



# England Boxing

*The Role of Boxing in Development:*

*A Social Marketing Perspective*

**October, 2016**



## The Role of Boxing in Development: A Social Marketing Perspective

Sport in general has long been championed as an all-purpose social vaccine (Coalter, 2007) to tackle a seemingly endless list of long-standing and stubborn problems (Weiss, 1993) resulting in a “smorgasbord of sporting schemes” (Green, 2008, p. 131). Sport has been increasingly adopted to achieve developmental outcomes (Kidd, 2008), yet the role of sport in social change is not fully understood. According to Kruse (2006):

*We have not come across any systematic analysis of how to understand the relationships between sport and development or an assessment of to what extent such a relationship exists [...] What is it with sport that could lead to such a [developmental] impact – what and where are the linkages and can they can be documented?” (p. 9)*

The confidence in sport to achieve developmental outcomes is largely based upon “... anecdotal evidence, [...] heartfelt narratives and evocative images” (Hartmann and Kwauk, 2011, p. 285). Of the Sport-For-Development (S4D) research conducted, there is evidence of enhancing social capital and reducing social exclusion (Sherry, 2010; Welty Peachey, Cohen, Borland, & Lyras, 2011; Schulenkorf, Thomson & Schlenker, 2011; Sherry & Stryboch, 2012; Welty Peachey, Lyras, Borland, & Cohen, 2013; Bruening, Welty Peachey, Evanovich, Fuller, Murty, Percy, & Chung, 2014), bridge building between different cultures (Sugden, 2008; Lyras, 2012), and gender equality (Lyras & Hums, 2009). Further to a greater understanding of which social problems that can be tackled via S4D, there is a pressing need to better understand how sport contributes to development. Indeed, the above research carries the caveat that such outcomes can only be achieved when sport is designed and managed well, but what does this mean?

There is a distinct lack of theoretical understanding of how sport can contribute to social change (Coalter, 2007; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011) and a lack of a clear operational conception of how S4D programmes are predicted or expected to function (Hartmann, 2003) in terms of “... the components, mechanisms, relationships and sequences of cause and effect that are *presumed* to lead to desired impacts” (Coalter, 2013, p. 3). There is a need to develop knowledge about S4D programme theories (i.e., the relationship between an S4D programme and its desired outcomes). The question of “... what type of sports, social relationships, processes and experiences lead to what type of impacts for whom, in what contexts” (Coalter, 2013, p. 3) remains un-answered. Thus far, S4D research has failed to provide strategic guidelines, models or frameworks for the role of sport in social change (Schulenkorf, 2012).

According to Coalter (2013), there is a tendency to mythologize sport. Green (2008) refers to commonly held beliefs that sport teaches basic rules of social behaviour and instils fundamental societal values such as hard work, competitiveness, and sacrifice. So to make progress in understanding the role of sport in social change it is necessary to think critically about the myths of sport and not simply assume that sport works as an all-purpose social vaccine (Coalter, 2007), recognising that sport can have both positive and negative effects (Chalip, 2006). For example, whilst sport has been found to build bridges between different cultures (Sugden, 2008), it has also been a source of identification for offensive and violent behaviours between soccer fans (Gaunt, et al., 2005). Indeed, some researchers have downplayed the role of sport in development. Coalter (2007) argues that sport is usually only one component of S4D programmes, and has a widely varied contribution to the impact of programmes. Similarly, Hartmann and Kwauk (2011) argue

that sport is a site for, rather than a cause of, developmental outcomes. These arguments help to dispel the myth of sport as an all-purpose social vaccine, thus removing an unhelpful assumption in S4D work. However, as much as a greater understanding of the role of sport in social change might dispel the myth of sport as a social vaccine, it might also elevate the role of sport in social change beyond the downplaying contentions of Coalter (2007) and Hartmann and Kwauk (2011). Although sport per se (i.e., sport in itself) is not responsible for particular outcomes, when implemented and delivered effectively, it can play an important role in social change (Green, 2008). Indeed, according to Bruening, et al. (2014), sport can play an important role in social change when implemented with intentional design, management, and structure for particular outcomes.

## Social Marketing as a Framework for Understanding S4D

This study seeks to contribute to the theoretical understanding of S4D by examining the role of sport in social change. A useful framework for such an examination is social marketing, which can be defined as “a process that applies marketing principles and techniques to create, communicate, and deliver value in order to influence target audience behaviours that benefit society as well as the target audience” (Kotler, Lee & Rotshild, 2006, p. 7). S4D programmes can be readily conceptualized as social marketing when considering that they seek to benefit both participants and society through behaviour change. In this sense, sport is used as a vehicle for social change so to influence target groups by adding value to a desired behaviour, i.e. the attributes of a sport are applied in such a way that they add value to a desired behaviour, thus influencing a target group to engage in the desired behaviour. This approach to evaluating the role of sport in social change can be applied to previous attempts to shed some light on the role of sport in social change by distinguishing between different approaches to S4D (Coalter, 2007) and by categorizing S4D programmes (Green, 2008), so to in turn evaluate their contribution to understand their contribution to understanding the role of sport in social change.

### Sport Plus vs. Plus Sport

S4D programmes, according to Coalter (2009), can be divided into two broad approaches of Sport Plus and Plus Sport. Although not explicitly articulated by Coalter, these approaches can best be distinguished based upon outcomes sought and the role of sport in delivery. In terms of outcomes sought, the Sport Plus approach to S4D prioritizes traditional sport development objectives of increased participation, sporting skill development, and sustainable sport organizations, (i.e., development *of* sport), and secondarily seeks to use sport to address broader social issues (i.e., development *through* sport). Coalter (2009) is critical of such an approach arguing that such claims are made with a view to contributing to agencies’ (i.e., external funders) non-sporting objectives rather than a realistic assessment of what is possible. In contrast, the Plus Sport approach prioritizes developmental outcomes (e.g., behaviour change). In terms of the role of sport, the Sport Plus presumes that sport plays an instrumental role in addressing broader social issues. This falls short of the view that sport per se (i.e., in itself) results in social change, but still views sport as a “vitaly important necessary, but not sufficient condition” (Coalter, 2007, p. 71) for social change. In contrast, the Plus Sport approach focuses on specific processes and mechanisms that are specifically designed to achieve specific developmental outcomes (e.g., social, educational, and health outcomes). Sport plays a role in this approach (e.g., as a ‘hook’) but it is used as part of a much broader and more complex set of processes.

## Sport for Social Inclusion

This categorization of S4D programme, according to Green (2008) is designed to provide sporting opportunities to specific populations regarded as underserved, at risk, or disengaged. This approach serves sport (and can thus be considered sport plus according to Coalter's (2007) distinction of S4D approaches) by increasing the number and diversity of participants in sport. Participants are also served from a perspective of equity and distributive justice by providing sport and the assumed benefits it provides (i.e., sport per se) to those who do not have the same sport participation opportunities as others. This categorization relies upon the myths of sport (e.g., sport builds characters) and, according to Green (2008), such beliefs are so ingrained that it is not necessary to do anything more than provide access to sport because benefits will accrue merely as a function of sport participation.

This assumption that sport per se can achieve developmental outcomes hinders the purpose of establishing the role of sport in social change because such a contention makes no effort to understand why sport might work. Arnaud (2002, cited in Green, 2008) describes a sport for social inclusion programme whereby the intention was to articulate to minority populations the principles and values of the sports culture. However, on closer inspection, sport added value as a hook to "bring children, adolescents and young adults together" (p. 577) and "by minimizing differences so to integrate immigrant populations" (p. 577). As such, sport adds value by providing a universal language and value neutral common ground by which social change can occur. Green (2008) refers to the case of Belfast United as an example of a sport for social inclusion programme whereby soccer was used to bring Irish Catholic and Protestant youth together to form a football club that toured the United States. This football club served as a site that required participants to undertake integrated activities to minimize hostilities between the Catholic and Protestant participants. Green (2008) suggests that in "embracing the performance ethos of the competitive sport culture, participants are no longer focused on ethnic differences" (pp. 133-134). The labeling of these programmes as sport for social inclusion does not accurately convey the role sport played in these programmes. The emphasis on sport to 'bring together' participants indicates that sport added value in serving as a hook by which to engage participants. The assumption that the sport culture (i.e., sport's inherent positive values) added value to encourage participants to engage in a desired behaviour (i.e., integration) does not provide a realistic understanding of the role of sport in integration, lurching back to the belief sport per se achieves development, ignoring the negative values that can also be inherent in sport (e.g., win at all cost).

