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Sport, Power and Politics: Exploring sport and social control within the changing context of modernity

Abstract

The focus of this paper charts sports role within the broader framework of exercising power and enforcing social control. From the start, I undertake a socio-historical analysis that seeks to explore the changing methods of implementing power and how they have evolved from industrial times to service a postindustrial setting. Through this prism, I examine sport, both as a central part of culture and as a policy area within post-war Britain. The contours of which, help the paper articulate the different roles sports policy has played within production and consumer-based societies, by exploring its metamorphosis from an area of social policy designed to instil discipline and set behaviours through a panoptic approach to governing. To now, becoming a central area of a modernised policy framework, built around the seductive workings of synopticism. Here, it is examined how elite sporting role models and the international success they accrue, are now used as sites of inspiration to motivate ordinary members of the public to be physically active. The contours of which, conform to a very different method of controlling populations and enforcing power from what has been experienced previously.

Keywords: Panopticism, Politics, Modernity, Synopticism, Social Control

Introduction

The changing landscape of sports policy has been the subject of insightful academic debate over the last twenty years (see: Green, 2004; Green 2009; Grix and Carmicheal, 2012; Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013). For the most part, these deliberations have centred on recording shifts in government policy, most notably by monitoring the rise of political interest in elite sport and the emphasis placed on achieving success on the international stage (Bramham, 2008; Oakley and Green, 2001). In this article, I seek to chart the social and political context behind this policy trajectory, by exploring the intricate relationship between sport and the techniques involved with implementing power and enforcing social control. To do this, I outline the changes that have occurred within the social context of modernity since the late 1980s to provide an insight into the relationship between sport and broader discussions pertaining to the changing dynamics of how power is ratified within post-industrial societies.

To fully explain this transition in the context of society, the evolving techniques involved in exercising power and sports broader role in this relationship. I use the philosophical intuitions developed within the writings of contemporary social and political theorists to chart the changing contextual realities of advanced industrial nations and the resulting oscillations in how power operates within such societies. These insights lead me to examine the different techniques used to exercise power within production-based economies and assess how these have since evolved to service consumer-orientated ones (Bauman, 2000). To better articulate, this transition in the techniques associated with ascribing power, I introduce the concepts of panoptic and synoptic control to demonstrate these differences. An approach that goes beyond existing commentaries based on the premise of policy analysis, by instead looking at how such policies represent a modification in the implementation of power, inherent within broader society.

To this end, I argue how these systems of enforcing power, have throughout the last quarter of a century, changed radically, from a panoptic method, used within production based societies to instil discipline psychologically through the spectre of the few (i.e. administrators within state institutions), watching the actions of the many. To a new system, based around the workings of the synopticon. A method of control that represents a bottom-up approach to enforcing power, whereby governments seek to cajole citizens through a process of seduction implemented through the auspices of consumerism. This approach, in turn, has led to a situation where individuals are encouraged to reflexively manage their life projects by acting on information and watching the actions of celebrity role models from the world of sport and beyond. It is hoped that the application of these theoretical ideas can help demonstrate how broader societal changes in the implementation of enforcing social control have led to a reconfiguration of sports use within policy circles.

Before continuing, it is important to state that the examples provided in this discussion focus on policy developments within Britain. The reasons for this stem from the author living and working here and as a result, being more familiar with the political system and the context of sports policy employed by various governments. Despite this, the analysis of other post-industrial countries like Australia, Canada or New Zealand, who have experienced similar social and economic shifts will see similarities with many of the issues covered in the forthcoming pages.

Power and Social Control

Philosophical insights into the implementation of power and its use in orchestrating social control have been the subject of debate ever since Niccolo Machiavelli (2003) exposed the concept as an object of academic 'study' in the sixteenth century. In the intervening years, two prominent yet distinct understandings of power have emerged. The first offered by

Steven Lukes (2005) links power to agency, articulating an environment where individuals try to prevail over one another through various inter-personal interactions. This approach conceptualises power as a distinct object residing in the halls of Palaces or the offices of Parliament, ready to be courted by those who gain access to it. As a result, within this context, power relations in sport can be conceptualised as being wielded entirely on a personal level by the heads of various sporting organisations, coaches, managers and government ministers.

In contrast, the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1970) wrote about power as being a flexible and complex phenomenon to decipher, theorising how 'technologies of power' operate in a manner which for the most part are unseen, except that is, in the effects, they help to bring about. Indeed, this perspective views power as operating in an omnipresent manner, controlling individuals from afar through a technique that Foucault (1991) would later term 'governmentality'. Such a perspective explores how power and the ability to sanction control, are entwined within a 'web of power' built around discourse, a process which helps to control, judge and normalise actions (Foucault, 1970). Through this prism, power "reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives" (Foucault, 1977, p.39). An insight which emphasises how every part of social life, including the cultural sphere of sport, are entwined within the broader techniques of power that helps to control, manipulate and discipline populations from afar.

