putnam (2008), more substantial opportunities to garner social capital are created when social groups create opportunities for 'foreign' social groups to come together and bond. Spaaij (2012) highlights that this concept's relevance to inequality and power is a strength of this concept. Social capital is advantageous for the privileged by strengthening their dominance and superiority (Spaaij 2012). In contrast, Coleman (1988) argues that social capital is

not limited to only the powerful but could provide benefits to ‘disadvantaged’ groups.

There are three forms of social capital; bonding, bridging and linking (Putnam 2008). Bonding refers to the connections between family members and close friends, which can lead to access to resources that help individuals ‘get by’ (Spaaij 2012, p. 4). This form of social capital is often correlated with individuals and groups of lower social strata (Woolcook 2011). Bridging, on the other hand, involves more distant connections that can help individuals ‘get ahead’ and gain access to new opportunities (Spaaij 2012, p. 4). Woolcook (2001) notes that linking social capital involves a socially stratified relationship in which individuals and communities can collaborate and use resources and information from formal institutions to the wider community.

Field

All social processes occur within a network of *fields* (Bourdieu 1985). Fields are not comprised of physical, bounded spaces but are fluid. It is formally defined as:

...a structured social space, a field of forces, a force field. It contains people who dominate and people who are dominated. Constant, permanent relationships of inequality operate inside this space, which at the same time becomes a space in which various actors struggle for the transformation or preservation of the field. All the individuals in this universe bring to the competition all the (relative) power at their disposal. It is this power that defines their position in the field and, as a result, their strategies. (Bourdieu 1998, pp. 40-1)

Young people often occupy multiple fields concurrently (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). As socially-mediated spaces, fields are guided by ‘taken-for-granted logic’ that influences learning and adherence to social norms and rules within that space (Sandford and Quarmby 2018). The relationships formed and practices within fields impact the imposition and establishment of beliefs and values (Bourdieu 1993).

Thus, young people are influenced by their peers, families, and status into the broader community (Sandford and Quarmby 2018).

Field structure is determined by the distribution of resources, or *capital* (Bourdieu 1986). Within fields, capital is distributed, acquired and converted into power and symbolic forms of status (Bourdieu 1986). Therefore, fields are inherently rife with power, which places individuals in different social positions within the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Actors must navigate impending social forces and capital competition for resources and social position (Wacquant 1989). Using this conceptual tool creates an opportunity to investigate what has value within a particular field, and what has value to the individuals who aim to gain that capital (Bourdieu 1986). Thus, in this thesis, the use of fields will help locate the young people participating in Aspire, who occupy many overlapping and interacting fields.

The sporting paradox: A site for the reproduction/decline of inequalities

Sport and social class

Sport has long been regarded as a site for both the reproduction and challenge of inequalities (Warde 2006). In his writings on sport, Bourdieu (1984) focused on the role of social class in the reproduction of inequalities. He considers sport to have ‘unique features, tempos and crises’ that are ‘homologous’ with the market economy and dominant social relations (Bourdieu 1978, p. 821). In the 1960’s/70’s, social scientists considered sport to explore the ways in which hegemony, racism and social inequality were visible (Sands 2002). Central to Bourdieu’s worldview is the reproduction of privilege, in which dominant groups maintain their dominance by establishing certain ways of life, world views and dispositions. In sport, the habitus is constituted by dispositions that influence individual preferences for sport (Warde 2006). These dispositions become aspects of embodied cultural capital, which reflect valued aspects of certain sports (Bourdieu 1984; Warde 2006).

Bourdieu (1984) described the relationship between social class and the body. He suggested that individuals from higher social classes would engage in sports that

value more 'bourgeois' sports representing wealth, power and individual and moral characteristics (e.g. high drive, sportsmanship, etc.) (Bourdieu 1984; Stempel 2005; Wilkes 1990). The embodiment of class is reproduced through body regulation and active lifestyles that represent dispositions and practices considered culturally 'superior' (Bourdieu 1984). Bourdieu considered this practice to be 'exercise for its own sake', in which individuals commit to regular physical activity for fitness and body regulation purposes (Warde 2006, p. 112). Thus, higher (economic and physical) investment into the achievement of a socially valued body (slim and muscular) reflects membership in a higher social order (Bourdieu 1990; Shilling 2004).

Bourdieu considered working class individuals to have bodily preferences that reflect a hearty, 'will to work' habitus (Shilling 2004). Working class bodies are viewed as 'machines' that are crafted to meet the expectations and needs required of them for work and labour (Bourdieu 1981; Shilling 2004). According to Bourdieu, working classes tend to prefer sports that value strength, endurance and violence (Bourdieu 1984; Hargreaves 1994). Additionally, their bodies are guided by engagement in 'risky' activities that act as temporary releases from the demands of their labour (i.e. smoking, drinking, etc.) (Bourdieu 1981; Shilling 2004). Therefore, he suggests that risk and the body are inherently situated in social class divides (Wacquant 2018). Wellard (2006) argues that the rise of neoliberalism, the political economy of insecurity and the destruction of stable jobs and futures have led to increased feelings of discontentment with the body. This has been perpetuated by the commercialisation and commodification of modern lifestyles and idealised bodily identities (Bordo 1993). Therefore, as suggested by Bourdieu, this 'culture of the body has become a normative part of everyday life (Warde 2006).

Bourdieu suggests that it is the 'more hidden entry requirements' surrounding the body that dominant classes used to distance themselves from individuals in lower social classes (Bourdieu 1984, p. 217). These include family or community tradition, adherence to norms regarding dress, mannerisms and behaviour, and methods of

socialisation (Bourdieu 1984). Stempel (2005) argues that sport's 'exclusionary effects' should be considered as different forms of capital (cultural, social and embodied). They continue to call for research that aims to understand the forms of cultural exclusion that are relevant in sport today and their relation to the wider forces of power (Stempel 2005). This research project on Aspire aims to address this call by considering how class (through forms of disadvantage) and gender serves to include and/or exclude these girls from Aspire and football in general.

Sport and gender

Whilst Bourdieu did not explicitly discuss gender or women in great detail; it has been argued that his social theory has relevance to feminism (Adkins 2004; Lovell 2000). Thorpe (2009) argues that the use of a theoretical framework that draws on both Bourdieu and feminism can offer new ways of looking at, '...the relationship between gender, power, structure, agency, reflexivity, culture and embodiment in sport and physical youth culture' (p. 492). Even though it has been argued that bridging two theoretical backdrops can lead to 'theoretical blurring', the inclusion of feminist influences allows for a wider conceptual catchment that includes issues of class, gender relations and hegemony (Pringle 2005). Within the traditionally hegemonic fields of sport and football, including insight from feminist perspectives can help contextualise girls' unique experiences and challenges.

However, this view is not universally shared. Some feminists have cautioned against his roots in structuralism, arguing that the use of binary categorizations to explain differences in social order has the potential of placing more value on social class than sex/gender and race (Lovell 2000; McCall 1992). However, Bourdieu considered these, '...oppositions between high and low, masculine (or manly) and feminine...' (Bourdieu 1986), are 'practical' solutions to understanding the complexity of social life. McCall (1992) counters this, suggesting that using traditionally hegemonic determinants to classify social class position (i.e. education, employment status) inadvertently constructs and reinforces a hegemonic social structure. It can be argued that McCall's assertions provide evidence of the

usefulness of feminist theory as a supplement to Bourdieu's theoretical framework. This approach provides an opportunity to view social relations through a gendered lens, further understanding and challenging the role of hegemony within dominant narratives that govern social worlds.

More generally, sport and physical activity have been considered sites where the social construction of womanhood occurs (Hargreaves 1994). This use of reductive dichotomous categorisations (i.e. male vs female; masculinity vs femininity; aggressive vs cooperative) is prevalent within sport discourse (Hargreaves 1994). However, Hargreaves (1994) warns that this tendency masks the multiple realities in which women and girls experience sport. Whilst sport is popularly considered a site of male domination, this oppression is not 'straightforward' (Hargreaves 1994, p. 3). Therefore, by exploring how the institutional structures and cultures of sport intersect with gender norms, an understanding of how this influences the experience and display of femininity, embodiment and sexuality can be uncovered (Weedon 1987).

Situating Bourdieu in Aspire

Chapter Two demonstrated a paucity of research relating to the lived experiences of girls participating in SBIs. In contemporary society, there is a much greater emphasis on inclusion, empowerment and aspiration in social policy and scholarship about young people (Reay 2018). Reay (2018) argues that the increasing relevance of neoliberal policy has reinforced this association of young people's aspirations with social class. Additionally, recent research on the challenges faced by young girls in sport and physical activity has highlighted the pressing need for novel research that queries all aspects of their social worlds (Women in Sport 2019). The conceptual tools that Bourdieu offers provide a helpful framework for understanding the social, classed and gendered lives of the girls participating in this study.

Research on sport and physical activity has predominantly focused on sport-related outcomes and processes, which has led to a lack of information on broader processes

involved with 'being active' (Coalter 2007, p. 110). Using habitus as a theoretical concept allows for consideration of the relationship between the influence of neoliberal ideologies and policies, orientations towards risk and dominant discourses of young people as 'deviant' or 'risky'. Additionally, Bourdieu's emphasis on the role of the body in the construction of social worlds holds significant relevance within the movement-based social world of sport and physical activity. An embodied understanding of the social experiences of young people occupying multiple fields offers insights into how young people experience multiple fields.

Football is considered one of the fastest-growing sports for girls and women worldwide (Williams 2013). The Scottish Football Association (SFA) reports that between 2016 and 2020, there was a 21% increase in the participation of girls and women in Scottish football (The Scottish Football Association 2020a). Additionally, increased visibility, professionalisation and exposure have normalised the participation of women and girls in this traditionally 'masculine' sport (Petty and Pope 2019). Therefore, football (and arguably, sport and physical activity as a whole) is becoming an increasingly prevalent context for identity formation and meaning-making in the girls' lives. School and sport are significant sites where a young person's identity is constructed (Stahl 2016). These spaces represent fields where capital can be acquired and embodied into a sporting habitus (Claringbould et al. 2015).

In this study, football, school, and Aspire are relevant fields. In sport, education and relevant cultural fields, adults (e.g. coaches, educators, parents/guardians, etc.) hold a higher position in the hierarchy of power than young people (Sidanius and Pratto 2001). This power hierarchy structures the field and is characterised by broader structural discourses and practices (Sandford and Quarmby 2018). Each field is characterised by its own actors (e.g. young people, coaches, wider school staff), its historical context (CashBack for Communities, SFA grassroots strategy, neoliberalism), and forms of capital (football skills, life skills, attainment). Young people occupy multiple fields at the same time. Thus, their social reality is shaped

by interconnected fields (Sandford and Quarmby 2018). Indeed, Aspire represents only one dimension of the lives of the young people participating in the programme. Therefore, acknowledging the influences of their related fields that inform their understandings of and embodiments of experiences.

Spaaij (2009) argues that forms of capital are of particular interest in SBIs. This can be explained by the prominence of the ‘can do/at-risk’ paradigm that underpins SBIs (Harris 2004; Heywood 2007). Developing of relevant capital within intervention settings can help foster the ‘idealised’ future citizen (Heywood 2007). As noted previously, there are multiple forms of capital; economic (related to money), cultural (knowledge, dispositions, lifestyles), social (social positions, connections), symbolic (prestige, recognition) and physical (body attributes and abilities that are valued within a field) (Shilling 1997). In a football setting, social capital can be determined by position within a team (i.e. head or assistant coach, captain vs player, etc.). However, these normative football hierarchies do not exist in an Aspire setting. Thus, it appears that the dissection of which forms of social capital are valued becomes complicated. If the focal point of participation lies in the actual football participation itself, social capital could be represented by sporting acumen and footballing knowledge. On the other hand, if the development of life skills holds more value, then social capital could be considered comprised of moral values, personal attributes and life skills.

It is argued that personal institutional and structural factors shape the development of social and cultural capital in SBIs (see Kay and Bradbury 2009; Spaaij 2009). A range of contemporary research attributes sports involvement to the development of social capital (see Collins and Kay 2003; Kay and Bradbury 2009; Putnam 2000; Seippel 2006; Spaaij 2009). This is achieved by building community identity (Atherley 2006; Tonts 2005) and building positive social connections through bridging social capital (Harris 1998; Skinner et al. 2008). Access to bridging social capital is associated with fostering more significant community engagement opportunities (Frank and Yasumoto 1998; Paxton 1999). As a result, bridging social

capital plays a vital role in developing both individuals and the broader community through increased social bonding and inclusion (Skinner et al. 2008). However, Spaaij (2009) challenged the assumption that SBIs can contribute to the development of social and cultural capital of young people affected by poverty, high unemployment rates and low educational attainment. Coalter (2007) builds upon this argument and asserts that the ‘contested’ nature of social capital promotes the agenda of a neoliberalist ‘inclusion’ discourse (p. 159). This inclusion discourse posits that access to social programming will inevitably foster individual and community bonds and social and cultural capital.

There is debate on the varied interpretations and forms of social and cultural capital within the broader sport, football and SBI fields. This work will challenge and use these different perspectives to better understand how these varied forms of capital are present in relation to this particular SBI. This thesis can present insight into which (if any) forms of social and cultural capital hold relevance within the Aspire (and broader SBI) setting and, subsequently, how these varied forms present themselves in individual and collective lived experiences. Therefore, this thesis employs the concept of ‘sporting capital’ to understand the claims set forth by Spaaij (2009) and Coalter (2007). Closer attention to ‘sporting capital’ will provide insight into the role of capital in the development of the ‘sporting habitus’ and ‘sporting identity’.

Rowe (2015) attests that the concept of ‘sporting capital’ can,

...provide a new lens on sporting behaviour and their determinants that... has the potential to unlock the door to improved insight and understanding of the phenomenon that is ‘sport’ and in turn provide a foundation for more effective public policy intervention. (p. 43)

Higher sporting capital levels predict current and future participation in sport (Rowe 2015). Sporting capital is considered to be acquired through education and experience and is mediated by norms constituted by external influences (e.g. family, peers, teachers, coaches, media, etc.) (Rowe 2015). It is comprised of three primary

domains: psychological (e.g. perceived competence and self-efficacy), social (e.g. family and peer influence in interest) and physiological (e.g. physical literacy and health) (Rowe 2015).

Attempts to locate the relevance of Bourdieu in ‘traditional’ football settings are well documented. The ability of Bourdieu’s concepts to consider social class and gender issues is useful in understanding how football culture impacts individual and community identity formation (Tucker 2019). Existing research has primarily focused on the participation of young boys from working-class communities (Armstrong and Giulianotti 1999; Tucker 2019). Tucker (2019) argues that ‘football capital’ should be a distinct form of capital in its own right due to its prevalence as a highly valued component of British life. Drawing on Bourdieu’s concept of *capital*, football capital explains the sociocultural and symbolic norms and values embedded in traditional football spaces (i.e. football pitches, changing rooms, stadia, clubhouses and sporting grounds) (Tucker 2019). Adherence to these norms can (de)legitimise membership and status of individuals within the field (Tucker 2019). In football, power is grounded in the intricacies of building capital (Tucker 2019). Therefore, this capital can be used to secure status and dominance amongst, and at times, over others (Tucker 2019).

This section has demonstrated how Bourdieu’s concepts of *habitus*, *field* and *capital* have relevance to Aspire, and this present thesis. His concepts provide a framework through which embodiments of gender and class can be understood. This chapter now focuses on establishing an understanding of the sociology of the body and embodiment.

The body

A sociology of the body

Wider social shifts driven by feminism, capitalism and consumerism have increased attention to the body within academic discourse (Shilling 1993; 2016). As a discipline, the sociology of the body has looked at how the body is organised within

society (Turner 1984). Central to this lies an emphasis on understanding individuals' embodied, sensory and gendered capacities and experiences (Crossley 1995; Shilling 1993). The range of theoretical and contextual inquiries is vast, touching upon topics including gender and the body (see Butler 1990; Grosz 1994), sporting bodies (see Thorpe 2011), health, disability and the body (see Turner 1987), and embodied emotions (Blackman 2012). Within sociological thought, the body has been applied to theories on social class (see Bourdieu 1984; 1990), feminism (see Butler 1990; Connell 2007; Grosz 1994), phenomenology (see Husserl 1989; Merleau-Ponty 1962), symbolic interactionism (see Mead 1934), and power (see Foucault 1975). An embodied sociology is summarised by Coffey (1999):

The body is negotiated in everyday life, serving as an agent of cultural reproduction and as a site of cultural representation. Bodies are adorned, used, abused, touched, and forbidden. They work, play, interact, gesture, and fail. (p. 59)

The nature of embodiment is complex, multi-layered, interactional and situated within institutional discourses, cultural processes and socio-political organisation (Waskul and Vannini 2016).

Discourse on the body is often linked to the phenomenological work of Husserl (1989) and Merleau-Ponty (1962). Husserl (1917) viewed the body as a 'zero-point of orientation', which hosts all knowledge and experience (p. 315). Merleau-Ponty's (1962) framework views the mind and the body as a joint entity linked to the world's social nature. True phenomenological tradition views experience as inherently 'grounded' in the body (MacLachlan 2004, p. 4). Individuals exist 'in-the-world' as physical entities and are influenced by individual subjectivity (Merleau-Ponty 1962). Thus, 'being-in-the-world' is constituted by subjectivity, personal experiences and the sociocultural world that individuals inhabit (Merleau-Ponty 1962; McLachlan 2004). Therefore, the use of a phenomenological framework has emerged as a popular method of exploring the lived experience of embodiment.

By contrast, symbolic interactionism was first introduced by Blumer (1937) and built upon the pragmatic social psychology of Mead (1934). This conceptual framework occurs through ‘self-indication’ (Blumer 1969, p. 83), in which individuals act in response to a situation and action is constructed by interpreting the present situation (Longmore 1998). This interpretation is guided by ‘previous interactions’ that inform how one should act in a certain situation (Blumer 1969, p. 86). This framework views the body, self and social interaction as interrelated and constantly reconfigured. It is primarily focused on the micro-interactions that exist amongst individuals. It operates on the assumption that individual action is guided by the underlying meanings associated with experience (Benzies and Allen 2008). This has popularly been applied to research on health and illness, sport, imagery and body transformation (Vannini 2016).

Foucault (1977; 1979) viewed the body as implicated in processes involving power and agency. It is central in the micro-practices of everyday life and acts as the primary site for the negotiation of power (Foucault 1979). Power is mediated through relationships, language and disciplinary practices, rather than being a construct that one either has or does not have. Foucault (1979) queried the production, regulation and representation of bodies within wider contexts driven by regulation and surveillance. Foucault (1979) discusses ‘the gaze’, or the sense that individuals are being watched and monitored at all times. The pressure of conforming to the gaze of ‘invisible observers’ drives feelings of shame and guilt if the body does not adopt its expected forms (Foucault 1979; MacLachlan 2004).

The body under neoliberal conditions

The body is considered a site of production and performance of femininities and masculinities in neoliberal societies (Phipps 2014). Baudrillard (1998) argues that individuals’ relations to their bodies mirror how social relations are organised. Thus, the accumulation of capital is a key tenet of capitalism applied to the physical sphere (Baudrillard 1998; Coffey 2020). Within neoliberal discourses, individuals understand their bodies as something to invest in, to be worked on and optimised:

...orchestrated as a mystique of liberation and accomplishment, [are] in fact always simultaneously an investment of efficient, competitive, economic type. The body 'appropriated' in this way is appropriated first to meet 'capitalist' objectives: in other words, where it is invested, it is invested in order to produce a yield. The body is not appropriated for the autonomous needs of the subject, but in terms of an enforced instrumentality that is indexed to the code and the norms of a society production and managed consumption. (Baudrillard 1998; p. 131, emphasis in original)

Therefore, within a post-industrial society, bodily discipline and hard work are considered moral attributes (Baudrillard 1998; Thorpe et al. 2016). This has perpetuated conditions that view the relationship between the body and self-improvement, self-regulation and self-assessment (Markula 2003; Markula and Pringle 2006).

Straughan (2010) argues that neoliberalism has led to the intensification of the 'body industry'. Popular media and the prolific fitness industry have implored the public that through hard work, bodily imperfections can and should be corrected through diet and exercise (Becker 1993). This perpetuates the idea that individuals are responsible for monitoring and controlling their bodies (Becker 1993; Cairns and Johnston 2015). This 'disciplined body' refers to how the body is framed by control, regimentation, desire and rules (Coffey 1999, p. 59). These discourses of self-improvement have been linked to sentiments of self-discovery and the development of the authentic self (Heyes 2007).

Recent research suggests that within neoliberalism, girls are subject to constructions as the 'ideal' subject (Heywood 2007, p. 103). In this new subjectivity, '...young women are championed as a metaphor for social change' (McRobbie 2004, p. 6). Thus, 'future girls' bear the brunt of the consequential concerns surrounding notions of risk and pressures to take personal responsibility over personal successes and failures as a result of this decentralised welfare state (Heywood 2007). Therefore, the promotion of notions of 'girl power' has been adopted as a political praxis to

promote participation in intervention-based programmes (Heywood and Drake 2004). Heywood (2007) discusses the impact of the 'can do/at-risk' paradigm that is prominent in American intervention discourses. This position sport and physical activity as a setting where girls can learn to take control and responsibility for their health and body (Heywood 2007). Additionally, in response to attempts to increase mass 'equitable' participation, modern women and girls are encouraged to adopt previously 'masculine' characteristics and positions in order to disrupt normative gendered power relations (Gill and Sharff 2011). This is reflected in the tendency for sports-based interventions to focus on team-based, traditionally 'masculine' sports (Gill and Sharff 2011). This relates to this present research, in which girls are participating in a traditionally 'masculine' sport, football.

Gender is a socially constructed concept continuously reinforced, challenged, and shaped by structural hierarchy, power and inequality (Bourdieu 1990; Connell 2009). Grosz (1994) considers the 'lived body' and emphasises its importance in understanding subjectivities. Gender constructions are embedded within sport and physical activity, shaped by historical discourse and ongoing notions of (dis-)empowerment (Theberge 1990). By reinforcing social categories of men and women, these distinctions shape the order of society, institutions, interactions and individual gendered performances (Connell 2009). Sport and physical activity has historically been considered to be a traditionally hegemonic institution that reproduces and reinforces these categories (Hargreaves 1994). Socially constructed body ideals implore women to have an athletic and thin, strong and vulnerable body. Therefore, the body image of a thin, white, young woman has been representative of the cultural landscape of Western industrialised societies (Tiggemann et al. 2000). Arguably, these body ideals are guided by a patriarchal gaze that disempowers both the female body and subject (Berger 1972). Perpetuation of the gender order of male dominance has been attributed to reinforce the suppression of women and the division between men and women (Connell 2009). This social order is central to the feminist thesis; the reproduction of the separation between men and women influences access to opportunities, experiences and responsibilities.

Lived experience

The use of the concept of the lived experience has grown in popularity within the social sciences, social policy and medicine (Hoerger 2016). However, as McIntosh and Wright (2018) attest, ‘...growing use of the term “lived experience” is unaccompanied by discussion of what it may mean or imply’ (p. 1). Numerous ‘definitions’ exist in attempts to explain the doing of and usefulness of the concept. For example, Denzin (1998) highlights how reality is shaped by symbolic interaction and is interpreted and presented to others through storytelling and embodied performances. Therefore, inquiry relating to the lived experience must incorporate the larger social and cultural contexts (Denzin 2008), as well as the researcher’s role in capturing this (Wright 2016). Methodologically, the prolonged nature of inquiry allows for the capture of both routine norms and change (Edwards and Irwin 2010). McIntosh and Wright (2018) emphasise the importance of analysing lived experience alongside consideration of relevant policy and practice.

Viewed through a sociological lens, lived experience allows for an understanding of how everyday lived realities are embodied (Denzin 1990). This includes account of the ways in which sociocultural narratives and structures inform a sense of self. By giving attention to how individuals speak about and live through their worlds, critical empirical and theoretical understandings can be unveiled about how social life is constructed, the meanings associated with experiences, and the ways in which experiences are situated within wider discourses (Denzin 1990). This becomes especially important when considering contested and marginalised identities and bodies (Mirza 2013).

The concept of lived experience has a strong association with phenomenological discourse (van Manen 2014). Phenomenology originated in response to the dominance of positivist approaches and is employed as both a philosophy and a methodological approach for capturing ‘thick’ (Geertz 1973) descriptions of ‘being-in-the-world’ (Merleau-Ponty 1962) in real life contexts (Kerry and Armour 2000;

Moran 2000). This implores that study of the lived experience should firstly originate in the experience itself rather than in the theories that inform it (MacLachlan 2004; Merleau-Ponty 1962). Meaning arises and is embedded in experiences of 'being-in-the-world' (Waskul and Vannini 2016).

Lived experience has also gained prominence in feminist scholarship (Hinterberger 2007). Focused on 'giving voice' to gendered and marginalised subjects, inquiry into lived experience within feminist writings has focused on debunking concerns about oppression, voice and agency (De Beauvoir 2010; Kruks 2014; Stein 1996). Used of lived experience as a tool for knowledge production aims to challenge dominant forms of belief systems and knowledge (Hinterberger 2007). This is achieved through the body, considered the site of lived experience and the vehicle for expressing and communicating oneself (Kruks 2014). The experience is situated within the sociocultural context in which the subject is located (Hinterberger 2007). Thus, a feminist framework aims to uncover 'habitual' (Kruks 2014, p. 87) understandings of the embodied and gendered lived experience. It is constructed and changed through social interaction between individuals that make, resist and transform meanings and rules that guide behaviour (Hargreaves 1994).

Ethnography has a strong association with the concept of lived experience (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). This can be attributed to the methodological emphasis on prolonged and intensive participant observation and interviewing characteristic of ethnographic methods (Becker 2007; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Engagement in reflexivity and the navigation of the balance between insider and outsider positionality as the ethnographer helps facilitate understanding and articulation of lived experience (Coffey 1999; Genzuk 2003). The prolonged nature of ethnography can help make sense of how social conditions and policy impact the daily experiences of social groups (Becker 2007; Denzin 1996). The use of multiple methods in ethnography also allows for a 'rich' (Geertz 1973) account of everyday experiences. This can help uncover and challenge, '...the concrete practices through which a policy is enforced in everyday life' (Dubois 2009, p. 222). This emphasis on

immersive inquiry, engagement with reflexivity and purposeful inquiry characterises the use of lived experience within ethnographic methods:

Researching lived experience, can, therefore, signify a strategy of recognition that is attentive to feelings, bodily states, interactions and identities that tend to be devalued or ignored. In this sense, lived experience can be invoked as a shorthand for empathy, conferring respect and esteem. (McIntosh and Wright 2018, p. 10)

In this present study, consideration of the lived experience is informed by conceptualisations offered by traditional phenomenological, feminist and ethnographic traditions. Central to all three traditions, attention toward challenging taken-for-granted assumptions and practices has significant relevance to this present research. Drawing on feminist phenomenology, it aims to use the concept of lived experience as an approach to understanding and articulating gendered and embodied subjectivities (Hinterberger 2007; Kruks 2014). Additionally, by engaging with the ethnographic tenet of reflexivity, this methodology offers an opportunity to employ an empathetic approach to recognising embodied experiences (Becker 2007). Finally, the use of the notion of lived experience uncovers and challenges how policy and dominant practices affect everyday experiences (Dubois 2009). This is fundamental to this thesis, which aims to understand lived experience in an intervention setting in relation to broader neoliberal and dominant youth-as-risk discourse.

Conclusion

Bourdieu's (1984) concepts of *habitus*, *field* and *capital* offer a conceptual tool to examine sports participation in neoliberal, gendered and classed social practices. This chapter demonstrated how these concepts could be employed in a sport (specifically, football) setting. It also discussed how these concepts could have relevance to Aspire and sports-based interventions. This conceptual framework allows for analysis of the multi-layered complexity that sport interventions settings can foster.

The sociology of the body comprises a rich set of scholarship that touches upon a range of theoretical and conceptual frameworks that explain the relationship between the body and the lived experience. Central to Bourdieu's (1984) concepts and the lived experience of participating in sport and physical activity is the role of the body and embodiment. The primary aim of this thesis was to understand the lived experience of 'at-risk' girls participating in a sports-based intervention. An ethnographic methodology was deemed the most suitable approach to achieve this aim. Chapter Four will describe in detail the ethnographic methodology of this study.

Chapter Four: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter will describe and provide the rationale for the ethnographic methodology of this study. Firstly, it will revisit the research aim presented in Chapter One. It will continue by discussing my methodological positioning and rationale for selecting an interpretivist paradigm. The ethnographic design of the study will then be outlined in detail. This begins with an overview of the recruitment process and the participants involved in this research. My engagement with the process of reflexivity will be summarised through discussion of the pilot study, the collection of field notes, navigation of insider/outsider positionality, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and entry into the field. The chapter continues by outlining the methods of data collection, including prolonged participation-observation, informal interviews, formal semi-structured interviews with the adult coaches and creative arts-based focus groups with the young people. Finally, the chapter concludes by discussing the reflexive thematic analysis used to analyse the wealth of data collected (Braun and Clarke 2006; 2019).

Research Aim

The aim of this study is to understand the lived experience of a particular group of girls (ages 11-13) participating in a girl's-only Aspire programme. Chapter One provided a thorough summary of this life skills education-based SBI delivered in school time to 'at-risk' S1 and S2 pupils. This inductive, exploratory ethnography focused on capturing the prolonged day-to-day lived experiences in a one-year cycle of the programme. This expansive aim was developed in direct response to calls for a deeper understanding of *how* SBIs that employ a life skills-based education model operate in the day-to-day (Coalter 2007; Holt et al. 2007; Holt and Jones 2007; Jones and Lavallee 2009; Larson et al. 2004). Therefore, this research did not involve steadfast, rigid research questions but rather a wide aim of understanding, capturing and presenting their lived experience over the nine months of study.

To achieve this research aim, an ethnographic methodology was deemed most appropriate. Wolcott (1990) aptly describes ethnography as a *process* and a *product*, imploring that:

Anyone who engages in ethnography also assumes responsibility to participate in the continuing dialogue to define and redefine it both as a process and a product. ... To commit to ethnography traditionally has meant to commit to looking at, and attempting to make sense of, human social behaviour in terms of cultural patterning. (p. 13)

Inspired by Wolcott (1990), the remainder of this chapter will outline this process in detail, focusing on the methodological design of this ethnography and critical reflections on the *doing of* ethnography.

Methodological positioning

Consideration of a research paradigm is essential at the onset of an ethnography because it guides the entirety of the research process (Hatch 2002). Generally defined, a research paradigm is the belief system through which ones sees and makes sense of the social world (Guba and Lincoln 1989; Patton 1978). Each paradigm is comprised of its own ontology, epistemology and methodology (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). However, despite a range of named paradigms in qualitative research (for example, interpretivism, pragmatism, feminist), the variations of each problematise efforts to outline comprehensive understandings of each paradigm (Barbour 2008). Thus, Barbour (2008) implores the importance of selecting a research paradigm that ‘fits’ the research topic:

Along with Seale (1999), I would argue that it is important to read around the various methodological ‘offerings’ available, with a view to weighing up the relevance of each – or, indeed, hybrids of two or more – for the particular research topic in hand. (p. 20)

This research was directly inspired by the historical domination of positivist quantitative approaches to sport and physical activity research (Coalter 2007).