## Sport as a Universal Neutral Language

An arguably more accurate understanding can be found in Coubertin's vision of sport as a site for peace and cross-national understanding. Sport works as such a site because of its social and cultural significance (Bergsgard, et al., 2007) that acts as a hook to bring disparate groups together (e.g., North and South Korea marching under the Korea Unification Flag at Sydney 2000), but, according to Coubertin, also because sport is 'universalisable' (i.e., a universal language) that provides a contact point across cultures (Girginov, 2010). Indeed, as argued by McCormack and Chalip (1988), it is the specific socializing experiences that particular sport settings provide that result in particular outcomes.

This understanding of the role of sport is reflective of Sugden's (2010) description of the Football for Peace S4D programme. This programme aimed to build bridges between neighboring

Jewish and Arab towns and villages in Israel. Football (soccer) was used as a hook to bring the disparate groups together, but, according to Sugden (2010), the development outcomes could not have been achieved without values-based coaching to promote mutual understanding and engender a desire for, and commitment to, peaceful coexistence. This reflects Plus Sport (Coalter, 2007) in that the values were coached (i.e., carefully managed processes intentionally designed to build peace) rather than assumed as being inherent in the sport. Where sport added value in this process was (1) as a hook, and (2) in its intrinsic value neutrality that provided a vehicle for peace building (Sugden, 2010). The value of sport as a hook will be discussed in more detail in a subsequent section, but the value of sport's intrinsic value neutrality and its status as a universal language warrant consideration for a new categorization of the role of sport in social change. Sport as a universal neutral language provides a more practical categorization of such programmes than sport for social inclusion by focusing S4D practitioners' attention on how sport can play a value-adding role.

## Sport as Diversion

Green (2008) describes the S4D categorization of Sport as Diversion, which involves diverting deviant behaviours with socially desirable behaviours. For example, the Midnight Basketball programme recognised the social problem of inner city criminal behaviours having peak hours between 10 p.m. and 2 a.m. and was designed to reduce criminal activity via the mechanism of diverting participants away from the undesirable behaviour of crime to the desirable behaviour of sport participation. In this case, basketball provides value because it has been identified as a sport valued by the intended participants of inner-city, African-American male youths. In this sense, value is created when a sport is selected that can serve as a hook to attract intended participants away from an undesirable behaviour and the choice of sport is dependent upon which sport or physical activity is most attractive to intended participants. As such, other sports have been used for other target groups, such as Midnight Table Tennis in Hungary. This categorization cuts across both the Sport Plus and Plus Sport approaches to S4D. In terms of outcomes sought it prioritizes the social problem, rather than sport participation and sporting skills development, which is reflective of the Plus Sport approach. In terms of the role of sport, the solution is participation in sport, which is reflective of the Sport Plus approach. The programme theory moves beyond sport per se to achieve developmental outcomes, whereby a particular sport has been chosen to attract a particular target group and it has been scheduled at a particular time so to provide an alternative (and desirable) behaviour to the current undesirable behaviour. As such, sport has been implemented with intentional design, management, and structure for particular outcomes (Bruening, et al., 2014), but falls short of being part of a much broader and more complex set of processes that, according to Coalter (2007), reflect the design of the Plus Sport approach.

## Sport as a Replacement

Sport provides value by being able to hook participants, but the social problem would not be alleviated without the appropriate scheduling of the programme at a time when the undesired behaviour was occurring. Although the attractive capability of sport was vitally important, it was not sufficient for success (Coalter, 2007). As such, categorizing Midnight Basketball as a sport as a hook programme does not do it justice, yet categorizing it as sport as diversion does not capture the full value that sport brought to the programme. The value of such a programme comes from the scheduling of the sport, so that it acts as a replacement. In that sense sport is acting less as a

diversion (i.e., distraction) and more as a replacement (i.e., alternative). Therefore a more practical categorization that captures the value-adding role of sport in social change is sport as a replacement. In returning to the Midnight Basketball example, the role of sport in this programme is via two value-adding components; (1) sport as a hook, whereby a sport that is attractive to the target group is selected to provide a hook, and (2) sport as a replacement, whereby the selected sport is scheduled at a time or delivered in such a manner that it replaces the undesirable behaviour. It is important to note that to use sport as a replacement is not restricted to scheduling against the undesirable behaviour. For example, it could also act as a replacement by providing a desirable source of identification (e.g., member of a sports team or club) that replaces an undesirable source of identification (e.g., gang membership) or by requiring commitment and a level of fitness (e.g., endurance sports) that replace unhealthy behaviours (e.g., smoking). Of course, vehicles others than sport could be used as a replacement, but the malleability and multidimensional nature of sport (Bergsgard, et al., 2007) makes it a viable vehicle to replace undesirable behaviours.

### Sport as a Hook

Green (2008) proposes sport as a hook as her third and final category of S4D programmes and defines it as (1) the use of sport to attract participants and (2) then provide other core social services, such as tutoring and counselling. An example of such a programme is described by Walker, Hills, and Heere (2015), who describe an employment programme whereby an English Premier League soccer club was used as a hook, following which employability training was delivered. Sport provides value as a hook because of its social and cultural significance, as indicated by the increasing salience of sport to governments and their various policy agendas (Bergsgard, et al., 2007). Indeed, sport's value as a hook can be attributed to its global following and the unique strong connection that sport fans have with sport brands (Heere & James, 2007). However, as Green (2008) points out, whilst sport is attractive to target groups, it is not uniquely so, with music, dance, art, and technology also attractive to target groups. Yet, according to Green (2008), it is sport that forms the core of development programmes. This could be for several reasons (1) sport is a more prolific passion than other potential vehicles of social change, (2) sport is a stronger hook (e.g., target groups have stronger affinity with their favourite sports/leagues/teams than with their favourite music/bands/artists), or (3) once used as a hook, sport offers something more in the delivery of a programme (e.g., sport then serves as a replacement, as discussed above).

In applying the social marketing framework so to understand the role of sport in social change it becomes apparent that Green's (2008) additional requirement of providing other core social services fails to convey any value from sport, and as such, is an unnecessary complication. Also, to add such a requirement for this categorization excludes S4D programmes that make use of sport as a hook, but which do not then provide other core social services. Although other core social services may provide an important role in achieving developmental outcomes, so might other components of an S4D programme once participants have been hooked (e.g., scheduling of sport to act as a replacement to an undesirable behaviour, as discussed above). As such, a more practical approach to enhance the understanding of the role of sport in S4D would be to apply the label of sport as a hook to the component of the programme that attracts participants, with any other core social services considered a separate component of the programme. Consideration of such a component is outside the scope of this paper, which is focused on the value-adding role of sport in social change.

## Statement of the Problem

The preceding discussion highlights the limitations of existing understanding of the role of sport in social change. Coalter's (2009) distinction between 'Sport Plus' and 'Plus Sport' is based upon the prioritisation of objectives of a programme, so does not add understanding to the role of sport in development. Similarly Green's (2008) categorization of 'Sport for Social Inclusion' is based upon the target group of underserved, at risk, or disengaged populations. This categorization relies on the assumed benefits of sport and sport's inherent positive values and is thus lacking the well articulated 'theory of change' that clearly articulates where and how sport is adding value to social change. Looking at the examples cited by Green (2008) through the value adding lens of social marketing established that sport was adding value by providing a universal language and value neutral common ground. Therefore, one of the potential ways that sport can be leveraged for social change is 'Sport as a Universal Neutral Language'. Green's (2008) categorization of 'Sport as Diversion' does begin to focus in on the role of sport in social change. However, with the example of Midnight Basketball, the value adding role of sport is as a replacement because it is scheduled at the time of the undesirable behaviour so to replace it with the desirable behaviour of sport participation. Finally, Green's (2008) categorization of 'Sport as a Hook' does convey how passion for sport can be leveraged to attract a target group to a programme. However, Green's (2008) additional component of providing other core services to achieve development moves beyond the role of sport, which is limited to the attraction of the target group. In applying the social marketing framework to focus on how sport adds value to a desired behaviour provides a clearer articulation of the role of sport in social change. This justifies the application of the social marketing framework to understand the role of sport in S4D programmes.