This understanding of power as a technique inferred onto populations through a series of methods implemented pervasively provides the prism through which I aim to explore sports role in helping to enact and maintain social control. However, to be able to contextualise how these mechanisms of enforcing power change, it is crucial to draw upon Bauman's (1999) assertion that power is inherently linked to culture and therefore open to the

prospect of renovation, a process that he refers to as 'praxis'. Bauman and Haugaard (2008, p.112) explain this situation by asserting how power has undergone a "radical change in the passage from the 'solid' to 'liquid' variety of modernity." A process which in turn has had a transformative influence on the way power is dispersed and exercised within society today. To fully detail how different societal epochs enforce power and sports role in reproducing and replenishing these processes, the discussion now turns to explore sport within the cultural age of modernity.

The Era of Modernity

The period referred to by historians and political scientists as modernity emerged out of 'The Enlightenment' in Western Europe during the mid-eighteenth century[1]. This metamorphosis in the constitution of society brought about substantial changes to culture, governance and most importantly for the focus of this discussion, power. At its core, such change was guided by the principle of reason, based around the prism of rational scientific thought, which had supplanted religion as the guiding authority used to regulate, manage and explain social phenomena (Bauman, 1989). This transition, in turn, led to the emergence of state institutions, such as parliamentary democracy, the rule of law, complex economic systems, and territorial sovereignty in the form of the nation-state (Giddens, 1991; 1998). The emergence of these administrative bureaucracies brought an end to the old Feudal order, which had championed the divine rights of the Monarchy, and which extorted power through primitive, and barbaric acts of violence (Foucault, 1977).

Nevertheless, a significant by-product of this evolution was the increase in the amount of freedom bestowed upon members of the polis, something which saw the breakdown of old securities in the form of community and religious fraternity. The fall out from this

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[1] The exact date reffering to the start of 'The Enlightenment' is debated, however, there is a general consensus that it took place within the mid-eighteenth century.

transformation was documented by the German philosopher Erich Fromm (2001) who interpreted such change as being representative of a form of 'negative freedom', constituting an environment where individuals were beset by a lack of security, causing them to feel uncertain and fearful within the confines of their new found liberty.

To counteract the debilitating effects brought on by the uncertainties of such insecurities the newly forged institutions of the state sought to create, to all intents and purposes, an artificial sense of order. The confines of which were built around scientific classifications, espousing set criteria to divide populations around new stratifications centred on 'race', gender, and social class that set in motion an adherence to behaviours associated with specific cultural scripts. As a result, 'solid' modernity to use Bauman's (1989; 2007) analogy, came to represent a double-edged sword, which on the one hand preached the democratic virtues of liberty and democracy. While conversely, seeking to provide an enduring sense of security through adopting a totalitarian attitude towards the ordering of society. Under such a system power was reformulated to help coerce and manipulate the behaviour of individuals by ordering them around the workings of industrial society (Swain, 2017).

Sport, Modernity and Panopticism

To be able to articulate this transition fully, it is important to engage with Adorno and Horkheimer's (1997) work on the *'Dialectic of Enlightenment'* where this concept is unpacked using the Freudian notion of the 'reality principle'. At its core, this theory explains how industrial society came to symbolise an era of trade-offs, designed to order the world around values and philosophies that helped negate the spectre of ambivalence, and its by-products insecurity and uncertainty by providing institutionally verified blueprints for what was deemed 'appropriate' behaviour. This process, in turn, facilitated a situation whereby

those searching for a sense of security, surrendered their freedoms by conforming to the bureaucratic rationalities offered to them by the institutions of the state. The paradox of which fed a totalitarian undercurrent that Bauman (1991, p.24) describes in the following passage, as a thought process set on:

> Suppressing or exterminating everything ambiguous, everything that sits astride the barricade and thus compromises the vital distinction between inside and outside. Building and keeping order means making friends and fighting enemies. First and foremost, however, it means purging ambivalence.

This determination and political will to order society around a calculative enterprise involved the reformulation of the techniques designed to elicit social control. No longer did the pre-modern acts of cruelty and barbarity suffice, instead a new method of power had to be formulated that was more pervasive and insidious. As a result, this new system of certifying discipline was less violent but more invasive and controlling than anything that had gone before it, with the focus being psychological rather than physical in its application (Adorno, 2001; Bauman, 2005; Foucault, 1991).

The workings of such a system conform to the Foucauldian (1977) concept of panoptic control, based around the British philosopher Jeremy Bentham's writings on the panoptic prison. At its heart, this theory conceptualises how discipline was maintained through the spectre of constant surveillance and the subsequent regulation of behaviour by state institutions. The contours of which manifested themselves through a normalising gaze, that acted as an 'all seeing eye' which left citizens with the impression that their actions were consistently being monitored by a higher authority. Foucault (1977, p.201) explains how this process of constant surveillance helped to induce "a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" onto members of the population.