Positivism posits that only observable phenomena can be counted as knowledge and aims to generate ‘law-like generalisations’ of social phenomena using the scientific method (Flick 2009; Wahyuni 2012, p. 71). Whilst quantitative inquiries in sport and physical activity generate useful information on outcomes, participation, and retention rates; they offer less information on the more abstract, hidden qualities of sport participation (Biddle et al. 2005; Coalter 2007; Holt and Sehn 2008; Krane and Baird 2005). By contrast, this thesis aims to uncover the, ‘...various mechanisms, processes and experiences associated with participation...’ (Coalter 2007, p. 2). Therefore, it is underpinned by an interpretivist qualitative approach, in order to, ‘...develop an in-depth subjective understanding of people’s lives’ (Pulla and Carter 2018, p. 9).

Interpretivists adopt the position that knowledge production is a social process (Gibbs 2007) constituted and constructed by social actors located in a particular sociotemporal context (Schwandt 1998). Therefore, social meaning is constructed through a prolonged process of social interaction using embodied language, action and experiences (Schwandt 1998). By acknowledging the dynamic and fluid nature of lived social reality, interpretivists aim to, ‘...understand social reality through the eyes of those being studied’ (Chowdhury 2014, n.p.). This paradigm stresses the unique nature of a particular culture to capture conceptual depth (Myers 1997), revealing its ontology, or rather, how one studies and views the social world (Barbour 2008). Thus, ontologically, interpretivism assumes that multiple realities exist (Barbour 2008). This relates to epistemology, or the ways in which the researcher’s worldview influences their ways of knowing and how they interpret the social world (Saldana et al. 2011). An interpretivist epistemology views knowledge as a product of human interaction. Therefore, an interpretivist is tasked with capturing and re-constructing the ways individuals make sense of their own social worlds (Schultz 1967).

My broad inductive research aim aligned with the epistemological and ontological assumptions of an interpretivist paradigm. This guided the ‘doing of’ the research.

Selection of an ethnographic methodology allowed for the research space to be jointly occupied by myself, as researcher, and the participants of this study (Wahyuni 2012). As a result, the nature of this jointly constructed social reality was subjective, fluid, and formulated from multiple perspectives. Using inductive methods within a naturalised setting allowed for the capture of the more emotive qualities of human behaviour (Layder 1994).

The ethnography

Methodologically, ethnography draws upon a multitude of philosophical approaches and methods for data collection and analysis (Skeggs 2001). Common methods of data collection include participant-observation, interviews, focus groups, visual methods and documentary analysis (Atkinson 2006; Krane and Baird 2005). Often a collection of methods is utilised to develop a multi-layered understanding of the everyday life of the culture under study (Flick 2009). O'Reilly (2005) offers a valuable and simplistic definition of the ethnographic process:

Minimally ethnography is iterative-inductive research (that evolves in design through the study), draws on a family of methods, involves direct and sustained contact with human agents, within the context of their lives (and cultures), watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions, and producing a richly written account that respects the irreducibility of human experience, that acknowledges the role of theory as well as the researcher's own role, and that viewed humans as part object/part subject. (p. 3)

As the 'instrument of data collection', the ethnographer is tasked with negotiating access to the culture of study, generating rapport and maintaining relationships, engaging with reflexive practice, completing empirical data collection, generating useful and thorough data, analysing data, and producing a volume of work that is representative of a culture on their own terms for outside eyes (Atkinson 2016). The benefit of the ethnographer and the group under study occupying the same physical space and experiencing a shared reality is that it reflects the everyday, routine ways in which people make sense of their social lives (Eder and Corsaro 1999;

Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). Thus, ethnography attempts to make sense of the familiar through prolonged participant observation (Flick 2009).

In sport and physical activity

Since its more formal introduction to the field in May 1898, in a special edition of *Arena Review* entitled ‘Ethnographic methods in the sociology of sport’, ethnography has gained traction as a credible method of qualitative inquiry in the field (Arena Review 1898). Compared to other forms of qualitative methods, ethnography differentiates itself in its commitment to intensive and prolonged participation and observation (Sands 2002). In consideration of the universality and widespread accessibility of sport, the aptness of the use of ethnography in this field is described by Atkinson (2016):

Ethnographic research on sport and exercise in the first person is a humane, morally guided, emotionally sensitive, embodied and deeply interpersonal enterprise, attentive to the striking similarities, rather than the mass differences, of the human experience for people interested in sport, exercise, physical activity, and other movement-based leisure pursuits. (p. 56)

Ethnographic explorations in sport and physical activity focus on the interpersonal and emotive processes that underpin sporting experiences, uncovering the ‘hidden qualities’ associated with sport (Coalter 2007; Krane and Baird 2005). Some examples of the diverse range of sport ethnographies to date include surfing (Sands 2002), bodybuilding (Klein 1988), athletics (MacPhail et al. 2003), football (soccer) (Clayton and Harris 2008; Holt and Sparkes 2001), rugby (Howe 2001), boxing (Woodward 2007), and wrestling (De Garis 1999). Some have employed an autoethnographic approach (Anderson and Austin 2012; Collinson and Hockey 2005; MacPhail 2004), whilst others have integrated visual and participatory methods (Choi et al. 2006; Jones et al. 2013). The wide range of areas of inquiry includes topics such as sexuality (Adams and Anderson 2012; Daspher 2012), eating disorders (Rich 2006), fandom (Hoerber and Kerwin 2013; Pearson 2012), and injury (Howe 2001). The majority of existing research focuses on adults, professional junior athletes, and inactive children (Klein 1993; MacPhail et al. 2003; O’Sullivan

and MacPhail 2010). Amongst this wealth of ethnographic exploration in the sport and physical activity sector, what lacks are inquiries into the lived experience of adolescent girls engaged in recreational and organised sport and SBIs that engage with issues of modern girlhood (Coalter 2007; Collins and Kay 2003). In literature on SBIs and life skill development, there is limited research grounded in the voices and experiences of young people themselves (Holt et al. 2020; Jones and Lavalley 2009). Therefore, employing an ethnographic design in this present study aims to garner a deeper understanding of the experiences of girls participating in an SBI using their own voices.

Participants and recruitment

This ethnography focused on the lived experience of 22 girls (S1=11; S2=11) who had been referred to participate in the Aspire programme by school staff during their P7 year. They were identified to be at risk of exclusion, becoming a potential offender, and/or coming from a disadvantaged background. Following initial referral, they were invited to participate in a ‘trial’ at CHS. Aspire trials are atypical; there is little focus on selecting young people that demonstrate the best footballing or athletic ability. Instead, they are evaluated on their ability to engage with a baseline level of physical activity and their potential to benefit from the programme. This involved an assessment of needs (linked to the reason for referral) and the potential for those needs to be supported in Aspire. These trials served a secondary purpose: to help facilitate the transition from primary to secondary school. Located on the CHS campus, young people were offered their first chance to familiarise themselves with their new educational environment. With the support of the SFA staff, Kerrie¹ leads the trial process at CHS every year. She is a full-time physical education teacher at CHS and has been an integral part of Aspire since its inception in 2008.

¹ To protect the anonymity of the head coach at the CHS Aspire site, Kerrie was randomly selected as a pseudonym. Whilst the young people referred to her as ‘Miss’, for continuity, she will be referred to as ‘Kerrie’ throughout the thesis.

Fieldwork was conducted in 2018/19. There were 11 young people in each of the S1 and S2 groups in this cycle. One S2 participant, Ruth, did not complete the year-long programme. Her story will be discussed in further detail in subsequent chapters. Additionally, three senior pupils (S5/S6) assisted Kerrie in sessions as part of their physical education leadership programme at CHS. One of the senior pupils, Kim, was an alumna of Aspire. Their primary role was to assist the head coach and serve as role models for the younger pupils. Due to a brief period when Kerrie was on leave due to illness, three other CHS staff members assisted in football sessions, Mr. Hall, Mr. Brown, and student teacher, Mary².

Participant selection and sampling in ethnographic research have long been considered to be problematic. In contrast to random sampling procedures required in quantitative research, in qualitative research sampling, ‘...is substantially more complicated than sample sizes and sites (Guetterman 2015, p. 2). As noted by Creswell (2013), the iterative, reflexive nature of ethnographic research is often accompanied by research questions (or aims) that are devoted to a particular phenomenon in a particular context with a particular group of people. Therefore, Creswell (2013) continues by describing a purposeful sampling strategy for qualitative research, including the selection of participants or field sites, selection of a sampling strategy and determining sample size. Following prolonged reflection, discussion and deliberation, I decided to focus on one particular girl’s-only site for this research. It was determined that prolonged participant observation with multiple sites would be too time intrusive and logistically challenging. Due to the group nature of this ethnography, I aimed to recruit all current Aspire participants to participate in this study. Failure to recruit all Aspire participants would foster

² Mr. Hall and Mr. Brown are referred to by their more formal pseudonyms in order to reflect the manner in which they introduced themselves to me. At their request, I was to reference their formal names whilst present amongst the young people. Arguably, this reflects the more distant proximity they had to this Aspire group and myself as researcher. Even though Mary was only at CHS for one month of the observations, she spent every session with the Aspire group. Therefore, her more informal reference to her first name reflects closeness to the study group.

several concerns regarding the maintenance of confidentiality and anonymity. These concerns are the focus of the next section.

Confidentiality and anonymity

To protect participants' privacy in this study, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity was a significant consideration before, during and after fieldwork (Coffelt 2017). The observations and the focus groups were completed in a group format. Due to the group nature of the ethnography, absolute confidentiality and anonymity was not possible (Jamieson and Williams 2003). Therefore, participants were naturally aware of the source of some verbal conversations and actions (Jamieson and Williams 2003). Additionally, I had no ability to control whether participants disclosed information outside of Aspire sessions (Coffelt 2017; Smith 1995). Therefore, several strategies were employed to ensure understanding of and adherence to informal group contracts to maintain confidentiality and anonymity in the group.

In research with children and young people, consideration of confidentiality and anonymity are critical aspects of the research process (Kirk 2007). To ensure that the young people had competency of the research process and confidentiality as a concept, I engaged in (re)negotiation of consent at various stages throughout this research (Beresford 1997). At the start of fieldwork, during informal conversations and before the focus group activities, I explained the study's purpose, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. I asked the young people to define confidentiality and anonymity in their own words (Beresford 1997). Additionally, we discussed the concept of 'safe space', in which young people were encouraged to respect other participants and keep the daily proceedings and conversations within the confines of the football pitch (or classroom and games hall). Discussion regarding this 'safe space' was guided by the young people, where they jointly developed this statement of confidentiality, "What is said in Aspire, stays in Aspire!" (from field notes, 05/11/2018, CHS 3G).

In field notes, transcriptions and final reports, all names and potentially identifying information were coded to anonymise participants. Pseudonyms were selected at random for the young people and adult coaches. Field notebooks were securely stored in a locked cabinet at all times outside of fieldwork. All electronic documents and recordings were encrypted and stored securely on a secure device.

Reflexivity

As noted previously, reflexivity is an essential feature of the ethnographic process (Watt 2007). Ethnographers are the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Flick 2009). Therefore, engagement with, ‘...reflexivity offer the qualitative researcher a critical lens through which to analyse key methodological dilemmas’ (Day 2012, p. 60). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) elaborate further on the purpose of reflexivity on the research process:

...the fact that as researchers we are likely to have an effect on the people we study does not mean that the validity of our findings is restricted to the data elicitation situations on which we relied. We can minimize reactivity and/or monitor it. But we can also exploit it: how people respond to the presence of the researcher may be as informative as how they react to other situations. (p. 18)

As a process, reflexivity involves acknowledging that the research product can and will reflect the researcher’s background, milieu, values and preconceptions (Gibbs 2007). This involves conscious, ongoing and critical consideration of both the researcher self and the group of study (Shacklock and Smyth 1998). As a critically important practice at all phases of the research process, practical mastery and experience is strongly recommended (Watt 2007).

Pilot study and the collection of field notes

To refine my ability to identify how and if my past experiences, preconceptions, assumptions and emotions influenced my worldview, I engaged in a pilot study prior to the onset of fieldwork (Labaree 2002; MacPhail 2004; Sherif 2001). To replicate the environmental conditions and content of the football-based sessions of Aspire, I

chose to observe three training sessions of a local women's football team that I was previously a member of. A reflexive fieldwork journal was used to document scratch field notes, diagrams to map proceedings spatially, and my own reflections (Ortlipp 2008). This pilot activity helped identify many key considerations to take into fieldwork; the challenges associated with documenting observations of a group ethnography, my lack of experience in ethnographic research and the influence of my background on my interpretation and existence in the group of study.

As a novice ethnographer, I was unfamiliar with how prolonged fieldwork would proceed. Despite previous engagement in observation-based research, I lacked experience in ethnographic methods and employment of a truly inductive approach. Additionally, I had given little intentional thought to the practical process of note-taking in the field (Wolfinger 2002). Before beginning my pilot observations, thorough reflection identified several expected challenges in daily observations; the likelihood of inclement weather, challenges in capturing complicated group processes and identifying the best method to document field notes. Unsurprisingly, the typically wet Scottish conditions began early on in my first pilot session. This forced me to transition from my paper fieldwork journal to taking notes on my mobile phone. Whilst I could record notes more quickly on my phone, I found it challenging to draw diagrams and map out the spatial movements of participants. Even on paper, I quickly found that capturing the diversity of all the proceedings simultaneously was incredibly challenging.

Despite the seemingly apparent simplicity of writing field notes, the actual process proved to be complex (Wolfinger 2002). During the three pilot sessions, I experimented with a variety of methods of documenting, including drawing maps for tracking movement, exclusively writing only scratch notes during sessions and pre-planning areas of interest for observation. As Wolfinger (2002) advises, this practice was essential in creating a decision-making strategy regarding which types of data will be collected, how it will be collected and in which order it will be

completed. I found that each of the methods had benefits, and shortcomings and a mix of all three strategies was the best approach to employ.

Considering the number of actors involved, the complexity of a football environment and the variety of embodied and sensory interactions and expressions, the time-intensive nature of writing field notes was unsurprising. The importance of dedicating sufficient time post-observation to translate scratch notes into a transcript of field notes was evident (Lofland and Lofland 1984). As a qualified social worker, I found this process quite familiar, reflecting my favoured system of charting in therapeutic work. My transcript writing style reflected the temporal strategy described by Emerson et al. (1995). From the scratch notes collected during the session, this strategy involves the systematic recording of notes from beginning to end (Emerson et al. 1995).

Prior to the onset of the pilot, I identified that a sport environment would be a comfortable place for me. As a lifelong footballer, coach and referee, I assumed that my background and knowledge of this culture's typical customs and proceedings would be beneficial (Coffey 1999). For individuals with lived experience in football, being in a football space is a 'familiar, topophilic experience' (Giulianotti 1999, p. 69). Despite potential 'objects of disorientation' (e.g. inclement weather, unfamiliar objects, unfamiliar people, etc.), the visual, physical and auditory symbols can reorient oneself and invoke feelings of familiarity (Giulianotti 1999, p. 69). These pilot observations unveiled that these feelings of familiarity were a double-edged sword. Whilst my previous experience in the sport bolstered my confidence in understanding the technical and tactical components of these sessions, I found that I often focused too strongly on these aspects. My scratch notes too frequently focused on documenting the football-specific proceedings (e.g. the set-up of particular drills, engagement with drills itself, etc.) and missed the nuanced, intimate details I was seeking (e.g. interpersonal interactions, changes in body language, uncontrolled spatial movements, etc.) (Flick 2009). These 'selective perceptions' strongly influenced what was captured in field notes (Flick 2009, p. 297). To take more

relevant notes and to be more efficient, I continuously asked myself, ‘...what to write down, how to write it down, and when to write it down’ (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, p. 176). Continued reflection identified that it was essential to view the research settings as ‘anthropologically strange’ as possible to truly maintain complete objectivity (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, p. 9). This objectivity, however, was incredibly difficult to maintain due to my previous membership in this group and my insider research positionality.

Insider/outsider positionality

The co-production of social research by researchers and participants highlights the epistemological nature of knowledge construction (Geertz 1993). This co-production is influenced by the ‘distinctive assets and liabilities’ associated with researcher positionality (Merton 1972, p. 33). Understanding the personhood of the researcher is a continuous and essential part of the research process (Dwyer and Buckle 2009). Scholarship on insider/outsider positionality in qualitative research has evolved into a spectral concept (Hellowell 2006). Whilst original schools of thought viewed outsider and insider positions as fixed throughout the research process, modern social research identifies the dynamic, fluid and frequently messy nature of group membership (Dwyer and Buckle 2009). To better understand one’s membership, Hellowell (2006) outlines five reflective questions:

- 1) How they consider themselves to be engaged in insider research,
- 2) How they consider themselves to be engaged in outsider research,
- 3) How they think they may be engaged as both an insider and outsider,
- 4) How they may not be engaged as an insider or an outsider, and
- 5) To reflect on areas where they are not sure of how they are positioned within their research. (p. 488)

The answers to these five questions will help guide the remainder of the discussion in this section.

In relation to the Aspire group, I considered myself somewhat of an ‘insider’ due to my extensive experience in football (Merton 1972). My familiarity with the

language and norms of a football setting was beneficial in feeling comfortable at the observation site (Brannick and Coghlan 2007; Merton 1972). Despite this, I found it challenging to navigate my new role as a researcher in a football setting (Brannick and Coghlan 2007). As an adult woman entering Aspire with the role of researcher, I considered myself to hold a hybrid insider-outsider role. Despite my intimate knowledge of the game, I had no pre-existing connection to Aspire. The ability to bring an objective and critical gaze to the research space is considered a benefit of outsider positionalities (Hellawell 2006). The lack of existing knowledge of the group's intimate processes, routines, terminology and norms allows for the collection of nuanced insights that might otherwise be missed (Dwyer and Buckle 2009). In contrast to the insider benefit of existing rapport, outsider researchers may face challenges in developing rapport and engaging with participants (Brannick and Coghlan 2007). However, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) argue that this hybrid role with a balance between 'involvement and estrangement' creates an ideal environment for inquiry (p. 115). I found that the navigation of this hybrid role became most apparent in the earliest stages of fieldwork.

Entry into the field: Gaining informed consent

A personal contact at the SFA helped facilitate my entry into Aspire. Some researchers argue that negotiating access to a field site tends to be easier if this is facilitated through personal contacts that have an existing relationship with the desired site or group of study (Wilkes 1999). At first, this appeared to be the case for this particular ethnography. This gatekeeper assisted in identifying a field site that matched my research goals and connected me to relevant parties (at the SFA and CHS) that needed to approve this research. However, despite rapid approval by the Regional Manager and the Head of Grassroots Football at the SFA, contacting the Head Teacher at CHS was challenging. Four long months had elapsed from my initial contact with this gatekeeper to my first day at CHS. Unfortunately, I was unable to help expedite this contact. My gatekeepers at the SFA requested to coordinate all communications to CHS regarding approval for this project. This preference for the gatekeepers to manage all communications with CHS reflects the

power gatekeepers can have over the research process (Reeves 2010). Whilst incredibly frustrating, delayed entry into the field offered an opportunity to develop a more robust research plan, complete pilot observations, engage with relevant literature, and spend critical time engaging in more reflexive practice.

This yearly cycle of Aspire began in August 2018. At that time, access was still being negotiated. As a result, data collection and my formal entry into the field did not begin until November 2018. My first visit to CHS did not involve data collection but rather familiarisation with the physical space, adult contacts at CHS and security protocols for entering and leaving the campus (Whiteley and Whiteley 2006). During this initial meeting, I met Kerrie for the first time. As the primary coach of this Aspire group, it was determined that she would be the best point of contact to assist in distributing informational sheets and consent forms to all participants. At this meeting, I provided Kerrie with a set of consent forms (Appendix 1) to distribute to all the S1 and S2 participants. Despite coming to this meeting with a set agenda of talking points and logistical questions, this visit only lasted a short time with only brief pleasantries exchanged. Therefore, I was only given enough time to hand Kerrie a stack of consent forms and information sheets without being able to adequately explain the process for securing consent that I had planned.

Two sets of consent forms were created, one for the young people and their parents/guardians (Appendix 1) and one for coaches (Appendix 2). Both included a standard research information sheet that provided contact information, a brief overview of the study, confirmation of ethical approval from the General University Ethics Panel (GUEP) at the University of Stirling, confirmation of approval of the study by the SFA and CHS, and a statement regarding confidentiality and data protection (Appendices 4 & 5). In addition, I included a second information with participant consent forms (Appendix 3). This sheet was made specifically for the young people in a more child-friendly format with colour and a photo of myself (Lambert and Glacken 2011). It also included my contact information, some of my interests, a brief overview of my research project, what my research entitled, a

statement of confidentiality, details for a parent/guardian meeting and a request for prompt return of consent forms (Appendix 3). Inspired by Lambert and Glacken (2011), this information sheet was presented, ‘...in a friendly and developmentally appropriate manner, using simple language, large print and incorporating diagrams and pictures’ (p. 788).

Following the initial meeting, another three weeks elapsed until we could organise a parent/guardian meeting to discuss this research. This informational meeting was planned to ensure that parents/guardians understood what the ethnography would entail and to provide an opportunity to discuss the research process and ask questions (Aarsand and Forberg 2000). Due to school policy, I could not organise this meeting myself and relied on Kerrie to schedule a space and contact all parents and guardians. As a result, this meeting was held immediately after school concluded. Likely due to timing, only one parent attended. I held a very brief discussion with this parent about the research project, and she agreed to sign the consent forms. Whilst the low turnout was disappointing, all 20 consent forms were still returned by the following week despite concern that there was limited direct communication between myself and parents/guardians. To remedy this concern, I ensured that my contact information was available to all parents to discuss any potential concerns or questions they had. However, this process of pre-fieldwork informational meetings with parents highlights a significant ethical concern regarding research with children and young people; I had no direct access to the young people themselves in order to ensure they had a strong understanding of what participation in this research would entail (Stalker et al. 2004). Gard and Meyenn (2000) argue that following informational meetings with parents/guardians, it must be ensured that children also possess a strong awareness of what their parents/guardians have given consent to. Therefore, obtaining *informed* consent from the young people was a priority upon entry into the field.

Once consent was obtained, I was finally able to fully enter the field in November 2018. Upon entry, my first priority was to ensure that all the young people had a

thorough understanding of the research process and what it meant to give their informed consent to participate. At the beginning of my first observation sessions with both groups, I was given time to sit down with the girls to provide them with an overview of the purpose of my research, what I would be doing (or not doing) whilst present, and to discuss and seek informed consent (Gibbs 2007). Informed consent indicates that participants understand what type of research they are consenting to and what will happen during the research (Gibbs 2007). They were given the option to withdraw from the research and to have their data removed upon request (Gibbs 2007). Despite poor attendance at the informational meeting, I hoped the girls reviewed the information sheet given to them (Appendix 3). The colourful design and inclusion of my photo were intentional choices that I thought would trigger feelings of familiarity. I hypothesised that this would help facilitate thoughtful and engaging conversations on consent and confidentiality in initial sessions. As expected, many of the girls stated that they recognised my face from the photograph on the information sheet. This recognition validated my decision to include a more child-friendly information sheet.

It is often noted that the process of informed consent and sound ethical practice is particularly challenging with children and young people (Blackman 2007; Young and Barrett 2001). Whilst recent literature has focused on navigating the messy nature of this critical aspect of the research process; several researchers have critiqued the obstructive nature of obtaining ethical approval through institutional review boards before contact with participants (Barley and Russell 2016; Guillemim and Gillam 2004). For example, Nairn et al. (2020) calls for ‘meaningful relationship building’ with groups before obtaining institutional and, subsequently, group consent:

Ethics Committees require informed consent *before* data collection. We argue this requirement imposes an ‘unnatural’ order of events where consent is expected from research participants *before* any relationship-building has time to take place. ... We propose that Ethics Committees rethink the most ethical sequence of events for gaining consent, especially from groups. We

argue that taking the time to build relationships *before* expecting research participants to consent and replacing informed consent with a negotiated agreement is a more ethical approach. (emphasis in original, p. 1)

Proponents of this critique argue that modern ethical regulation is no longer a suitable protective factor for research participants but rather reinforces traditional power relations and hegemonic control (Nairn et al. 2020; Renold et al. 2008). Additionally, this approval process is underpinned by several critical assumptions that are incongruous with the flexible, participant-driven nature of ethnographic research (Barley and Russell 2016). This includes the assumption that all ethical dilemmas can be predicted and managed before the research begins (Barley and Russell 2016). Additionally, this process typically requires a declaration of research methods, which is inconsistent with the flexibility that is a core feature of ethnographic methods (Barley and Russell 2016).

Guillemim and Gillam (2004) argue that the reality of ‘ethics-in-practice’ is discordant with institutional regulations that require foregrounding a set of ethical concerns (p. 269). Russell (2013) builds upon this argument by imploring that young people should be involved and active in all stages of the research process, especially in negotiating informed consent. This circles back to the importance of ‘meaningful relationship building’ described by Nairn et al. (2020, p. 1). This approach helps create a research environment in which participants can actively determine suitable ethical parameters for the research, identify how this research can benefit them and agree to the conditions and design of data collection methods (Nairn et al. 2020). It is argued that involving young people in this process can lessen the effects of the natural power and authoritative imbalances involved in research with young people (Nairn et al. 2020; Renold et al. 2008; Theberge 1990).

In practice, I found the process of gaining informed consent particularly challenging. My delayed entry into the field, the poor attendance at the informational meeting and limited time to negotiate consent made the process feel rushed and unidirectional. Despite my attempts to make myself available and familiar to the

young people prior to my first session, our discussion of consent and the research process was ultimately guided by and dominated by me. When prompted, the girls did not ask questions related to the research process or ethical concerns but showed more interest in building a rapport with me. On reflection, I agree with the arguments set forth by Nairn et al. (2020). Prioritising ‘meaningful relationship building’ could have led to a more active group discussion on consent and confidentiality (Nairn et al. 2020, p. 1). Alongside this procedural challenge, I anticipated that the highly regulated environment of an education setting and my role as an adult could contribute to a potentially unilateral conversation (Jackson and Scott 2000). As a result, despite following procedural protocols for obtaining informed consent, I found myself questioning whether or not the young people were truly informed and comfortable with what they had just consented to. Therefore, I strongly committed to ensuring that I re-affirmed and re-negotiated consent as often as possible throughout the research process (The British Sociological Association 2017; Moore et al. 2018). Specific instances will be discussed in detail in the forthcoming section outlining the methods of data collection.

Beyond the challenges relating to the negotiation of informed consent, I found the process of securing ethical approval challenging ethically and methodologically. In line with the criticisms offered by Russell and Barkley (2016), I selected a methodology that I *felt* would be appropriate, without any intimate knowledge of or connection to the participants and what they would hope to gain from participation in this research. In the initial pre-planning stages of this research, I generated a number of structured research questions relating to the lived experience of Aspire participants, the ethic of care (Gilligan 1982) and caring relationships. As the research process continued, I realised that set of research questions was ill-suited for this particular group. This was evidenced in an entry in my reflexive fieldwork journal:

I am finding it quite challenging to understand the applicability of care in this setting. It is clear that there are displays of ‘care’ as it relates to the ethic of care, however, it does not appear to be a focal point of day-to-day programming. I am questioning how to capture, what to write down, and

what to pay attention to within this set of questions. (from field notes, 05/11/2018, CHS PE Hub)

Continued engagement with reflexivity unveiled that I was forcing a personal area of research interest onto this population and environment without a deep understanding of Aspire itself and its participants. Following reflection and consultation with my PhD supervisors, I decided to adapt my research questions and opt for a broader research aim. This was one of the first significant turning points of the PhD process. Potentially attributed to my tendency as a social work practitioner to follow more rigidly structured timelines and plans of action, I was unaware of the inherent flexibility of the ethnographic process. Although I had engaged with that notion through reading literature on the method, I had yet to internalise what its flexibility and ongoing mutability meant in practice. Initially, this dissonance between what I had *planned* and what I was *observing* was perceived as a failure or incorrect within the parameters of the ethnographic process. Supervisions with my PhD supervisors proved to be vital in understanding that this revelation was not a failure, but simply part of the art of ‘doing’ ethnography. Thus, I reminded myself that the purpose of selecting a more inductive and exploratory approach was to utilise the lived experience of the young people as the primary driving force for this investigation. In order to use insights from this lived experience to inform later stages of the research process, data was analysed concurrently alongside data collection. This next section will outline the methods of data collection used to achieve this goal.

Methods of data collection

Participant observation

A central feature of ethnographic research is prolonged intensive participation and observation in the field (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; Sands 2002). Pure anthropological tradition involved complete immersion in a foreign culture, with the aim of being a ‘native’ (Lofland 1971). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) describe the benefit of prolonged participant observation:

As participant observers we can learn the culture or subculture of the people we are studying. We can come to interpret the world more or less in the same way that they do, and thereby learn to understand their behaviour in a different way to that in which natural scientists set about understanding the behaviour of physical phenomena. (p. 9)

It is a complex method of data collection that combines participation and observation, interviewing, document analysis and introspection (Denzin 1989). Often denoted as symbolic of the ethnographer, a reflexive fieldwork journal is traditionally used to document field notes (Sands 2002). These field notes are comprised of thorough and 'concrete' descriptions of social processes and the wider contexts that inform them (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, p. 175). These notes should provide 'accurate representations' (Sands 2002, p. 76). of observations to elucidate deep, rich, and 'thick' (Geertz 1972) information.

Following the previously described pilot observations, I engaged in prolonged participant observation from November 2018 to June 2019. Over the seven months of study, I observed 68 sessions (S1=28; S2=41). Each session ranged between 60 and 90 minutes of observation. When possible, I spent additional time before and after sessions observing transitions to and from Aspire and engaging in informal conversations. These observations occurred in a range of locations across the PE hub grounds at CHS, including the main hallway of the PE hub, the outside 3G pitch, the large indoor games hall, the small indoor games hall, the PE hub office and the walkways immediately surrounding the PE building.