Although the application of the social marketing lens has enhanced the existing categorisations of S4D programmes, a clearer understanding of the role of sport in social change can be achieved by a focused analysis of specific S4D programmes given that the role of sport is best understood when analyzing where it adds value to a desired behaviour. Such analysis can only take place when looking at specific S4D programmes with clear and specific desired behaviours that are being worked towards. Further focus can be achieved by analyzing specific sports. Analysis of sport in general has thus far lead to a vague understanding of the role of sport, such as sport as a diversion. When looking at the two elements of the Midnight Basketball example separately, it is apparent that sport is serving two roles. First, the scheduling of basketball at midnight is sport as a replacement as previously discussed. However, such scheduling of sport would not add value to the desired behaviour of participation in sport, rather than antisocial behaviour, unless sport is effectively used as a hook, which is the second component of Midnight Basketball. For example, had Midnight Basketball been implemented in Hungary and Midnight Table Tennis been implemented in the United States, the value added to the desired behaviour would have been different. The scheduling of the sport as a replacement is specific to the antisocial behaviour, whilst the selection of the sport as a hook is specific to the target group and the sports they identify with and are attracted to. If potential participants do not identify with the sport used in the programme then the S4D practitioner has failed to add value to the desired behaviour and their programme will not achieve its desired outcomes. This identifies a need to understand specific sports in terms of attributes (e.g., attractive to the target group) that can be used to add value to a desired behaviour (e.g., more fun than the alternative undesirable behaviour). Limiting such an understanding of the attributes of specific sports to their use as a

hook only makes a limited contribution to understanding the role of sport in social change. Indeed, to comprehensively apply the social marketing framework to an S4D programme, it is necessary to look at all the ways that sport adds value to the programme's desired behaviour. As such, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of the role of sport in social change by focusing on the specific sport of boxing through the analysis of S4D programmes that use boxing as their vehicle for social change, identifying where boxing adds value to the programme's desired behaviour.

## Research Question

Based upon the above statement of the problem, the research question is:

*How does boxing add value to the desired behaviours of S4D programmes that use boxing as a vehicle for social change?*

## Research Setting

This study is a partnership between the Walker Research Group and England Boxing. England Boxing provided access to two of S4D programmes that it contributes funding to that use boxing as their vehicle for change. These two programmes, with specific desired behaviours for their respective target groups, served as case studies in this study:

### The Boxing Academy

The Boxing Academy (BA) is an alternative education pathway for thirteen to sixteen year olds who have either been excluded, or are at risk of school exclusion. As such, the social problem being tackled is exclusion from school. For the 2014/15 academic year in England, 4,790 students were permanently excluded from secondary schools, which is a 15% increase from the year prior (*Department for Education, 2016*). Secondary schools represent the most problematic setting for school exclusion with 83% of all exclusions in the UK occurring at this education level. Although the number of total exclusions represents only a fraction of total secondary school enrolments, the seriousness of this problem is exacerbated by the lack of alternative education pathways for excluded students. The BA receives referrals from schools so that rather than being excluded from traditional education settings, students are able to access alternative education designed to correct the symptomatic issues that could enable future exclusion. Moreover, the programme proactively assists in assuaging social problems that could potentially occur as a result of being excluded from education. In this sense, the desired behaviour that the BA seeks to impart in its target group is to engage with and complete their education to their maximum potential.

### Champions of Life

The Champions of Life programme is delivered by Anfield Amateur Boxing Club (ABC) in Liverpool, England. The social problem being tackled is youth participation in gangs and the anti-social behaviours associated with being a member of a gang. There is no national measure of gang related crimes in England and Wales, however, according to the House of Commons (2016), gang crime and serious youth violence is often synonymous with knife crime. For the year 2014/15 there were 46,527 offences involving a knife or a sharp instrument, 20,153 of which were for

possession, a 5 per cent increase from 2013/14 which saw 44,257 offences. The Champions of Life programme provides an alternative to being part of a gang by being part of the Anfield ABC seeks to replace anti-social behaviours with pro-social behaviours. As such, the desired behaviour of the target group is to be part of the alternative boxing community and to engage in pro-social behaviours outside of the gym.

## Methodology

### Case Study Design

A case study was adopted, which is defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context” (*Yin, 2009, p. 18*). This design was adopted so to undertake a focused study of the role of sport in social change, which has been missing in previous studies. Two case studies were selected by England Boxing as representatives of programmes that effectively leverage boxing as a vehicle for social change. Such selection represents the use of critical cases, which are cases that have strategic importance in relation to the general problem studied (*Yin, 2009*) and which represent best practices that set the standard (*Flyvberg, 2011*).

### Data Collection

Qualitative data was collected, providing nuanced and contextual data that would provide a complex and holistic picture in a natural setting (*Creswell, 2012*) so to establish the complex role of boxing in social change that could not be garnered from quantitative data. The qualitative data was collected using a combination of administrator interviews and participant focus groups, so to gain multiple perspectives of the use of boxing within the case studies. A one hour interview was conducted with the head coach of the Anfield ABC, deliverers of the Champions of Life programme and a forty five minute focus group was conducted with participants of the Champions of Life programme, which consisted of six males, all white, aged between 12 and 18 years old. A one hour interview was conducted with the Head Teacher of the Boxing Academy, a white female, and a thirty minute interview with a Boxing Academy coach and pod leader, a black Caribbean male. A thirty minute interview was conducted with a Boxing Academy pupil, an 18 year old white male. Administrator interview guides and participant focus groups reflected the social marketing framework by focusing on how boxing was used within the programmes and how it added value to the desired behaviour, either by removing barriers that the target group face in engaging in the desired behaviour or meeting needs that the target group require in order to engage in the desired behaviour.

### Data Analysis

All interviews and focus groups were digitally recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were analysed using an inductive coding strategy to establish themes and extract quotes relevant to the value adding role of boxing on social change. Specifically, a line-by-line open coding procedure was used to “... expose the thoughts, ideas and meanings contained therein” (*Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 102*). A selective coding process was used to remain focused on the research construct of boxing attributes, from which segments of relevant and meaningful text were

identified and attributed memos and initial codes (*Spiggle, 1994*). Coded text was grouped into larger abstract categories using axial coding, which served to meaningfully sort, synthesise, organise and reassemble the data into general themes (Creswell & Miller, 2000). This analysis process was conducted first separately by two researchers before each researcher read the other's memos and coding, so to reach a consensus on the value-adding attributes of boxing. This use of multiple researchers reduced researcher bias (*Maxwell, 2012*).

## Findings

### The Boxing Academy's Value-Adding Use of Boxing

#### The Universal Language of Boxing to Reframe Education

At the highest level, boxing adds value by presenting education differently from the traditional way, which appears to be a barrier to accessing education for the target group. Boxing has been used as a framework whereby the Boxing Academy has the feel of a boxing gym more so than of a school, which offers a fresh setting to students for whom traditional schooling is not adequate. This is contrary to the well-established use of sport as a hook, whereby sport is used to attract a target group before offering additional services un-related to sport (*Green, 2008*). The Boxing Academy integrates boxing into the education process so that boxing is at the heart of the solution, rather than simply an initial hook.

*They do boxing training everyday, it's an integral part of their education, but the reason it works is because it looks and feels and sounds like a boxing gym. (The Boxing Academy Head Teacher Interview)*

*Boxing is not used as a hook to attract students, indeed many of the students are not interested in boxing. Rather, it is used as a framework. (The Boxing Academy Head Teacher Interview)*

*Only one or two students a year go on to box outside of the Academy. This is not about boxing and making students good boxers. This is about using boxing to achieve other outcomes. (The Boxing Academy Head Teacher Interview)*

Although not used as a hook, boxing does have links with the target group of the Boxing Academy, which makes it an appropriately selected vehicle for social change. Boxing has close ties to working communities stratified by ethnicities and social status (*Wacquant, 1992*), which matches the demographics of the target group.

*Boxing is a universal language. Boxing is a working class sport that is played all over the world, which works the demographics of our students, with eighty per cent of our students being of mixed race. Of students excluded, a disproportionate amount are Afro-Caribbean and our intake reflects that. (The Boxing Academy Head Teacher Interview)*

Those who participate in boxing at least once a week consist of 75% males and 25 % females (*Sport England, 2016*), which matches the exclusion gender breakdown in the UK where boys are over three times more likely than girls to be permanently excluded (*Department for Education,*

2016). Further to being suited to the demographics of the target group, boxing has been selected because of its values ethos that can be extended to the classroom so to scaffold the delivery of alternative education.

## Extending the Values and Ethos of Boxing to the Classroom

Boxing is able to add value by teaching and developing several values and skills which are needed by the target group in order to access education. Boxing Academy students' primary relationships are with pod leaders. These pod leaders perform the role of boxing coaches in the training sessions and teacher assistants in the scheduled General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) lessons, so to facilitate the overall educational experience. The constant presence of the pod leaders across both settings encourages the values and skills developed in the boxing training to be extended to the classroom and everyday life.