This process of monitoring, he argued helped the institutions of modernity create a society of 'docile bodies', disciplined to act in a particular way, by conforming to the demands of whatever the institutions of the state chose to legitimise.

The cultural sphere of sport was in no way immune from the workings of the panopticon as it provided fertile soil for the policing of emotions and the regulation of behaviours. Such reasoning stemmed from sports association with leisure, an area of human life associated with individual free will and autonomy, the potential of which, made it a necessary target for the disciplinary mechanisms of the state (Spracklen, 2009; 2011). Adorno's (1998, p.196-197) insight helps build upon this assertion by explaining how sport represented an arena for the promotion and concealment of a variety of emotions:

> On the one hand, it can have an anti-barbaric and anti-sadistic effect by means of *fair play*, a spirit of chivalry, and consideration for the weak. On the other hand, in many of its varieties and practices, it can promote aggression, brutality, and sadism.

Within this context, sport was used as a tool to serve the institutions of modernity by infusing a form of disciplinary power based on 'technologies of dominance'. At their core, these technologies acted as a catalyst for the development of social processes linked to exclusion, classification, individualisation, totalitisation, regulation, normalisation and surveillance (Lang, 2010). Indeed, such techniques manifested themselves within the sphere of sport in a variety of ways, most prominently as a method of internally influencing members of the population by disciplining them into set behaviours.

Here, the work of Clarke and Critcher (1985), as well as Russell (2013), have articulated how sport came to represent the 'opium of the masses', incorporated to distract the working classes from the thought of revolution. Similarly, Kirk (1998) and Hargreaves (1987) have described sports role as a 'technology of surveillance' designed to make the polis

more compliant and productive, training young men and women to perform set tasks in an efficient and orderly manner while following rules. While, scholars writing in the sociology of 'race' and ethnicity, have also pointed to sports association with the ethnocentric project of Empire. An approach that exposes how certain sports were used to facilitate the spread of Eurocentric values to those living in the colonies in the hope of instilling the supposed 'superior' values of 'civilised' Europeans (Fletcher, 2011; Hylton, 2009; Ratna, 2015).

Sports Policy and Panoptic Control in Post-War Britain

Sports role in the mechanics of instigating social control became ever more prominent during its foray into becoming "a legitimate area of public policy" (Bloyce and Smith, 2009, p.29) in the early 1960s. At the centre of this ideology towards sport, and broader public policy, in general, was the covenant that came to be known as the post-war consensus — an approach to governing that set out to navigate a middle-path between the ideologies of libertarian capitalism and scientific communism, which had dominated political thought throughout much of the twentieth century (Bramham, 2008; Bramham and Wagg, 2017). Under this doctrine, the state became a paternal mediator to curb the gross inequalities of unregulated capitalism, while seeking to maintain the democratic virtues of freedom that had been eroded by the dystopian projects of Soviet Communism and Nazism (Bogdaner and Skdelskey, 1970).

The ideology guiding government thinking across both sides of the political spectrum during this time focussed on preserving state-run industry, regulating commerce, following an approach to fiscal policy based around Keynesian economics and promoting state planning in matters relating to social provision in areas such as housing, the arts and recreation (Bramham and Wagg, 2017). This style of government subsequently facilitated a "strategic and planned approach to providing sporting opportunities" (Jackson, 2008, p.28) symbolised

by the stratagem of 'Sport for All'. A series of policies established through the 'Sport and Recreation White Paper' in 1975, as well as previous policy developments such as the creation of the Advisory Sports Council in 1964 and the Home Nations Sports Councils in 1971 (Green, 2004). Together, these ideas brought sports policy to the fore, with both central government and local councils using sport and recreation as a site around which to improve public health, maintain civil order, and increase community cohesion (Houlihan and White, 2002).

Despite this, the ambivalence that characterised the modern epoch, highlighted above, was also in evidence. The work of Houlihan (1997) provides a valuable insight into how this manifested itself on the one hand through the building of 500 new swimming pools and 450 indoor sports halls by local authorities in the 1970s to promote recreational opportunities for the population. However, despite this progressive doctrine, it has also been documented how such an approach to policymaking exposed a more authoritarian side to decision making, that sought to control populations and maintain the sentiments of a social order that privileged specific groups and disadvantaged others (Glyptis, 1989; Henry, 2001; Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013). The crux of this argument centres on the problems inherent with a top-down Weberian approach to bureaucratic decision making that, for the most part, represented a one-way process whereby public administrators sought to provide opportunities for sport and leisure without consulting the communities they served (Bramham and Wagg, 2017). This detachment, in turn, caused sport and leisure provision during this time to lack joined up thinking with external agencies in health and education, as well as ignoring the concerns of marginalised communities within society such as women and ethnic minorities (Hylton, 2013).