I mostly attempted to occupy peripheral spaces to lessen my impact on the natural proceedings of the group (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). There were, however, many instances where individual participants were removed from certain activities or the wider group. For example, the walk from the PE hub to the 3G pitch was lengthy and involved a large set of stairs. Informal rapport building and interview opportunities often occurred on this set of stairs. The ascent to the PE hub from the 3G pitch allowed for vital time post-session to ask questions or to gain additional

insights (Krane and Baird 2005). Additionally, there were many informal interviewing opportunities during the football-based components of sessions. Often, for behavioural or physical (injury or illness) reasons, some girls were unable to participate in football activities. Especially as our rapport strengthened, the girls often chose to sit near me while disengaged from primary activities. For example, in this exchange with Michelle, an opportunity for informal interviewing and rapport building organically presented itself:

Michelle is not participating today. She started with the warm up, but has since decided to sit alongside the fence with me. She shares that she hurt her knee in PE last week and it is still feeling sore. Whilst we sat together watching the session, we spoke about funny dog names (my personal favourite: Toastie), her aspiration to become a teacher, and how annoying parents can be. I took this opportunity to ask her about how she was added to Aspire later than the rest of the girls. She shared that she had to change her class schedule because she needed to be placed in an additional support period for more tutoring because she had low math marks. As a result, her rotational needed to be switched and she was referred to Aspire. (from field notes, 08/12/2018, CHS 3G)

As previously stated, in an attempt to ensure on-going consent, I re-affirmed consent as often as possible during these informal conversations. This re-affirmation of consent followed recommendations set forth by the British Sociological Association of Ethical Practice:

...it may be necessary for the obtaining of consent to be regarded, not as a once-and-for all prior event, but as a process, subject to negotiation over time. In addition, particular care may need to be taken during periods of prolonged fieldwork where it is easy for research participants to forget they are being studied. (British Sociological Association 2017, p. 5)

At times, re-affirmation felt unnatural. Despite my urge to forgo re-affirmation during certain informal interactions that felt particularly relevant and/or interesting, sound ethical practice required this (O'Reilly 2005). For example, in this same exchange with Michelle, re-affirmation of consent felt abrupt and unnatural:

I start to realise that we have been speaking for some time now and I have not yet reminded Michelle about my role as researcher and to re-affirm consent for participation in the research. After we decide that Toastie is possibly one of the best food-themed dog names a Golden Retriever could have, I shift focus to reminding her that I was there to conduct research and

checked to make sure that she still understood the parameters of confidentiality and consent that we established as a group. (from field notes, 08/12/2018, CHS 3G)

Equally as challenging as re-affirmation of consent, I often had several follow-up questions related to the aim of the research. I found it challenging to naturally interweave these queries into exchanges:

A particular problem is how to shape conversations arising in the field into interviews in which the unfolding of the other's specific experiences in aligned with the issue of the research in a systematic way. The local and temporal framework is less clearly delimited than in other interview situations, where time and place are arranged exclusively for the interview. Here opportunities for an interview often arise spontaneously and surprisingly from regular field contacts. (Flick 2009, p. 169)

Despite my desire to keep informal interviews as relevant as possible to the research aim, I discovered that rapport building was equally important (Punch 2002). At times these conversations became what I initially assumed to be tangential, covering topics from funny-looking animals, school dinner menus and make-up tips. By the end of the year, I realised that the girls had started to lead these informal interactions, sharing everything and anything they desired. As an ethnographer-in-training, I was not immediately aware of the value of these interactions. A review of my field notes demonstrated how powerful and relevant these seemingly casual interactions were to understand the complex nature of their lives in and outside of, Aspire. Additionally, engagement in informal interviews is considered to increase young people's choice, agency and ability to express themselves (Balen et al. 2000; Punch 2002).

Participatory arts-based focus groups

The selection of focus groups in place of formal individual interviews with children and young people has become a popular methodological choice in modern social research (Gibson 2007; Literat 2013). Focus groups can decrease the levels of discomfort that a one-on-one interview can elicit (Literat 2013). They are designed to be a, '...carefully planned discussion, designed to obtain perceptions on a defined

area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment' (Krueger 1994, p. 6). Aligned with feminist epistemologies, focus groups can give voice to participants (e.g. children, women and at-risk individuals) that may have otherwise been omitted from traditional research means (Fenge et al. 2011; Flick 2009; Wilkinson 1999).

My delayed entry into the field led to concerns regarding rapport building and completing interviews to supplement field observations. I felt strongly that formal interviews with the young people should not occur before I had ample opportunity to generate rapport. Ethically and methodologically, decreasing potential feelings of discomfort was a priority. Whilst focus group interviews aimed to create a more welcoming research environment. I had concerns about how unfamiliar a focus group process could be to the young people. Therefore, I opted to design an interactive focus group environment with the inclusion of creative arts-based activity. The inclusion of visual material as a supplemental source of data was selected due to its ability to work well in conjunction with other methods of data collection (Jones et al. 2013).

The use of participatory visual methods (PVM) in a range of disciplines has become increasingly popular in recent years. PVM includes photo elicitation (see Harper 2000), video diary, photovoice, self-portraits (see Luttrell 2003), visual mapping using spatial tracking (see Kwan 2008) and other creative means (Flick 2009). Integration of PVM in focus group activities predominantly occurs with media made or captured *prior* to the focus group (Flick 2009). For example, in photovoice research and photo-elicitation interviews, participants are given a camera to capture photographs that represent who they are (Dabs 1982). The chosen photographs help to stimulate discussion about the photo itself and its relation to participants' daily lives (Flick 2009).

Robust guidelines regarding integrating interactive arts-based activities in focus groups are scant (Caretta and Vacchelli 2015). Whilst that led to methodological concerns, Flick (2009) advocates for creative license in selecting the method most

suitable to the research, advocating for the selection of a group that is ‘right’ for the selected research (Flick 2009, p. 196). The selection of an arts-based activity was inspired by my past training and experience as a social worker and creative arts therapist. In my experience, engagement in a loosely structured, expressive art activity can help facilitate discussion, decrease feelings of awkwardness and foster an environment where young people can take ownership and agency over their participation and information disclosed. These trends are also reflected in literature on engagement in arts-based methods with children and young people (Coad 2007; Coad et al. 2009; Sonn et al. 2013). For example, in a multi-method, qualitative study of Australian children’s perceptions and experiences of place, space and physical activity, the benefit of the integration of participatory and visual methods with children and young people are discussed:

Our use of multiple methods increased children’s opportunity to choose and have at least partial control about how to contribute and what to say, and helped engage and interest them while demonstrating that we recognized them as active agents in the creation of their worlds. It is unlikely that a single method would have revealed some of the most important study findings such as the stark differences between their conceptions of play and sport, their understandings of the place of television in their lives and their enthusiastic desire for involvement in decisions that affect their lives here and now. (Darbyshire et al. 2005)

Similarly, using creative and interactive activities in interview settings can make proceedings feel less rigid and constructed (Jones et al. 2013; Phoenix and Rich 2016). The ability to claim agency in how and what type of information was shared in the made material decreased the natural power imbalance between myself, the researcher, and the young people (Packard 2008; Phoenix and Rich 2016).

The creative arts project used in this project was inspired by the popular Panini cards released for every major football tournament (Appendix 9). These cards feature images of the players, basic demographic information and game-related statistics. They are often sold alongside a sticker activity book. In this book,

collectors can affix their player cards, learn more about teams, host cities and a tournament as a whole. I assumed that the widespread popularity and availability of these cards and activity books would foster some sensations of familiarity. These focus groups were held only a month before the start of the Women’s World Cup 2019, serendipitously, the first World Cup Scotland would qualify for. As a result, Panini packs and activity books were readily available and promoted in major grocery outlets and newsagents. In the focus group interviews, it was revealed that about half of the girls recognised these cards. They tended to be the more football-minded participants with formal experience playing in a team environment.

Following recommendations by Krueger and Casey (2000) that focus groups should be comprised of four to eight participants, four focus groups were held with five participants each (Table 3). Two participants did not take part in the groups, Ruth and Hannah.

S1 Group 1	S1 Group 2	S2 Group 1	S2 Group 2
Ellen	Alex	Amanda	Abigail
Erin	Alice	Amy	Alison
Georgia	Maggie	Diamond	Melissa
Michelle	Niamh	Megan	Toni
Sarah	Rosie	Taylor	Sydney

Table 2. Grouping of participants for focus groups.

In the week before the interviews, each young person was given a handout describing the activity and purpose of the focus groups (Appendix 8). I had initially planned to follow up on the distribution of the handouts with a verbal discussion. However, an unexpected outbreak of Norovirus at CHS disrupted a week of observations, and I could not attend campus. To ensure complete clarity on what participation entailed in these focus groups, I began each with an open discussion. Firstly, I asked if everyone had received the informational handout and if they had ample opportunity to review it. This elicited several questions querying the purpose (Is this a test?), the procedure (Do we get to put whatever we want or just stuff about

football?) and confidentiality (Does everyone get to see this?). To help answer these questions, I distributed instructions and supplemental materials to each young person (Appendix 9). This included a brief description of the art activity, a list of suggested components to include, example player cards and some visual components they could cut out and include in their own cards. I emphasised that the goal of the activity was to create a made object that answered, “What do you want the world to know about you?” Similarly to how player cards provide all the essential information fans need to know about each footballer, I encouraged the girls to include components representing their personalities and interests, both on and off the pitch, in and out of Aspire.

Following the establishment of a thorough understanding of the purpose and process of the activity and the focus group itself, we continued with the process of consent negotiation. I explained how and why the proceedings would be audio recorded. I emphasised that the audio recordings, the resultant transcripts and the made material would only be seen by myself and my supervisors. All personally identifying information would be redacted and/or replaced with a pseudonym. Next, we established a group consensus regarding confidentiality. I asked the participants to define confidentiality in their own words and to determine a group consensus on guidelines for confidentiality. For example, Toni defined confidentiality as, “It means you won’t tell anyone. Like we won’t say outside of group” (S2 group 2, 14/05/2019, CHS classroom). The majority of responses maintained this simplistic theme. Upon reflection, I realised that our establishment of confidentiality in the focus groups was short conversations. This raised two ethical concerns: i) young people’s understanding of confidentiality and, ii) my role as a mandated reporter. Firstly, this brief review and consent to the parameters of confidentiality failed to ensure that all young people participating had full voice to demonstrate their individual understanding of the concept. Each group had only one or two young people contribute to our shared definition of confidentiality. It appeared that the remainder of the participants were agreeable to what their peers had contributed. In fact, this concern is common in research with children and young people. For

example, Hyde et al. (2005) state, ‘...it (confidentiality) is of greater concern with children, who may not fully appreciate the concept of confidentiality in a culture that is increasingly at variance with the notion of children keeping secrets’ (n.p.). Therefore, aligned with recommendations by Heary and Hennessy (2002), following input from the young people on our shared definition of confidentiality, I could have employed an additional strategy to ensure comprehension. This strategy involves a more thorough discussion of the meaning and essential need for confidentiality in the research process (Heary and Hennessy 2002). In addition, this discussion should have involved my dual role as researcher and mandated reporter.

The earlier stages of the fieldwork process brought into prominence the sensitive nature of some of the challenges and experiences that the participants brought to the programme. Therefore, I was aware of the potential for the participants to disclose potentially sensitive topics during the focus group interviews. However, I failed to reaffirm that in cases of potential abuse and neglect, I would have to break conditions of confidentiality to report disclosures to appropriate authorities (Heary and Hennessy 2002). Curtis et al. (2003) also raise the concern that young people may disclose information they have not processed themselves adequately. Whilst none of the young people disclosed any sensitive or reportable information during the focus groups, reflection revealed that I would have been ill-prepared to address that sensitive situation if it arose. In the future, I would follow recommendations set forth by Curtis et al. (2003) to prepare a list of resources relevant to issues that will be discussed in the focus group.

Following thorough re-affirmation of consent, the first hour of each focus group was dedicated to creating their player cards. During this time, I interacted with all of the participants. I asked questions to develop an understanding of the motivation and meanings they ascribed to the choices they made in how they constructed their cards. I inquired about colour choices, various visual components and their decision-making processes. Part of this activity included posing for a portrait using an Instax, instant photo camera. Most of the girls enjoyed using the camera and selecting the

poses they felt represented them. The avid footballers opted for more ‘traditional’ football poses (Figure 1) or action shots (Figure 2). Others were more creative and used some of the art materials to enhance their photos (Figure 3). Two girls opted out of taking a photo because they felt uncomfortable taking photographs (Figure 4).



Figure 1. Georgia's player card. (S1 group 1, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom)

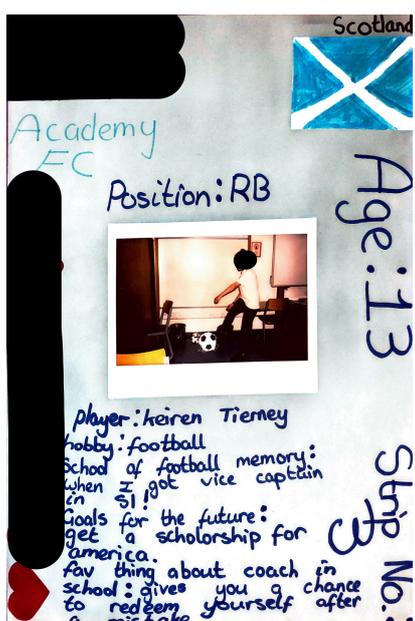


Figure 2. Rosie's player card. (S1 group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom)



Figure 3. Taylor's player card. (S2 group 1, 14/05/2019, CHS classroom)

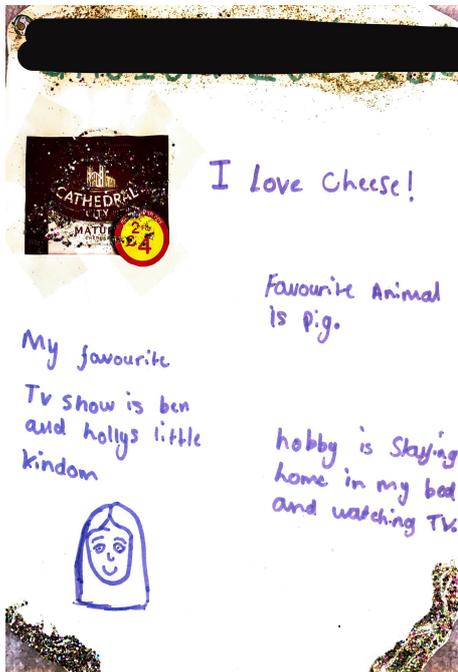


Figure 4. Maggie's player card. (S1 group 2, 14/05/2019, CHS classroom)

The second hour of the focus groups resembled a more formal focus group format. The participants were asked to share their cards with the rest of the group (Phoenix

and Rich 2016). I adopted the role of facilitator instead of the primary interviewer to encourage a participant-led environment in which the player cards were used as a tool to guide the discussion. In a physical education ethnographic and participatory action project with ‘disadvantaged’ adolescent girls, it was reported that, ‘it was the students’ reading of their own visual artefacts that gave us the best insight into their lived experiences’ (Enright and O’Sullivan 2012, n.p.). As discussions proceeded, I had to interject and mediate several times. This was necessary at times when the conversation became stagnant or overly dominated by a singular voice. Mediation in focus groups is described by Flick (2009):

Objectivity here mainly means the mediation between the different participants. The interviewer’s main task is to prevent single participants or partial groups from dominating the interview and thus the whole group with their contributions. Furthermore, the interviewer should encourage reserved members to become involved in the interview and to give their views and should try to obtain answers from the whole group in order to cover the topic as far as possible. (p. 195)

Each of the four focus groups had at least one individual that dominated the conversation. As a result, I had to encourage and prompt some of the more reserved, quiet participants to participate.

Throughout the entirety of the focus groups, I documented scratch notes. Using the same methods employed in field observations, I devoted time immediately after each group to convert these notes into a longer transcript. This practice proved especially important as my recording device failed in one of the groups. The remainder of the group recordings were transcribed clean verbatim, and I omitted intelligible crosstalk (Bertrand et al. 1992). The accuracy of these transcriptions was checked by reviewing the written transcripts while listening to recordings for a second time (Bertrand et al. 1992). Additionally, all audio transcripts were cross-checked with the transcript generated by my own notes to ensure content credibility (Bertrand et al. 1992).

Formal interviews

The ‘art form’ of ethnographic interviewing is a complex practice (Sands 2002, p. 66). In contrast to informal, ‘friendly conversations’, ethnographic interviewing should involve:

- 1) An *explicit purpose* to be holding an interview (i.e. what the research is about and why this informant),
- 2) *Ethnographic explanations*, including project explanations (a description of the purpose of the study), recording explanations (consent and purpose of audio recordings), native language explanations (rejection of translational competence), interview explanations (clarification of information and participatory discussion) and question explanations (explanations regarding types of questions), and
- 3) *Ethnographic questions* (descriptive, structural and contrast questions).
(Spradley 1979, pp. 59-60)

Formal, semi-structured interviews in ethnographic research elucidate, ‘...detailed and complex insights into people’s decisions, values, motivations, beliefs, perceptions, feelings and emotions’ (Smith and Sparkes 2016, p. 108). In contrast to more positivist methods, semi-structured interviews are grounded in the assumption that participants are more likely to express subjective opinions and thoughts in an open interview setting, than in a more formal interview or questionnaire (Flick 2009). From a feminist perspective, interviews are employed as a method for researchers and participants to ‘illuminate experience’ together (Hesse-Biber 2012, p. 20).

Formal interviews were held with three coaches from a variety of Aspire sites across the region:

- 1) Kerrie – Coach and PE teacher at CHS Aspire (girl’s only)
- 2) John – External hire coach and administrator at Allan HS (mixed – predominantly boys)
- 3) Phil – External hire coach at Valley HS and Lowland Academy (mixed – predominantly boys)

These interviews were held at their respective campuses and lasted approximately 60 minutes. All three coaches selected an interview location of their preference. Each interview began with an overview of my role in the research, the purpose of the research, and a brief overview of the interview process. Consent negotiation included terms of confidentiality and how audio recordings and resultant transcripts would be stored safely. Each of the audio transcripts was transcribed verbatim. The accuracy of these transcriptions was checked by reviewing transcripts while listening to recordings for a second time.

A semi-structured guide was created using insights from observation data (Appendix 7; Smith and Sparkes 2016). Despite variance in coaching backgrounds and Aspire programme specificities, the same interview guide was used for each interview. This helps facilitate ‘comparability’ of the data across the three interviews (Flick 2009, p. 172). The questions and method were designed to facilitate ‘retrospective inspection’ through data-informed open-ended questions (Flick 2009, p. 151). For example, one section of the interview included the use of labelled index cards. Interviewees were asked to rank the aspects on the cards in order of importance by physically moving the cards (Figure 5). This activity triggered memories, interesting anecdotes and opportunities for relevant follow-up questions. These additional insights altered the planned order of interview questions. Therefore, I used the interview schedule flexibly to sustain the interviews’ natural flow (Merton and Kendall 1946).

Development of Friendships	Mental Skills (mental strength, focus, discipline)	Physical Skills (stamina, speed, strength, etc.)
Tactical Skills (defending, attacking, team shape)	Teamwork and Collaboration	Technical Skills (passing, shooting, finishing, etc.)

Figure 5. Index cards for formal interviews with the coaches.

Leaving the field

As a social worker, the idea of ‘termination’ was familiar. Despite being reasonably comfortable with the process, I lacked a general understanding of what leaving the field could entail in ethnographic research. Literature on this phase of ethnographic research is insufficient despite the continued emphasis on reflexivity at *all* phases of the research process (Coffey 1999; Iversen 2009). Thoughtful consideration of this phase of fieldwork is crucial because it marks the close of a special relationship that has been formed over time (Walsh 2012). The potentiality of a reluctance to terminate this relationship must also be considered (Walsh 2012). The ability of an ethnographer to depart the field and ‘...escape the exigencies and problems plaguing everyday research settings’ contributes to the power imbalance between researchers and their research participants (Irwin 2006, p. 166). After seven months of forging relationships with the young people and Kerrie, negotiation of our post-research relationship was emotionally challenging. During discussions about termination, some of the young people asked questions including, “Will you be back with us next year?” and “Why won’t you be in Aspire anymore?” It appeared that the procedural aspects of leaving the field (e.g. the writing and sharing of findings) were less of a concern; the disruption of our relationship was the most challenging to process for participants. Similarly, Smith and Atkinson (2017) warn of the ‘disenchanting and alienating’ nature of departing the field for researchers (p. 636). Feelings of alienation occurred as I reckoned with the end of fieldwork as I transitioned into this phase of analysis.

Data analysis

In true ethnographic fashion, the process of data analysis occurred concurrently with data collection. Gibbs (2007) describes the purpose of this approach to analysis:

Analysis can, and should, start in the field. As you collect your data by interviewing, taking field notes, acquiring documents, and so on, you can start your analysis. In fact, not only is concurrent analysis and data collection possible, but it can actually be good practice too. You should use the analysis

of your early data as a way of raising new research issues and questions. (p. 3)

The prolonged nature of ethnographic research produces an extraordinary quantity of textual data (O'Reilly 2005). Therefore, engagement with analysis alongside data collection can help relieve the burden of analysing copious amounts of text post-fieldwork. Due to the nature of this research, the selection of an appropriate analytical framework was difficult. Thus, inspired by Coffey and Atkinson (1996), my analytic process was, '...not about adhering to any one correct approach or set of right techniques; it is imaginative, artful, flexible and reflexive' (p. 10).

There are a range of qualitative data analysis frameworks, including grounded theory, content analysis, narrative analysis and interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Denzin and Lincoln 2013). Each analytical framework is guided by a particular set of methodological and theoretical constraints and guidelines. After reviewing the options available for analysis, Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis (TA) was selected for this ethnography. This analytical approach sets itself apart from other qualitative approaches because it is a method, not a methodology (Clarke and Braun 2015). Therefore, its lack of strict methodological and theoretical constraints makes it an attractive analytic choice for this inductive ethnography (Clarke and Braun 2015). Since its initial proposal as a method, Braun and Clarke's (2006) TA is now referred to as reflexive TA (Braun and Clarke 2019). This new nomenclature was aptly proposed following reflections on the widespread use of their method of TA. Although its 'theoretical flexibility' was a quality that made this method of analysis appealing, this reflects one of the primary misconceptions that led to the renaming of the method (Braun and Clarke 2019). Therefore, whilst this method offers a degree of flexibility, this should not be misconstrued to indicate that the method is boundless and not informed by theory (Braun and Clarke 2019). Thus, reflexive TA should, '...reflect the values of a qualitative paradigm, centring researcher subjectivity, organic and recursive coding processes, and the importance of deep reflection on, and engagement with, data' (Braun and Clarke 2019, p. 10).

Put simply, TA as a method involves the systematically identifying and organising patterns of meaning, or themes, across data (Braun and Clarke 2012). Reflexive TA includes six phases:

- 1) *Familiarizing yourself with your data*: Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data and noting down initial ideas.
- 2) *Generating initial codes*: Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
- 3) *Searching for themes*: Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
- 4) *Reviewing themes*: Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.
- 5) *Defining and naming themes*: Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names of each theme.
- 6) *Producing the report*: Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature. (Braun and Clarke 2006, p. 87)

Following fieldwork, I enrolled in a short online course to refresh my knowledge of nVIVO computer software. I felt distanced from the data from my previous experience with the software. Therefore, despite a range of computer-assisted programmes to aid in the coding process, I elected to complete this by hand on paper. I agreed with the warning set forth by Ely et al. (1991) that there is a danger that the use of computer packages may be seen as a substitute for analysis. Therefore, I felt strongly that manual analysis was more flexible, and easier to engage intimately with the data (Gibbs 2007). I followed a similar method to Gibbs (2007) in that I wrote, ‘...the code name in the margin or by marking text with colour (either in the margin or using highlighter pens)’ (p. 44). Additionally, I often used post-it notes and cut out strips of text to create visual maps and lists. This process was time-intensive and laborious, but I found visual mapping to be the most

useful tool for identifying themes. Using Bourdieu's concepts to frame this analysis, two primary themes were generated from this reflexive thematic analysis: 1) the role of Aspire as a site to manage risk, and 2) the role of the gendered, sporting body in constituting and/or challenging dominant discourses of risk and girls in sport.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the ethnographic methodology used in this study. To explore the lived experience of a group of girls participating in a one-year cycle of Aspire, this ethnographic methodology was underpinned by an interpretivist epistemology. Central to this paradigm is the tenet of reflexivity. This chapter outlined how engagement was critical to various phases of the research process, including entry into the field, establishing confidentiality and anonymity, collecting field notes and leaving the field. The methods of data collection included prolonged participant observation, formal semi-structured one-on-one interviews with adult coaches, and creative arts-based focus groups with the young people participating in Aspire. The rich and 'thick' data set generated from this methodology was analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006; Braun and Clarke 2019), informed by Bourdieu's (1984) concepts of *habitus*, *capital* and *field*.

The following two chapters will outline the results of this analysis. Chapter Five considers the role of Aspire as a sports-based intervention aimed at developing life skills in its participants. It will dissect the primary theme that Aspire is a site for mitigation of risk. This discussion will outline various ways in which the varied sporting identities and habitus of the Aspire participants affected their perception of and experience of Aspire as a site for life skill development. Chapter Six, on the other hand, will look specifically at how the gendered sporting body constituted and/or challenged dominant discourses of risk and girls in sport.

Chapter Five: Aspire – A site to manage ‘risk’

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of ‘at-risk’ girls participating in a football based SBI in Scotland. Previous research on SBIs has focused on three primary areas; quantitative measures of predetermined outcomes, approaches to delivery and the importance of the coach and programme philosophy (see Coalter 2007 Danish et al. 2006; Jones and Lavalley 2009). These analyses have tended to focus on *how* to deliver effective programming, specifically, developing life skills in participants and creating motivational climates and appropriate coaching behaviours (Jones and Lavalley 2008). This has promoted a widespread, comprehensive belief that SBIs are suitable locations for fostering life skills and overall well-being in at-risk young people (Flintoff 2017; Watson and Scraton 2013). However, this present research aimed to challenge this assumption by paying attention to the experience of *being in Aspire*.

Chapter Two demonstrated the importance of risk in the rationale for policy and funding for SBIs for young people. However, considering risk as a social construct is scantily discussed within SBI discourse. Through the auspices of quantitative-based reports that SBIs demonstrate efficacy in realising certain outcomes, the impact of risk labelling on everyday sporting experiences remains relatively untouched (Deakin et al. 2020). Therefore, this analysis does not attempt to evaluate the efficacy of Aspire, nor does it analyse coaching practices. Rather, this reflexive thematic analysis uses Bourdieu’s concepts of *habitus*, *field* and *capital* in order to better understand the impact of class, gender and risk on the lived experience of girls participating in a particular football based SBI in Scotland.

The wealth of data collected from field observations, formal interviews and the focus group activity yielded a rich dataset to address the research aim of this thesis. Following the reflexive thematic analysis (see Chapter Five), two core themes were developed: 1) the role of Aspire in the management of risk and 2) the prevalence of

risk in the construction of gendered, sporting identities. This chapter will pay attention to the first theme: the role of Aspire as a site for risk management. The first section analyses the relationship between the ‘coaching habitus’ and the delivery of Aspire and its programme philosophy. Following that, this analysis shifts toward understanding how the young people perceived the programme’s purpose. It highlights how the variance amongst the girls ‘sporting habitus’ and sporting identities affected their perceptions regarding why they were in the Aspire programme. The chapter will conclude by discussing the social construct of risk and its relevance in the lives of the young people in and outwith the programme.

Influence of a coaching habitus

Chapter Three outlined Bourdieu’s framework of *habitus*, *field* and *capital*. The conceptual triad is used in this analysis to understand the relationship between the coaches’ habitus and the Aspire programme’s delivery. This is considered due to the well-documented acknowledgement of the role of coaches in the delivery of SBIs (Allen and Cronin 2015), the realisation of programme outcomes, the fostering of relationships and the construction of motivational climates (Bailey and Dismore 2004). Whilst this research aimed primarily to understand the lived experience of the young people involved in this programme, consideration of a ‘coaching habitus’ is helpful to better understand the day-to-day embodiments of Aspire’s philosophy to develop the ‘person first, player second’ (The Scottish Football Association 2020a). This section will demonstrate how this adage shaped the girls’ experience. Additionally, this section will include insight from all three coaches interviewed to further contextualise the relationship between the wider Aspire programme priorities and the coaches that deliver it.

The use of Bourdieu’s concept of habitus has become popular in coaching literature to understand the role that lived experience has in coach development (see Jones et al. 2004; Taylor and Garratt 2010). Light and Evans (2015) assert that, ‘...it can provide a useful means of conceptualizing how experience comes to form such a powerful influence on coaches’ practice and the formation their inclinations toward

particular coaching approaches' (p. 1). Previous research on the coaching habitus has focused primarily on elite sport and the impact of past playing experience on the trajectory towards coaching (see Evans 2011; Light and Evans 2015). Thus, this research on a strictly recreational, non-competitive sport environment provides an interesting and novel environment to explore the coaching habitus.

The social world of coaching is complex; it is both a professional and voluntary practice, elite and recreational, regulated and unregulated (Cushion et al. 2003). Within the 'Sport for All' agenda (see Chapter Two), coaches were identified as the primary means to enhance sports participation, promote community involvement and foster individual and community social responsibility (MacPhail et al. 2003). As a result, a country-wide certification and education system was implemented to foster professionalisation and standardisation of coaches and, '...a moral identity, in which core moral purposes are combined with objectives towards widening participation, coupled with ambitions to promote social inclusion and develop social capital' (Taylor and Garratt 2010, p. 124). Aspire was born from the 'Sport for All' agenda. Thus it can be argued that this professionalisation could significantly impact the Aspire coaches' coaching habitus.

It is presumed that coaches have a significant impact on the realisation of projected outcomes in SBIs (Bailey and Dismore 2004). As described in Chapter Two, SBIs for young people are grounded in two goals; to expand access to structured sport for at-risk young people and to develop life skills in participants through sport acquisition (Perkins and Noam 2007). SBI theory, policy and practice reproduce the claim that sport can be an effective tool to enhance the lives of young people (Petitpas et al. 2005). Aspire was born from these principles, designed to reach 'at-risk' young people to encourage regular school attendance, increased attainment and the development of transferrable life skills. All three coaches reflected a commitment to this mission and the wider 'Sport for All' agenda:

Like *football has to be just the vehicle* that we use just to teach everything else and for me it is that person first stuff, and then the player second comes next. (Kerrie, individual interview, 19/06/2019, CHS, emphasis added)

Somebody still might want to be a footballer and that's great, but it's good that we're basically not just focused on football. It's the person that counts. And the person always changes as they grow up, their aspirations change, so it's important that we are kind of on top of that, and me helping to try and get them on the pathway if we can. *Using the football is kind of the vehicle.* (Phil, individual interview, 30/05/2019, Valley HS, emphasis added)

The football is just the tool. Football is just the tool because football is the thing that's drawn them to you. And then you can see, once you get to know the kids, you can see which of the ones are crying out for help. (John, individual interview, 03/06/2019, Allan HS, emphasis added)

This 'buy-in' was reproduced by anecdotal claims by the coaches that described how sport impacted their own life. For example, Kerrie reflected on her passion for sport at an early age:

And if Aspire happened when I was back at school, I know I would've jumped at the chance to be a part of it. But the things, the things I do remember from being in school aren't Maths and English. It was the things I was passionate about, it was my PE, my basketball team, my football team. See if I can create that for pupils here, then that's what matters. (Kerrie, individual interview, 19/09/2019, CHS)

'Pre-coaching experience' has been attributed to strongly influence why and how coaches practice (Côte 2006, p. 221). Holmes et al. (2021) argue that 'implicit, embodied learning' in childhood and adolescence fosters the development of sets of durable dispositions that shape coaches' beliefs and practices. In the previous quote, Kerrie references her early experiences of participating in the sub-fields of sport, basketball and football. Her early passion for both sports led to long amateur careers as an athlete, coach and ultimately professionally, as a PE teacher. She was one of the first coaches involved in the first cohort of girl's-only Aspire programmes and has led the CHS group since its inception.

As a full-time PE teacher, her past coaching experience focused on young people in school sport settings rather than the wider, organised game itself. She described how this dual role impacted how she approached delivering the mission of Aspire and

achieving its outcome of developing the, 'person first, player second' (The Scottish Football Association 2018):

So obviously part of the programme is *person first, player second*. Like that's just how I teach in general. Like I think that's the most important thing, like I'm not interested in necessarily how good a pupil is in terms of their practical ability, it's more about developing them as a person and then if you could develop an individual who has the ability to work as part of a team, who can work collaboratively, who has mental skills such as mental strength, growth mind set, then all of the other stuff can come. So if you've got a pupil who you want to develop in terms of their weaker foot, then if they've got growth mind set, and they understand that this idea that mistakes are welcome, and that we learn from our mistakes, then the practical side will develop from that. But you have to develop the person first. So for me, it's just how I conduct myself in terms of my teaching, but also in terms of my coaching. Um, I think if we can develop pupils socially and in terms of their cognitive skills and all that sort of stuff, then I think that it makes it easier for learning and for teaching all that kind of technical, physical, and tactical side of things. (Kerrie, individual interview, 19/09/2019, CHS)

Here Kerrie links her coaching philosophy (*habitus*) to examples of practice. This approach to coaching was constructed over years of developing corporeal knowledge through her personal experiences as an athlete and coach, as well as through formal coaching education and her training to become a PE teacher (Light and Evans 2015). It is suggested that the prolonged processes of knowledge acquisition subconsciously influence how individuals act, speak and think in practice (Bourdieu 1990).