*The boxing coaches are able to share their experiences in the boxing ring, such as performing under pressure, and extend and apply those experiences to everyday life. (The Boxing Academy Boxing Coach Interview)*

*What we learn in the boxing, including the discipline, staying calm and having respect carries over into the classroom because it is engrained into us through daily boxing training. (The Boxing Academy Student Interview)*

The boxing training has been particularly effective at developing discipline and focus.

## Boxing Demands Discipline and Focus

Boxing adds value by developing discipline and focus, so to overcome the barrier to accessing education of persistent disruptive behaviour. Department for Education (2016) data shows that persistent disruptive behaviour is the most common reason for exclusion. Moreover, students with special education needs accounted for over half of excluded pupils, which includes difficulties in concentrating. These data suggest that excluded pupils require more self-discipline and focus, to better enable educational success. The nature of boxing is such that its training demands discipline and focus. In a survey of sports scientists conducted by ESPN (2010), boxing was identified as the most physically demanding of all sports, requiring the greatest levels of endurance, strength, power, and nerve. The high physical demand of the sport has been confirmed by analyses of heart rates, oxygen consumption, and blood lactate responses (Ghosh, 2010). Taken together, these results suggest that embedding boxing as a compulsory part of the BA curriculum will help ensure that BA pupils develop self-discipline and focus in order to meet the sport's training demands. Moreover, boxing is an individual sport, which further reinforces self-discipline and focus.

*Boxing is about discipline and dedication, which are the values that our students so desperately need, and no other sport can teach these values so effectively. (The Boxing Academy Head Teacher Interview)*

*For boxing you have to be disciplined, you have to be calm under pressure. When you step into a boxing ring, you find out a lot about yourself, having tested yourself in a challenging environment. (The Boxing Academy Boxing Coach Interview)*

In support of the internalised self-discipline of the target group, whereby pupils are able to control themselves due to their development in boxing training, external discipline is ensured by the use of boxing coaches in the education process.

## Authority of Boxing Coaches Enforces Discipline in the Gym and Classroom

Boxing adds value by not just teaching self-discipline, but by also providing a framework of discipline. This framework contributes to overcoming the barrier of persistent disruptive behaviour, but also meets the need of a framework that removes the potential for violence, as established by Department for Education (2016) data on violence as a reason for exclusion. These statistics suggest that the traditional school setting was unable to provide sufficient controls for violence from the target group. The boxing gym is a setting of strict discipline, with the boxing coach serving as the enforcer of discipline. In engaging in boxing training with the pod leaders serving as the boxing coaches, pod leaders established a position of authority over the pupils. By also using the boxing coaches as teacher assistants in the classroom it was possible to extend the authority of the boxing coaches to the education process, so to extend the presence of discipline from the boxing gym to the classroom. This authority and discipline was likely absent from the pupils' prior educational experiences, as evident in the physical abuse directed towards teachers and other pupils among the excluded student population (Departments for Education, 2016). The use of boxers as teacher assistants limits the risk of physical abuse towards teachers because, as competitive boxers, students are less likely to attempt any physical intimidation or violence due to the physical superiority and fighting ability of their 'pod' leaders.

*The majority of these students have come to us for fighting, for fighting teachers for fighting other students. However, when their teacher is a boxer the possibility of fighting in the classroom is removed. Whereas they were previously able to challenge authority physically and intimidate their teachers, they are unable to physically intimidate their teachers here and so must find a more appropriate mechanism to challenge, which will be to talk something through. (The Boxing Academy Boxing Coach Interview)*

*They take the boxing lessons and act as a teaching assistant on the other classes. The students will behave when the pod leaders are present, they will follow their leader. They don't need to be a disciplinarian. The pod leaders are active in the lessons, so that the students will follow their example. (The Boxing Academy Head Teacher Interview)*

*As boxers, our pod leaders are physically strong, so they can't be physically intimidated. A lot of the students in their previous schools had squared up to their teachers, but that incorrect behaviour is not an option at the Boxing Academy because the pod leaders will not be physically intimidated so none of us would even dare and try it. (The Boxing Academy Student Interview)*

With their authority, the boxing coaches were able to set limits for the pupils and hold the pupils accountable to their actions. They utilise the resource of boxing punishments, such as press-ups, that they extended to breaking of rules in the classroom, ensuring that pupils understood that their actions had consequences.

*The coaches are able to set boundaries that have been missing for a lot of these kids and if rules are broken, the boxing coaches are able to enforce immediate consequences. (The Boxing Academy Head Teacher Interview)*

*The pod leaders was with the group throughout all of the lessons. They were about to keep discipline, for example, by giving out push-ups as punishment if anyone misbehaved, making sure that everyone paid attention and respected the teacher. (The Boxing Academy Student Interview)*

*If an issue happened in class, whether work or behavioural related, the pod leaders take us out of class and talk to us one-on-one to try to understand why we are doing what we are doing and explain to us the consequences of our behaviour. Also, if the group was generally misbehaving, the pod leaders will address us as a group and explain why the behaviour is not acceptable and what the consequences of that behaviour will be. (The Boxing Academy Student Interview)*

*This job is mentally draining. When the students are not behaving you have to tell them ten times to do the same thing. 'Can you sit up please? Can you sit up please?' The discipline I have developed through boxing helps me to persevere with these students and not give up. (The Boxing Academy Boxing Coach Interview)*

The problem behaviour of violence from the target group is not solely due to a lack of discipline and authority, but may also be due to an inability to regulate emotions.

## Teaching Angry Pupils to Keep Their Cool

Boxing training teaches the skill of emotional regulation so to further add value to accessing education by removing the barrier of violent behaviour. In particular, anger was found to be a barrier for Boxing Academy pupils accessing education.

*Our students are angry. They're angry at themselves, angry at their parents, angry at their teachers, angry at society because they feel that they're an outcast, that they're destined to be on the street, destined to take up criminal activities. (The Boxing Academy Boxing Coach Interview)*

Boxing added value to emotional regulation in two ways. Firstly, participating in boxing was found to serve as a form of stress release and a way to positively release anger. This is supported by research from Durrett (2010), who identified that participants in boxing reported stress release as a motivation to participate.

*When that anger takes over, no amount of kicking a football or running is going to help with that anger. We teach our students to face their problems head on and not to run away from their problems. By projecting their problems on to a punch bag and hitting that bag our students are able to develop a sense of being able to tackle their problems because that bag isn't going anywhere and neither are their problems. From hitting a bag our students can release their anger and once that is done they can start to calmly think about how they are going to solve that problem. (The Boxing Academy Boxing Coach Interview)*

*Boxing was a form of stress release. It allowed me to channel my anger in a more positive way. Because I was able to do that, I was able to focus on my education and I was able to achieve academically. (The Boxing Academy Student Interview)*

*Boxing allowed me to constructively release my anger, in a way that wouldn't affect me negatively. (The Boxing Academy Student Interview)*

This supports the catharsis theory of aggression, which contends punching a boxing bag should reduce levels of aggression in students. In contrast to this finding, empirical evidence does not support that such behaviour reduces aggression (*Bushman, 2002*). However, boxing was also found to add value to emotional regulation by teaching control, strategy, and forethought, which reflects 'the sweet science' of boxing.

*Boxing teaches temper control. After getting hit, you still need to control your temper otherwise you will get hurt even more. This is a lesson that our students need to learn in order to engage in education. (The Boxing Academy Head Teacher Interview)*

This skill of emotional regulation, although developed via boxing training, can also be used by the Boxing Academy pupils in the classroom.

## Confidence to Learn and Stay Out of Trouble

Boxing training was found to have a positive influence on the confidence of the target group, which overcomes the negative mental issues that can act as a barrier to accessing education. These barriers can develop following exclusion, resulting in a perception of limited opportunities that negatively impact self-esteem (*Daniels, 2011*) and long-term depression (*Berridge et al., 2001*). Boxing was found to develop the physical fitness of pupils, which enhanced their appearance and ultimately their confidence.

*Learning to box and becoming physically fit, checking out their abs in the mirror, gives the students confidence. (The Boxing Academy Head Teacher Interview)*

The Boxing Academy coaches were able to reinforce confidence in pupils by adopting a reinforcing and encouraging coaching style, which has been found to enhance confidence in sports participants (*Smith & Smoll, 1990*). When with increased confidence pupils had increased hope that they could match their ambitions and were more motivated to achieve these ambitions (*Chen, Gully & Eden, 2004*) as the ability to excel in once problematic contexts (*e.g., education*) became perceptually more attainable.