The works of Flintoff and Scraton, (2001), Hargreaves, (1986; 2002), and Scraton, (1992; 1994) have highlighted the problems surrounding this overly bureaucratic approach to

formulating policy. Through employing a critical feminist perspective that documents how sport and leisure administration during this time did very little to disrupt the vaunted interests of men, particularly those from the middle-classes who had the financial and cultural resources to access such facilities. At the heart of this critique, is a broader vernacular that seeks to demonstrate the problems inherent with an overly bureaucratic approach to decision making that failed to understand the barriers faced by women at the level of policy delivery. Importantly, these arguments lament a lack of outreach within leisure and recreation services during this time, by exposing the inability of an overly administrative system to listen to the voices of women. The fallout from which highlights how such policies, while cultivating in appearance, did very little to alter the status quo and challenge the power dynamic of sport as a patriarchal space. Again, exposing the disciplinary technique of maintaining cultural attitudes that dissuaded women from entering the realm of sport and leisure, something which demonstrably affected their levels of participation as a consequence.

Similarly, the introduction of 'Action Sport' in 1982, exposed the disciplinary techniques inherent within sport and leisure policy during this period, only this time in relation to the rubric of 'race' and cultural identity. Here, the cultural sphere of sport became a central cog in the policing of Black and Asian communities, particularly in the aftermath of the inner-city rioting, strained community relations, and growing questions relating to Britain's cultural identity that had come to the fore in the early 1980s. At its core, 'Action Sport' represented a policy used by the Thatcher government to plaster over many of the cracks that had begun to emerge within British society (Coalter, Long, and Duffield, 1988). However, as Carrington (2010) and Collins (2016) state, a darker side existed within this policy discourse that centred more on the policing of minority ethnic communities than trying to atone for the structural problems causing such disturbances.

This perspective documents the disciplinary technique of using a cultural resource such as sport to facilitate the creation of an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1991), a prominent tactic used by the Thatcher Government to get migrant communities to assimilate into the 'dominant' culture of the metropole (Gilroy, 2002). The contours of which are explored by Long and Spracklen (2011) through their insight into the disciplinary technique of 'whiteness', a tactic used by policymakers to enlist sport as a vehicle for enforcing 'British' cultural values onto migrant populations. This ethnocentric approach used sport not only as a way of controlling such communities but also as a site around which to test their loyalties, something that was conveyed openly by senior government officials at the time. None more so than the then Conservative Party chairmen Norman Tebbit, who spoke about the need for a 'cricket test' to gauge the loyalty of minority ethnic communities to Britain, particularly in sporting contests against their country of origin (Fletcher, 2011). The fall out from such actions draws comparisons with the ethnocentric workings of Empire discussed previously, in the way that sport was again contrived as a vehicle for disciplining ethnic cultures by pressuring such groups to assimilate into a Eurocentric notion of 'Britishness' through making them aware that their choice of allegiance was being monitored by a higher authority.

It can, therefore, be argued that under the conditions of 'solid' modernity, built on the disciplinary techniques associated with panoptic control, the cultural sphere of sport came to symbolise a site to enforce institutionally verified behaviours onto the population. This perspective exposes modernities preoccupation with ordering society around grand societal designs. The flaws of which, manifested themselves through a top-down, overly bureaucratic approach towards enforcing power and implementing policy both in broader social issues and in the cultural sphere of sport. While it can be argued that specific procedures did exude a cultivating agenda, more often than not, these policies sought to use sport as a site to instil

disciplinary 'techniques' onto the population, in an attempt to rationalise behaviour and stratify social positions. Indeed, it has been evidenced how such techniques conform to the intricate workings of panoptic control in the way sport became a site used by the political elite to regulate and discipline the actions of the many through the spectres of surveillance and instrumental forms of rationality.

Sport, Politics and Power in the Changing Social and Political Context of Modernity

Since the late 1980s, social and political thinkers have written about a shift in the social, cultural and political context of society. These theoretical ideas have presented themselves in various guises, most notably as 'late' modernity (Habermas, 1985); 'reflexive' modernity (Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994) and 'liquid' modernity (Bauman, 2000). While each of these interpretations has its own nuanced opinions about contemporary society, a central tenant behind all of these theoretical ideas has been debates about the changing socio-cultural fabric of modernity. In particular, the widespread effects of Neo-liberal economic policies and the phenomenon of globalisation that has helped to set in motion the freeing of financial capital, populations and cultures to flow across national borders, reducing the power of the nation-state to implement overly autocratic approaches to instigating power in the process (Beck, 1992; 2005). This shift in the context of society, has, in turn, led to a reformulation of the methods used to control populations. The forthcoming pages seek to document the environment under which such change has taken place, as well as, narrate sports role in this new system of enforcing social control.