The three coaches selected to be interviewed in this study represented the diversity of backgrounds of the coaches in Aspire programmes countrywide. According to SFA staff, Aspire coaches tend to fall into three categories: full-time educators at the school site (e.g. Kerrie), external youth or sport workers (e.g. Phil), and external football coaches (e.g. John). In the coaching literature, it is presumed that individual coaches pass through similar fields during their coaching trajectories (Light and Evans 2015). This leads to the development of a similar individual coaching *habitus*. Therefore, this coaching *habitus*, '...inclines coaches toward a "coaching style" and shape their practice without rational consideration of them' (Hassanin and Light 2012, p. 4). Aspire's complex location in several fields and subfields (for example,

sport, football, youth work, education, etc.) makes it difficult to establish a unified understanding of how similar coaching habitus can develop in its coaches. The widely varied personal, educational and coaching backgrounds of the three coaches interviewed in this research, therefore, provide an interesting comparative complexity.

As described previously, Kerrie's recreational, pedagogic approach to coaching was grounded in her personal experiences as a player, coach and secondary school educator. In contrast to Kerrie, Phil came from a trajectory that resembled youth work (specifically in health education) and had experience coaching competitive football:

So I actually got the job, I don't think necessarily based on my football; although I've got my UEFA B license now. I had got the job, I feel, because of my background in education. So there was probably a lot of good football people that applied for the job, and were like I wanna do this session, I wanna do that session, but actually, my whole interview was based on the fact that I used to work with education. So I used to work in the primary schools, I used to work in health. So looking at lifestyles, healthy choices, like diet and all that kind of stuff. So I kinda put that whole scuff as the person first, player second. So I was kinda always talking about the person, and that's been kinda my whole philosophy through the six, seven years. (Phil, individual interview, 30/05/2019, Valley HS)

Here Phil reflects on the differences between informal and formal learning. Holding a UEFA B license denotes a high level of professional football education, knowledge and practice. As of 2017, only 1,651 football coaches (male = 1,619; female = 32) in Scotland held a UEFA B license (UEFA 2017). Access to this level of formal education requires significant economic and time investment over many years of study and practice. Light and Evans (2015) state that, '...formal learning primarily involves conscious, reflective cognition and use of language' (p. 5). Abraham et al. (2006) attest that past experience has a stronger influence on coaching knowledge and practice development than traditional formal coach education interventions. This could be explained by the processes through which informal learning occurs. Informal learning is an embodied, unconscious and prolonged process that is manifested as 'knowledge-in-action' (Kontos 2004). The

significance of informal learning to the development of a coaching habitus is explained by Bourdieu's emphasis on the importance of the embodied and experiential nature of learning (Wacquant 1998). In the previous quote, Phil reflects on the years of informal learning he accrued working within schools as a health worker. Thus, his unique amalgamation of formal education and informal education (via coaching and work experience) in health and football fields inspired his commitment to Aspire's programme philosophy.

The third coach, John, represented a traditional 'footballers' background with professional playing experience:

I say to them, I was a pro, I played for 18 years. I was involved in management and coaching. I played in every continent apart from Australia so I've been around the block. (John, individual interview, 03/06/2019, Allan HS)

He also held a significant role in the development of Aspire:

The Scottish Football Association has, I think this is the 12th year that they've had the Aspire programme. I've been in from the very start. ... I was at a school in the North. So it was the North to start with and then I moved down here. And then they changed the role and it became seven schools in this region and I managed the seven schools. (John, individual interview, 03/06/2019, Allan HS)

In contrast to Kerrie and Phil, all of John's informal and formal learning occurred within the football field. He did not attend University but holds a UEFA Pro license, the highest level of licensure available to football coaches. As a full-time professional footballer, he had a high level of knowledge about the competitive game. John was less explicit about how his coaching habitus affected his pedagogical methods. However, offered some insights when speaking about the programme philosophy:

And we use football as the tool to go and bring the kids around because we feel that there's a structure of football, there's a discipline and an organisation within that. And basically a lot of these kids that need some help, that's exactly what they need within their lives, is this discipline and organisation within it. (John, individual interview, 03/06/2019, Allan HS)

This quote reflects John's preference to sporting environments that are structured with discipline and organisation. It can be argued that this preference may come from his competitive coaching and playing career. He continued to highlight some of his coaching methods that were directly drawn from his own coaching and playing experience:

Like I'm very strong in discipline. When the bell goes, they have seven minutes to have to be out on the field. If they're not there in seven minutes, there's a form of punishment. ... You'll see them running. ... So they have to bring a water bottle every day. You know, for example, if they forget a water bottle, they have to do like a 100-word essay on hydration and different stuff like that you know? The thing is before every session, and after every session, I will shake the hands of every kid beforehand and after. And when they leave the department I'll shake hands again with them. So anything that happens on the pitch, stays on the pitch. (John, individual interview, 03/06/2019, Allan HS)

He continues to link his philosophy of discipline and organisation with a traditional football drill:

I drew a line. It wasn't invisible. And it wasn't flexible. If they stepped over the line (snaps fingers). That was – so they all knew. Just simple things to make them feel together. I've got this little warmup I do with them. It's called the samba warmup, based from Brazil. And they do it – you see most of the professional teams do it now on the side before they play and this thing really made them feel part of it because they were the only ones in the school who knew how to do it initially. (John, individual interview, 03/06/2019, Allan HS)

Thus, John's coaching habitus and practice were grounded in his lifelong experiences in the competitive game.

Cushion et al. (2003) describe a coaching 'apprenticeship' that represents a learning trajectory of coaching through experience. This pathway starts with experience as a player/athlete and ultimately ends with a high-level coaching position (Cushion 2001; Cushion et al. 2003). The intermediate stages include coaching experience through informal 'apprenticeships' and/or experience in leadership positions (e.g. captain or senior leadership) (Cushion 2001; Cushion et al. 2003). These intermediate stages towards the development of a coach (and a coaching habitus)

appeared to be high priorities for all three coaches as an outcome of Aspire. This was reflected in the ‘success stories’ John and Kerrie shared:

I’ll just say it, some of our best leaders we’ve had in the school, have all come from Aspire. You know just through opportunities they’ve had in Aspire, whether it’s been going down to the primary schools and lead sports days or whether it be, coming and filtering back down and leading Aspire. So for example, at the start of the last academic year, we had two girls that were leading the Aspire training sessions. So they had their own wee folder they created with session plans, I checked their session plans, and it was just additional stuff that they did. But it gave them the confidence to now move on. And now we’ve got pupils applying to be PE teachers and pupils doing stuff in sport development and they’ve all come through Aspire. (Kerrie, individual interview, 19/09/2019, CHS)

Here Kerrie specifically highlights how participation in Aspire fostered opportunities for participants to gain embodied, corporeal knowledge. She continues to link these experiences with success in future roles within the sport, football and education fields. Interestingly, it appears that Kerrie’s idea of ‘success’ closely reflected her own coaching habitus and professional trajectory. Similarly, this appeared to apply to John as well:

Like for example, the guy that went on to be the head boy, I saw something in him. I gave him a real hard time in terms of feedback. And then we had the parent’s night and the parents came in, his mom said he feels as if you’re picking on him. And I said why yes I am. I am picking on him. Well can you tell us the reason why? Yeah. Cuz there’s something there that he has and he’s not giving me the opportunity to bring it out of him because he’s being so stubborn and so he has to change. And I can see him going, and the penny dropped there and then. And from then on he went on to play for Scottish School boys. Now he’s at Central University. I actually think he plays for the Central University team. (John, individual interview, 03/06/2019, Allan HS)

In this quote, John continues to draw on his philosophy of discipline and organisation in this ‘tough love’ anecdote. John identifies success in this instance as achieving at a high level in the sport (playing for Scottish School boys and Central University). Arguably, this reflects his own life experience, trajectory and habitus.

This section aimed to investigate the coaching habitus of the three coaches interviewed in this research. All three coaches had distinctly different playing, coaching, educational and professional backgrounds, which led to the development

of a distinct coaching habitus. Despite this variance, it appeared that all coaches maintained a commitment to the ethos towards developing, ‘the person first, player second’. The individual distinctions between the coaches manifested in differences in everyday practices and, ultimately, their personal visions for the professional trajectories of the young people. Thus, whilst the coaches appeared to reflect a shared commitment to the goals of Aspire, it was less clear if this commitment held relevance with the young people themselves. Therefore, the next section will focus on the young people’s perceptions of what they believe to be the true purpose of Aspire.

Young people’s perceptions of the programme purpose

The previous section discussed how Aspire’s ‘person first, player second’ philosophy was embedded and constituted in the coaching habitus of the three coaches involved in this research. It demonstrated the significant role that past experience, values and preferences shaped how they understood the programme’s purpose and their role as coach. This section will apply a similar analysis by looking at the experience of the young people through the concepts of the sporting habitus and sporting identity.

Engström (2008) provides a simple definition of sporting habitus:

Sports habitus is an essential application of the concept of habitus and should be understood as the underlying generative principle for differences in taste and unconscious strategies for sporting activities in a wide social context that interconnect with a number of social fields (p. 324, emphasis in original)

Put simply, an individual’s preference for football (in this case) is shaped by their own perception of their ability to perform and engage in the sport. This preference is shaped by past experience, attitudes towards football and status within the group (or field in general) (Bourdieu 1984). In an analysis of Sanchez and Spencer’s (2013) ‘carnal ethnographies’ of martial arts and combat sports, Wacquant (2014) describes the relationship of the ‘primary habitus’ to the ‘sporting habitus’:

...their martial or sporting habitus is a *tertiary formation*, grounded in their primary (gender, national, class, etc.) habitus and mediated by their scholastic habitus – which constitutes both a motivative resource and a built-in hindrance to gaining the practical mastery of a corporeal craft, insofar as it inclines the apprentice to a reflexive attitude. (p. 7, emphasis in original)

This ‘tertiary formation’ can expose the ways in which one feels ‘at home’ or ‘like a fish out of water’ (Sweetman 2009, p. 494):

The casting of a secondary (tertiary, quaternary, quinary, etc.) habitus will thus be inflected by the distance separating it from the systems of dispositions that serve as scaffolding for its construction because they precede it. The greater that distance, the more difficult the traineeship, and the greater the gaps and frictions between the successive layers of schemata, the less integrated the resulting dispositional formation is likely to be. (Wacquant 2014, p. 7-8)

Wacquant (2014) argues that this sporting habitus has three components: *cognitive*, *conative* and *affective*. Cognitive consists of understanding the patterns and meanings that constitute the field (e.g. football) (Wacquant 2014). The conative component of the sporting habitus involves the required ‘proprioceptive capacities, sensorimotor skills, and kinaesthetic dexterities’ for ‘purposeful action’ in the sport (Wacquant 2014, p. 8). Finally, the affective component involves the purposeful and engaged ‘doing of’ and ‘being in’ the sport (Wacquant 2014).

The concept of sporting habitus can help delineate the micro-practices of identity formation as it relates to the sporting experience. Habitus is an essential element in shaping social (sporting) identity (Reay 1998; Skeggs 1997). Sporting identity (also referred to as athletic identity) is considered to be the extent to which one identifies with the role of an athlete (Brewer et al. 1993). It is constituted over time through the acquisition of skills, confidence and related knowledge (Brewer et al. 1993). Sporting identities are considered to be shaped by the perceived meaning and value of the activity, as well as by external influences (e.g. family, coaches, friends, community and media) (Pot et al. 2014).

These two concepts will be employed in this section to describe how the football-aspect of Aspire held prominence in the lives of the girls participating in this programme. By outlining the differences between the ‘non-sporty’, ‘somewhat sporty’ and ‘sporty’ girls, this section will demonstrate how those differences manifested in varied perceptions of the purpose of the programme and ultimately, how the programme was experienced. This section will feature stories and insight from several girls, but will focus extensively on three in particular, Rosie, Alex and Michelle. These girls were chosen as they represent the variety of experience, ability levels and passion for the sport that was observed in the wider Aspire group. In order to provide an introduction to each of their individual stories, their made material will be introduced at the start of this section.

Rosie: ‘Sporty’

As a self-professed “football mad girl”, Rosie embodied traditional notions of *being* a footballer. This was reflected in her made material, actions, vocabulary and interests (S1 focus group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom). To Rosie, her entire world was shaped by football and the “right” way of doing things (S1 focus group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom). This included ways of being, embodiments, interests and personality traits. Her passion for her club team and its success was clear. In fact, she often gave me a ‘match report’ following her club games at the weekends:

Rosie and Erin were walking alongside me as we went down the steps to the pitch. As we started to speak about our weekends, they shared that their club team had won their league cup at the weekend. As we approached the pitch, Erin ran off to kick some footballs in the goal with Georgia and Rosie stayed behind to continue to speak about her club team. She shared again that they were undefeated in the league and the cup this season. She also shared that her team would be going to participate in the annual international youth tournament held at Disney World next year. (From field notes, 11/03/2019, CHS 3G)

Her voracious passion for the game and intense dedication towards developing herself into a professional footballer often led to strong opinions about how Aspire football sessions should be. There was often tension between her and the rest of the

group because of her competitive nature and strong bank of football-related knowledge. This passion was reflected in her player card (Figure 2), in which every added component included football.

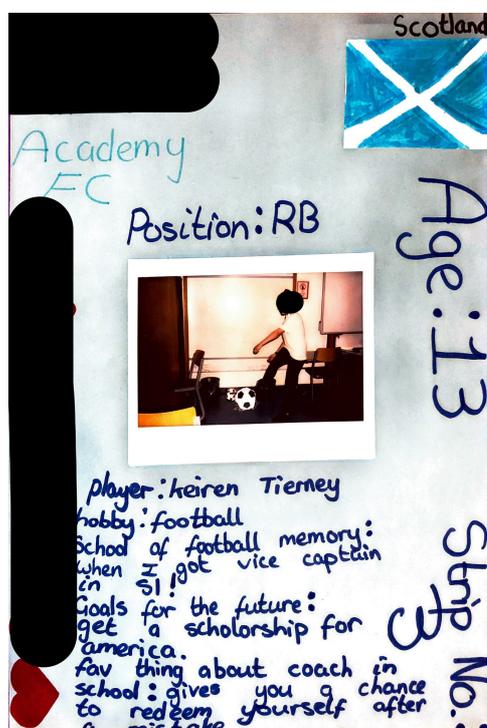


Figure 2. Rosie's player card. (S1 focus group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom)

Alex: 'Somewhat sporty'

I often recorded the lively, energetic and friendly nature of Alex. She was slim, tall, blonde and naturally possessed athletic ability. Most commonly, field note entries on Alex included words like happy, giggling and effort. I noted, "She is really putting her all into this small-sided game. I can see her hairline start to glisten from sweat, her cheeks have become rosy from exertion, and she hasn't stopped running since the game started" (From field notes, 20/06/2019, CHS 3G). She did not consider herself to be sporty or athletic, but she loved exercising and trying new sports.

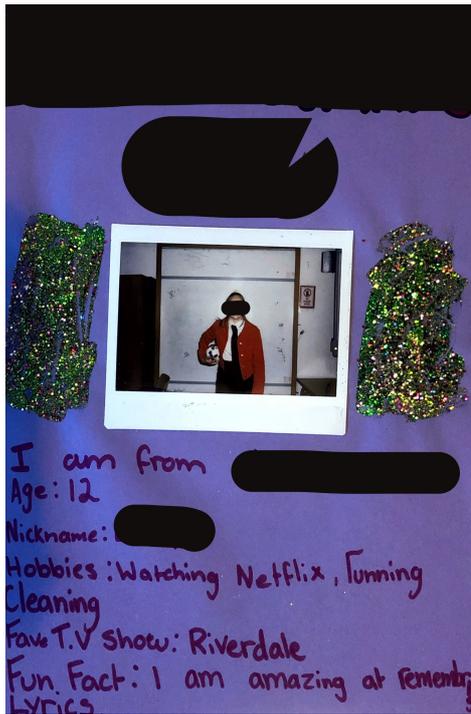


Figure 6. Alex's player card. (S1 focus group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom)

Michelle: 'Non-sporty'

Michelle joined Aspire a few months after the programme started. She was reticent in the larger group but very vocal with her friends, Ellen and Sarah. After a few brief, informal interactions, she often approached me to speak about all aspects of her life. We discussed topics we both found interest in, such as American foods and her favourite dog breeds. She expressed a strong passion for her future career goal to become a primary school teacher. Michelle was another young person that expressed little interest in the football itself, however, she shared that she enjoyed meeting new friends and experiencing something new by participating in Aspire.

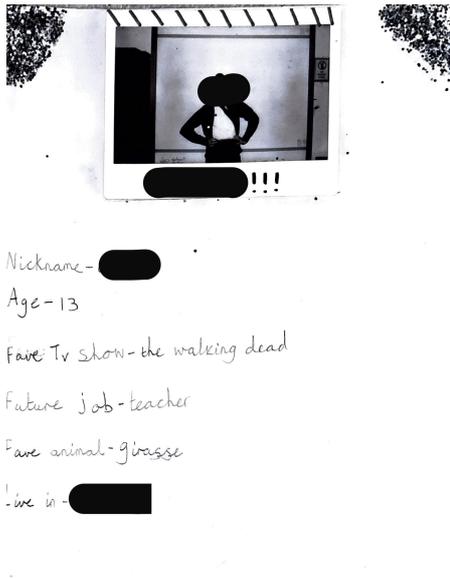


Figure 7. Michelle's player card. (S1 focus group 1, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom)

The relationship of the sporting habitus to perceptions of programme purpose

The previous section established a strong consensus amongst the coaches that the purpose of Aspire was to develop the 'person first, player second' (The Scottish Football Association 2018). This consensus, however, did not appear to be shared by the young people. In the focus group activity, the girls were asked to discuss, "What do you think the goal of participating in Aspire is?" and "What do you hope to get out of participating in Aspire?" The group discussion revealed a range of direct answers. Rosie's response reflected the opinions of the more 'football-minded' participants: "To develop our football skills and to get better" (S1 focus group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom). In a similar vein to Rosie, Niamh (Figure 8), another 'experienced' footballer responded: "Learning it and improving it (football skills)" (S1 focus group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom).



Figure 8. Niamh's player card. (S1 focus group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom)

Most of the girls with past football experience expressed opinions similar to Rosie and Niamh; the goal of Aspire was to develop football skills. This directly contrasted with the 'person first, player second' philosophy and the perception of all three of the Aspire coaches (The Scottish Football Association 2012). For these 'experienced footballers', this perception that the purpose of Aspire was to develop football-related skills could be explained by their movement through the football *field* over time (Bourdieu 1984). A closer look at the football trajectories of Rosie and Niamh provides examples of this. For example, Niamh spoke about her passion for the game and her competitive club team:

When I started, my dad put me in the local boy's team and I played there for a few years before I had to join a girl's team. The closest big club was over at the Academy and I've been there ever since. Sometimes I get to be captain and one day I want to play for the women's team and be a professional. (Niamh, S1 focus group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom)

Here Niamh identifies an example of symbolic capital characteristic of organised and competitive sport, holding a captaincy. Arguably, knowledge of this tradition and awareness of the culturally constructed value of holding a captaincy provides

evidence of her understanding of the values and norms of the football field. These experiences of gaining symbolic capital (captaincy), cultural capital (game-related knowledge) and physical capital (continued participation in the sport) helped to constitute her football habitus. Additionally, in this excerpt, Niamh specifically identifies her aspiration to become a professional footballer in the future. Bok (2010) notes that the capacity to aspire is shaped by past sociocultural experiences and ‘the availability of navigational information’ (p. 164). In another excerpt, Rosie touches upon this ‘navigational information’ as she links her playing experience to her own aspirations to play professionally one day:

Like I play for a *real* club, we have *real* coaches and train every week. I used to play with the boys and that made me tougher like, but then a few years ago I switched to girls and we’re the best team in the league. I wanna be a professional footballer one day, like that’s a thing girls can do now, you know? (Rosie, S1 focus group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom, emphasis added)

Rosie references the widespread visibility of professional female footballers that have recently proliferated in Scotland (and worldwide). According to Mutter and Pawlowski (2014), increased visibility and relevance of professional sports have a positive association with motivation to participate in sport (at all levels). Therefore, this aspiration not only plays a pivotal role in Rosie’s self-concept and sporting identity but could be providing motivation for continued participation in football-related activities (and Aspire itself).

Additionally, in this quote, Rosie indicates that her club team and coaches are “*real*” (Rosie, S1 focus group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom, emphasis added). This explicitly distinguishes her football experiences at her club from her experiences in Aspire. This can be interpreted to suggest that she did not view Aspire to be a *real* football setting. Arguably, this could provide insight into her perception of Aspire’s purpose as a programme. Previously, Rosie suggested that Aspire was a site, “to develop our football skills and to get better” (S1 focus group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom). Therefore, despite viewing Aspire as a site to increase physical mastery and gain football-related skills, Rosie held a perception that Aspire may not be the most effective place to achieve this. This perception often materialised during

football sessions. Her years of experience playing on competitive club teams constituted her habitus and the wealth of cultural capital and game-specific knowledge she possessed. This was often manifested in the employment of football-specific language that referenced the knowledge she had accrued from her playing experience. For example, during a small-sided game:

The group is playing a 6v6 game and after a bright and spirited start, the game starts to lose focus. Kerrie yells, “Jog in girls!” Once the group crowded around her, she says, “We want to create an environment where we can have a discussion if things aren’t going right, I want to open it up to the team. What is working? And what isn’t working right now?” Rosie responds, “Naebody is moving and showing for the ball. We need to use the space and play to feet.” Kerrie then has to translate what Rosie said into more layman terms so that the rest of the group understood what she meant. (From field notes, 20/06/2016, CHS 3G)

Interestingly Kerrie opened this exchange with a call for the ‘team’ to hold a group discussion on ways to make this particular game more engaging and effective. Rosie’s prompt and highly culturally-specific response could have contributed to the unconscious subordination of ‘stigmatised’ identities (Bourdieu 2001). To Rosie, employment of football-specific language like, “moving and showing for the ball” or “play to feet”, is a habitual part of her ways of being. However, this was not the case for the less football-minded girls in the programme that had limited access to the cultural capital required to understand these terms. Therefore, Rosie’s ‘football identity’ was, ‘defined and asserted through differences’ between herself and the less experienced Aspire participants (Bourdieu 1984, p. 167). There were many similar situations where Kerrie asked for feedback from the group about the football-related aspects of daily programming. It was rare to find an occasion where Rosie did not answer first. Additionally, she almost exclusively employed football-specific language or tactics. The importance of her past and current status as a ‘competitive footballer’ represented her many experiences as a burgeoning athlete in the field. Thus, alongside her cultural capital, engrained in her sporting habitus were expectations for how one should act in Aspire sessions:

Um, obviously you know in Aspire, not everybody is going to be amazing so it’s still nice for everybody to try their best because if you know that everybody has tried their best, you can’t do much more. But if you try your best only one session, then that’s not that good, but if you try every session

as good as you can then you'll progress and you'll get much better and you'll be the best of the team. (Rosie, S1 Group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom)

Here Rosie highlights the tenet of 'trying your best'. To Rosie, 'trying your best' required an on-going commitment to "get much better" to "be the best" (Rosie, S1 Group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom). Arguably, this could provide evidence of the internalisation of neoliberal messaging that pervades the 'can do/at-risk' paradigm (Harris 2004). This quote exemplifies how individual responsibility to 'try your best' is packaged into discourses of empowerment (Heywood 2007). This interpretation could provide evidence of Rosie's understanding of Aspire's purpose to develop life skills (trying your best) in order to produce active, responsible and individualised citizens that aim to "be the best" (Coakley 2011). However, Rosie was quite vocal about how important effort and attainment of football skills were to her within the programme. Another quote from Rosie strengthens this argument when she discusses becoming a "better player":

It's meant to be the school of excellence, the school of sport. You're here to get excellent really, like obviously it's not gonna happen overnight but like I don't know. You need to get better. But if you're a better player, well I try to be encouraging to make people feel better about themselves and stuff, and I have been doing that and stuff, that's making folk better players and if everybody is like that, and we keep going how we're going then everyone will become a better player. And if we all want to keep training and stuff like that, then we will become a better player. (Rosie, S1 Group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom)

In this quote, Rosie acknowledges the variance in experience and ability level that comprises the Aspire 'team.' Her specific acknowledgement of the language implored 'excellence' that CHS imposed onto the school of sport could reflect another instance in which she unconsciously continued to marginalise her peers based on their 'non-sporty' or 'somewhat sporty' identities. She implies that to be a part of Aspire, "you *need* to get better" (Rosie, S1 Group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom). To her, membership in this group is therefore constituted initially by effort and eventually by achieving a suitable level of football acumen and/or physical ability. This quote further indicates that Rosie viewed Aspire as a site exclusively devoted to developing football skills. However, she shows little indication that she needs to improve her own football skills. She identifies the rest of

the group to be ‘at risk’ of not developing into good players, but not herself. However, she does acknowledge her role in “encouraging” other individuals in the programme. Another interpretation of this quote could lie in the ways that Rosie viewed her personal outcomes through participation in the programme to go beyond the development of football skills. Her player card (Figure 2) explicitly lists one of her favourite memories as when she “got vice-captain in S1.” Research indicates that athletes expect their captains (and vice captains) to have strong motivational, leadership and sport-specific skills (Fransen et al. 2019). Therefore, it could be argued that because of Rosie’s high level of existing physical competence and cultural knowledge, she found Aspire to be a potential site where she could develop the ‘life skills’ related to her aspiration of becoming a professional footballer.

Thus far, Rosie’s story has demonstrated her desire for “excellence” and “betterment” in her own football-related abilities, in her peers and in Aspire generally. Her football habitus shapes this preference for ways-of-being that are shaped by effort, exertion and football-related skill development. Her football-centric perception that Aspire is a site for football development constituted her desire to be in a team with a higher level of football-related ability. This view, however, was challenged by ‘somewhat sporty’ Alex:

Rosie: Oh I think it would be more enjoyable if everybody was better. If everybody tried their hardest so they could improve. Everybody’s good already but if they try harder to improve then it would just make us look better as a team.

Alex: It’s not that people are not trying—

Rosie: It’s just if you try harder you’re better.

Alex: —they’re not as committed as some other people.

(S1 Group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom)

Again, Rosie emphasised the individual responsibility associated with trying harder to improve. She identifies how individual betterment would positively affect the entire team. However, Alex’s interjection reminds Rosie of the variance of identities that constituted the Aspire ‘team’. Alex links Rosie’s desire for betterment with

commitment. Sport commitment and skill mastery are positively associated with one's sport identity (Weiss 2000, Williams 2013). The anticipated benefits of continued participation explain this; commitment to developing a sport-specific skill contributes to feelings of achievement, which continues to foster increased motivation (Weiss 2000). Therefore, it is expected that girls with a stronger sporting identity would be highly motivated to continue participation in sport, with the aim of continued skill mastery and attainment of cultural and symbolic capital. However, as Alex notes, the Aspire group comprises a range of sporting ability levels and, subsequently, identification with 'sportiness.' This is exemplified in the way that Alex spoke about her own 'sportiness':

I was gonna say like, there's more people in the team that are like obviously more experienced like Niamh, Rosie and Erin and things like that, Georgia. And I'm not throwing Alice and I under the bus but like we never really like been in any football teams, cuz we've always been in like dancing and gymnastics. I like running and stuff but I think sometimes it's the most experienced ones that are like those people aren't really like, not like they're not good but like... not as good. (Alex, S1 Group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom)

In this quote, Alex identified Niamh, Rosie, Erin and Georgia as the group's most "experienced" footballers due to their longstanding membership in traditional football teams and clubs. Even though she had no prior experience in organised football, she noted her past participation in other sports (dancing, gymnastics and athletics). Therefore, whilst she is arguably a 'sporty' individual, she expressed that she often felt judged by the more "experienced" footballers because she lacked football-specific attributes. This perception could have impacted her perception that Aspire was a programme designed to provide opportunities, "to make new friends and to learn new things" (Alex, S1 Group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom). Her negative association with attributes valued in the football field (high levels of football-related physical ability) could have impacted her motivation to attain football skills to match the "experienced" footballers.

Additionally, whilst Alex occupied the football field through participation in Aspire, she also held experience in athletics, dancing, and gymnastics fields (Bourdieu

1984). Perhaps her varied experiences in these various fields shaped her worldview that Aspire was a programme designed for more than developing football acumen. Her visits to these other sports-related fields were also recreational and non-competitive. Thus, perhaps engrained in her sporting habitus was a disposition that viewed sport to be non-competitive and grounded in enjoyment. This could explain her perception of the purpose of Aspire, in which one should, "...enjoy yourself. And to say I can do it. Cuz people say oh you can't do this, you can't do that" (S1 group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom). In this response, she could also be referencing the wider structural and cultural constraints that guided her lived experience as a young girl participating in sport and physical activity. She implies notions of regulation and surveillance that guide her self-concept as she navigated her evolving sporting identity in Aspire.

Even though she did not identify as a footballer, she readily participated in all football sessions. From an outside perspective, Alex appeared to be naturally athletic. She quickly mastered new techniques and physical movements, was rarely fatigued, and appeared to be wholly engaged. Her innate ability to master challenging and advanced football games and techniques was demonstrated throughout sessions. This was evidenced in a session run by Mr. Halls:

Mr. Halls allows the group to design the game that they'll play today. Niamh suggests a game where each team has to stay in their own half of the pitch. Each player in each team is only allowed to use three touches each before they need to pass the ball to a team mate or to the other team on the opposing half of the hall. ... The game has progressed into a 3v1 situation. Now, one player from each team must run into the middle of the group on the other side of the hall in an attempt to steal their ball. Alex is the first to defend in her group and as soon as Mr. Halls yells, "Go!", Alex is over to the other side of the hall in a flash and steals the ball before Ellen has even reached the other group. Ellen did not appear to understand the drill in the same way Alex did and ended up hesitating for some time before realising she was also meant to defend. (From field notes, 23/01/2019, CHS small games hall)

In this session, Alex's natural athletic ability and ease of comprehension of more complex football drills were displayed. Niamh, one of the "experienced" footballers designed a common drill in football, which was arguably inspired by her own exposure to this drill (or similar) in her own playing experience. However, Alex's

lack of existing football knowledge did not provide her with the pre-formed knowledge required to be successful in this drill. Instead, her sporting ability provided the basis of her success in this example. It could be argued that her ease in comprehension could have contributed to her unwavering enjoyment related to her participation in the programme. In all the field work sessions completed, I never noted an instance in which Alex was upset, frustrated, disengaged or unmotivated to participate. Perhaps this could reflect her perception that the goal of Aspire was to “enjoy yourself” (S1 group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom).