Boxing was also found to enhance pupils' confidence in their ability to defend themselves. Boxing helped to remove the barrier of the propensity of the target group to fight, as evident in data on fighting as a reason for exclusion (Department for Education, 2016), because pupils were able to prove their ability to fight in the safe and appropriate setting of the boxing gym. Therefore, there was less need for the target group to prove their ability to fight in other inappropriate settings, such as the street or the classroom.

*In learning to box, our students develop a sense of confidence in their ability to defend themselves, so if they are challenged on the street, they have the confidence to walk away from trouble, knowing that they don't need to prove anything to themselves. They have the*

*confidence and self discipline to know what they could do, but not do it. (The Boxing Academy Boxing Coach Interview)*

*I've learned to deal with different situations in different ways. I've learned to walk away from situations, learning not to escalate situations. (The Boxing Academy Student Interview)*

Further to developing skills and values that the target group need to access education, boxing adds further value by providing a setting that scaffolds the education process.

## A Platform to Build Relationships and a Sense of Community

Boxing added value to accessing education by serving as a platform through which relationships and a sense of community could be developed. The Boxing Academy pupils, due to their behavioural problems, had previously suffered from marginalisation at their schools. Research has found that those excluded from school suffer from various social disadvantages, such as homelessness (*Berridge et al., 2001*), which leads to a lack of perceived social capital and a diminished sense of community. As such, the target group had a need for a sense of community that welcomed them to engage in the education process.

*A big difference for them is they can walk into a place where people are pleased to see them everyday, instead of a place where everyone hates them. They can talk to their mentors [boxing coaches], who don't look and sound like teachers, they're boxers. (The Boxing Academy Head Teacher Interview)*

Sport is well-established as a vehicle to develop social capital and entrench a felt sense of community (*Jarvie, 2003; Tonts, 2005; Vail, 2007; Skinner, Zakus & Cowell, 2008; Sherry, 2010*). The compulsory daily boxing training for pupils provided a shared interest and focal point through which a sense of community was developed. The boxing culture was particularly conducive to developing camaraderie and respectful relationships because pupils were pushing themselves in a demanding sport, working closely with their coaches and testing themselves against each other.

*Boxing is used as a platform to develop relationships. When you train with someone every day, you develop a relationship with them. (The Boxing Academy Head Teacher Interview)*

*The Boxing Academy feels nothing like a normal school, but more like a typical boxing gym. The boxing gym culture is conducive to developing camaraderie and the relationships that are so important to our success. It feels like a big family. They're suddenly part of something, even though they didn't choose to be. (The Boxing Academy Head Teacher Interview)*

*The reason that the Boxing Academy works is because of the relationship between the students and the boxing coaches. A lot of it is forged in the gym, but also over making bagels in the morning for breakfast. It's about that easy social environment, where these children can actually relax and feel like somebody cares about them. (The Boxing Academy Head Teacher Interview)*

*When it's just you and them in the ring, then you gain respect for each other because you've gone through the same hard training. (The Boxing Academy Student Interview)*

Positive relationships with Boxing Academy staff and other pupils provided a sense of community that welcomed the target group to engage in education and provided a community of trust and support that encouraged the target group to achieve their potential in education. An important component of this was the ability of the boxing coaches to serve as respected and relatable role models.

## Boxing Coaches as Respected and Relatable Role Models

Boxing provided coaches that served as positive role models, which added value to accessing education by setting a positive example to reinforce the importance of education, a need of the target group who were previously lacking positive role models. Indeed, data shows that excluded pupils have suffered child sexual abuse, frequent shifts between homes, parental violence, bereavement and homelessness (*Berridge et al., 2001*). With a lack of a positive parental role model, Boxing Academy pupils have found negative role models on the street.

*Their role models in their communities are drug dealers, so their understanding of how to earn money is through a socially undesirable mechanism where they can see easy money, rather than a long-term career plan. (The Boxing Academy Boxing Coach Interview)*

Research has found that coaches are able to influence pro-social behaviours beyond the sporting context (*Parrott & Duggan, 2009*). Boxing coaches were found to be particularly effective at influencing pro-social behaviours because of the respect that the pupils had for their boxing coaches. That the Boxing Academy only recruits boxing coaches with competitive boxing experience ensures respect because of the credibility and status that comes with having competed as a boxer.

*I spent years trying different sports to tackle this problem. There is something about boxing that makes a difference. They might not like their boxing coaches some of the time, but they all respect them. They will listen to their pod leaders, such as 'that's the stupidest idea I've ever heard, let me tell you why'. (The Boxing Academy Head Teacher Interview)*

*When recruiting coaches they must have had competitive boxing experience, that's a must, in order to get the respect from our students. We've tried boxercise coaches or people that have only trained in boxing, and it doesn't work. (The Boxing Academy Head Teacher Interview)*

*That our pod leaders all have fighting experience provides them with a toughness, a confidence and a sense of calm that allows them to handle difficult situations with difficult students and also gain respect from our students, so that they are less likely behave in a disrespectful manner. (The Boxing Academy Boxing Coach Interview)*

The pro-social messages delivered by the boxing coaches were particularly salient because pod leaders were recruited from the same community as the students and had encountered and overcome the same challenges the students face on entering the Boxing Academy.

*[Pod Leader] came to us from a very dysfunctional background. He had been in prison, but them got into boxing through Fight 4 Change. He brings his entire experience to the table and*

*he absolutely is not prepared to compromise on the discipline he instills in the students. (The Boxing Academy Head Teacher Interview)*

*When I came to the Boxing Academy, the kids were bouncing off the walls. They were just like how I used to be at school, where I would always follow the wrong crowd. I used to think it was fun to get excluded from class, but when it came to exams I realised what a mistake I had made. I can now help others not to make the same mistakes that I made. (The Boxing Academy Boxing Coach Interview)*

*We have gone through what they're going through, so we can share with them our experiences and how we got through those same challenges. They wouldn't be able to relate to us if we came from an affluent background. (The Boxing Academy Boxing Coach Interview)*

*I used the ethos of boxing, such as being disciplined, and my experiences as a young person to teach our students. The students say 'wow, it's like you really know me' and I say 'yes, it's because I've been through all the things that you're going through and more, so learn through my experiences'. (The Boxing Academy Boxing Coach Interview)*

This resulted in the boxing coaches being better able to relate to the Boxing Academy pupils, facilitating mutual respect, a greater understanding of needs and how to meet them and a belief in the pupils that they too could overcome their challenges.

*None of the teachers look down on us, which was the case in our previous schools. There was a level playing field where respect was given and taken by all. I had greater respect for my teachers at the Boxing Academy because they were more sympathetic and empathetic. In particular, our pod leaders had been in similar situations themselves, so they could understand us. They would never lose their temper, get frustrated or talk down to us. They would always speak to us on their level. They were respectful to us, so we were respectful to them. (The Boxing Academy Student Interview)*

*Having gone through the same thing when they were our age, the pod leaders knew what we needed. (The Boxing Academy Student Interview)*

*The pod leaders have been in a similar situation to me and they have found a way to get out of it positively and work towards a better life, which made me think, I can do that too. They have been role models for us. (The Boxing Academy Student Interview)*

## Champions of Life's Value-Adding Use of Boxing

### A Sport Located at the Heart of the Problem

The social problem of gangs is limited to deprived and disadvantaged communities (REF). Boxing has been historically located in these communities and is associated with the fight to survive that is required in these communities.

*Boxing has got a social responsibility to help disadvantaged communities. Boxing clubs are based in the most deprived communities. These kids are there on our doorstep. They're coming*

*to find us, so we have a responsibility to develop that young person, to move them on, whether it's in the ring or in life itself. We have an opportunity to not only create champions in the ring, but champions in life. (Anfield ABC Administrator Interview)*

*Boxing, historically, has been based in deprived communities across the world. There's no affluent areas in Liverpool that have got boxing clubs. A lot of the young people we work with have got that bit of fight in them to survive. Everyday is a survival. They look at boxing and think they might be good at that because I've got the instincts to look after myself, I've got the instincts to fight. Boxing serves these deprived communities. Boxing has a moral duty to serve these communities. It's not just about creating the next world champions or the next ABA [Amateur Boxing Association] champions. It's about creating champions of life. We've got kids in here who are competing the semi-finals of the ABAs next weekend, but I'd rather have every kid in here go on and achieve in life than have a champion in the ring. (Anfield ABC Administrator Interview)*

Boxing was found to be accessible as an alternative to gang involvement because it was located in the Liverpool community where gang involvement was a social problem. Thus, the barrier of lack of transport and also the danger of crossing in to other gang territories is removed by the intervention being located in the local boxing club.