Bauman's (2000; 2007; 2011) work on the metamorphic changes affecting society is central to understanding reformulations in social policy and broader shifts in how power operates in a world that has transitioned from a state of 'solid' to 'liquid' modernity. At the centre of his theoretical perspective are two political events that occurred during the latter

half of the twentieth century. The first relates to the emergence of the political ideology known as the New Right that was instrumental in guiding Conservative Party policy from the 1980s onwards and in fundamentally setting a new cross-party political consensus manufactured around the auspices of Neo-liberalism. Built upon Friedrich Hayek's (1944) assertion that excessive government intervention stifles individual freedom, instigating a 'road to serfdom' and Milton Friedman's (1992) theory of monetarist economics that called for a reduction in state spending by promoting fiscal liberalism. This ideology became central in bringing about the end to the post-war consensus that had represented political orthodoxy since the end of Second World War, by rolling back the frontiers of the state and imbuing a consumerist mentality shaped around individual decision making and choice.

The other political event to which Bauman (2000) refers to is the collapse of Communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, symbolised by the dismantling of the Berlin wall in 1989. Such an event was imperious in bringing about a decisive end to the century-old debate about which political ideology would prevail as the overarching prism guiding global civilisation, a condition that Fukuyama (1992) famously described as the 'end of history'. Importantly, the fallout from this transformation proved central in exposing a prominent aspect of the human condition, that of freedom. Here, Bauman (1998) through engaging with the work of Isiah Berlin (1969) explains how the fall of the Berlin Wall led to a reinterpretation about what freedom represented, with many on the political Right using Communism's demise to promote their agenda of excessive individualisation over communal solidarity. To put this more lucidly, the symbolic fall of the Berlin wall, represented the final act of 'solid' modernity for Bauman, leaving capitalism unchallenged as the dominant paradigm guiding advanced industrial nations into the epoch of 'liquid' modernity. The consequences of both these events saw a shift towards what Luttwark (2000) has aptly defined as 'turbo-capitalism'. An approach to governing characterised by excessive consumer

freedom that has seen the retreat of the state from peoples daily lives and the emergence of

excessive individualisation (Beck, 1992), leading to individuals plotting their lives through

the procurement of information.

Sports Policy, Neoliberalism and 'Life Politics'

To fully comprehend these seismic shifts in the context of society and their effects

upon sports administration, the paper now turns to discuss how these changes have affected

policy developments in the area of sport. Throughout most of the 1980s, sports policy

remained marginalised under the Thatcher government. However, her removal from office in

1990 saw a sea change in fortunes, due in part to the personal characteristics of her successor,

and former chancellor John Major (Houlihan and White, 2002). While Major's arrival did not

bring about a significant shift in the Conservative Party's broader Neo-liberal ideology, his

"strong personal interest" in sport allowed this area of policy to be of considerable concern

for his government (Coalter, 2007, p.14). Despite this, the political environment that sports

policy found itself navigating in the 1990s was vastly different from that of the 1970s. The

reason behind this shift was the emergence of 'New Public Management' (NPM) (Hood,

1991; Elliasen and Sitter, 2008), an approach to management that sought to inscribe private

sector principles onto the workings of the public sector. At their core, these practices included

the implementation of a host key performance indicators, the prospect of outsourcing

underachieving public sector provision to the private sector through the introduction of

Compulsory Competitive Tendering, and the constant measurement and auditing of

performances on a national scale to highlight areas of underachievement (Houlihan and

Green, 2009).

It was against this backdrop that the 'Modernisation' policies implemented by New

Labour emerged (Houlihan and Lindsay, 2013). Under this rubric, successive Government's

since 1997 have set out to modify and upgrade the principles of NPM. Flynn (2012) and Newman (2002) explain how this shift towards 'Modernisation' represents a new approach towards Governing, guided through the mantra of 'Networked Governance'. At its core, this method promised to instigate the workings of a smarter and more hollowed out state, free from layers of bureaucracy that had characterised previous Governments, particularly those on the political left. An example of this 'modernisation' rhetoric can be seen in the following extract from the policy document *A Sporting Future for All* where it is stipulated that "the success or failure in achieving milestone targets […] will be an important factor in deciding future levels of funding" (DCMS, 2000, p.44).