Her effort, attitude and apparent enjoyment were often noted in sessions. More often than not, her infectious energy appeared to have a positive effect on her teammates:

Alice and Alex just happen to be the same number to be the same number and every time they are called they just giggle the whole time. Alex is arguably a better footballer and is scoring more goals than Alice, but Alice couldn't care less. They both look like they're having so much fun and I'm not sure that they haven't stopped laughing this entire time. Their energy seems to resonate throughout the entire group. Every time they are matched up, they make the entire group laugh. I even notice that the senior pupils, Kerrie and myself are constantly laughing along with them. (From field notes, 12/12/2018, CHS Small games hall)

This field note entry provided an embodied example of how the programme was a site for enjoyment and fun for some of the girls. Even though there was a difference in football-based ability between Alice and Alex, this did not appear to be a barrier to enjoyment for either girl. Alice was a self-professed ‘somewhat sporty’ girl (Figure 9) who only viewed Aspire as an opportunity to have fun and make new friends (S1 group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom). As her player card indicates, she had past experience in gymnastics and racing motorbikes (Figure 9). Discussion from the focus group interviews revealed that she also had experience in swimming and participating in Park Run (S1 group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom). Therefore, in a similar fashion to Alex, Alice possessed a ‘somewhat sporty’ identity that was constituted by the existence of a sporting habitus shaped by past experience in non-football sports fields. It is also interesting to note that Alice participated in both traditionally ‘masculine’ (motorbike racing) and ‘feminine’ (gymnastics) sports in the past.

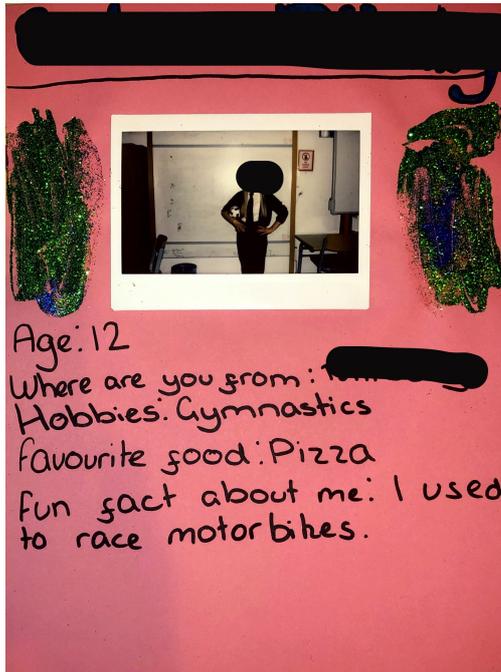


Figure 9. Alice's player card. (S1 group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom)

The 'non-sporty' girl is considered to be disengaged from sport and, '...have never identified with sport' (Women in Sport 2019, p. 7). She associates sport with being, '...too often an alien and loaded concept, which they associate with negative feelings and outcomes' (Women in Sport 2019, p. 7). This typology underlines the 'non-sporty' girl's aversion to sport and physical activity. This could explain why the girls that did not identify as athletic or sporty viewed Aspire as a site for developing of friendships and having opportunities for socialisation. A closer look at 'non-sporty' Michelle's story can exemplify this. During a theory-based session held in the small games hall, Michelle, Sarah, and Ellen asked to sit next to me whilst they completed their worksheet activity. In this exchange, Michelle reflected that Aspire was important to her because she had the opportunity to spend time with her best friends, Ellen and Sarah:

During the worksheet activity, Ellen, Sarah and Michelle are sitting next to me and start to discuss their friendship. Michelle joined Aspire late and shared that she felt really nervous until she learned that Ellen and Sarah were part of the group. The three of them shared that their class schedules were completely different and Aspire was the only chance for them to spend time together in school time. Even though Ellen and Sarah have played football

before, their favourite thing about Aspire is the time they get to spend with each other. (From field notes, 23/01/2019, CHS small games hall)

Michelle's late entry into the Aspire 'team' was a source of anxiety for her. Her lack of interest and experience in football (and sport in general), coupled with anxieties about joining an already formed peer group made her entry into Aspire a source of worry. Initially placed in a different rotational period, Michelle was moved to Aspire two months after the school year had started. In this exchange, Michelle expressed apprehension about joining Aspire. Michelle stated, "I thought everyone was gonna be good at football. I thought I'd get bullied cuz I cannae kick a ball" (From field notes, 23/01/2019, CHS small games hall). Thus, to Michelle, the varied ability levels of the Aspire group were viewed to be a positive attribute. This contrasts significantly with the perception of Rosie that was described previously. This could explain Michelle's perception that Aspire was designed to be a programme where, "you can make new friends" (S1 focus group 1, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom).

Reference to her player card (Figure 6) arguably provides visual evidence of her limited value on sport and physical activity in her self-concept and identity. She opted out of a football-related pose and did not include any references to sport or Aspire. Instead, she specifically noted her aspiration to become a primary school teacher. In an informal interview, she shared that this aspiration was longstanding; she had fond memories of her P5 teacher, who had a significant impact on her life.

In the descent to the pitch, Michelle decided to walk alongside me and we started talking about Kerrie. Michelle said that before she was in Aspire, she had only heard about how nice Kerrie was. When she found out she was in Aspire, she was excited to get a class session with Kerrie because all her friends always talked about how fun of a teacher she was. Michelle continued by talking about her P5 teacher and said she had a similar personality to Kerrie. Michelle spoke about how she lost her gran during P5 and how she was really struggling in school. She said that this teacher was so helpful in getting her through that tough time that she wanted to be just like her. She wanted to become a primary school teacher in the future so that she could help other kids going through difficult times. (From field notes, 15/04/2019; CHS PE grounds)

This quote highlighted Kerrie's impact in reducing Michelle's anxieties about joining Aspire. Michelle identified that Kerrie and her P5 teacher possessed the character traits she aspired to develop. Therefore, in contrast to the role models that had value to 'sporty' Rosie, professional female footballers, Kerrie was one of Michelle's aspirational role models. Michelle's story provides evidence of the ways in which 'non-sporty' identities can experience daily participation in a sports-based setting. Her lack of interest in sport and lack of a 'sporting' habitus constituted her belief that Aspire was designed to be a site for socialisation and the development of friendships.

In observations, there were few instances in which Michelle's engagement with the actual football activities was noted. She readily participated in all drills and games. However, this participation was often muted and somewhat apathetic:

I nearly forgot that Michelle and Sarah were here today. During the entire small-sided game, they have been hiding on the outside of the goalposts. Every time Kerrie encourages them to get more involved, they yell back, "But we're goalies!" Kerrie aptly points out that there should only be one goalie in a football team, but they pay no mind to her. Every time Georgia carries the ball to the goal they are defending, they move further and further *outside* of the goalposts, rather than attempting to save the shot. (From field notes, 11/03/2019, CHS 3G)

Every step past the goalpost demonstrated a physical *and* affective attempt to remove themselves from the football activity. It provided striking visual imagery of how disengagement from the programme can be embodied and displayed. Therefore, despite occupying and *being in* the Aspire setting, this observation provides an example of the ways in which Michelle embodied this disengaged, 'non-sporty' identity. Arguably, to Michelle, these actions reflected her perception of the programme's purpose, to make friends. This excerpt illustrated how she used time in Aspire to achieve this goal by socialising at times when she was expected to be engaged in football-related activities.

The stories of Rosie, Alex and Michelle reveal an interesting revelation; none of the girls appeared to be aware of their own designation of being 'at-risk', nor did they

understand Aspire's advertised purpose. Therefore, there was a limited (if any) understanding of the programme's aim to foster transferrable life skills alongside football-related skills. This lack of clarity regarding *why* they were participating in Aspire led to individual constructions of the programme 'purpose. These constructions were guided by their own sporting identities, which were shaped by their sporting habitus. Additionally, it is interesting to note here that there was a distinct and profound dissonance between the perceptions of the coaches and the young people. The coaches expressed a strong awareness of the importance of reaching 'at-risk' young people to encourage the development of life skills to mitigate exposure to adverse outcomes later in life.

Traditional forms of risk

As described in Chapter One, Aspire sites are specifically selected to serve catchment areas that persistently report high economic deprivation and poverty levels. This specific Aspire programme was selected for this research partly due to its location in one of the most deprived councils in Scotland. This council consistently reports high poverty rates, assistance grants and disengagement (The Scottish Government 2020b). Prior to fieldwork, I was unaware of how relevant these statistics would be to the lives of the young people involved in the programme. Additionally, I wondered how relevant the documented importance of reaching young people deemed to be 'at-risk' of offending, disengagement and coming from challenging backgrounds would be (The Scottish Football Association 2012).

It appeared that the girls possessed a strong awareness of the more traditional notions of risk that led to their inclusion in the programme. Whilst the previous section demonstrated that the girls had limited awareness that their participation in Aspire was predicated on being 'at-risk' of predetermined outcomes, they did appear to understand how these traditional forms of risk directly impacted their lives. A deeper look at the stories of Melissa and Ruth will help illustrate these points. Prior to introducing their stories, each sub-section will begin with a quote from one of the coaches. These quotes will be used to frame how coaches, Aspire generally, and

wider society viewed the young people in relation to dominant assumptions surrounding their 'at-risk' designation.

Melissa: 'Coming from a disadvantaged background'

I mean if you look at the additional support needs of these girls, you know, and you look at the deciles and the communities they live in, then you know, for some of them football is everything. For some of them, this is going to be potentially the best time of their life. (Kerrie, 19/06/2019, individual interview, CHS PE Hub)

Kerrie described Melissa as, "...one of the odd ones" (Kerrie, 19/06/2019, individual interview, CHS PE Hub). According to Kerrie, she came from an interesting background. In the focus group interviews, she shared that she was adopted and came from a very large family with eight children. She embraced her "weirdness" and considered her eccentricity one of her best and most unique qualities (S2 focus group 2, 14/05/2019, CHS classroom). Her unique personality was reflected in the choices she made on her player card. As she selected the components to include in her player card, she explained that she chose a woman holding a gun because she felt that "it's who I want to be" (S2 focus group 2, 14/05/2019, CHS classroom). When prompted further, she explained, "She looks happy and strong, like if you got a gun you can take care of yourself" (S2 focus group 2, 14/05/2019, CHS classroom). Additionally, she was one of the few girls that adapted her photograph. She included devil horns, a devil tail and a cigarette in this drawing of her visual representation of herself.

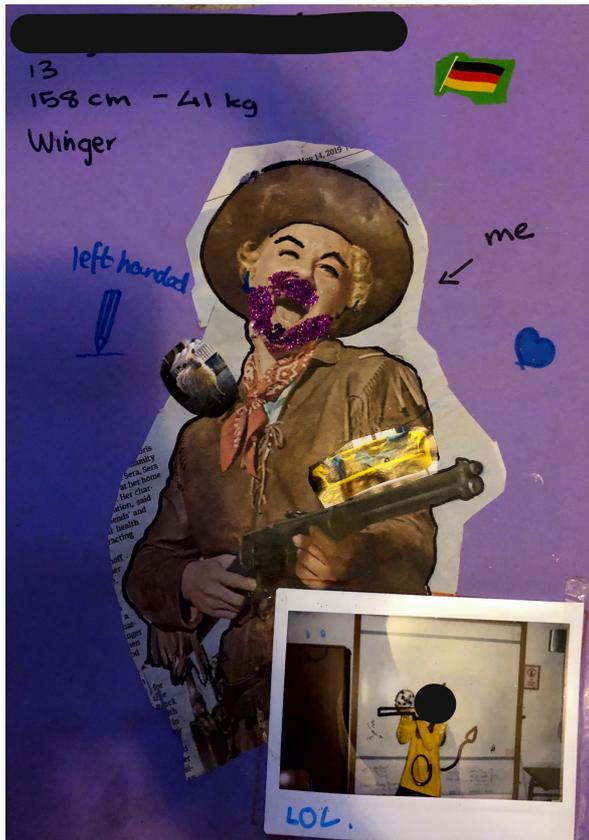


Figure 10. Melissa’s player card. (S2 focus group 2, 14/05/2019, CHS classroom)

Kerrie’s quote that opened this section identified that “the additional support needs” and “deciles” of their local communities constituted the ‘at-risk’ designation for many young people. In the same quote, she attempts to assign meaning to the programme by stating that, “For some of them, this is going to be potentially the best time of their life” (Kerrie, 19/06/2019, individual interview, CHS PE Hub). This provides additional evidence of the coaches’ view that Aspire can provide an ‘escape’ from the lives that led them to the programme. Whilst it has been argued that this messaging promotes neoliberalist conceptions of ‘youth-at-risk’, it did appear that this sentiment held credence in Melissa’s life. In an informal exchange, she described the meaning that Aspire held for her:

My house is crazy all the time. There’s kids and toys everywhere. You can’t find anything. You can’t hear anything. Sometimes it’s a lot so I just try to listen to music on my bed. See this is why I like school. It gets me out of the house. Aspire days are my favourite days. I’m not good at school so I like running around instead. (Melissa, from field notes, 25/02/2019, CHS 3G)

In this exchange, she acknowledged that there was some evidence supporting Kerrie's assertion that Aspire could be an 'escape' for some of the young people. In another informal exchange, Melissa spoke to me in more detail about why she likes Aspire:

Melissa and I are the first to the pitch today so we're sitting against the fence waiting for the rest of the girls to come. I ask her about her weekend and she replies that she did nothing but sleep. She expressed that her family could only afford to put her in one outside-of-school-time activity. She explained that her martial arts sessions are on only Tuesday afternoons so that meant that she had a lot of free time during the weekends. Aspire was her first exposure to football outside of P.E. and she felt as though she was improving her football skills. She shared that wished she could play football outside of Aspire on "an actual team", but likely could not afford it or get to sessions and games. (From field notes, 20/03/2019, CHS 3G)

In this quote, Melissa finds joy in Aspire through her mastery of skills *and* engaging in purposeful activities that it allows. Similarly, for some of the other girls, economic barriers restricted the ability of some girls to participate in sport outwith Aspire, despite a strong desire to join competitive teams. Some young people expressed a desire to participate in organised football or other sports with well-established competitive clubs. For example, Sydnie discussed how the financial and practical complications associated with fees, travel and proper kit were problematic to her participation in competitive, organised football:

I used to play for Rangers like, in their Academy, but this season I had to move to Steeple cuz it's closer and I can go with my friend. I want to play at a high level but Rangers was so expensive and so far away. Like my brother plays too so it's every night my parents had to drive to Glasgow and it was too much. Sometimes my dad had to leave work early just to get us and he cannae do that anymore. (Sydnie, S2 focus group 2, 14/05/2019, CHS classroom)

Alice builds on this point, by describing how economic constraints affected her access to an integral piece of kit, which mediates access to more formal forms of football:

I don't really want to play outside Aspire. Like I would if I could, but you see those boots the boys all have? They're so expensive. Like I can't even get new school shoes every year. (Alice, 22/05/2019, S1 focus group 2, CHS classroom)

This manifested in another instance in which Melissa openly referenced her lack of access to financial resources as she explained why she had to wear her school shoes to the Aspire session:

- Melissa: My shoes are soaking!
- Kerrie: This is why I want you guys to bring a spare pair of shoes, especially when it's been chucking down like this.
- Melissa: I can't! These are my only shoes.
- Kerrie: Your only shoes?
- Melissa: Aye. My mom says I can only get one pair of shoes a year cuz they're too much and these are my school shoes so I have to wear them to football too.

(From field notes, 28/01/2019, CHS outdoor grounds)

This exchange between Melissa and Kerrie provided insight into a potential barrier to participation for Melissa. This economic constraint had a direct impact on her participation in Aspire. It can be argued that limited access to football boots could affect the constitution of a football habitus. In traditional football settings, a core feature of a full football kit is football boots. In some settings (i.e. organised and competitive teams), football boots are required pieces of kit. In this case, football boots could be an example of the 'hidden entry requirements' that guide access to sport (Bourdieu 1984, p. 217). Therefore, lack of access to this critical item that predicates participation limited her interest in participating in the sport outside of Aspire. As discussed previously, this lack of motivation to continue to participate has a negative effect on one's self-concept and, therefore, sporting identity. Additionally, limited access to football boots could limit one's participation in the football settings that are considered to provide the cognitive, conative and affective components required to constitute a sporting habitus (Wacquant 2014).

In response to stories like Melissa and Alice, Kerrie felt that it was the responsibility of Aspire and Central HS to provide enough kit to mitigate the economic constraints that some of the young people had:

Which is another reason why I've sort of said to the faculty head here, I want a bank of shorts, socks, shin guards, goalkeeping gloves, and um, boots. All that sort of stuff, just for spare. Just in case somebody can't afford it. ... And I think that can contribute to them not trying their best and things like that. (Kerrie, 19/06/2019, individual interview, Central HS)

In addition to identifying a solution to an economic barrier that affected participation in Aspire (and football generally), Kerrie also touches upon how access to these forms of symbolic capital can affect the quality of individual participation in Aspire. Again, this reinforces the relationship between a sporting identity and motivation to participate. To Kerrie, a girl with suitable access to 'proper' football kit is viewed to have higher levels of motivation to participate. This effort leads to the development of transferable skills for life.

Ruth: 'At-risk of disengagement and/or offending'

It's basically a set-up for kids that have poor parental support. Kids who have issues. And we use football as the tool to go and bring the kids around because we feel that there's a structure of football, there's a discipline and an organisation within that. And basically a lot of these kids that need some help, that's exactly what they need within their lives, s this organisation and discipline within it. (John, 03/06/2019, individual interview, Allan HS)

Ruth was a tall and slender girl with distinctively curly, and blonde hair always held up in a ponytail. Regardless of the weather conditions, she always wore a white polo shirt, her school sweater, black leggings and black trainers. On the football pitch, she looked at ease with the ball at her feet. She had excellent technical skills and an observable passion for the sport. In one informal interaction, we discussed the meaning that football had for her:

I was shocked that Ruth approached me in as I was waiting in the hallway today. She asked for information regarding local teams or clubs she could join. She shared that she recently had to leave her previous team because her family could not afford it and because of persistent behavioural problems at school, she was not allowed to remain a part of the team. Ruth said leaving her club team made her profoundly sad and she decided to "do bad things just cuz". She has aspirations to become a professional footballer or a coach one day and felt that Aspire helped her "get her love for football back." (From field notes, 05/12/2019, CHS PE Hub)

Despite her strong technical ability and passion for the sport, she struggled to adhere to the structure of the Aspire programme. This difficulty appeared to transcend into all structured aspects of her life, most notably in her schooling. She consistently struggled to manage the expectations and structures of school. In nearly all the sessions she attended, her support worker was required to attend to ensure that her behaviour was appropriate. According to Kerrie, she consistently could not manage a full day in primary school and was placed on a part-time timetable. This transition to part-time schooling helped her reach some of her educational targets, but her promotion into secondary school posed a significant problem. Required to attend full-time, she began to skip classes and, at times, entire days. Her home life exacerbated these problems; infrequent parental supervision and a low-income household, “led her down the wrong paths” (Kerrie, 19/06/2019, individual interview, Central HS). According to Kerrie, from an early age, she began engaging with behaviours that align with traditional notions of ‘risk’, including smoking, drinking, offending and anti-social behaviour. As a result, she was transitioned to a secondary support school before the end of her S2 year. Although she was unable to finish the Aspire programme, Kerrie believed that the positive effects of her participation over the past 1.5 years were demonstrable:

I’m constantly reminded of the success stories that happen through Aspire. You know, Ruth, for example, not managing a full day in primary school. She was on part-time timetable constantly. But then she came into high school and was in five days a week for however many months, nearly two years you know. And that was because she had Aspire. I remember one day she came up to me and she said, “Aw, Miss Kerrie I wasn’t very well today and my mum said I could have the day off. But I said nah cuz I’ve got Aspire twice.” So you know it was that kind of – it means that much to them. So to me, it’s a lesson to them, it’s their livelihood, it’s what they’re so passionate about. (Kerrie, 19/06/2019, individual interview, Central HS)

Arguably, this anecdote could provide evidence of the ‘transformative’ effect of Aspire in the life of Ruth (Coalter 2007). However, prolonged participant-observation revealed that Ruth struggled to properly participate in almost all Aspire sessions. This was clear from my very first visit to CHS:

As I approached the pitch, Ruth was the first person there. She was loudly kicking footballs against the fence on her own. I instantly recognised her

from a few weeks earlier during my familiarisation visit. On that day, we unknowingly took the same bus to Central HS. I remember wondering why a young girl in school uniform was on the bus alone in the middle of the school day. As we both departed the bus, I walked along the path to the main office, while she took the path leading to the wooded area surrounding the school. An hour later as I departed the school grounds, I was surprised to see Ruth sitting atop a grit bin outside the school smoking a cigarette. (From field notes, 05/11/2018, CHS 3G)

This imagery of a young girl in a school uniform defiantly engaging in traditionally 'risky' behaviour directly in front of the institution tasked with managing her 'riskiness' was striking. She embodied this defiance throughout her participation in Aspire. However, it was not displayed as explicitly as it was during this first encounter. Ruth appeared to have embodied strategies that she employed as ways of expressing her interest and disengagement in Aspire sessions. At times, her disinterest was apparent and visible:

Mary yells out to Ruth, "Come on Ruth, we need you." Ruth responds, "No. I'm not playing" with her arms folded across her chest, as she positioned herself in the furthest away corner of the wire fence enclosing the pitch. After Mary tries to re-engage again, Ruth turns her back to the group and begins to play with the little black bits of astroturf. (From field notes, 07/11/2018, CHS 3G)

She frequently employed avoidance tactics by leaving sessions entirely:

Mr. Hall yells out to Ruth, "You're making a choice right now!" Despite this, she continues to walk up the stairs to the PE hub. Mr. Hall reminds her that the building is locked and shut and that she is unable to enter. This does not stop Ruth, who continues up the stairs and disappears into the main campus. (From field notes, 05/12/2019, CHS 3G)

Management of Ruth by school staff arguably employed more of a deficit model towards behaviour management. It appeared as though her interactions with school staff were almost exclusively oriented around managing her 'risky' behaviour. This approach was grounded in the belief that she needed to be taught how to avoid and diminish negative behaviours (Damon 2004). There was a shared language, vocabulary and approach amongst the coaches when it came to managing her behaviour. This embodied trends in 'youth-as-risk' discourse that implores the need

to 'fix' individuals through participation in Aspire to mitigate future risks to themselves and wider society.

In contrast to her relationships with other school staff members, it appeared that Ruth and Kerrie had an understanding relationship. This was manifested in how they interacted with each other:

You've literally been told you're on the last legs in the school. That's not fair. We've been talking about the PE department looking after you, then people talking to me about looking after you. What's the point in putting your top on if you don't have trackies? I've been talking to Ms. Sky about keeping you in school, because you and I both know you'll be the first to moan if you're not in school. Ruth, you need to tell me if you don't have trackies at home because then I have to talk to your mom. If I get you a new pair of shorts and a top can I trust you to bring it? I'm doing this for you, I've tried supporting you. (Kerrie, From field notes, 19/11/2018, CHS PE Hub)

In this exchange, Kerrie acknowledges some potential barriers related to her home life that could prevent her from bringing the appropriate kit to sessions. In identifying a strategy to mitigate his barrier, Kerrie attempts to provide tangible support in order to help facilitate Ruth's participation in Aspire. Kerrie was strongly aware of the meaning and value Ruth ascribed to her football participation. Kerrie described this in the formal interview:

Ruth was booted from the school. It's a shame cuz I think Ruth was a really good example of that... And you know she was fantastic with the younger pupils. When she was leading for the primary schools and stuff like that, she was brilliant. Getting in and coaching, and teaching them, and going over the rules and that. That's her place to shine. You know, and for her we've already lost her in terms of education you know, just you know she's not going to achieve in terms of Nationals and Highers probably. However, something like football and coaching could be her avenue. (Kerrie, 19/06/2019, individual interview, CHS PE Hub)

Ruth possessed years of playing in competitive, organised football settings. She started playing at a young age on local boys' teams. In addition to these experiences of participating in the football field over time, she possessed a strong knowledge of the norms and routines that structure and guide the football field (Bourdieu 1984).

Therefore, it can be argued that a football setting was a place where she felt comfortable, and possessed the knowledge that she needed to actively participate and constitute a self-concept. In this quote Kerrie identified how this habitus could impact her future aspirations and ‘possibilities.’ Ruth’s difficulties in engaging in traditional compulsory schooling limited her access to the educational credentials that would provide her with the cultural and symbolic capital required to achieve in normative pathways to adulthood. Here Kerrie identifies how Ruth’s ‘sporting habitus’ can be beneficial in creating an alternative pathway towards engagement in the labour market.

Ruth’s story highlights a critical finding of this research. Whilst it has been demonstrated that the social construct of risk held a prominent role in the development and delivery of Aspire, there were very few instances in which the girls explicitly discussed their entry into the programme. It appears that there are scant inquiries in the existing literature that investigate how young people view their own risk labelling and ‘riskiness’. During the fieldwork, Ruth was the only girl that explicitly discussed her ‘at-risk’ labelling. In her descriptions of her own “bad behaviour”, she expressed an awareness of how participation in traditionally ‘risky’ behaviours led to this designation:

Ruth has again disengaged but has decided to sit next to me today. She starts to share that she only acts up because she’s so tired of being in trouble. She shares that she is required to text her mom every time she leaves the house and school to make sure she “isn’t doing them things that I shouldn’t be doing.” Ruth discussed how she is constantly in trouble at school, because she feels like the teachers don’t understand why she does the things that she does. For example, she reflected on her past engagement with law enforcement because of her persistent absences from school and drinking in the local community. She concluded by stating, “They already call me a bad girl, so I’m just gonna be a bad girl.” (From field notes, 19/11/2018, CHS 3G)

This internalisation and acceptance of her stigmatised risk labelling reflects findings from Ferguson’s (2000) study on the perception of stigmatised and deviant identities. As described in Chapter Two, this internalisation fosters embodiment and acceptance of these marginalised identities. Therefore, Ruth provides evidence of

the need to be intentional about language when considering ‘at-risk’ populations. This section has also demonstrated that Aspire targets, “...the ones that actually need it” from the trial and application process (Phil, 03/06/2019, individual interview, Allan HS). However, the lack of awareness of the risk labelling that led to the inclusion of the other 21 girls reflects findings from Ahmad’s (2010) evaluation of Aspire. Young people felt that their participation was due to the display of positive behavioural and/or sporting attributes. Therefore, this could be a potential area of future research.

Conclusion

This chapter was dedicated to presenting the role of Aspire as a site to manage risk. The literature review demonstrated how sociocultural narratives and neoliberal policy had positioned ‘at-risk’ young people as ‘beings’ and ‘becomings’ (Uprichard 2008). This chapter has argued that the ‘coaching habitus’, or the past experiences and dispositions that shape coaching habits, constituted coaches’ belief that Aspire was an effective site for the development of life skills (Light and Evans 2015). This commitment to the stated programme philosophy and purpose shaped how the coaches viewed their own role in delivering the programme. This was considered due to the strong association of the role of the coach in the delivery of sports-based interventions (Camiré et al. 2011; Camiré et al. 2012).

I argued that how the coaches viewed and delivered the programme had a significant impact on the way that the girls experienced the programme. To investigate how the girls perceived the programme’s purpose, I employed the concepts of ‘sporting habitus’ and ‘sporting identity.’ Using these concepts allowed for a deeper consideration of how wider structural influences, past experience and self-concept related to football affected the individual constructions of the programme’s purpose. In contrast to the coaches, the girls did not view Aspire to be a forum for life skill development. Instead, individual perceptions of the programme purpose appeared to be linked to individual ‘sporting identities’, which are shaped by the ‘sporting habitus.’ For example, ‘sporty’ Rosie felt that Aspire was exclusively a site for the

development of football-related skills. This reflects her sporting habitus, which was shaped and formed due to years of participating in competitive, organised football. For ‘somewhat sporty’ Alex, Aspire was a place where she could enjoy herself and challenge herself to master new skills and try new things. Her experience in other sports fields offered her access to some forms of physical and cultural capital that she was able to apply to her experience in Aspire. Arguably, this had a positive effect on her enjoyment, motivation and participation in the programme. Finally, for ‘non-sporty’ Michelle, Aspire was exclusively a site for fostering of through opportunities for social interactions. She lacked a strong ‘sporting identity’, and therefore, she found little meaning in the football-related aspects of the programme. Instead, Michelle valued her ability to strengthen her social bonds with Ellen and Sarah. Therefore, this section illustrated that young people developed their own constructions of the meaning and purpose of Aspire as a result of their existing sporting habitus and sporting identities.

The chapter concluded by looking deeper at more literal, traditional constructions of being ‘at-risk.’ Through the stories of Melissa and Ruth, this section demonstrated that Aspire’s qualifying conditions for entry into the programme did have relevance to the lives of the girls selected for the programme. For example, Melissa’s story illustrated how economic barriers could lead to direct and indirect impacts on sports participation. Of the 22 participants, Ruth was the only young person who was aware of her risk labelling and reason for referral into the programme. Despite significant differences in the ‘riskiness’ related to the stories of Melissa and Ruth, this section demonstrated how a range of ‘risks’ could affect the individual experience in Aspire. The following analysis chapter will build on this theme of ‘being at-risk.’ It will pay attention to the role of the establishment of safe spaces on the gendered, sporting body.

Chapter Six: Safe spaces and the gendered sporting habitus

Introduction

As described in Chapter Three, Bourdieu attests that the body is the means through which we experience the world (Bourdieu 1984; Levin 1985). The body mediates processes of learning; thus, all experience is embodied (Levin 1985). Historically, girls' bodies have been consigned to absent entities within learning environments (Satina and Hultgren 2001). By exploring the meaning of the body and the extent to which the body is absent in female consciousness, how coaching and sports practice can affect the embodied experience of the participants can be revealed. This attention towards a female embodied perspective is critical for girls, who have been traditionally marginalised in hegemonic spaces and limited by culturally imposed gender roles.

Adolescence is considered a time when significant biological maturation occurs (Magnusson et al. 1985). For girls, this involves physical growth, the emergence of breasts, growth of body hair and the onset of menarche (Stattin and Magnusson 2018). Despite these significant and universal changes, there are limited sociological inquiries into the impact of this physical transition on the lived experience of girls participating in sport and physical activity. Research on girls and puberty is dominated by the well-documented drop-off in participation in sport and physical activity in adolescent girls (see Baker et al. 2007; Labbrozzi et al. 2013; Manna 2014). Sociologically, existing research has highlighted how the gendered nature of physical education, sport and physical activity spaces reproduce gendered knowledges, which influences how young people view their gendered physical capabilities (see Azzarito and Solomon 2005; Scraton 1992). This can be explained by the prominent belief that physical education and sporting spaces are considered to have an essential role in shaping attitudes towards the body, bodily competence and providing opportunities for learning (Connell 1987; Hargreaves 1994; Satina and Hultgreen 2001).

This chapter will illustrate the function of the body in sustaining patriarchal norms through the hierarchical ordering of female bodies in institutional space. It will touch upon the ways in which this football setting predisposes individuals towards the use of historically practical and symbolic manifestations of dominant, heterosexual and masculine orientations in the world. First, it will describe the relevance of the concept of 'safe spaces' to Aspire. It will continue by dissecting the relevance of the empowerment/disempowerment paradigm as it relates to Kerrie's mantra for life skill development, "We are not here to become better footballers, we are here to become better people!" (Kerrie, from field notes, 05/11/2018, CHS 3G). Then, the concept of the gendered, sporting habitus will be introduced. The gendered sporting habitus can help explain the ways that the sporting habitus is shaped by the gendered nature of the Aspire setting and experience. It will be used to illustrate the ways in which Diamond's and Toni's lived experiences were shaped by risk, class and gender. This will include a discussion regarding the relevance of symbolic violence and systematic embodied unconscious complicity by coaches, who are arguably practising active subordination.