*The programme's right on my doorstep. I used to hang around the streets in this area, but now I hang out at the gym in this area. (Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)*

*I don't have a car and my parents don't have a car, so if this programme was far away, I wouldn't be able to get to it. (Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)*

*If I had to go to another area then I might encounter members of other gangs, but this gym is in my area and I know everyone who is going to be here. You could be walking into another gang that was after you in the first place. Even after I've left a rival gang, they'd still view it like I was on their turf and there'd be trouble. (Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)*

In coming from deprived and disadvantaged communities a further barrier faced by the target group in accessing sport as part of an intervention for gang involvement is cost. The affordability of boxing was found to overcome this barrier.

*Boxing is a proper working man's sport. It doesn't cost much to box. A lot of other sports price out kids from deprived communities. (Anfield ABC Administrator Interview)*

*It's only a pound for a session and it gets off you off the streets. (Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)*

*There's a lot of snobbery in some sports, like golf and tennis, that you can't access without money. All the equipment is provided. It's not golf and tennis where you have to buy all the gear in order to participate. (Anfield ABC Administrator Interview)*

The ties between boxing and the Champions of Life's target group also play an important role in boxing serving as a replacement for gang involvement.

## Boxing as a Replacement: Re-channeling Aggression

The role of sport in social change has been previously described as a diversion (Green, 2008), but this study has more accurately described the effective role of sport as a replacement, which focuses on the value of sport as an alternative and more attractive behaviour than the undesired behaviour, rather than sport as a distraction for the undesired behaviour. Indeed, this study found that boxing was viewed as an alternative and more attractive behaviour to the undesired behaviour of gang involvement. Part of the attraction was that participating in boxing was viewed as positive, in relation to the anti-social behaviour of gang involvement.

*I like boxing, it gets me off the street. If I wasn't doing boxing I'd be hanging out with gangs.*  
(Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)

*Boxing gets you off the street and focuses your mind on something else. It channels your energy into something positive.* (Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)

*Coming to the gym made me realise that I could channel my energies elsewhere that is worthwhile, rather than doing things that could put me in jail or even get me killed.* (Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)

Boxing serves effectively as a replacement because of its appeal to the target group of those involved with gangs. In order to effectively serve as a replacement, a sport must also be an effective hook for the target group. Boxing was found to serve as a hook (Green, 2008) for the target group because it was an alternative outlet for their aggression and because of the credible status of boxing in the eyes of the target group (e.g., a tough sport for a tough target group). This image of boxing was found to not only attract the target group, but also allowed the programme administrators to approach the target group with greater success.

*I was very aggressive out on the streets, but the aggressiveness of boxing attracted me to the programme. In here [the gym], I can still be aggressive, but its now controlled aggression.*  
(Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)

*It's a bit of a status. I can tell people I'm a boxer. I'm boxing for this club. It's exciting with all the bags up and a ring in the gym. With that status of the sport, we were able to attract people to the club and once they were engaged by boxing we were able to get them different accreditations, including English and Maths and fork-lift truck driving with a view to employment in the future.* (Anfield ABC Administrator Interview)

*We've got no fear of approaching gangs. We have credibility to approach gangs and say that we're from a boxing club, so you've broken down that barrier straight away. When I used to do youth work I would go out and say 'I'm from Positive Futures' and the gangs would respond 'Who the f\*\*\*ing hell is that? You're a bunch of grassers', but when you say you're from a boxing club there's that bit of respect for you straight away because there is a toughness associated with boxing.* (Anfield ABC Administrator Interview)

The image and status of boxing was also found to play a role in the target group being able to leave a gang.

## A Credible Exit Route from Gangs

A barrier to engaging in pro-social behaviour, rather than gang involvement, is the ability to leave a gang after a desire to leave has been reached (REF).

*When I was going around with a gang and wanted to stop, they were like 'What do you mean stop? Well you're not, you're staying here, you know things, you know where the guns are, where the knives are, where the drugs are. If you try and leave with that information, we'll just punch your head in. We'll stab you.'* (Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)

Boxing was found to be able to overcome this barrier, firstly through its credible status whereby it represents one of the few acceptable routes through a gang can be left.

*Boxing is a street sport. You're not losing any street credibility by going to a boxing club. You're going from one gang to another gang. A kid couldn't go from a gang to a tennis club. They'd probably get a few slaps if they tried to do that, but they could say that they're going to do boxing and that would be seen as credible within the gang.* (Anfield ABC Administrator Interview)

*The former gang members that we have in the gym, when their mates from the gang say 'are you coming out tonight?' they can say 'no, I'm going boxing' and they haven't lost any face or credibility. If they go on to fight, their mates from the gang will turn up to watch them. What they see is just watching two lads punching each other, but what they're really watching is two lads who respect the life out of each other. Their mate is not their follower on the street no more.* (Anfield ABC Administrator Interview)

Secondly, the physical threat that represents a barrier to leaving a gang was found to be overcome by boxing because it is an exit route that teaches self defence.

*Boxing helps with leaving a gang because it teaches you self defence, so it gives you the confidence to leave a gang.* (Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)

The above themes focus on the ties between boxing, the social problem and the target group. Furthermore, boxing was found to add value by teaching skills that the target group needed to engage in pro-social behaviour, rather than gang involvement.

## Learning to Follow Rules: From the Gym to Real-Life

A barrier to engaging in pro-social behaviours is the target group's disregard for authority and rules (REF).

*When you're in a gang, you're in a situation with no boundaries, so it can spiral out of control easily.* (Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)

*Within the gang culture you start drinking and smoking from 12 years old, getting yourself into trouble, causing mayhem, smashing windows, throwing stuff at cars. (Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)*

Boxing was able to remove this barrier by providing a learning context in which rules were present (i.e., the gym environment) and where following of rules is an inherent part of the sport based upon the respect that boxers have for their coaches (e.g., the toughest of world champions have nothing but respect for their coaches and the rules of their gym). The Champions of Life programme facilitated learning to respect rules by having participants set the rules themselves so that there is ownership and thus great accountability.

*We let the kids decide the rules, so that they take ownership of them. The kids always decide upon being respectful and being disciplined because of the nature of boxing. The coaches never have to bring up the rules because when someone isn't being respectful or disciplined the kids police that behaviour themselves and reinforce that behaviour. (Anfield ABC Administrator Interview)*

Through the context of boxing, participants learned about the need to follow rules, an understanding which they could then apply to other contexts, such as employment, which serves as a pro-social behaviour that is alternative to gang involvement.

*The rules of the gym can be applied to real-life. Simple rules like you can't come in the gym with chewing gum are enforced, so we learn how to follow rules. In life, there's rules. In jobs, there's rules. There's things that you can't do. If we can't follow rules, whether in the gym or on a building site, we're not gonna get anywhere. (Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)*

The target group's disregard for rules and authority can be linked to a lack of self-discipline and control that could serve as an internal moral compass.

## Nowhere to Hide: Inherent Discipline, Mental Strength and Control

A need for the target group to engage in pro-social behaviour, rather than gang involvement, is self-discipline and mental strength (REF). It was found that these attributes are inherent within boxing participation.

*Boxing gives kids something that you can't buy. It gives them a work ethic, mental strength and aspirations. They walk out of the gym with their head held high because they've achieved something. (Anfield ABC Administrator Interview)*

*Boxing is a team game until you get into the ring, then you're on your own until the bell goes and you're back in your corner and it's a team game again. So boxing teaches you how to survive on your own, how to think for yourself. (Anfield ABC Administrator Interview)*

*To step in the ring, you've got to have a lot of heart. Everyone looks at you differently. They see this different person. It's such an amazing feeling. (Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)*

Boxing was found to develop these skills because there is nowhere to hide in the sport of boxing. If a boxer does not give their all in their training, they will be found out in the ring because there are no team-mates to hide behind. With the physical threat that is coupled with defeat, and the unknown factor of an opponent's discipline and capabilities, it was found that boxing demands and instills discipline, which can then be applied to other contexts.