As a consequence, this approach to governing represents a synthesis built on – joined-up government in regards to cross-departmental working, the establishment of partnerships with organisations in both the private and third sector, evidence-based policy-making based on social impact, and public involvement and consultation in decision making. While, also seeking to maintain "the older NPM-related discourses of managerialism, efficiency, quality and consumerism," which had played a dominant role in the Governments of Thatcher and Major (Green, 2009, p.126). The implementation of such a strategy has seen the emergence of a target driven approach towards sports policy that to all intents and purposes has sought to demonstrate evidence surrounding impact and results to signify the attainment of objectives in regards to participation and elite success (Coalter, 2007; DCMS, 2008; DCMS 2015). A central feature guiding this approach towards public policy has been the ploy of providing citizens with information pertaining to where their money is spent, while also seeking to inform them about which services offer the best returns on their investments. This approach conforms to the broader political agenda of giving citizens the information required to become responsible consumers, allowing them to make informed choices about how to self-manage their lives (Castells, 1996; Richards and Smith, 2004).

The implications of the 'modernisation' agenda within sports policy (Collins, 2008) provides fertile soil for a broader discussion into the changing methods through which governments exercise power and implement social control. A point that Green (2009, p.125) articulates by emphasising how the system of 'networked governance' has sought to create a "state more concerned with 'steering' (guiding, shaping, leading) than 'rowing' (intervening at the level of policy delivery)." An acknowledgement, one could say, to the level of emphasis placed on individual autonomy to make decisions, a process which in turn, links into broader discussions about the implications of excessive individualisation (Bauman, 2012; Beck, 1992) within social and political theory. It is, therefore, important to realise, how such a shift in power exposes how individuals are now encouraged to formulate their life projects, and choices in a manner that no longer revolves around state verified solutions, previously implemented through the disciplinary measures of panoptic control (Giddens and Cassel, 1993). The contours of which, can be narrated through Beck (1992) and Giddens (1998, p.115) perception of 'risk'; as a form of social reflexivity based on "information rather than pre-given modes of conduct". Consequently, in contemporary society individuals are now expected to navigate the social world through independent decision-making, in the hope of successfully managing their biographies by consuming products and services. An undertaking that highlights how policies instigated under the banner of 'modernisation' seek to cajole individuals into exercising their agency, by choosing which sporting and physical activity pursuits to undertake based on the information provided to them.

The Viewer Society, Synoptic Control and the Rise of Elite Sports Policy

To fully illuminate the contours of this new approach to instigating power, the paper uses the example of government investment in elite sport to expose how such policies conform to the workings of synoptic control. Since the publication of the policy document *Sport: Raising the Game* in 1995, successive administrations on both sides of the political spectrum have

committed to investing heavily in elite sport (Green, 2007; Grix, 2009; Houlihan and

Lindsey, 2013). This funding has helped build state of the art facilities and enabled advances

in sports science to support athletes in their quest for glory (Coalter, 2007). Similarly, it has

also been documented how state funds have been directed towards the hosting of

international sporting events such as the London 2012 Olympics (Giulianotti, Armstrong,

Hales and Hobbs, 2015; Rowe, 2012) as well as the Manchester 2002 and Glasgow 2014

Commonwealth Games (Whigham and May, 2017). Such investment has been provided on

the supposed benefits that both the hosting and success accrued from such events can bring.

These claims include the cultural dynamics of 'soft power' that has the potential to provide a

country and host city with positive promotion through excessive global media exposure

(Brannagan and Giulianotti, 2015). The creation of a national feel-good factor brought on by

the achievement of national teams and athletes (Houlihan, 1997), and the promise of

investment in infrastructure projects within host cities and broader regional hubs (Horne and

Manzenreiter, 2006)

However, it is the central policy aim of using elite success to inspire ordinary men and

women into various sports and forms of physical activity (Coalter, 2007) that is of particular

interest to this discussion. The impetus behind this narrative puts forward the view that

international sporting success can "act as a driver for grassroots participation, whereby

sporting heroes inspire participation" (DCMS/Strategy Unit, 2002, p.117). A message that is

repeated unremittingly in government policy documents, and still represents a significant area

of government thinking today, as the following extract reveals:

International and domestic success can inspire some people to consider other forms of

engagement in sport. That might be the young girls that joined their local boxing club

after a visit to their school by Nicola Adams, or the Games Maker from the London

2012 Paralympics who, having got the volunteering bug, now helps out at their local

parkrun or Race for Life. (DCMS, 2015, p.43)

The rationale behind this approach towards using elite sporting success as a catalyst for

encouraging the masses to participate in sport and physical activity is known in academic

circles as the 'virtuous cycle' of sport. A method based around the belief that the secret to

attracting ordinary men and women to become physically active is through providing them

with the role models that can act as an inspiration to help sedentary people take up a sport or

encourage them to start living a healthy lifestyle. The dynamics of which are unpacked by

Grix and Carmicheal (2012, p. 76-77) below:

Elite success on the international stage leads to prestige, and elite sport contributes to a

collective sense of identity; this, then, boosts a greater mass sport participation, leading

to a healthier populace; this, in turn, provides a bigger 'pool' of talent from which to

choose the elite stars of the future and which ensures elite success. The process then

starts over again.