Safe spaces

Grounded in early feminist traditions, the concept of safe spaces, '...is associated with keeping marginalised groups free from violence and harassment' (Kenney 2001, p. 24). Whilst a safe space can be associated with a bounded, physical space that protects a certain group from outside danger, violence and/or harassment, it is also, '...a diverse set of social and therapeutic practices and conditions that can be found throughout social institutions and informal networks' (Djohari et al. 2018, p. 351). For children and young people, this concept is often discussed within educational and safeguarding contexts and can be, '...conceptualised as a multidimensional process that involves physical, psychological/affective, sociocultural, political and experiential dimensions' (Spaaij and Schlenker 2014, p. 633). It offers access to physical, social and emotional conditions that are 'free from harm' (The Roestone Collective 2014, p. 1346), that can,

...enable children and young people to express themselves, to play and experiment with multiple selves, and to resist, negotiate, escape or rewrite the social and structural pressures that influences control over many aspects of their lives (Djohari et al. 2018, p. 352).

This concept has been widely adopted, yet the processes used to construct safe spaces remains poorly understood (Barrett 2010; Holly and Steiner 2005). Therefore, safe spaces must also be examined, ‘...through the relational work of creating and maintaining them’ (The Roestone Collective 2014, p. 1348).

We are able to treat safe space as a living concept, identifying tendencies and variations in its use, and recognizing its situatedness in multiple contexts. We do not, therefore, use the concept of safe spaces as an analytical tool to consider the relative safety of any given space or place, although our analysis certainly speaks to questions of safety more generally... of reviewing and exploring instances where people explicitly invoke the phrase “safe space”. (The Roestone Collective 2014, p. 1347)

However, as Stengel (2010) discusses, there are prominent ironies in *why* safe spaces are constructed in educational settings, which affects how we construct safe spaces:

The need for safe space for students who experience social exclusion and harassment is the result of a political economy that was intended to create safe space for others... By designating fears, we construct safe space for some and unsafe space for others. That is, we construct the world as safe and unsafe and control the movement of fear but also movement of bodies in that world. (p. 524)

This becomes evident when attempting to disentangle how the concept of safe space interacts with the complexities of Aspire itself; the segregation of ‘at-risk’ pupils from the rest of the student body, the tension of bodily control in an embodied environment founded on rules, structure and routine, and the promotion of a girl’s-only space in a traditionally hegemonic sporting environment.

As implored by Stengel (2010), this discussion on safe space, ‘...can only be properly interpreted—and responded to—when the link between fear and safety is uncovered and deconstructed’ (p. 524). As a starting point, this section first examines the interplay between fear and safety in the wider community where these girls reside. This consideration is further complicated by what Harris (2004) calls the ‘can do’/’at-risk’ paradigm, in which girls, ‘...are rendered both responsible for their health and personal development within a neoliberal framework and also culpable for any failure to overcome structural barriers to these forms of engagement’ (Clark 2015, p. 1013). The challenging nature of their local community was central to their designation of being ‘at-risk’ and their resultant access to the programme.

Aligned with traditional discourse on young people, risk and crime, the girls expressed an awareness of the risks endemic to their community. The young people spoke about how their local community embodied traditional notions of ‘risk’. When discussing the best part of living in their community, one group of pupils laughed and described it as “horrible” (S2 focus group 2, 14/05/2019, CHS classroom). The group continued to describe their community:

...terrible, absolute shit, with so many junkies. Everybody just walks about smoking and drinking and stuff, some people drink, some people abuse drugs, you get called a weirdo if you don’t drink. (S2 focus group 2, 14/05/2019, CHS classroom).

During field work, there were a number of instances in which the dangers of the outside community infiltrated the school environment. For example,

You can’t ignore the smell of marijuana that is radiating from the hallway. I hear two of the boys chat about it as they put their boots on. One of them says, “Just another Monday at CHS, eh?” (From field notes, 21/01/2019, CHS PE Hub hallway).

It appeared as though these types of ‘risky’ encounters were frequent occurrences on the CHS campus. For example, in one of the focus group interviews, the girls reflected on a dangerous incident that occurred on school grounds:

Alex: There was a guy running through the main street with a machete. There was a – PC came to the school and I didn’t

know about it and there was a guy running about in the main street with a machete.

Interviewer: Really? When did that happen?

Alex: I think it was maybe two years ago? There was a guns and drugs thing here once.

Rosie: Oh aye!

Alice: In the school?

Rosie: Aye! He brought them in. The guy he just came in with guns and drugs.

Alice: Guns and drugs.

Rosie: I mean I've had drugs thrown at me in the corridor.

Alice: I got offered a cigarette.

(S1 focus group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom)

The group acknowledged how important it was for their safety to avoid the people and areas where these behaviours were most visible. They felt that the lack of safe, public space to occupy after school interfered with the free time they would prefer to spend with friends or exercising (e.g. running, cycling, practising football, and skating) (The Roestone Collective 2014; S2 focus group 2, 14/05/2019, CHS classroom). This avoidance of public space caused many of the girls to, "...just lay in bed watching Netflix because I can't go out" or "...walk straight home with my friends cuz my mum dinnae want me to walk alone" (S2 focus group 2, 14/05/2019, CHS classroom). Despite the girls being unaware of their own individual 'risk' circumstances that led to their inclusion in Aspire, they demonstrated a strong awareness of the wider challenges surrounding them. This included how safe they felt in school, in Aspire and their communities.

Aspire was frequently referenced as a "safe space" by coaches and pupils alike. Kerrie described her vision of Aspire as a safe space:

...for me it is really important that pupils kind of have that safe space. And I think that we captured these pupils with something that they love. Like football has to be just the vehicle we use just to teach everything else and for me it is that person first stuff, and then the player second comes next. But you know, it is about providing opportunities for pupils to make mistakes, for it to be ok, for it to not be where we're having a go because other pupils have made a mistake and we understand. (Kerrie, individual interview, 19/06/2019, Central HS)

This philosophy aligns with the socioemotional conditions that promote what Fry (1987) coined, 'psychological freedom', or the freedom to try new things and to make mistakes while learning. This freedom that fosters creativity, pushing oneself out of their comfort zone and feeling secure enough to share their thoughts and experiences (Stengal and Weems 2010). Kerrie linked this 'psychological freedom' with the development of football-related outcomes:

In fact, I've got a really good relationship with these girls and they respect me and I respect them. We create an environment where it's safe to challenge one another in an appropriate manner and it's safe to make mistakes and fail, then we can progress and learn the technical, the physical, the tactical. (Kerrie, individual interview, 19/06/2019, Central HS)

Kerrie felt that it was her responsibility to foster this ethos and guide the development of a safe space. Central to her role was a commitment to developing positive relationships with each of the young people. The girls themselves recognised this, "she lets us take it at our pace" (S1 focus group 1, 15/05/2019, CHS classroom). Beyond her role as a positive role model, the girls also identified Kerrie as an adult to whom they felt comfortable to speak to and express themselves freely in front of. For many of the girls, there was a shared consensus that it was difficult to find adults they felt they could talk to and trust. One focus group described this:

The group organically started to discuss the ways in which they felt closeness with Kerrie. Erin started to reflect on an incident that occurred at the start of the academic year where she suffered a personal loss. She shared that she felt "like she wasn't even there" (in school) and she was struggling to pay attention in her classes. Erin reflected that Kerrie was an adult that she felt comfortable speaking to about the loss. Opening up to her helped get "back on my feet" and "I started to do better in school and football again." (From field notes, S1 focus group 1, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom)

Another focus group discussed how important it was to find this adult in school that they could trust and open up to:

Diamond: Like Mr. Den is my favourite like.

Amanda: He's so nice. He's the only guy teacher I talk to.

Diamond: Aye same. But I always talk to Kerrie about girl stuff you know? Like the gross stuff. (laughter)

Megan: Aye like I'm not gonna go to a guy to tell him I have cramps like.

(S2 group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom)

This exchange described how the concept of 'safe spaces' and access to trusted adult confidants had a gendered dimension. Here the girls discuss how menstruation is a topic that they would not feel comfortable discussing with a male adult. Diamond explicitly identifies Kerrie, a woman, as the person whom she would discuss issues related to menstruation with. Culpepper (1992) argues that the more girls openly talk about their periods, new menstrual attitudes are introduced, and new menstrual possibilities are developed. This practice can help deconstruct the taboo related to menstruation and puberty (Fingerson 2005). This is considered to lessen the burden related to emerging issues of girlhood, which may have a positive effect on girls that menstruate (Fingerson 2005).

Kerrie's desire for Aspire to be a safe, welcoming and inclusive space appeared to help foster a prideful in-group mentality. It appeared that inclusion in this select group held special meaning for the participants. In-group membership is also considered to be a protective factor for young people (Tajfel 1981). The development of positive prosocial relationships with their peers contributed to the feelings of safety in both affective and emotional dimensions. Diamond described their collective relationship, "I don't know how to explain it, but it's like we're a little family" (S2 focus group 1, 14/05/2019, CHS classroom). The group considered themselves a 'team' despite the lack of organised or competitive football. It can be argued that Aspire's use of a 'team' environment could be one strategy for risk

mitigation. The young people frequently identified that participating in Aspire provided them with access to new peer groups, time for socialisation and an opportunity to exercise in a structured, safe place. This reflected existing evidence regarding the social benefits of sport for girls (see Women in Sport 2019).

John considers the football kit to be a powerful tool for meaning-making. Its value comes from the social meaning that is aligned with owning and wearing it. Coach Phil elaborates on the impact that this may have on the development of team identity:

... it's great, if you look, if you're part of the team and you've got something that somebody else doesn't have the opportunity to do. So if we all just turned up and you could wear what you want, it wouldn't seem as important or as valued as you would do if everybody looked the same... And it's just trying to make them feel part of the same kind of thing, but I know sometimes the practicalities of that, they don't always work out so. (Phil, individual interview, 30/05/2019, Valley HS)

Kerrie also acknowledged the value and meaning making that a unified football kit can hold. In Aspire, this is achieved through the seven-piece set of red Adidas kit:

In previous years, the pupils had been given seven pieces of kit. Two shorts, two socks, two t-shirts and a waterproof jacket and that sense of identity. That pride they have in that kit and all turning up and wearing the same stuff is massive. (Kerrie, individual interview, 19/06/2019, Central HS)

Despite the stated importance of wearing this kit, it was rare to actually see any of the girls wearing the kit. In fact, from the very first observation session, only one female participant consistently wore her red kit:

Sydney is the only girl dressed in full red kit and is wearing Adidas boots. From what I've seen so far, she is incredibly skilled and very attentive to Mary. (from field notes, 05/11/2018, CHS 3G)

This trend was particularly striking during observations. Every session occurred on the same pitch, adjacent to the boy's Aspire group. From the first session, the difference in appearance between the two groups was evident. At every boy's session, every single pupil was outfitted in the red Adidas kit, supplemented by football boots. All pupils in Aspire, boys and girls, are invited to wear football

boots, but they must bring their own. Additionally, according to Mr. Halls, the boy's group upholds a 'no kit, no football' policy. This reflected his coaching habitus and preference for creating an environment that replicated the professionalism of a competitive football team. One of the focus groups talked about this emphasis on professionalism amongst the boys. This focus group explained that the boys adhere to the kit policy because they "treat it seriously", as if it were a professional team (S1 focus group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS Classroom). This reflected the strong sporting habitus the boys brought to their Aspire experiences. Despite both the boy's and girl's programmes ascribing to the SFA's entry requirements of being 'at-risk,' all the boys were expected to wear football boots to every session. In the previous chapter, both Melissa and Alice spoke about the financial barriers related to obtaining suitable football boots. Therefore, it is particularly striking that the boys were required to wear football boots and the entire group had the ability to adhere to this condition. It is difficult to deduce why this occurred; however, this could be attributed to the historically marginalised position girls occupy within this 'masculine' sport. Perhaps for the boys, the kit required to participate in the cultural institution of football was an expense considered to be as necessary as school shoes.

Kerrie did not link non-adherence of kit to disengagement or disinterest in Aspire. Instead, she recognised the gendered barriers that prevented the girl's groups from adhering to traditional kit policies:

Like the way in which the programme is sold, it's seven pieces of kit over the course of—they get seven each year. So in an ideal world, that is what we'd like to have happen. Because you're right, they grow out of it extremely quickly. And we are very much aware of that, and you know, it's not something that I would call out pupils on. If they didn't have theirs, if the kit was too small. For example, Diamond, I'm more than happy for her to wear her own t-shirt. And in the first and foremost, I would try to go out and sort something for her that's not excluding her from the team and the whole appearance of the group. (Kerrie, individual interview, 19/06/2019, CHS)

Here, Kerrie also notes the importance of group identification by wearing a unified kit. Thus, while Phil and John view the red Adidas kit as a critical artefact for meaning-making, Kerrie emphasises that this meaning-making can still be achieved

through other means. In fact, this sentiment was reflected by the young people as well. This was apparent in a discussion on the role of kit in their group meaning-making. In one of the focus groups, the girls discussed how adherence to a uniform kit in Aspire symbolised being a team. However, despite poor adherence to the kit provided by the Scottish FA due to poor fit, the girls still felt they were a unified team, just like the boys. Alex said, “I mean we all wear our white tops from school so it’s like the same thing” (S1 focus group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom). Frost (2001) attests that wearing certain pieces of clothing that holds cultural meaning can offer a means through which capital can be accumulated, and a sense of group identity can be fostered. These examples offered some insight into personal perceptions of how safe space was evoked; however, a deeper understanding of Aspire’s safe space can be uncovered through analysis of the rituals and bodily movements through the socio-spatial dimensions of the space that was constructed.

Despite occupying a number of physical spaces throughout the physical education grounds at CHS that were shared by other pupil groups, this Aspire group appeared to segregate into an insular group naturally. As described previously, the group had been together for nearly a month and a half before data collection was able to commence. By then, both the S1 and S2 groups appeared to be strongly bonded as units. This was most apparent in periods when they were disengaged from football itself. As expected within an educational setting, their movement was coordinated and regulated. The group routinely moved as one being during each session, from the changing rooms to the pitch or games hall and back to the changing rooms. This routine of movement occurred alongside similar rituals of movement of the other pupil groups occupying the same shared physical spaces during those class periods. These spaces included the changing rooms, the hallway of the PE hub, the immediate area outside of the hub and the footpath/stairwell to the 3G pitch. From an outside perspective, the PE grounds were organised chaos. From the boy’s rugby group putting on their boots in the doorway to the dancers filing into the games hall with their speakers blaring to the Aspire girls huddled together and waiting in the hallway with all the football kit; every person knew where to be, what to do and

when to do it. Despite many opportunities in this transition period to break from routine and engage with other pupil groups, the pupils adhered to these routines without input from adult staff. The Aspire girls, in particular, routinely moved in these spaces in small groups and very rarely engaged beyond passing, short exchanges with pupils from other classes.

As a timetabled programme delivered in an education setting, it could be suggested that this regular commitment to routine could be attributed to the culture and norms set forth by CHS and not just by Aspire. Additionally, the bounded nature of a football session itself often elicited directives to, "...stop watching the boys and pay attention", or, "...don't walk through our pitch, boys!" (From field notes, 08/12/2018, CHS 3G). These directives reinforced the socio-spatial boundaries characteristic of sport and education itself. This 'restricted freedom of movement', and thus expression, is inherently paradoxical (Djohari et al. 2018). Safe spaces are theoretically designed to foster environments free of fear, which can contrast directly with the systemic ritualised oppression in modern, neoliberal approaches to education. The tenuousness of the line between oppression and free expression unfolded in an unexpected joint session between three separate pupil groups. Due to short staffing, the girl's S2 Aspire group, the boy's S2 Aspire group, and the boy's S2 rugby group were in the large games hall together (From field notes, 28/01/2019, CHS games hall). The large group was playing a variation of dodgeball which led to many instances of young people being "out" and spending prolonged periods of time sitting on the side disengaged from the primary activity.

Firstly, it was evident that the girls of Aspire were very disengaged from the activity. It was difficult to ignore the intense nature of a game grounded in physical aggression and fear. The boys took the game seriously and were "hitting" the opposing team. Unsurprisingly, nearly all the girls were scattered around the perimeter in small groups, flinching every time a ball whizzed past them. Only Ruth and Toni appeared to be excited about the game, an excitement that only persisted until they were hit with a ball. After only about twenty minutes of the session, all the

girls stopped playing the game and began to sit alongside the walls of the games hall, talking and jeering at the boys who were still playing. I then decided to use these periods of inactivity to build rapport and learn more about the Aspire girls. I began speaking with two of the quietest pupils, Amy and Amanda. Soon, I caught the eye of Ruth, who appeared to be annoyed and angry, sitting alone at a wall adjacent to us. I invited her over, and instinctually the girls readjusted their positions and formed a semi-circle around me. This instinctual, physical movement created a, ‘...body arrangement in space (that) create temporary and changing, bounded territories, recognised both by participants involved in the encounter and by bystanders’ (Mondada 2013, p. 600). This, ‘...ecological huddle wherein participants orient to one another and away from those who are present in the situation but not officially in the encounter’, constituted this physical and affective space (Goffman 1964, p. 64). Ecological huddles, ‘...describe how attention shared between participants is directed at a particular artefact of interest’ (Sakr 2018, p. 6). In this case, this ‘particular artefact of interest’ was Aspire itself.

This shared attention towards participation became even more apparent a few minutes later when Sydnie and Toni sprinted over excitedly, “Oh my god, is there an Aspire hangout?! I’m coming for the Aspire chat!” (From field notes, 28/01/2019, CHS games hall) As the remaining Aspire girls hear this, they start running over to the group and sit down for our “hangout” (From field notes, 28/01/2019, CHS games hall). Soon, I found myself surrounded by the entire S2 group of Aspire girls. The power of this “hangout” did not lie in the actual conversation itself but in the affective qualities of the temporary safe space we constructed together (Horton and Krafl 2006). This power was reflected in a study on a youth development organisation that serves inner-city neighbourhoods in the United States (Hirsh et al. 2000). This study identified the importance of informal “hangouts”:

The club also provides girls with a safe space where they can talk informally and simply “hang out” with each other and with boys. Many girls stated that they prefer to spend time with their friends at the club, in contrast to those

friends who do not come to the clubs, because they “know them well,” they are “trustworthy”, and “they are like family.” (Hirsh et al. 2000, n.p.)

The link between social identity and team membership is widely discussed in sport and physical activity literature. This link is described by Tajfel (1981) as:

That part of an individuals’ self-concept which derive from his (or her) knowledge of his (or her) membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership. (p. 255)

In a school-based sport context, identification with a group (i.e. the Aspire team) predicted athlete perceptions of self-worth, commitment and effort (Martin et al. 2017). This was supported by pupil reports on the importance of positive social support in the effort exerted in the programme (Martin et al. 2017).

Throughout the year, new pupils, senior pupils and adult staff became a part of the Aspire team. Inclusion in this group held special meaning for its members; however, membership was not fixed. Inviting other individuals into the Aspire team was an exciting event. Pupils expressed eagerness in showing new individuals what Aspire was all about:

The energy in the hallway is much more animated than usual today. Kerrie finally comes out from the changing room with the last of the girls and tells them all to settle down. Before she can say anything, Alison raises her hand and volunteers to lead the warm up. Sydnie, Ruth, Diamond and Alison are incredibly giggly, energetic and start telling the new girls all about Aspire and the team (From field notes, 10/12/2018, CHS PE hub).

The welcoming nature of the group was supported by Kerrie as she reinforced Aspire’s aim to create “better people”:

Girls you are all more than welcome. All you have to do in Aspire is not be a good footballer – you just have to try your best. I want you to be good people – you know this. You can make mistakes, it doesn’t matter. We are inclusive, we are respectful. It’s okay if you don’t know the rules or what to do. The other girls will help you. (Kerrie, from field notes, 10/12/2018, CHS PE hub).

The following section will attempt to understand how this dissonance manifested in everyday practice. This will be achieved by providing a summary of Kerrie’s ethos

for life skill development, “We’re not here to become better footballers, we’re here to become better people!” (Kerrie, from field notes, 05/11/2018, CHS 3G) Insight from John and Phil will be included in an attempt to contextualise further what this “better person” may entail. This section will conclude by comparing the coaches’ perceptions with the young people’s views of what this “better person” looks like.

Becoming better people – A mantra for empowerment?

The notion of empowerment features heavily in ‘youth-at-risk’ discourse. Empowerment is defined as, ‘...the ability of individuals and groups to act in order to ensure their own well-being or their right to participate in decision-making that concerns them’ (Calvés 2009, p. 736). It is grounded in the philosophy that ‘marginalised’ or ‘oppressed’ individuals or populations should be able to express themselves and challenge the forms of domination that maintain their subservient position (Wise 2005). Feminist scholarship adds to this, viewing the concept of empowerment to encompass a, ‘...creative power that can be used to accomplish things (“power to”), a collective political power used by grassroots organizations (“power with”), and also a “power from within,” referring to self-confidence and the capacity to undo the effects of internalized oppression’ (Calvés 2009, p. 740). However, under neoliberal conditions, discourses of empowerment are considered paradoxical (Rushing 2016). Rushing (2016) highlights how these discourses ‘sound liberatory,’ whilst legitimising the responsabilization of vulnerable individuals under the auspices of self-determination and global citizenship. In intervention programmes targeted for ‘at-risk’ communities, empowerment and participation are presented as a package that are, ‘...independent of the structures of oppressions, and simply processes by which programs foster individuals’ sense of worth and esteem’ (Miraftab 2004, p. 242).

A closer look at Kerrie’s trademark mantra illustrates how Miraftab’s (2004) attestation has relevance to Aspire. This ethos of empowerment was present amongst all three coaches. The overview of their coaching habitus provided evidence that they perceived Aspire to be an effective method to contribute to social

change for the young people and the wider community. Aligned with ‘youth-at-risk’ discourse, this empowerment occurred through the promotion of ‘betterment’ and aspirations (Coakley 2016). One of the best examples of this comes from Kerrie and her trademark mantra:

We are not here to become better footballers, we are here to become better people! This is a place where you will make mistakes, you will be challenged, we are here to support one another because we are a part of Aspire! (Kerrie, from field notes, 05/11/2018, CHS 3G)

Here Kerrie echoes sentiments of ‘community participation’ as a means to emphasise the development of individual qualities of resilience (making mistakes) and perseverance (being challenged). She attempted to remind the young people of these ‘values’ throughout the programme:

I’ve already spoken to some of you today, but I just want to remind you all of our values. You know you’re not in Aspire to become amazing footballers, you’re here to become better people. I want you to learn and show the values that we talk about in Aspire every single day. So what does that mean? That means getting dressed quickly, bringing your kit coming every day, taking initiative, so if I’m not out yet, you should know you need to get your warm-up in straight away so we can get to football. (Kerrie, from field notes, 07/11/2018, CHS 3G)

In this derivative, Kerrie identifies explicitly the importance of Aspire values. She provides examples of ways that young people can exemplify and practice these values. This included adhering to a routine by getting dressed quickly, taking personal responsibility by bringing a suitable kit and taking the initiative, and self-actualisation into a responsible Aspire participant by following established group norms. This could provide evidence of the impact of ‘youth-at-risk’ and neoliberal discourses on the role of Aspire in the production of ‘global citizens’ (Coakley 2011).

At times Kerrie changed this mantra slightly. For example, in this variation, she places the same level of value on the processes of becoming a better footballer and a better person:

Remember this is about making you a better person and a better footballer. You need to put the work in at training. If one person fails, we all fail. (Kerrie, from field notes, 26/11/2018, CHS 3G)

Here she implies that the development of football skills through ‘hard work’ can contribute to this development into a “better person”. This can be interpreted to indicate that through the intentional process of seeking and acquiring football-related skills, one may acquire the values and skills that can be constituted into both the primary and sporting habitus (Wacquant 2014). Additionally, she draws upon the principle of collective responsibility as she attests that individual failure inherently becomes group failure. In another derivative, she builds on this by encouraging the young people to become better people in order to fulfil her own desire to foster “better people”:

All you have to do in Aspire is not be a good footballer; you just have to try your best. I want you to be good people – you know this. You can make mistakes, it doesn’t matter. (Kerrie, from field notes, 10/12/2018, CHS 3G)

These quotes from Kerrie are arguably aligned with a positive youth development ethos, which is person-centred and strengths-based (Damon 2004; Lerner 2002). She connects certain life skills with football-related methods towards development. For example, when she says, “That means getting dressed quickly, bringing your kit, coming every day”, she may be implying that continued commitment to this could help foster responsibility. Connecting insight from these quotes, her vision of a ‘better person’ may be one who makes mistakes, is supportive, responsible, takes initiative, works hard, is inclusive and is respectful. Her view on “betterment” reflects the increasingly popular relationship in social policy that connects resilience and discourses about well-being (Ecclestone 2012). Arthur (2012) argues that resilience has emerged as a modern revitalisation of the neoliberal tenet of ‘character building’. Thus, despite employing a more holistic, strengths-based view, it becomes impossible to ignore the subtle undertones of ‘youth-at-risk’ in this philosophy of betterment.

Because of Kerrie's voracious commitment to this mantra and to gain a better understanding of what a "better person" might entail, all the other coaches were asked to respond to the following:

The coach at CHS's Aspire site often says, "We're not here to become better footballers, we are here to become better people!" Do you agree or disagree that this 'mantra' has relevance within Aspire? What do you think she means by better people? Or if you were to say that to your pupils, what would you mean by saying that?

Phil and John shared long responses that arguably represented their individual coaching habitus. Firstly, Phil responded:

No, that's true cuz like you can talk about being a better player, but ultimately if you're not willing to work at something, if you're not willing to be a good team player, like, you're not going to develop anyway, as much as you could do. So actually, it kind of works whether it's in Aspire or not. It's just great the fact that we've got this programme that focuses on the person. You've got to be the best person you can be in order to be the best footballer. So it's fundamentally – so I totally agree with what she says. That has to be, especially in a school environment where we've got some kids that educationally, got really bright backgrounds and really nice families and we've got kids that don't have anything. And so we've got a whole range of backgrounds. So it's important for us to really look at the individual within the team environment to get the best out of everybody. So I totally agree with that point. I think we totally have to put that first. And then you know what, if they then have talent at football, and then they've used kind of the skills that they've picked up to go and progress in their career. (Phil, individual interview, 30/05/2019, Valley HS)

Phil's response built on Kerrie's; however, it was notably more football-centric. He explicitly identified the attainment of football skills as a starting point for transferability of acquired skills to other life domains and future aspirations. This reflects prominent scholarship that serves as the rationale for sports-based interventions (Coalter 2007). The previous chapter demonstrated how this belief that participation in sport can foster the development of transferable life skills was internalised as a result of the coaching habitus that the coaches brought to the programme. Additionally, in this quote, Phil referenced the various backgrounds that the young people brought to the programme. Notably, he specifically identified the role of the family, which he considered to be both a protective and risk factor.

John also shared a football-centric response. He links this “better person” with notions of aspiration and success in later life:

For me, it’s about the individual. It’s about shaping that individual. And trying to shape them and put them in a direction that they need to go. They have got to find their own way. What do you want to do when you leave school? Like a lot of the guys they want to be professional players. Okay if you want to be a professional player, there are a lot of things you have to do in terms of your workrate, this, that and the next thing. But you know that’s pie in the sky sometimes cuz it’s not easy, not everybody does it. So what you’ve got to do, you’ve got to have a backup plan. So what’s your alternate for earning a living? What can you do? How can you go around and earn it? So when you turn around and you’re selecting the subjects you should take, you gotta make sure they’ve got the right subjects, and then you go. Because you won’t wake up one morning and be wealthy. You’ve got to go to work like everybody else. Just make sure that you’re preparing yourself for that. That you know what road you want to go down. Don’t leave school and then be like oh, well now I gotta see about getting a job. So what you gotta do is you go and do something about it. (John, individual interview, 03/06/2019, Allan HS)

In contrast to Kerrie and Phil, John emphasised his personal role in shaping the young people in his Aspire programme. His response corresponds to the prevailing neoliberal discourse on ‘risky’ young lives, which emphasises the role of Aspire in the successful progression of ‘vulnerable’ young people into the labour market. One interpretation of John’s response could imply that he believed that without participation in Aspire, some young people would otherwise not be afforded access to the resources that would put them, “in the direction that they need to go” (John, individual interview, 03/06/2019, Allan HS). Interestingly, notions of escapism were linked to the development of this “better person”. John provides an example of this:

Because there’s so many different ways they can go off the rails. But it’s a big thing. It’s – this thing is key. Because what you do, if you go and plant that seed, this is an opportunity for you to use football and this programme to take you away from the life that you’re living in now. It’s an opportunity. (John, individual interview, 03/06/2019, Allan HS)

John believed strongly in the role of Aspire to foster opportunities for escapism from, “...the life that you’re living in now” (John, individual interview, 03/06/2019, Allan HS). There was a strong assumption that it was necessary for the young people to overcome the conditions that led to their risk labelling. Otherwise, they

would not experience success later in life. It has been argued that through this aspirational discourse, there is risk of falsely promoting the idea that hard work and effort are always sufficient to overcome problems and barriers (Berger 2004). As described previously, the pseudonym *Aspire* was partly selected due to its prominence within the programme. For example, in an early field observation, Kerrie repeated a profound statement to one of the S1 groups during a session that involved mastery of a challenging football concept: “You have to aspire to achieve” (From field notes, 09/11/2018, CHS games hall). All three coaches used this word when discussing the potential for empowerment to “escape” the lives that affected the young people, leading them to the programme itself. However, this sentiment did not appear to be adopted by the young people themselves.

All three of these interpretations from Kerrie, Phil and John offered insights into the qualities that may represent this “better person” and the processes towards ‘betterment’. Whilst it appeared that the coaches had a shared commitment to this ethos of empowerment, it did not appear that the young people shared this view. The young people’s perceptions of what a “better person” may entail appeared to be grounded in their ‘sporting habitus’ and ‘sporting identities’. This will be demonstrated by deconstructing Niamh and Taylor’s perceptions of the concept. In the focus group interviews, the young people were asked the following:

Have you heard Kerrie say something like this before? “We’re not here to become better footballers, we’re here to become better people!” If so, what do you think that means? To be a better person?

Despite this direct questioning, it was difficult to obtain more than one-word answers from the young people. At first, it appeared as though this “better person” concept was foreign or potentially confusing. Although many of the girls had a recognition of the phrase, articulating what it may mean seemed challenging for them. For example, Abigail simply responded, “I actually don’t know” (S2 group 2, 19/05/2019, CHS classroom). It is difficult to know if it was the phraseology of the question that elicited confusion or if it was the concept itself. However, Niamh and Toni offered interesting and thoughtful answers that reflected their ‘footballing’ identities. For example, Niamh answered:

To get on with everybody as well because it's a team sport. Trying hard and not talking down to one another either. Everybody's equal. (S1 group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom)

In this quote, Niamh emphasises the football aspect of Aspire. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Niamh regularly competes in organised football for a local club and considers herself to be a 'footballer' with a strong 'sporting identity'. It could be argued that her ability to link individual experience to the football setting could be attributed to her football habitus. Another self-identified 'footballer' was Toni. They viewed this better person to be one who,

...become more confident. and be yourself. and kind of say if someone was from a different country, or a different color, or gay, respect them for who they are. (S2 group 2, 19/05/2019, CHS classroom)

Even though Toni identified as a footballer, they did not have the same level of experience and access as Niamh. Toni's response arguably reflects their gendered habitus, which could be explained by their ongoing process of transitioning from a female to a male. To them, this transition characterised their experience in Aspire and school itself. Therefore, this could explain why Toni interpreted this "better person" to exist in a more global sense rather than just in a football setting.