*It's not like a game of football where the result doesn't just depend on you. You need a different mindset. You need to get yourself psyched up. (Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)*

*The fear created by not knowing who your opponent is and what they are capable of drives you and going through the process gives you so much mental strength and confidence. (Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)*

*The discipline and focus that is inherent in training can be applied to real-life. When you've got a fight coming up, you're thinking about what your opponent might be doing, so you can't skip a run or eat junk food or smoke a cigarette because that could be the difference between winning and losing. You train as hard as possible, run as fast as possible, so that when you get into the ring you know that your opponent cannot have done more than you and that I've done everything possible to win. After I lost a bout, I trained even harder because I wanted to come back even stronger. (Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)*

Such disciplined training was found to serve to directly replace some of the anti-social behaviours associated with gang involvement because the physical demands of boxing are such that it is not possible for a boxer to drink alcohol and smoke and perform at their best because of the negative effect that these substances have on the body.

*The coaches don't just teach us how to box, but they teach us about a healthy lifestyle. It's not possible to smoke and be good at boxing. To be a boxer you have to change your whole lifestyle around boxing. Boxers can't get the full potential out of their bodies if they drink and smoke. It will affect our performance in the ring. To be the best, your body needs to be at its best. (Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)*

*It keeps you fit, it keeps you healthy, and if you smoke, it makes you stop smoking because you can't smoke and box. (Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)*

Closely tied to discipline and mental strength is self-control, which was also a need of the target group that was found to be inherent in boxing training. Boxing demands self-control because if a boxer loses their cool, they lose control of the fight, which could lead to not just defeat, but getting hurt.

*When you get to the point where you are still using a lot of energy, anger and aggression, you have to calm down and use your energy, anger and aggression in a constructive way, so that you don't get out of control, so that you don't spin out of control and you stay disciplined. You can then apply that outside of the boxing ring. If something did occur outside, you know how to deal with it and not blow up, which could end up with you being put in jail. (Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)*

## A New Support System: The Boxing Club Family

Many of the target group come from broken homes and are thus lacking a sense of belonging (REF). It was found that the boxing gym community was able to meet the need of providing a sense of belonging, a need that was previously being met by being a member of a gang.

*A lot of gangs are made up with people from broken homes, who are looking to be part of a family. A gang represents their support mechanism and it is the peer pressure within that support mechanism that leads to kids getting into all kinds of trouble. A boxing club is a family, so it acts as an alternative to being in a gang. (Anfield ABC Administrator Interview)*

*It's about building a sense of community, a sense of family, that they can then take outside of the gym. (Anfield ABC Administrator Interview)*

*It's difficult to sell boxing to funders because they just see it as a dangerous sport, but it's not about the fighting, not everyone will go on to fight, it's about creating a community in the gym. (Anfield ABC Administrator Interview)*

The boxing club was found to act as a replacement for the gang and provided greater value to the target group in providing a sense of belonging because it provided a larger system of support and a stronger sense of loyalty.

*When you're in a gang, you think it's cool and you've got mates looking out for you, but when you're in a gym you've got twice as many people looking out for you. It's a different sort of loyalty. You're not just friends, you're brothers. It's more like a family. (Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)*

Furthermore, the boxing club was found to provide greater value in meeting the need of a sense of community because it provided a more positive atmosphere build upon mutual respect, equality, acceptance and openness.

*Instead of getting respect from other gang members, you get respect from everyone in the gym. You would not say anything to a gang leader and they say how it's going to go, but when you're in the gym, everyone's equal. Everyone respects each other. (Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)*

*The atmosphere in the gym is really positive. Even if someone comes in and they're a bad person, the gym will change them. It's impossible to stay a bad person in here because of the gym culture that is so accepting and open. (Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)*

Although other sports may be able to provide a sense of belonging and community to their participants, boxing was found to be particularly effective in performing such a role because of the demands of the sport, which generates mutual respect from participating, regardless of victories or defeats.

*I respect my opponents because they've got the guts to stand up in the ring. For meeting you in the ring, you've got to respect them. You understand the pain that they've gone through as*

*well. They've pushed themselves to their limits, just like you have. (Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)*

*It doesn't matter if he's won twenty fights and he's lost twenty fights, everyone is the same, everyone is on the same level. (Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)*

*The first thing that you need when you come into a boxing gym is discipline and respect. What you have to go through as a boxer with all the hard work and discipline creates respect for yourself and once you have respect for yourself, you can then have respect for others. (Anfield ABC Administrator Interview)*

An important part of the boxing club family are the boxing coaches.

### Walked in Their Shoes: Alternative Role Models

In coming from broken homes, the target group are in need of role models (REF). Boxing coaches are able to fill this role, which can also be met by gang leaders. Boxing coaches offer greater value as role models than gang leaders or other role models 'on the street' because the example that they are setting is pro-social, such as employment, rather than anti-social, and following a positive example is more likely to be reinforced by others outside of the gang.

*When you're on the street, you think you've got role models, you wanna be him and you wanna be him, but they're role models for all the wrong reasons. However, when you're in the gym you can see life as it really is. Who you should be really looking up to and what is really important, like having a job. (Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)*

*A boxing gym is full of role models. People that have come off the streets and turned their lives around, doing something positive with their lives. (Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)*

It was found that the boxing coaches were effective in serving as positive role models because they came from the same community as the target group, which facilitated trustful relationships. Furthermore, the coaches had often faced the same challenges that the target group faced in engaging in pro-social behaviour, which enabled them to understand and empathise with the Champions of Life participants and, in turn, the target group could relate to the coaches and were thus more open to the guidance they were providing and the example they were setting.

*Our coaches are from the community, which is vital for building up trust within the community. The community can see that we are investing in them. (Anfield ABC Administrator Interview)*

*Our coaches have got a history. They've been in the shoes of the kids, so they can understand and relate to them. (Anfield ABC Administrator Interview)*

*I'm giving back to the kids now. I'm part of their life, getting them off the streets. I know where they've come from. I've grown up in their shoes. I've come out the other side, and now I want to get them out the other side. I can relate to their problems. They're not going to listen to people who haven't been through it themselves, who don't know what they're talking about,*

*but I can talk to them about the lessons I learned when I went through what they're going through, which they can grasp more. (Anfield ABC Administrator Interview)*

*Any problems that I've got I can talk to the coaches about because we're like a family and they understand me. I can talk about things with my coaches that I wouldn't be able to talk about with my parents or teachers. The coaches would help me out. They have been through what we're going through. They've been in my shoes, so they can give me guidance. (Anfield ABC Focus Group Participant)*

Having faced the same challenges as the target group, coaches are able to offer specific guidance illustrated with the vivid picture of their own experience. Furthermore, having overcome these challenges and coming from a similar background, the coaches were found to have the confidence to challenge the participants and not shy away from the serious problems they faced.

*Boxing is a working class sport and our coaches have a past. They have been in trouble themselves. They are able to share those experiences and tell the kids how bad it was whilst being examples of how they can turn their lives around. (Anfield ABC Administrator Interview)*

*Because of their background, the coaches are not scared to challenge a kid, whereas coaches of other sports might find it difficult to deal with kids with serious problems. (Anfield ABC Administrator Interview)*

## Discussion

### Focus on Sport's Value-adding Role

Distinguishing between S4D approaches and categorizing S4D programs according to outcomes sought is limiting to developing understanding of the role in sport in social change. Coalter (2007) distinguishes between Sport Plus and Plus Sport approaches in terms of outcome, whereby both seek to achieve developmental outcomes, but where Sport Plus approaches prioritize traditional sports development outcomes (i.e., participation, sporting skills) ahead of broader social outcomes. This distinction adds little to our understanding of the role of sport in social change beyond the understanding that for some practitioners development *of* sport is prioritized over development *through* sport. When considering outcomes, the terms development *of* sport and development *through* sport offer greater clarity. Coalter's (2007) distinction between Sport Plus and Plus Sport based upon the centrality of the role of sport provides an interesting distinction through which S4D programs can be analysed, but does not establish where and how sport can add value to social change.

Green's (2008) categorizations of S4D programs are based upon a mixture of objectives (sport for social inclusion) and the role of sport (sport as diversion, sport as a hook). Such an inconsistent categorization limits the understanding of the role of sport in social change. For example, Green (2008) describes an S4D program categorized as sport as a hook that "uses sport to attract teens, but is ultimately intended to help participants form relationships with other participants and with adult programme leaders" (pp. 135-136). The contrast Green (2008) makes (i.e., "but is ultimately") is inappropriate because there is no inherent conflict between delivery

and outcomes. Indeed, they can be considered independently from each other when seeking to understand S4D programs. A strong program theory will establish (1) the interim impacts broader outcomes that a program is seeking to achieve, and (2) the mechanisms and processes by which the program will achieve the interim impacts and broader outcomes (Coalter, 2007). Understanding a S4D program's desired interim impacts and broader outcomes is important in the evaluation of S4D programs (i.e., establishing impact), whereas understanding the mechanisms and processes by which the program will achieve the interim impacts and broader outcomes is more important in understanding the role of sport in social change.