The principles of this approach expose a definitive shift in the context of how the state

implements power to control populations, exposing a transition from a technique built around

the panoptic principle of disciplining bodies through the few sanctioning and controlling the

actions of the many. To a system, that is instead, based on the premise of the many watching

the actions of the few in the hope of picking up information that, in turn, can be used to help

them self-manage their lifestyle.

To fully understand the processes guiding the workings of power and social control

that have manifested themselves within both sport and the broader vestiges of social policy,

the discussion must engage with Bauman's (2000) writings on the 'pleasure principle'. A

concept he uses to reconfigure Freud's understanding of the 'reality principle', introduced

earlier in the discussion via the work of Adorno and Horkheimer to explain the conditions of 'solid' modernity. Here, Bauman articulates how in 'liquid' modernity members of the polis navigate society through consuming rather that through following the rationalities espoused by the institutions of the state. The consequences of which have served to place a greater emphasis on the individual to calculate and reflexively manage their life projects as state verified solutions to social problems are no longer perceived to provide the remedies that they once did. As a result, men and women are now devoid of the behavioural scripts forged by the institutions of the state, as was the case in 'solid' modernity, and as a consequence are now exposed to the prospect of 'negative freedom' (Fromm, 2001) that in turn breeds high levels of anxiety brought on by excessive individualisation. This environment, therefore, constitutes a situation, where citizens are led to believe that:

> Security is disempowering, disabling, breeding the resented'dependency' and
> altogether constraining the human agents' freedom. What this passes over in silence is
> that acrobatics and rope-walking without a safety net are an art few people can master
> and a recipe for disaster for all the rest. Take away security, and freedom is the first
> casualty. (Bauman and Tester, 2001, p.52)

In the area of sport and leisure, this means consistently being aware of new fitness fads, dietary plans, and sporting opportunities that might arise through deciphering information emanating from media platforms and lifestyle experts. The consequences of which, leave individuals in 'liquid' modernity looking to 'role' models, those who can show them the 'correct' path, or provide information on how to deal with a particular issue. This environment chimes with the policy rationale of the 'virtuous cycle of sport' whereby the latest diet plan, sporting activity, or success story promoted by a successful athlete can provide those watching with the information required to inspire or help deal with a particular issue, that in turn can set them on the road to being healthier and more physically active.

The use of elite sporting success as a site around which to provide individuals with information and role models on how to live their lives chimes with the work of the Norwegian Criminologist Thomas Mathiesen (1997) and his concept of 'the viewer society'. At the heart of Mathiesen theory is the belief the intricate workings of panoptic control, built upon Foucault's premise of the few watching the actions of the many, is now redundant. Instead, he argues that a new method of control has emerged, based on a synoptic technique whereby the many are now encouraged to watch the actions of the few (Swain, 2018). Interestingly, this theoretical idea, chimes with the social conditions of 'liquid' modernity and developments within social policy, particularly in the way individuals are now encouraged to look to role models in the form of experts and the information they provide to self-manage their own lives. An insight that correlates with Giddens (1991) assertion that 'experts' and 'expert systems', provide information through which ordinary members of the public can make informed choices through the process of 'life politics'. In the realm of sport, this dynamic correlates with the drive by government to invest in elite sport, by showcasing sporting talent in the hope of providing the 'role' models, complete with the expertise to inspire individuals to participate in sport and as a consequence be physically active. It is through this 'technique' that individuals, ravaged by the insecurity of being forced to make their own lifestyle choices, gravitate towards the sports, activities, consumables and fitness packages endorsed by those successful athletes. The contours of which are described by Bauman (2000, p.30) as constituting a situation, where:

It is now your task to watch the swelling ranks of Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and watch them closely and avidly, in the hope of finding something useful for yourself: an example to imitate or a word of advice about how to cope with your problems, which, like their problems, need to be coped with individually and can be coped with only individually. (Bauman, 2000, p.30)

The significance of this shift in the techniques used to implement power exposes how these two methods differ from one another. In particular, by exposing how the cultural arena of sport no longer represents a site in social life used by state institutions to invasively discipline and order individuals into stratified social positions. But instead, narrates a system where power now pervades itself within sport through the spectre 'precarization' (contingency), whereby members of the public are left to decide on their own how best to manage their life projects through consuming products, in the form of gym memberships, nutritional supplements, or equipment and accessories that help them stay physically active and healthy. It is through this new method that members of the polis are now controlled, due to their need to find security by sifting through information to make the correct decisions regarding their lifestyle. Here, it can be seen how the process of watching elite athletes exposes the influence of contemporary sports policy, by revealing its attempt to cajole members of the public into being physically active. An approach that hinges on providing the sporting 'role' models (celebrities) that can, in turn, provide ordinary men and women with the information, advice, or examples needed to improve their fitness and health.