The sporting gendered habitus

As described previously, the predisposition to participation in sport is considered to involve the sporting habitus (Pot et al. 2014). This sporting habitus is defined as an individual's preference for certain sports and is shaped by an individual's perception of their own sporting abilities (Engström 2008). Such a perception can be influenced by a number of factors, including past experience of different sporting activities in leisure time and at school, high levels of cultural capital (i.e. physical skills and familial dispositions towards sport) and the social environment (Bourdieu 2005; Engström 2008).

A gendered habitus can help demonstrate the ways in which young people are constrained within discourses of dominant gendered norms and beliefs (McLeod 2005). In a study on the role of sport and physical education on the construction of

gendered identities in adolescence, Metcalfe (2018) first introduced the concept of the 'sporting gendered habitus'. This concept aims to integrate the function of sport within a gendered habitus, which is argued to replicate notions of hegemonic masculinity (Metcalfe 2019). Metcalfe (2019) contends that sport culture reproduces dominant gender-based representations and assumptions, which can reinforce the role of sport in a male habitus whilst also marginalising a female habitus. Therefore, employment of a sporting gendered habitus as a conceptual tool can help explore how taken-for-granted knowledge regarding the social and gendered construction of sport impacts lived experience and identity development (Metcalfe 2018; 2019). This concept will be used in this chapter in order to explore the intersection between a gendered habitus and a sporting habitus to consider the role of sport (and Aspire) in the lives of the girls that participated in this research.

As described in Chapter Three, participation in sport is driven by the preferences, tastes, skills and knowledge that constitute one's sporting habitus (Bourdieu 1984; Wilson 2002). Wilson (2002) argues that, cultural capital has a stronger influence on sport selection than economic capital, especially for young people. According to Bourdieu (1984), the individual lies at the crux of preferences toward sport. This selection occurs based on how strongly the individual's habitus relates to the culture of a particular sport. Thus, individuals must find meaning in the activity to continue it. As a result, if a sporting field is fixated on high levels of physical training and competition, this setting may be incongruous with individuals that are seeking fulfilment of enjoyment or casual participation (Engström 2008).

The previous two chapters noted how the Aspire participants brought varied forms of sporting habitus to the programme. For example, Rosie embodied a more traditional football habitus shaped by her past experiences in a competitive team setting, individual passion for the sport and aspirations to pursue a career as a professional footballer. On the hand, arguably, Michelle did not possess a strong sporting or football habitus. She showed little interest in the game itself, did not consider herself to have traditional football skills and did not find any connection

between participation in sport and her future aspirations to become a primary school teacher. This variance between the sporting habitus that the Aspire programmes brought to the programme demonstrates the range of dispositions, preferences and meanings that the football aspect of Aspire held to the young people. Considering this diversity, consideration of the gendered aspect of their experience alongside their sporting participation provides novel insights about the lived experience of developing a sporting gendered habitus. The following sections will use the stories of Toni and Diamond to illustrate this.

Diamond: The impact of external influences and peer pressure

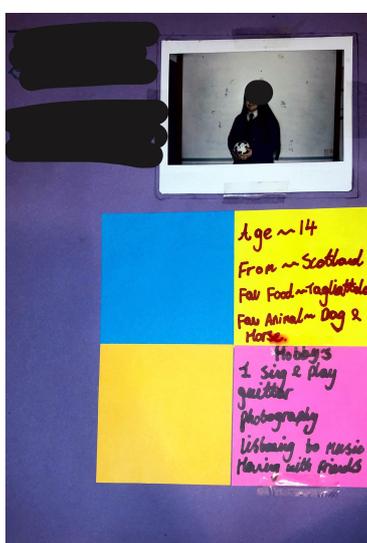


Figure 11. Diamond's player card. (S2 focus group 2, 14/05/2019, CHS classroom)

Adolescence as a period of development has long been associated with increased social pressure to conform to gender expectations from peers and wider society. In our society, certain attributes related to athleticism (e.g. strength, aggression, competitiveness, power) hold significant value for males, constituting socially constructed definitions of masculinity (Connell 1987; Gorely et al. 2003; Young 1990). Therefore, girls are perceived to be intruding in male-dominated spaces as a result of their sport participation (Connell 1987). It is documented that physical activity educators may unconsciously reinforce gender norms through gendered

modes of communication (Messner 2000; Young 1990). This trend became especially prominent in a session that involved a joint boys and girls session:

Even though Kerrie is here today, it appears as though the boys and girls are playing together today. Mr. Halls runs the boys through a vigorous warm-up whilst the girls are directing their own warm-up in typical fashion. Mr. Halls is loud, direct and yelling at the boys to be “focused” and to “pick up the intensity”. On the other hand, Kerrie is giggling with the girls whilst Ellen trips over her own feet as she attempted to do the grapevine. (From field notes, 15/03/2019, CHS 3G)

This excerpt arguably demonstrated how the boy’s and girl’s Aspire groups differed. Even though the session was planned to be a “fun” mixed session between the boys and the girls, the boy’s warm-up reflected a more traditional football warm-up that emphasised “focus” and “intensity”. Therefore, there appeared to be a distinct difference between the ways in which Kerrie and Mr. Halls used verbal communication and body language to express the purpose of the session. Arguably, these differences reinforced gendered expectations; the boys should be intense, focused and physically prepared, and the girls should have fun and be less focused on skill mastery. This reflected a finding from research conducted on physical education settings (Taylor et al. 1999). Girls believed their teachers would teach the boys instead of the girls (Taylor et al. 1999). Therefore, by receiving less attention, girls had access to fewer opportunities to foster physical skills and the sense of confidence that mastery can foster (Taylor et al. 1999). This lack of confidence was intensified as a result of negative peer interactions. From the perspective of the young people themselves, the girls felt as though the boys treated them differently during these joint games:

Amanda: They underestimate us.

Interviewer: You think so?

Amanda: So they won’t play with us properly.

Interviewer: How does that make you feel?

Diamond: Annoyed. It makes you feel like, I don’t know, it makes you feel like...

Interviewer: What did you say Megan?

- Megan: I said sexist.
- Interviewer: You think it's sexist?
- Diamond: It used to be like—I don't know how it used to be like. Women are just like, like we need to stand together more. We need to stand together and like, like nowadays girls are just so nasty to each other for like no reason. Like see some of the stuff I've heard girls say to some people, like, for no reason, I'm like, like would you say that in front of your mum? Or like your gran or something? So like no, no like why say it to someone like that? It just makes you feel so down, and with the boys it's like, it's like oh you're a girl, you're not good enough. Only because you see, so many sports are seen as—
- Taylor: Like the lassies are better than the boys.
- Diamond: —like for example, so many sports are seen for like, oh like dancing for women, gymnastics is for women and football is for males, like rugby is like male. But like to be fair, it's like, it doesn't matter, you can do both. And it doesn't matter, like what gender you are, you can still be equally as good.
- Amanda: I think it's to do with like media as well. Like you don't really see like women's football on the TV—
- Diamond: It's mostly male isn't it?
- Amanda: —Whereas like you see male football, like obviously like men's football was there first so obviously it's still there. But they should be introducing it like women in traditionally male sports more than they are.

(S2 group 2, 22/05/2019, CHS classroom)

In this exchange, the girls expressed their beliefs that sport is a 'sexist' institution. To them, this is reproduced by the lack of visibility of professional women's sport and long-standing assumptions about the distinction between traditionally 'feminine' sports. Additionally, Diamond points out that whilst attempting to participate in these mixed games, the girls were subject to assumptions and comments from their male peers that made them feel unwelcome. Existing research supports these claims, reporting that girls do not align with the boy's agenda of

winning and competition (Garrett 2004; Taylor et al. 1999). Findings also show that when girls did not perform to expectations, they were criticised and humiliated (Garrett 2004; Taylor et al. 1999).

It has been argued that the visibility of ‘non-feminine’ physical displays can help challenge existing gendered norms (Le Menstrel et al. 2002). Additionally, engagement in physical activity has been considered to be a protective factor in counteracting the adverse outcomes that are associated with the sexualisation of girls (Duncan et al. 2005). However, despite the rise of professionalism of women’s sport in recent years and the resultant increase in the visibility of active women, professional female athletes are often portrayed in hyper-feminine and sexualised manners (Duncan et al. 2005). As a result, girls are projected culturally constructed images that focus on their appearance rather than their sporting abilities. Popular media has increased pressure for girls to conform to the hegemonic idealisation of the slimmed and toned ‘feminine’ body (Duncan et al. 2005; Shakib 2003). However, the Aspire girls identified that increased exposure to professional female athletes on social media has shifted popular opinion on what the feminine athlete should look like. One of the focus groups referenced American gymnast Simone Biles:

Diamond: You know what’s quite bad as well, in like gymnastics. I’m not saying like she’s big or anything, but like in gymnastics so many of them are quite skinny and she’s like well built, so it’s quite cool to have that, that she’s like that. Cuz so many people think that you have to be like super skinny to do gymnastics.

Interviewer: So you think that’s the same in all sports? That you should look a certain way?

Amanda: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you think it’s like that for boys and girls or just girls?

Diamond: For both.

Amanda: I think for both, yeah. Cuz like if you don’t look like physically fit, I think people like just assume like—

Diamond: I look like I probably cannae run like to there and back but I'm actually quite like good at running. Like I'm quite fast for being small. I'm quite chubby to be fair.

(S2 focus group 2, 19/05/2019, CHS classroom)

Here, Diamond points out an interesting point in which she describes how Simone Biles challenges traditional notions of femininity within a traditionally feminine sport. Often, equality in sport discourse focuses on the entry of girls into traditionally masculine spaces (i.e. football, rugby, weight lifting, etc.) (Ennis 1999; Theberge 1990). However, this point by Diamond emphasises the perceived importance of having visible role models that debunk notions of both masculinity and femininity.

The girls reported an awareness of how their growing bodies affected their participation:

In the focus group interviews, the girls commented extensively on how uncomfortable the kit was for them. One group explained that they were fitted for their kit after being accepted into the programme in P7. They felt like their kit was too large for them at the beginning of the year, but only months later, it was already too small. (From researcher's notes reflecting on focus groups)

A discussion on this topic occurred organically in one focus group with S2 pupils:

Diamond: Like our kits are from S1 so they're kinda small for us. So—

Amanda: That's why none of us wear kit.

Diamond: Aye, like see my socks, they literally just like—

Taylor: My red top is like the only part of my kit that fits me.

Interviewer: Do you wish that you had kit that fit you? Would you wear it every day?

Amanda: Yeah.

Diamond: We need new kit but you know the school doesn't have as much money. I mean I had S2 kit in S1 because the tops were too tight.

Interviewer: Does it feel different to be in Aspire wearing your full kit?

Amanda: Yeah it does.

Interviewer: Cuz you all wear your school clothes?

Diamond: Probably cuz then you feel a part of a team, like, maybe for example like, that's why I think, for example, wearing a uniform to school is quite good as well, because there might be some people that might be less fortunate and don't have the stuff like brand. Like that's brand you got and mine is just like from Primark.

(S2 focus group 1, 14/05/2019, CHS classroom)

Here, the group expresses a desire to wear the traditional Aspire kit because of its social meaning and value that it holds. What appears to be limited consideration by the SFA that girls' bodies develop rapidly and unpredictably at this age represents another way in which women's and girls' experiences are 'hidden' from consciousness. In addition, the lack of attention towards the effects of menstruation on their experiences and ability to wear the provided kit was apparent. In the same focus group, the topic of menstruation arose organically:

Amanda: I don't even like the red colour. I wanna pick the colours of the kit.

Diamond: Aye, like blue or purple or like something else, but nae red.

Taylor: I like red because of the times in S1 I actually wore it, I was on my period and had an accident and it didn't show and naebody knew it.

Interviewer: Are your periods something that you guys talk about? Like how to protect yourself from leaks, what products you could wear, and stuff like that?

Amanda: No way. Sometimes we can tell Kerrie if we're hurting but I usually just try to get out of Aspire or PE if it's bad. We don't talk about gross stuff like that.

(S2 focus group 1, 14/05/2019, CHS classroom)

In this exchange, Amanda highlights how avoidance of the activity itself is, at times preferable because of the discomfort and worry menstruation can cause while exercising. In another focus group, Toni shared, "See sometimes when I'm angry or lazy it's cuz I'm on my period and I just can't be bothered. I don't like to tell Kerrie but sometimes she lets me sit out if I want to" (S2 focus group 2, 19/05/2019, CHS classroom). The effect of menstruation on the individual dispositions brought to the programme was a common experience shared by girls from both cohorts. For example, in one session, Rosie decided to remove herself from the activity. This was notable because she never missed a session or failed to participate in activities. As she sat alongside me on the sidelines, she shared, "My head hurts and I cannae deal with people who dinnae know what they're doing today. I have bad cramps and I'm just too angry and I'm gonna get in trouble cuz I'm gonna keep yelling at them" (from field notes, 15/03/2019, CHS 3G). Interestingly, it did appear that the girls felt comfortable talking about menstruation and its effect on them with their peers and me. However, it seemed that disclosure to adult staff at the school was taboo, which could reflect its omission from the consciousness of the programme itself.

Sydney: Navigating the pressures of 'fitting in' with the boys

From the data it was clear that, especially for the 'less sporty' girls, there was discomfort in displaying their bodies as moving objects. This led to the self-regulation of movement, perspiration and effort and reflected wider social expectations that girls should be gentle, non-physical and passive (Shakib 2003; Young 1990). However, for the very few girls that had strong football ability and enjoyed the challenge of playing with the boys, they arguably challenged these norms and garnered respect from their male peers.

I notice that as this game goes on, more of the girls are disengaged completely from the game. The boys have maintained the same level of intensity that the game started with and are now refusing to pass to most of

the girls. For the last few minutes, the only girl that seems engaged in the game is Sydnie. Physically, she has maintained the pace of the game and the boys seem willing to pass the ball to her. As a result, the rest of the girls have begun to stand about the pitch, playing with their hair, watching the rugby boys and forming small groups. (From field notes, 15/03/2019, CHS 3G)

This excerpt highlights two interesting points. Firstly, the unconscious exclusion of ‘non-sporty’ girls from this shared sporting space. Whilst the adult outsider or physical education teacher could perceive this to be laziness or lack of motivation. It is argued that this could reflect an internal fear of humiliation and feelings of being inadequate (Ennis 1999; Garrett 2004). Secondly, this excerpt demonstrated how the display of traditional masculinity through athleticism garnered respect from peers of the opposite sex. This reinforced the idea that girls must prove themselves and their athletic ability before joining boys in the sporting arena (Shakib 2003). As Bourdieu (1984) attests, the field is shaped and constrained by gender norms.

To same-sex peers outside of the programme, proof of athletic ability in traditionally masculine sports had an opposite effect:

Alison: In S1, everyone thought I was a dancer.

Interviewer: And then what would they say if you were like no I’m in Aspire?

Alison: They’d be like oh you’re weird.

Melissa: Yeah it’s just like see the dancers they actually judge you on everything. It’s so annoying. They’re like you smell, eww.

Sydnie: Dancers are the worst. Because like when we go into the changing rooms, the changing rooms will already stink of perfume. Oh and it’ll already stink of sweat cuz everybody’s in there sharing and that an we’ll go in there and get the blame for it.

Toni: Exactly, they’ll be like, see if we walk in, they’ll be like, “Oh they’re so sweaty and that.” They’re like high and mighty, like well you guys can’t come in here, this is the dance room.

(S2 group 2, 19/05/2019, CHS classroom)

This discussion highlighted the conflict between the footballers and the dancers. According to the girls, the dancers are viewed to be the ‘popular’ sporting group amongst the girls at CHS. This reflects wider cultural norms that place a higher value on participation in more aesthetic sports for girls (Heywood 2007). Thus, within the context of CHS, dancers were considered to possess higher levels of cultural capital. These exchanges reinforced the dominance of traditionally feminine expectations on the girls of CHS. This peer rejection was also reflected in research on a group of high school basketball players in the United States (Shakib 2003). It revealed an inverse association with athletic ability and female popularity (Shakib 2003). This contradiction reflects a paradox within girl’s sport, in which dominant expectations and stereotypes related to gender are contradictory to those of sport (Heywood 2007).

To the dancers, it appeared as though evidence of physical exertion was viewed to be negative, associated with judgment and inferiority. In addition, Sydnie and Toni emphasised the negative stereotype associated with being sweaty. As Kessel (2016) states, ‘...sweating from sporting exertion is not seen as beautiful. Its *raison d’etre* strays too far from appearance’ (p. x). Despite this, there were many instances *inside* the safety of the Aspire safe space in which it appeared that some of the girls felt comfortable engaging in strenuous physical activity and displaying traditional forms of exertion. For example:

Emily is putting out a lot of effort in this game, she’s sweating with a red face, and I don’t think she’s stopped running the entire time. Emily saves a goal from a goal line clearance and everyone on her team gives her a high five and says well done. (From field notes, 10/12/2018, CHS 3G)

Here, within the Aspire group, it appeared as though Emily’s effort and exertion were valued in the group. High fives to applaud her effort expressed appreciation for her commitment to her physical effort. Therefore, there appeared to be a degree of comfort amongst the group in straying away from traditional embodiments and displays of femininity. This provides additional evidence for the value of Aspire’s ‘safe space’ that was described previously.

Toni: Challenging traditional notions of femininity and masculinity

As noted in the previous section, during Toni's second year of participation in Aspire, they began their transition from female to male. They received strong resistance to this transition in fields outside of Aspire. Aligned with the concept of safe space, Toni shared that Aspire was the only place in which adults appropriately referred to them by their preferred pronouns and chosen name. Toni loved football and had experience playing football for several competitive teams in the past. As a goalkeeper and striker, Toni felt that football was an important part of their identity, even when they were not actively playing for a club team. This was reflected in Toni's player card, in which they elected for an action shot photograph.



Figure 12. Toni's player card. (S2 focus group 2, 14/05/2019, CHS classroom)

Issues of gender were not restricted to the differences between the two sexes. For individuals that identify as transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) on the gender identity spectrum, the gendered sporting experience can be complicated. In

recent years, the experience of TGNC athletes and individuals has become increasingly visible (Broad 2001). This has led to an influx of policies that relate the TGNC athletes (Morris and Van Raalte 2016). Young people who identify as TGNC face many challenges as they attempt to understand their gender identity and transition through puberty (Morris and Van Raalte 2016). In *Aspire*, one of the participants revealed that they were currently transitioning. Toni did not reveal in-depth insights into their transition, however, they expressed evident discontent with the structural challenges that affected this experience.

Like the school won't change my name. I'm not even wanting to change my name because I have a boy's and a girl's name. Like my teachers don't wanna change the spelling, they won't let me use the boy's bathrooms. Like it's like they are just ignoring me. (Toni, S2 group 2, 19/05/2019, CHS classroom)

Toni expressed frustration with the structural challenges to gaining acceptance of their gender identity within the school setting. However, this discontent did not transcend into *Aspire*.

Toni: Kerrie dinnae care. She is the only teacher that's been accepting like. She told me that she would help me get the school to change my name so I want to.

Sydney: And we accept Toni too. I think what the school is doing is horrible like. Toni spelt this way, Toni spelt this other way, it dinnae matter like. It's just a name.

(S2 focus group 2, 19/05/2019, CHS classroom)

Kerrie's response to Toni reflected what Morris and Van Raalte (2016) recommended for coaches in sport settings. To help support TGNC athletes, coaches should create welcoming environments and be supportive (emotionally and in navigating relevant policies and barriers). Additionally, Sydney expressed peer-to-peer support, further reinforcing the notion of *Aspire* as a safe place. However, it is well documented that sporting spaces can be a site of bigotry and stereotyping for individuals that do not conform to traditional expectations related to individual sex (Shakib 2003; Cahn 1994). For example, Shakib (2003) found that for post-pubertal girls, peers were more likely to question girls' heterosexuality if they did not display

traditional forms of femininity or if they did not downplay their athletic skills. This phenomenon occurred in Aspire as well:

Or you get those people whoa, like oh you're a tranny cuz you do football.
(Melissa, S2 focus group 2, 19/05/2021, CHS classroom)

Research shows that this socially reinforced link between sports participation and issues of sexuality can promote avoidance of sport and physical activity entirely (Cahn 1994; Griffin 1998). Thus, for some, the cultural capital costs associated with actual or perceived identities related to issues of sexuality are too risky (Cahn 1994; Griffin 1998). Again, this provides additional evidence of the role of Aspire as a safe space to challenge dominant discourses and assumptions whilst constructing a gendered, sporting identity.

Toni's experience in Aspire was not only shaped by their gender transition but also by their developing body. Regarding concerns about traditional football kit, discussions and observations revealed that sports bras were equally important to the developing girls. In the last ten years, there has been a remarkable shift within sport (especially football) to recognise the gendered needs of active girls and women. One area that has received notable attention is breast health, specifically in knowledge surrounding one of the iconic pieces of apparel for active females, the sports bra. Until recently, the importance of the sports bra was restricted to kinetic and physiological concerns regarding breast motion (see Mason et al. 1999; Page & Steele 1999). This is despite well documented concerns in the medical community that poorly fitted bras can contribute to physical discomfort, muscle fatigue or mastalgia (breast pain) (Chen et al. 2011).

Toni provided the first instance where I noted the impact of developing breasts on ability to participate:

As Toni goes to strike the ball, I can see them holding their right arm across their breasts, almost as it was necessary to hold them up. Throughout the entire session, I can see them continue to throw their left arm in the balance whilst relying on their right arm to keep their breasts in place. (From field notes, 05/11/2019, CHS 3G)

Beyond this physical representation of the effect of developing breasts on their active participation in Aspire, very few girls reported knowledge of sports bras in the focus groups. Discussion of the challenges of getting used to growing breasts and running arose. Pupils reported that it often created pain and feelings of discomfort, leading to less motivation to run properly or at a higher intensity. For example, Sarah called them her “jiggly bits” and complained about how difficult and uncomfortable her breasts bouncing was for her. She said that the bouncing made running difficult because it hurt too much and was embarrassing. It was an aspect of her developing body that she did not consider to affect her sporting experience. To Sarah, this was a normative part of going through puberty and it was simply not something to consider to be a problem. She expressed a desire in obtaining a sports bra to help make her experience in Aspire less physically demanding and more comfortable, however, lacked knowledge on how to obtain a sports bra. Similarly, to Sarah, upon inquiry about their knowledge or use of sports bras, few reported that they had access to sports bras. The pupils reported that they had little understanding of what an appropriate sports bra was. Therefore, future inquiry into how breast health affects sporting experience could be an interesting avenue for future research.

Despite being a female sportsperson myself, I did not expect breasts to become a prominent topic in Aspire. It represents one of those ‘hidden’ aspects of sport that are rarely discussed (Coalter 2007). Even though sports bras are influential pieces of ‘kit’ in sport, they are never supplied nor discussed. Kerrie and I discussed this in her individual interview:

Like you think about what you need to be successful at football. And we’re providing shorts and socks and t-shirts, but actually for female athletes, a sports bra is probably, especially when they are growing and they are developing, and that’s something we should be aware of and potentially even providing. (Kerrie, 19/06/2019, individual interview, CHS).

Conclusion

Girls that participate in sport and physical activity must navigate wider discourses and structures that define notions of femininity and masculinity (Connell 1987;

Gorely et al. 2003). Central to this navigation is access to safe spaces formed and maintained by group membership and group identity. This chapter continued by exploring the intersection of the gendered habitus and sporting participation to study how sport (or is not) linked to the expressions of a gendered sporting habitus (Metcalf 2018; 2019). Findings from this chapter emphasised the role of the body in the reproduction of and challenge of dominant gender norms. Thus, commitment towards presenting oneself as 'feminine' and conforming to gender-based expectations in and outwith Aspire impacted the allocation of social and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 2001).

Capital is allocated to gendered bodies that conform to expectations. Therefore, the importance of outward bodily displays is emphasised (Bourdieu 2001). This leads to pressure to ascribe to both gendered and sporting expectations, which can be paradoxical for girls (Young 1990). Gendered expectations encourage girls to control their movements, occupy less space and to be passive, quiet and obedient (Young 1990). However, in order to develop physical competence and 'success' within sporting spaces, girls must challenge the boundaries of femininity (Shakib 2003). Therefore, the more successful a girl is at sport, the less feminine they appear to be (Shakib 2003).

Navigating the tensions between sportiness and femininity is exacerbated by the external (i.e. societal, gendered, peers) and internal (i.e. puberty and identity development) pressures that 'problematise' girls' lives (Ekholm 2019). The impact of these pressures is revealed by looking closely at the prolonged lived experience of the Aspire girls. Pressures from peers outside of Aspire appeared to impact participation negatively. External criticisms that football was for 'trannies' and was 'gross' because of the consequences of physical exertion led to discomfort in expressing individual sportiness outside of Aspire. Findings also revealed that developing bodies led to difficulties in finding kit that fit properly, which impacted group identity formation and meaning-making. Additionally, the girls discussed how two poorly theorised aspects of experience strongly affected their day-to-day lives:

breast health and menstruation. Whilst discourse on these two topics has been dominated by research on adult sportswomen, findings from this study reveal that additional research should be completed on these topics to broaden our knowledge of how these issues affect contemporary girls in sport.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

Introduction

This thesis addressed outstanding knowledge gaps on the limited understanding of how SBIs are delivered and experienced by participants on a day-to-day basis. While quantitative analyses demonstrating the efficacy of SBIs are plentiful, these reports are starved of deeper, intimate insights into the ‘unquantifiable’ (Coalter 2007). By recording the lived experiences of young girls, this study explored the developmental challenges of previously defined ‘at-risk’ young people and uncovered the challenges faced in promoting their inclusion, comfort, and life skill acquisition in football-based SBIs. Exploration into the lived experience uncovered how pervasive assumptions surrounding young people are engrained in program language and delivery, spanning from gender-based stereotypes of femininity to political undertones of social neoliberalism’s push towards ensuring the attainment of a competitive, productive, and personally responsible lifestyle in young people.

Furthermore, this thesis examines the lived experience of ‘at-risk’ girls participating in a football-based sports intervention in the Scottish Lowlands, an area targeted for further attention for future life skill development. More specifically, this research demonstrated how the emergence of neoliberalism in the 1960s shaped UK sports policy and youth development programming decades later. At the core of these programmes lies the archaic belief of ‘youth-as-risk’, necessitating that these ‘adults-in-the-making’ require surveillance, management, and intervention (Turnbull and Spence 2011, p. 939). The global popularity and widespread access to sport have fostered SBI’s acceptance to achieve these ends under the broader umbrella of ‘life skills’, attributes perceived necessary for successful engagement in the labour market as ‘global citizens’. Yet, the lived experiences and voices of 22 ‘at-risk’ girls participating in the Aspire programme demonstrate the unintended liabilities of such programming.

The remainder of this chapter summarises key findings of the study, its contributions to the fields of youth development, sport and physical activity, social work and qualitative research methods, and recommendations for future research. This chapter will highlight the study's main contributions in the context of the research aims, including: i) conducting ethnographies with 'at-risk' girls in sport; ii) examining the disconnect between adult coaches' and the young people's perceptions and experiences of Aspire's programme purpose; and iii) recommending the role of safe spaces in providing a context for the experience of the gendered and sporting body. The chapter concludes by summarising research recommendations and implications for future studies and practice.

Ethnography of 'at-risk' girls in sport

One of the central aims of this thesis was to explore the lived experience of 'at-risk' girls participating in SBIs. The application of an ethnographic methodology significantly contributes to understanding 'at-risk' girls from their perspective – isolating their lived experiences rather than the judgements, opinions, and perspectives of those influencing SBI programmatic outcomes. In other words, experiences were not attempted to be quantified or compared but honoured and appreciated for their individuality and genuineness; the stories of girls spoke to the realities of their self-perceived notion of risk and involvement in sport. Thus, the study findings illustrate that applications of prolonged participant observation and semi-structured formal interviews with arts-based focus groups can illuminate key psychosocial journeys of young people often overlooked by traditional data collection methods.

Furthermore, this study demonstrates how Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2016) reflexive thematic analysis and Bourdieu's (1984) concepts of *habitus*, *field* and *capital* can be leveraged to understand the ways in which the 'taken-for-granted' assumptions surrounding 'youth-as-risk' (Turnbull and Spence 2011, p. 939) can be better explored in future works. By not engaging in a traditional programme evaluation, this approach could better investigate normative assumptions regarding

'risky' girls in sport and 'best practices' within sports-based interventions. As young people were considered 'experts in their own worlds' (Thomson 2008), they became encouraged to actively participate in Aspire to tell their personal stories as '...meaningfully engaged independent social actors' (Best 2007, p. 10). Prolonged participant observation offered significant opportunities for rapport building, informal conversations, continuous (re-)engagement in consent negotiation and reflexivity (Tickle 2016). Thus, the ethnographic study design transitioned sport from the driver to the medium of the intervention; young people developed life skills in complement with, and not despite, sport. This outcome demonstrates a transition opportunity for Aspire's programme methodology: football itself need not be the 'hook' to increase school attendance and engagement, but rather the use of football to voice young people's shared lived experiences (The Scottish Football Association 2018). This is particularly pertinent for young girls, who are already underrepresented in studies conducted on SBIs and whose experiences in 'masculine' team sports are minimally investigated (for example, Jeanes 2011; Mayeza 2018). This research contributes to a new wave of scholarship that focuses exclusively on profiling the underrepresented voices of girls, and challenges gendered assumptions that lie at the core of SBI programme development and delivery.

To achieve this, research on SBIs can consider introducing creative arts-based focus groups that increase participatory task-based activities not dependent on physical or technical football skills. The inspiration of this activity was grounded in my personal experience as a social worker delivering creative arts therapy with young people and the recent surge of participatory visual methods (PVM) with this population (Coad 2007; Coad et al. 2009; Phoenix and Rich 2016). Creative arts therapy ensures the familiarity of art as an expressive medium for young people and 'destigmatises' the therapeutic experience and the multidimensional nature of artistic expression through engagement in emotional, cognitive, and affective functions (Wengrower 2001). In addition, as a flexible, engaging, and encouraging modality, the structured and predictable nature of participating in a familiar and thoughtfully constructed arts

activity can foster feelings of safety while expressing potentially traumatic and difficult topics (Camilleri 2007). This complements the social neoliberal ideals of competition, skilled labour, and productivity demanded from SBIs emphasising social justice, equality, and community via creative arts therapy (Kuri 2017).

In addition, creative arts therapy has the potential to realign traditional SBI-driven neoliberalist ideals by fostering individual responsibility and collaborative engagement via self-expression. The interactive approach and sharing of made material in the focus groups allowed for young people to develop shared experiences through the deconstruction of common inequalities (Kuri 2017). This not only built a stronger affinity to social values pertinent for defining and recognizing individual responsibilities but also reinforced group participation in the absence of competition. Such values mirror social neoliberal philosophies without categorising the young people as at-risk, but rather the hypothetical circumstances, situations, and roles they embodied during focus groups. Whilst acknowledgment of identity and difference through the practice of reflexivity is a core ethnographic tenet (Young 1990), integration of an intersectional lens emphasises the role that social work values and practice had on the delivery and analysis of these focus groups. By giving voice to these young people, their experiences challenged marginalisation, gendered stereotypes and neoliberalist approaches to working with young people. Therefore, groups were defined by an ethos of social justice, not risk management.