It is more practical to categorize S4D programs according to the mechanisms and processes of S4D programs (e.g., sport as a universal neutral, rather than sport for social inclusion) because such labelling will focus practitioners' attention on making effective use of sport to achieve their desired outcomes, which should be front of mind regardless of labels and categories used in S4D. The consensus of a lack of theoretical understanding of how sport can contribute to social change (Hartmann, 2003; Coalter, 2007, 2013; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011; Schulenkorf, 2012) suggests that effective use of sport to achieve desired outcomes to be a pressing need for S4D practitioners. The use of sport to overcome feasible social problems is another debate, and categorizing S4D programs according to outcomes does not aid this debate like a clear list of social problems that empirical research has established as possible to alleviate through S4D. Focusing attention on the effectiveness of sport can enhance S4D program delivery, from which a clearer phenomenon can be studied so to further develop the theoretical understanding of the role of sport in social change.

The use of social marketing as a theoretical lens to analyse how sport played a value-adding role in the S4D programs studied (and to analyse existing categorizations of S4D in the study's literature review) served to highlight the practicality of understanding the role of sport in social change from the perspective of value added. This adds further clarity to the effective categorization of S4D by focusing S4D practitioner's attention on where and how sport adds value to behavior change. For example, sport as a diversion suggests that S4D programs only need to provide sport as a distraction and the undesirable behaviour will be forgotten about. The label of sport as a replacement, determined based upon seeking out the value of sport, encourages practitioners to use sport as a direct alternative to an undesirable behaviour through intentional design (e.g., scheduling against the undesirable behavior) so that sport is actually replacing the undesirable behaviour.

## Think S4D Components, not S4D Programmes

Rather than categorize S4D programs as sport as a hook or sport as a replacement, a more practical approach is to categorize components of S4D programs. As evident in this study, S4D programs have become much more sophisticated and are moving beyond a single use of sport. For example, as evident in this study, S4D programs are using sport as a hook, but rather than shift to an alternative vehicle of social change (e.g., tutoring, counselling) once participants have been hooked, as described by Green (2008), they continue to leverage the passion that participants have for sport so that participants do not become disengaged soon after commencing the program (e.g., sport as a metaphor). The problem of categorizing S4D programs as a whole is evident in Green's (2008) categorization of Midnight Basketball. Green (2008) first uses this program as an illustration of sport as a diversion before describing how it evolved to include mentoring, tutoring, and advising workshops, and as such represents an example of a sport as a hook program. Such

categorizing as a whole causes the program's conceptualization to be deprived of what initially made it a success, an important good practice that could be lost in S4D practice. Thinking about S4D components, rather than S4D programs as a whole, provides S4D practitioners with a toolkit that they can creatively draw from (i.e., developing a cocktail of multiple S4D components) so to maximize opportunity to overcome a social ill, just as a medical doctor might make use of a cocktail of drugs to overcome a physical ill, recognising that sport per se is not a social vaccine.

## References

- Berridge, D., Brodie, I., Pitts, J., Porteus, D., & Tarling, R. (2001). The independent effects of permanent exclusion from school on the offending careers of young people. . Retrieved 24 August 2016, from <http://troublesofyouth.pbworks.com/f/occ71-exclusion.pdf>
- Bloom, G. A., Durand-Bush, N., Schinke, R. J., & Salmela, J. H. (1998). The importance of mentoring in the development of coaches and athletes. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 29, 267-281.
- Bushman, B. J. (2002). Does venting anger feed or extinguish the flame? Catharsis, rumination, distraction, anger, and aggressive responding. *Personality and social psychology bulletin*, 28(6), 724-731.
- Chen, G., Gully, S. M., & Eden, D. (2004). General self-efficacy and self-esteem: Toward theoretical and empirical distinction between correlated self-evaluations. *Journal of organizational Behavior*, 25(3), 375-395.
- Clegg, J., Stackhouse, J., Finch, K., Murphy, C., & Nicholls, S. (2009). Language abilities of secondary age pupils at risk of school exclusion: A preliminary report. *Child Language Teaching and Therapy*, 25(1), 123-139.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory Into Practice*, 39(3), 124-130.
- Daniels, H. (2011). Exclusion from school and its consequences. *Psychological Science and Education*, 2011(1), 38-50.
- Department for Education (2016). Permanent and Fixed Period Exclusions in England: 2014 to 2015. . Retrieved 24 August 2016, from [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/539704/SFR\\_26\\_2016\\_text.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/539704/SFR_26_2016_text.pdf)
- Durrett, A. (2000). Boxing/Kickboxing Classes Still a Knockout. *IDEA Health & Fitness Source*, 18(2), 22-22.
- ESPN (2010). *Boxing's Knockout Punch: Sport Skills Difficulty Rankings*. Retrieved 24 August 2016, from <http://www.espn.com/espn/page2/sportSkills>

Flyvbjerg, B. (2011). Case study. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The sage handbook of qualitative research (4th ed.)*. (pp. 301-16). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Ghosh, A. K. (2010). Heart rate, oxygen consumption and blood lactate responses during specific training in amateur boxing. *International Journal of Applied Sports Sciences*, 22(1), 1-12.

Girginov, V. (2008). *Management of sports development*. Oxford, UK: Routledge.

Green, C. B. (2008). Sport as an agent for social and personal change. In V. Girginov (Ed.), *Management of Sports Development* (pp. 129-145). Oxford, UK: Routledge.

House of Commons (2016) Gangs and Serious Youth Violence. Retrieved 28 August 2016, from [researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2016.../CDP-2016-0045.pdf](http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2016.../CDP-2016-0045.pdf)

Howarth, C. (2004). Re-presentation and resistance in the context of school exclusion: reasons to be critical. *Journal of community & applied social psychology*, 14(5), 356-377.

Jarvie, G. (2003). Communitarianism, Sport and Social Capital Neighbourly Insights into Scottish Sport'. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 38(2), 139-153.

Judge, T. A., & Bono, J. E. (2001). Relationship of core self-evaluations traits—self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability—with job satisfaction and job performance: A meta-analysis. *Journal of applied Psychology*, 86(1), 80.

Macrae, S., Maguire, M. E. G., & Milbourne, L. (2003). Social exclusion: exclusion from school. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 7(2), 89-101.

Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (Vol. 41). Sage Publications.

Andrews, D. A., & Bonta, J. (2010). Rehabilitating criminal justice policy and practice. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 16(1), 39.

Parrott, R., & Duggan, A. (1999). Using coaches as role models of sun protection for youth: Georgia's "Got Youth Covered" project. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 27(2), 107-119.

Parsons, C. (2005). School Exclusion: The Will to Punish. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 53(2), 187-211.

Parsons, C., & Castle, F. (1998). The cost of school exclusion in England. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 2(4), 277-294.

Sherry, E. (2010). (Re) engaging marginalized groups through sport: The Homeless World Cup. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 45(1), 59-71.

Skinner, J., Zakus, D. H., & Cowell, J. (2008). Development through sport: Building social capital in disadvantaged communities. *Sport management review*, 11(3), 253-275.

Smith, R. E., & Smoll, F. L. (1990). Self-esteem and children's reactions to youth sport coaching behaviors: A field study of self-enhancement processes. *Developmental Psychology*, 26(6), 987.

Spiggle, S. (1994). Analysis and interpretation of qualitative data in consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21, 491-503.

Sport England (2016). Active People Interactive. . Retrieved 24 August 2016, from <http://activepeople.sportengland.org/>

Strauss, A. Corbin (1998) Basics of Qualitative Research. *Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. Thousand Oaks; CA.

Theriot, M. T., Craun, S. W., & Dupper, D. R. (2010). Multilevel evaluation of factors predicting school exclusion among middle and high school students. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 32(1), 13-19.

Tonts, M. (2005). Competitive sport and social capital in rural Australia. *Journal of rural studies*, 21(2), 137-149.

UK Government (2016). Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). . Retrieved 24 August 2016, from <https://www.gov.uk/children-with-special-educational-needs/overview>

Vail, S. E. (2007). Community development and sport participation. *Journal of Sport Management*, 21(4), 571.

Wacquant, L. J. (1992). The social logic of boxing in black Chicago: toward a sociology of pugilism. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 9(3).

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (Vol. 5). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.