Different Method, Same Consequences: How the Synopticon Diverts Blame

Before concluding this discussion, it is important to note that despite high levels of government investment in elite sport, the amount of ordinary members of the public participating in sport is still low (Carmicheal, Grix and Marques, 2013). A point, that not only highlights the problems with such a policy but also begs the question, as to why there is so little public outcry at the squandering of taxpayers money, on an approach that has failed to provide significant returns on its investment, and that certain people argue, could be better spent elsewhere? The contours of this question expose the problems inherent, with a policy stance that Beck (2007, p.685) describes as promoting the "impossible task of finding biographical solutions to systematic contradictions." An insight that exposes how the blame

for such sedentary behaviour is insidiously deflected away from the state and onto the shoulders of individuals. The dynamics of which bring into focus another distinct break in the workings of synoptic control, an insight that can be explored in greater depth through engaging with the concept of adiaphorization (Bauman and Lyon, 2013).

Through this concept, Bauman and Lyon (2013) explain how in 'solid' modernity, the disciplinary techniques instigated by state institutions could be implemented because of the distance afforded by the levels of bureaucracy intrinsic within government departments at the time. The contours of which never allowed policymakers to see the full consequences of their actions, as decisions to implement policy fell across various departments, resulting in the lack of a joined-up picture with regards to their outcome. Similarly, this bureaucratic approach also distanced such decision-makers from the consequences of their policies, something that stopped them fully comprehending the disadvantage caused by their ideas. However, despite this, it was still apparent to many in society where the vestiges of power resided. Therefore, as anger at such a lack of opportunities increased towards the latter half of the twentieth century, people could still direct their antagonisms at state institutions in the hope of eventually changing the situation.

However, in 'liquid' modernity, failures to get the population physically active, that have contributed to seeing the very same social groups disadvantaged as before, in the form of women, ethnic minorities and the remnants of the working class, find the direction of such blame being placed firmly on the shoulders of the individual rather than the state. The reason for this can be unpacked through the neoliberal rhetoric of excessive individualisation that socialises members of the polis into conceptualising such inequalities as being indicative of personal shortcomings in reflexively managing their agency (Bauman, 2000). Instead, of placing the blame for such inequality at the door of structural disparities in resources and

endemic forms of discrimination that have exacerbated social exclusion in sport (Collins, 2016).

Under this approach, the underrepresentation of certain social groups, as well as increases in health inequalities such as the obesity crisis, are now seen as being brought on by the inability of individuals to select "the right commodities" (Bauman, 2006, p.86) to consume. Rather than the failure of the government to tackle such problems through intervening in a positive way by reducing levels of inequality and barriers towards sports participation. This problem, when looked at through the moral lens of adiaphorization, exposes how the power dynamics inherent within synoptic control represent a method of controlling the population that decentralises blame from public institutions by placing such problems firmly onto the shoulders of individual citizens. In so doing, gross levels of inequality in society, and the realm of sport and leisure are now seen by the majority of people as being a personal problem, with anger being directed at underrepresented groups for their inability to reflexively manage their lifestyle. Instead of governments for failing to overcome such inequities and tackle the systemic problems that cause there to be a lack of financial resources for underprivileged groups in the first place. The consequences of which highlight the broader dynamics of this discussion, in the way that synoptic control divides members of the population into blaming each other for their inequalities, rather than a political system that reduces their security through enacting an approach to freedom based around excessive individualisation.

Conclusion

To conclude, this discussion has sought to provide an insight into the reformulation of power and its relationship with sport in helping to articulate how this conforms to a new system of

social control. At its core, this paper has sought to give an overview of the changes that have occurred in the implementation of power during the transition from 'solid' to 'liquid' modernity. An insight that has set out to articulate how the cultural sphere of sport has been reconceptualised from an area within society designed to instil normative behavioural scripts through the panoptic method of surveillance, characterised by the few (state bureaucrats) watching the actions of the many. To instead, representing a site in social life that provides role models in the form of elite athletes that can help individuals reflexively manage their biographies. What this discussion highlights, is that the synoptic method of control represents an insidious approach to controlling populations, that in turn, directs questions about the lack of equity within sports participation away from state institutions and instead places them onto the shoulders of individuals. The fall out from which causes citizens to blame each other for sedentary lifestyles and health issues rather than a political system that has failed to formulate policies to respond to such inequalities.

While I am aware that these ideas will sit well with some and be inflammatory to others, it is hoped that readers will engage with the arguments put forward and see them as a genuine attempt to add to understandings of sport, power and social control. Indeed, it is hoped that these ideas can be used by others to direct future discussions about power within sports policy and debates about socio-cultural influences on sport. As with all theoretical concepts, there are limitations to this paper, in particular, the potential for a broader debate about the role of community sport and panopticism, where arguments can be put forward to critique the idea of Synopticism. These critiques are welcome and will add significantly to following discussions in this area of sociology in the future.

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