For example, the focus group-based activity provided young people with structure to explore reflective questions (e.g., “What do you want the world to know about you?”) whilst inviting creative license to guide their communication process (Punch 2002). This approach inverted the power balance inherent between young people and researcher common in research with young people (Punch 2002). This was evident, for example, in the willingness for the young people to voice their discomfort whilst taking a photo or speaking about themselves in group discussion. Broadening the types of communication mediums for self-articulation (i.e. photography, drawing, text, colour, imagery, verbal speech) imposed personal

responsibility to communicate their persona in the most precise and comfortable narrative. Thus, such an activity created an environment of shared experiences (paralleling social neoliberal free market engagement) achieved through personal reflexivity (paralleling life-skill developed) through a means of thwarting stigma (in comparison to competition demands of sport).

While the creative arts-based focus groups were largely successful, limitations and concerns are worth noting if replicated in future studies. Firstly, the focus groups were held towards the end of the fieldwork process. This was primarily due to challenges regarding scheduling, unexpected school closures, and absences at the field site. Engagement may have been more effective if held at multiple time points throughout the study period, as the arts provided a new and exciting alternative to the otherwise expected sport activities. Additionally, these activities generated a significant amount of data, resulting in immense burden to analyse responses, compose follow-up questions, and address group discussion questions. While I recommend introducing groups closer to the programme midpoint, the success of focus groups depends on young people having ample time for rapport-building, re-negotiation of consent, and opportunities to discuss the focus group process.

A second limitation was the varied levels of engagement in each of the aspects of this creative process. Some girls sparsely contributed to conversation, whilst others were apprehensive towards adding anything to their player cards. Feedback revealed that a small number of the girls viewed the activity to be ‘compulsory’, as if it were an assignment to be completed in class time. This misconception could have been addressed through more thoughtful pre-group conversations to emphasise the role of personal choice embedded into our understandings of what consent for participation entailed. Others felt discomfort in sharing intimate details of their lives and/or taking a photograph of themselves in front of their peers. This prompted two potential alternate avenues for conducting this type of research, 1) an option for one-on-one interviews for young people who felt a level of discomfort in the group setting, and 2) offering a private option in the hallway, or on a different day to take individual

photos. However, this emphasises that there is no ‘right’ way to engage in PVM with young people, rather, it highlights the necessity for acknowledging and understanding the individual needs of young people throughout the research process.

Disconnect between perceptions and experiences

Another research aim of this thesis was to investigate the relationship between sporting identities and habitus. This examination uncovers the somewhat straightforward yet often overlooked bias associated with programme intervention: the perceptions of both those who run and participate in SBIs shape the collective shared experiences of all. In other words, the perceptions of the many manifest the reality of the whole. For Aspire’s SBI design, this presents when evaluating notions of ‘risk’ and its effects on both the design and delivery of program aims by coaches and the openness and life-skill development of young people.

In the context of programme delivery, SBI coaches introduce personal perceptions through the ‘coaching habitus’ when designing player development and practice sessions (Jones et al. 2004; Light and Evans 2015; Taylor and Garratt 2010). Coaches hold a significant role in the delivery of SBIs (Allen and Cronin 2015), supporting the realisation of desired programme outcomes, and the cultivation of motivational climates and interpersonal relationships (Bailey and Dismore 2004). Therefore, inclusion of formal one-on-one interviews with adult coaches was essential in gathering additional information on the life experiences and philosophies that became embedded within program design and structure. While this study focused on the lived experiences of young girls, the Aspire program indirectly drives youths’ lived experiences from the perspectives and lived experiences of coaches.

Most important in these interviews was the rhetoric that pervaded programme language and thus perceived notions of riskiness among young people. All coaches expressed a steadfast commitment to the documented programme purpose: Aspire mitigates the risk that young people present to themselves, their communities, and

wider society. This clarity on a unified perspective – sport as a tool to alleviate the riskiness of youth behaviours – imposed Aspire as a needs-based intervention, not an instituted leisure activity. This was further reinforced by critically analysing the program’s mission statement, ‘person first, player second’, which was commonly summarized by coaches as a ‘better person’ ethos. Such a dominant ideology imposes that young people *must* engage in LSBE interventions *because* they lack skills necessary to participate in the knowledge economy (Jarvie 2008). Thus, coaches’ educational philosophies towards youth education embedded a ‘better people’ habitus aimed at ‘escaping’ the risk-laden realities that brought youths into the programme.

Interestingly, the ethos associated with coaches’ perspectives aligns with dominant social neoliberal ideologies that value competition, skill-development, and productivity to overcome ‘risk’, broadly speculated as unskilled or inefficient youth development. This perspective is easily understood, as coaches’ personal experiences with sport are rooted in the social neoliberal ideologies of SBIs or recreational sport teams they engaged in as youths. Fieldwork interviews reaffirmed this alignment between coaches’ sporting identities and their influence on the sporting habitus, as sport provided their pathway to higher education, engagement in a skilled labour market, promotion towards excellence in skill development, and the discipline and achievement to train youths into accomplished footballers. This perpetuated the neoliberal notion that these ‘at-risk’ girls required intervention to be successful later in life through normative pathways to post-secondary education and the labour market (Jarvie 2008). Therein lies the paradox between coaches’ experiences and perceptions: in developing a coaching habitus paralleling their personal experiences and antiquated social neoliberal ideologies, coaches inadvertently impose, not remove, these same ideologies on the youth they teach and more deeply embed notions of ‘risk’ within life skill trainings.

In contrast to coaches, findings showed that young people neither had preconceived notions of Aspire’s intended intervention goals nor viewed themselves as an ‘at-risk’

group. Instead, young people possessed various opinions regarding their programme involvement, ranging from 'sporty' identities driven by technical football skill development to 'non-sporty' identities seeking leisure, community engagement, and socialization. Thus, their sporting identity defined both their perception of the role of sport in their programme involvement as well as the collective sport habitus fostered by all young peoples' experiences (Brewer et al. 1993).

These varied sporting identities that the girls carried into the programme influenced how they perceived, and ultimately questioned, Aspire's purpose, precipitating in the labelling of 'others'. For those identifying as 'sporty', the aspiration to develop football skills introduced bias towards 'non-sporty' girls. Likewise, the aspiration of 'non-sporty' girls to make friends, socialise, and engage in fun, interactive activities outside of their normal classes, introduced stigma towards 'sporty' girls. Yet, for both groups, the introduction of labelling and othering highlights the underlying purpose desired by these young girls: to develop a community enriched by shared lived experiences. Without clarity on programme aims for the young people whilst surrounded by the constant coaching rhetoric of 'at-risk' behaviours, both 'sporty' and 'non-sporty' girls viewed their counterparts as non-competitive, unskilled, or inefficient with respect to their perceptions of the programme aims. Therein lies the paradox between girls' perceptions and experiences: by perceiving those outside their sporting identity as others, girls inadvertently labelled their counterpart as others, fostering animosity, stigma, and competition that potentially promotes further risk behaviour later in life rather than community, camaraderie, and understanding desired for Aspire's programme outcome.

Furthermore, Wright and Lavery (2010) attest that young people with a predisposition to a 'strong' sporting habitus will already possess a strong sporting identity and will be more inclined to participate in sport. SBIs utilising a LBSE model, like Aspire, therefore inherently ostracises and stigmatises those of a 'non-sporty' identity, who provide a negative feedback loop to 'sporty' youths seeking footballer skill development (Wright and Lavery 2010). This again aligns closely

with social neoliberalist undertones, reinforcing rather than challenging dominant ideals of competition, skilled and efficient labour, and personal independence. This is particularly troubling as girls in sport already face pressures of gender-based stereotypes in sport that support neoliberal ideals, namely that football is ‘too competitive’ or requires ‘too much physical skill’ (Coalter 2007). However, the rapid rise and growth of women’s football in the past decade has challenged these assumptions. The professionalisation and expansion of opportunities to work and participate in the male-dominated industry of football has contributed to the normalisation and acceptance of ‘masculine’ ways of being (Culvin 2021). Considering the recent explosion of the professional game, England’s success at the Women’s European Championships in 2022 and Scotland’s qualification for the 2023 Women’s World Cup Play-offs, the changing nature of gendered sporting subjectivities and practices should remain a focal point in future inquiries.

Overall, study findings highlight the importance of unpacking the ‘risk’ labelling that is pervasive in our contemporary, neoliberal society (Ferguson 2000; Sjöström 2017). This holds relevance within social work practice due to ‘...social work’s increasing obsession(s) with risk(s)’ (Parton 2002, p. 98). As neoliberal conditions have created welfare systems that have become increasingly punitive and regulated (Peck 2003), social workers have been tasked with the prediction and management of risk in ‘at-risk’ individuals (Rose 2000). Therefore, this thesis demonstrates the importance of unpacking dominant risk rhetoric and practices to, ‘...pose questions about who benefits from these ideologies and which aspects of reality are being ignored’ (Rose 2000, p. 3). These aspects of reality are uncovered by looking more closely at the role of risk, gender, and the interaction between sporting identities and sporting habitus in the lived experiences of the young people.

Within the context of ‘sport-for-all’ and increased focus on bolstering participation rates of ‘at-risk’ girls through engagement in SBIs, considerations should be made for future studies. To deliver more intentional and appropriate programming that suits the diverse, individualised identities of at-risk girls, a wider understanding of

various needs and interests of contemporary girls are needed. Use of Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* can be useful in understanding how sporting identities are formed over time, which could inform the lived experience of participating in SBIs and sport generally. The contributions provided by unpacking the relationship of identity, habitus, and lived experience fosters a call for continued in-depth, qualitative research that places the voices and experiences of girls at the forefront to unpack the role of 'risk' in SBI policy and practice. However, such research must also recognise that no SBI is without the social awkwardness and judgments that young people inherently impose on one another. Thus, while programmes can create an environment fostering respect of individual perceptions, beliefs, and experiences, young persons' sporting identities will always positively and/or negatively influence the collective sporting habitus of all participants. Inherently, 'othering' will occur, but researchers, coaches and SBIs must work particularly hard to minimise this labelling while delivering SBI-related activities.

Safe spaces, the gendered body and sporting bodies

In the process of developing life skills, Aspire institutes a 'team'-forward approach to foster a 'safe space' for young people to experience 'being-in-the-world' (Merleau-Ponty 1962). As noted earlier, this notion of shared responsibility and participation in the knowledge economy is tied deeply to social neoliberal ideologies. However, these beliefs also align closely with the feminist tradition, or the development of a safe space to provide physical and affective protection. As an exclusively female program arm, Aspire's young girls were connected as a 'team' contributing to the formation of individual and group gender-based identities. Due to the risk-laden nature of the local community that served CHS and the dominant discourses that shaped their experiences, young girls viewed Aspire as an 'escape' from the gender-based stereotypes, anxieties, and uncertainties of their everyday lives. Arguably, construction of this safe space helped create an environment in which the young people were able to negotiate the complicated discourses that underpinned their lived experience of participating in a traditionally 'masculine' sport in a classed and gendered body.

While many LSBE programmes delivered using SBIs focus on ‘at-risk’ young people, the lack of prior literature on young girls demonstrates the limited attention to interactions between sport and the gendered body. While not an intended focal point of this study, my findings demonstrated that aspects of participation in sport among young girls overlooked and often neglected how young girls perceived femininity and contemporary girlhood. By qualitatively collecting lived experiences, this study illuminated young girls’ challenges with understanding gendered aspects of participation and construction of a gender identity in a predominantly masculine footballing environment. The integration of Bourdieu’s concepts helped to analyse the ways in which gendered and class-based stereotypes and assumptions affected the lived experience of the girls in Aspire. Through Bourdieu’s (1984) concepts of *habitus*, *field*, and *capital*, I was able to establish an understanding of how the gendered sporting habitus (Metcalf 2018; 2019) was formed and experienced in the programme.

This gendered sporting habitus challenged traditional social neoliberal constructs on the ‘ways-of-being’ in society, and to a lesser degree, a predominantly masculine football environment (Metcalf 2018; 2019). As active agents in the navigation of their own experiences of ‘doing gender’ (West and Zimmerman 1987), the Aspire participants were able to challenge dominant gender-based representations and assumptions as ‘menstruating,’ ‘sweaty,’ and ‘active’ beings. It was determined that there were many instances in which the Aspire girls challenged the taken-for-granted assumptions and dispositions that historically have marginalised and actively excluded women and girls from sport (Hargreaves 1996). For example, the Aspire girls rejected traditional notions that a football team should wear a specific type of kit and footwear. Despite a lack of access to football boots and suitably fit kit, the Aspire group found meaning in the clothing that the group most often wore to sessions (school uniforms). Interestingly, even though hundreds of other students were simultaneously wearing the same attire, the girls distinguished themselves symbolically through this ‘team’ identity. Additionally, girls frequently challenged

dominant perception that girls “can’t play with the boys.” Alongside this imposition into a historically male-dominated space, girls were forced to navigate the challenges related to long-standing assumptions, such as that girls that participate in aesthetic sports (dancing) represented idealised athletic forms. Additionally, girls unveiled insight into the gendered barriers to participation that have historically been considered ‘taboo’ like menstruation and the emergence of breasts. These novel insights provide support for the ways in which this research has emphasised the importance of gaining a deeper understanding into the ways in which girls and women experience sport in contemporary society.

As with notions of ‘at risk’ or deviance between sporting identities and habitus, girls’ ability to share lived experiences of girlhood and femininity permitted their comfort, willingness, and camaraderie in defining a collective ‘team’ experience. Once again, the reflexivity permitted through ethnographic examination of lived experiences permitted girls to deconstruct, question, and even reconfigure normative assumptions of ‘youth-as-risk’ as it related to gendered subjectivities and power inequalities. Engagement in conversations from the challenges of menstruation during physical activity to the acceptance of an active body helped foster a shared space of girls, by girls. This served to empower and reaffirm notions of contemporary girlhood while demonstrating its belonging in a traditionally masculine sport like football. Continued engagement in this practice can elicit meaningful changes in settings where girls engage in sport and physical activity while challenging and contextualising archaic sociohistorical and socio-political contexts of feminism.

Thus, greater attention must be given to the value of girls-only SBI programmatic designs for its importance in reflection and deconstruction of normative assumptions surrounding risk, girlhood, and girls that participate in sport. However, to achieve this, programmes must be delivered for young people based on their current needs and contemporary challenges presented with aging. This includes prominent issues of girlhood including gender-based stigmas and social pressures in traditionally

masculine sport, the developing body, peer relationships through womanhood, education on breast health and appropriate sportswear, and navigating menstruation with an active body. Failure to do so establishes dissonance between popular conceptions of ‘life skills’ and the actual needs of contemporary ‘future girls’ (Azzarito 2010). Only then can programs like Aspire effectively align with feminist values to ‘re-situate those residing in the margins, bringing them into the centre of knowledge produced about (by) them’ (Harding 2020, n.p.). By placing the voices and experiences of the 22 girls participating in this study at the centre of this research, this study aimed to foster positive change for all girls participating in sport (Stanley and Wise 1993).

Recommendations and future directions

My years of experience as a social worker (in sport and youth settings), a sports coach, and as a coordinator for sports-based youth development programmes led to the development of a deep bank of existing knowledge related to the ‘best practices’ of the delivery of sports-based interventions. However, at the start of my PhD, I found myself questioning the true efficacy of these best practices, and ultimately, SBIs in general. To address these concerns, I felt strongly that engagement in research grounded in the voices of the young people themselves could offer the answers that I was seeking. Given that few studies utilise qualitative or ethnographic designs, my research demonstrates the importance of granting young people the opportunity to explore, challenge, and re(construct) their notions of self, risk, gender, sport, life skills.

Future study directions are informed by the limitations and concerns faced in the execution of this study. Firstly, this research targeted only one girl cohort of Aspire across one-year, greatly minimising the duration of the lived experience tracked within the population of these young people. This restriction reflects challenges with the nature of ethnographic, and more broadly qualitative, study designs: the recording, interpreting, and analysing of lived experiences produces a large quantity of data that is time-intensive to analyse and report on. This emphasises the

importance of government funded or private sector support to support such interventions and the social workers facilitating programme activities. The creation of standardised activities for quarterly or semesterly curricula plans can help develop structured templates for facilitating this data collection. Furthermore, structured lessons can help young people develop their personal knowledge economy by building connections between sequential reflexive activities, thereby growing and reaffirming their personal identities simultaneously.

A second limitation of this study was its inability to examine and compare boys-only, girls-only, and/or mixed boys/girls programming. Future studies should consider how notions of risk, gender, sport, and social ideologies change as the sporting identities differ within each programme's sporting habitus. Such future research can uncover ways in which these demographic differences shape the lived experiences of young people and modify their development of life skills. Furthermore, a broader demographic scope can better contextualise how programme policies and pedagogical principles influence pre-conceived notions of risk and their alignment with social neoliberal ideals. By only targeting Aspire, this study is subject to limited generalisability to areas beyond the Scottish Lowlands or guided by different programmatic designs. However, as little research has been conducted using lived experiences of young girls, this field site was an intentional methodological choice explore poorly theorised aspects of the 'risky,' classed, and gendered experience of participation in a SBI.

The final study limitation was the timing of termination, formal interviews, and focus groups. Due to unforeseen circumstances, interviews with coaches and focus group activities with young people occurred just weeks prior to the end of the school term. This led to a lack of opportunity to engage in follow-up interviews to ask for clarification and additional insight. Additionally, this timing meant that I had to engage in the processes of termination alongside these formal interviews and focus groups. The shortened process of program termination threatened to interrupt or detract from the formal interviews and focus groups. Future studies should compare

timelines of programme delivery with academic calendars to ensure adequate time spent collecting end-of-study data with the young people. Though challenging, overlap in program termination, formal intervals, and focus groups proved beneficial, as it inadvertently ensured uninterrupted access to all participants involved in this study. This afforded physical and affective space that allowed for engaging and deliberate discussion with young people.

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Appendix 1. Consent form for young people & parents/guardians



PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM Players & Parents/Guardians

I have read the Research Information Sheet.

The purpose and details of this study have been explained to me and I have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I consent to audio recording of observations.

I understand that all the information I provide will be treated in confidence and will be kept anonymous. I understand that my name will not be used in any reports.

My involvement in this research project is entirely voluntary and I understand that I have a right to withdraw at any time.

I agree to participate in this project.

Signature of Research Participant _____

Date _____

Name _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian of Participant _____

Date _____

Name _____

Appendix 2. Consent form for coaches



PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM Coaches

I have read the Research Information Sheet.

The purpose and details of this study have been explained to me and I have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I consent to audio recording of a formal interview and work being observed.

I understand that all the information I provide will be treated in confidence and will be kept anonymous. I understand that my name will not be used in any reports.

My involvement in this research project is entirely voluntary and I understand that I have a right to withdraw at any time.

I agree to participate in this project.

Signature of Research Participant _____

Date _____

Name _____

Appendix 3. Fieldwork information sheet for young people



CHELSEA RAYMOND

PHD STUDENT

✉ C.A.RAYMOND1@STIR.AC.UK

📍 UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING

WHO AM I?

I am a PhD student at the University of Stirling.

I started playing football when I was around your age and now I play for the uni! #BleedGreen

I was born & raised in America and my favourite footballer is fellow center mid, Carli Lloyd.



THE DETAILS

From October to June, I'll be at all your football sessions observing and talking with you, your teammates, and your coaches.

Everything you say will be kept confidential, which means that your name will not be on anything I share from my project. Although there are a few instances in which I have to break this confidentiality and that is if I think you might be at risk of harm, harming someone else, or harming yourself. This is so we can make sure you are safe, healthy, and not in harms way.

WHAT IS MY PROJECT?

I'll be coming to your Girl's Aspire site to observe your football sessions, chat with you and ask you questions about yourself and your footballing, and to do a fun, creative project with you!

The goal of my project is to learn more about who you are and what football means to you. I want to learn more about how programs like Girl's Aspire help young people that may be going through a difficult time in their life. After my time with your group, I will share my findings with the Scottish FA and hopefully raise awareness of women's & girls football in Scotland.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO?

Share the information sheets and consent forms with your parent/guardian.

Make sure you both sign the form if you want to participate in the project and return it to myself or your coach at our informational meeting on (30 October, 3:20PM, PE Hub).

It's ok if you do not want to participate or if you have any questions or concerns. Please ask me or speak to me about these concerns at the information meeting or send me an email!

Appendix 4. Research information sheet for parents/guardians

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am a PhD student in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Stirling conducting a study on young female footballers. I would like to invite your child to participate in my study.

The primary goal of this research project is to learn more about the experience of being a young female footballer in Scotland. I am particularly interested in how and if recreational sport can help children cope with the difficult circumstances they may face. I hope to understand the importance of and how relationships between coaches and athletes evolve over a year of participation in Girl's Aspire. This research aims to raise awareness of the girls and women's game in Scotland and will report on the experience of young recreational female footballers.

This Girl's Aspire site has been chosen for participation in this research project. I hope to spend 10 months at this site, from August 2018 to June 2019. During football sessions, I will be observing the coaches and children in order to learn more about the day-to-day experiences of a Girl's Aspire participant. With participation in this research project, your child will be asked to participate in informal conversations and in a group activity where we will do a fun creative project. In this group activity, the interview will be audio recorded. All identifying information will be redacted and audio files will be deleted following completion of my analysis. Your child's involvement in this study is entirely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw consent at any time. Consent will be an on-going process and can be renegotiated at any time during the study. Throughout the study, participants will be reminded of the purpose of the study and consent will be discussed again prior to any formal interviews. You and your child may withdraw from this study up until one month following the completion of data collection (estimated July 2019).

General consent for this Girl's Aspire has been given by the Scottish FA and your local council. Your child's participation is confidential and she will not be named in any documentation or published results. Her anonymity will be assured through the use of a randomly assigned code as a means of identification in written reports and transcriptions. Data will be viewed by the researcher and her supervisors only and be kept in a secure location at all times. Following my time at your site, I will be analysing data and writing up my final report on this research. Following completion of my report (estimated Summer 2020), I will be holding a follow-up meeting to share my findings with you if you wish to see the results.

I will be holding an informational meeting at Central HS on 30 October at 3:20PM to discuss my project and to answer any questions or concerns you or your child may have. I look forward to meeting you and your child.

Contact:

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this project, please contact the researcher, Chelsea Raymond (email: c.a.raymond1@stir.ac.uk). She has completed a PVG check with the Scottish FA. The data collected will only be used to complete the researcher's thesis and publications for a PhD at the University of Stirling. Her work is supervised by Dr. Ruth Emond & Dr. Sandra Engstrom at the University of Stirling. Her work has been approved by Paul McNeill at the Scottish FA and be contacted at Paul.Mcneill@scottishfa.co.uk.

Appendix 5. Research information sheet for coaches



RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET

Dear Coach,

I am a PhD student in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Stirling conducting a study on young female footballers. I would like to invite you to participate in my study.

The primary goal of this research project is to learn more about the experience of being a young female footballer in Scotland. I am particularly interested in how and if recreational sport can help children cope with the difficult circumstances they may face. I hope to understand the importance of and how relationships between coaches and athletes evolve over a year of participation in Girl's Aspire. This research aims to raise awareness of the girls and women's game in Scotland and will report on the experience of young recreational female footballers.

This Girl's Aspire site has been chosen for light participation in this research project. You have been asked to participate in a formal interview to discuss your Aspire site and your involvement in the programme. Your involvement in this study is entirely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw consent at any time.

General consent for this Girl's Aspire has been given by the Scottish FA and your local council. Your participation is confidential and you will not be named in any documentation or published results. Data will be viewed by the researcher and her supervisors only and be kept in a secure location at all times. Following my time at your site, I will be analysing data and writing up my final report on this research. Following completion of my report (estimated Summer 2020), I will be holding a follow-up meeting to share my findings with you if you wish to see the results.

Contact:

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this project, please contact the researcher, Chelsea Raymond (email: c.a.raymond1@stir.ac.uk). She has completed a PVG check with the Scottish FA. The data collected will only be used to complete the researcher's thesis and publications for a PhD at the University of Stirling. Her work is supervised by Dr. Ruth Emond & Dr. Sandra Engstrom at the University of Stirling.

Appendix 6. Interview guide for focus groups with young people

PART 1: Consent & Description of Activity

Hi girls, thank you for being here today. As I told you last week, today we will be doing a creative activity where we will make player cards and then we will have the chance to share with one another what we have created. The reason that we are doing this activity is so that I can learn more about each of you, what football and Aspire means to you, and to give you the chance to express yourself in a creative way. I decided to focus on Aspire and your group because I think you all have a lot of experiences, opinions, and things to share.

Before we started, I just wanted to remind you guys that everything you say or create in this session is confidential. Can anyone remind us what confidential means? (Create shared consensus via discussion) I also want to remind you that I will be recording the session using this (show the recorder). I will be recording this so that I do not miss any of the things that you share. Is that alright with everyone?

PART 2: Creative Activity

Let's move on to the activity now.

(I'll distribute the player photos, example player cards, and supplies)

There is no right or wrong way to make your player card, and you do not have to make it look like the example cards I've provided. I want you to be as creative as you like in how you express yourself through these cards. I expect that everyone will include different things, colors, and decorations. You can use anything on the table to make your cards. I'll give you 30 minutes to make them. During that time, I'll be walking around and might ask you some questions about what you are making. Does anyone have any questions about what we are doing?

During creation of the player cards, I will walk around and engage with the girls. Examples of guiding/exploratory questions that could be used:

- What do you want the world to know about you?
- When did you first become interested in football?
- When did you start playing football?
- What is your favorite part about Aspire?
- What is your least favorite part about Aspire?
- Do you have a favorite player/position/team?
- How do you feel when you play football? When you are in Aspire?

Examples of exploratory questions:

- Why did you choose those colors/aspects to include?
- What does this mean?
- What was your thinking behind this?

PART 3: Group Discussion

I know some of you might not be done with your cards, and that is alright. Can you bring what you have made and your chairs over so we can sit in a circle and have a discussion about our cards?

(Wait for them to make a circle with their chairs)

Great, before we begin talking, I just want to remind you of our definition of confidentiality that we established at the beginning of the activity. Can anyone remind us what that means?

Reminder that there was no right or wrong way to create your cards. I encourage you to share your cards, experiences, and opinions even if it is the same or different from other people. Even though we're in school right now, this discussion is going to be different than how you probably have group discussions in class time. If you want to comment on something someone has said, want to agree or disagree, or ask them questions, feel free. Does anyone have any questions before we start?

Any volunteers to go first?

Can you describe and share your player card with the group?

Are there any specific parts of your card that you would like to share with the group?

PART 4: Closing

- Thank girls for participating and being honest and open
- Review some of the main points
- Anyone have anything else to add?
- End group

Appendix 7. Interview guide for interviews with coaches

PART 1: Introduction

Hi (Coach), as you know I am doing a PhD at the University of Stirling. Thank you again for working with me throughout this past year and for agreeing to do this interview. As a reminder, the goal of my research is to learn more about the experience of being a young female footballer in Scotland. I am particularly interested in how and if recreational sport and Aspire specifically, helps (or does not help) children cope with the difficult circumstances they may face. I hope to understand the importance of and how relationships between coaches and athletes evolve through participation in the Girl's Aspire.

Before we begin, I would like to remind you that this interview is confidential and any identifiable information will be removed. I also want to remind you that this interview will be audio recorded and I would like to reconfirm your consent for that? And your consent to participate in this interview?

Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin?

PART 2: Interview

1. Can you describe a typical day at Aspire?
2. The SFA lists these things as goals of participation in the Aspire. Can you rank these in order of priority for you? I have also included some extra cards, if you would like to add any other things that may not be included in this list.
 - a. Respect
 - b. Teamwork
 - c. Football skill development (Technical)
 - d. Football skill development (Tactical)
 - e. Physical skills
 - f. Mental skills
 - g. Development of friendships
3. What does 'Person First, Player Second' mean to you?
4. As you know, I've been doing observations here for the past six months, here are some things that I have observed. Are these things that you see happening in your program? These are things I see, what do you see? (Share index cards)

Coaching

1. Can you describe your role as coach in Aspire?
2. What abilities/capabilities do you think a successful coach should possess? What about successful in the context of Aspire?

Culture/Relationships

1. What kind of culture do you hope to develop in Aspire? What does culture mean to you?
2. Can you describe some of the routines that have been established in your program?

PART 3: Closing

I'm just cognizant of the time we have left and I want to give you the opportunity to use this time to share any additional comments that you may have in regards to your Aspire experience.

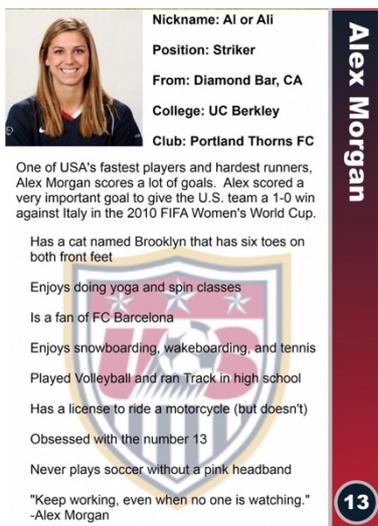
Thank you for your time and again for your honesty and participation. Going forward, I hope to finish analysing and writing up my findings by 2020 and I would be more than happy to share those with you. Again thank you so much for your time, it is much appreciated.

Appendix 8. Information sheet for focus groups with young people

ASPIRE Player Cards

Next week you will be participating in a group interview and activity with Chelsea. You may have seen these sticker books and packs of football cards at the store recently for the Women's World Cup in France this summer. To celebrate that the Scotland Women's National Team will be playing in their first World Cup, we will make our very own Aspire player cards!

Player cards are meant to give fans a quick snapshot of who you are on and off the pitch. There are loads of ways that you can design your card and I encourage you to be creative in what you include and how you design it! There is no right or wrong way to create your card. I want you to think about what sorts of things you would like the world to know about you, your favourite things, and about what Aspire means to you. Here are some to examples to help you think of ideas before we meet!



Nickname: Al or Ali
Position: Striker
From: Diamond Bar, CA
College: UC Berkley
Club: Portland Thorns FC

One of USA's fastest players and hardest runners, Alex Morgan scores a lot of goals. Alex scored a very important goal to give the U.S. team a 1-0 win against Italy in the 2010 FIFA Women's World Cup.

Has a cat named Brooklyn that has six toes on both front feet

Enjoys doing yoga and spin classes

Is a fan of FC Barcelona

Enjoys snowboarding, wakeboarding, and tennis

Played Volleyball and ran Track in high school

Has a license to ride a motorcycle (but doesn't)

Obsessed with the number 13

Never plays soccer without a pink headband

"Keep working, even when no one is watching."
-Alex Morgan

Alex Morgan

13



After we create our cards, we will have a group discussion about our cards and our experience in Aspire. This will be a chance for you to share all about your experience! Make sure to bring all your questions and ideas to the activity – Chelsea will be happy to answer all your questions and help you make your cards!

Appendix 9. Supplement for focus groups with young people

Player Card Activity

What do you want the world to know about you?

Some ideas for things you might want to include in your card:

- A nickname (if you have one)
- Age
- Where are you from?
- Favourites
 - Football-related things: player, team, position, country?
 - Hobbies
 - TV Show
 - Song
 - Singer/Group
 - Thing about yourself
 - Food
 - Animal
 - Aspire memory
- Fun facts about yourself
- What is your favorite thing about yourself?
- What is a proud accomplishment of yours?
- What are your goals for the future?
- What is the best part of Aspire?
- What is the best part of the Lowlands? CHS?
- What is one thing you like about playing football?

- How important is football to you?
- Who are your friends?
- What do you want to be when you grow up?
- Who are your role models?



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Utah Royals FC (USA)

