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# **Extracurricular Sport and Physical Activity in Welsh Secondary Schools: Leisure Lifestyles and Young People**

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## **Abstract**

This paper presents research into an initiative that promotes extracurricular sport and physical activity opportunities for young people in Welsh secondary schools. The purpose of the research was to develop a nuanced understanding of young people's participation, and non-participation in the initiative and its connection to their leisure lifestyles. An accumulated twelve month period of ethnographic case study research was undertaken. An exploratory 18-week study period was spent in six Welsh secondary schools that led to phase two, a further eight week period at two of the original six schools visited. The research adopted a young person-centred approach and used observations, focus groups, interviews and classroom activities for data collection. The findings highlighted the importance of locating extracurricular sport and physical activity as part of young people's leisure lifestyles. The success of the initiative appeared closely linked to three principal factors: its perceived image; the type and range of activities offered; and the ability of the sport development officer to connect to young people. An explanatory framework is proposed as a means of making sense of the research findings and identifying the implications for policy makers interested in introducing and managing similar initiatives.

**Keywords:** Young people; leisure lifestyles; extracurricular sport; physical activity; sport management

## **1.Introduction**

Youth cultures and lifestyles are reflected in the transition from childhood to adulthood. They are part of an ‘idioculture’ (Wilson & White, 2001) that represents beliefs, values, symbols and activities that young people share by engaging in cultural practices such as music, dance, fashion and ‘hanging about’ (Frith, 1984). In contemporary western societies young people’s lifestyles and behaviours are often centred around the opportunity to assert independence, relationships, instability of interests, playing computer games, watching TV and the opportunity to be physically active (Green, 2002). In this sense leisure time provides young people with an opportunity for independence, responsibility and autonomy from parental influence (Roberts, 1996). Sport and physical activity are amongst the popular sites of expression for young people in their leisure time. They are perceived as important for establishing social and moral skills for young people and promoting personal and social responsibility (Bailey, 2005). As with other aspects of their lives, young people’s participation in sport and physical activity is complex (Parker & Don, 2013).

Hitherto there have been relatively few large scale qualitative studies using young people-centred methods to develop a nuanced understanding of their leisure lifestyles and participation in extracurricular sport and physical activity. The purpose of this paper is therefore to present the findings from a large-scale empirical programme of research based in secondary schools in Wales. Its aim was to explore young people’s participation and non-participation in extracurricular sport and physical activity, and their relationship to leisure lifestyles. Importantly, the research placed young people at the heart of analysis (MacPhail & Kinchin, 2004). The focus of the research was a pan-Wales initiative that targeted extracurricular sport and physical activity in all secondary schools. Known as the ‘5x60’ initiative its aim was to raise physical activity levels to meet the Welsh Government’s target

of young people engaging in sport and physical activity for one hour (60 minutes), five times a week. Introduced as a pilot in 2004, (Bolton *et al* 2007), its main objective was to locate a sports development officer (SDO) to stimulate and provide additional extracurricular sport and physical activity opportunities, especially targeting those currently not involved in school sport, school team sport and / or Physical Education (Sports Council for Wales, 2006).

Following this introduction, the paper has four substantive sections. The background and context presents a multi-disciplinary overview of themes linked to the sociology of leisure, informed in particular by the work of Ken Roberts (1996, 1997, 2004), as well as paediatric exercise psychology and Ken Fox's (1988) conceptual under-pinning on engagement in physical activity. The procedures used for data capture are briefly presented before a consideration of the key findings. The results are synthesised around presenting and understanding of the young people's leisure lifestyles, and their characteristics which display considerable heterogeneity. There are also important findings for the programme delivery, namely, the image of the programme, the range of activities and role of the SDO. Finally, an explanatory framework based on these finding is presented together with a discussion that considers some implications for policy makers involved in youth programmes.

## **2. Background and Context**

“Young people” can be distinguished as a maturational group between childhood and adulthood; and ‘youth describes aspects of people's social position which are an effect of their biological age but not completely determined by it” (Frith, 1984, 2). Quite often then the transition from childhood to adulthood is viewed as the development of the immature child to the independent employable adult. However, to mark clear differentiation between ‘young

people', 'children' and 'adults' can be difficult for two main reasons. First, the reference to 'the immature child and the independent employable adult' fails to identify the socio-cultural constraints of youth as a distinct stage in the life-course (Bynner, 2001). Second, Frith (1984, 2) argues that "if the end of youth is marked by our taking on an adult role – marriage and children, work and a career, our own household – then people stop being young at a great variety of ages".

Since the mid-1990s sociological research has referred to the 'new condition of youth' (Roberts, 1996). There has been a tendency towards prolonging life-stages as the typical ages at which individuals cross adult thresholds (such as marriage) have risen, and major life events have ceased to be as closely linked to specific ages as in the past. Young people's futures have become more uncertain and their biographies more individualised – partly due to the sheer pace of economic and social change, the variety of courses in post-compulsory education, training schemes, temporary and part-time jobs, and periods of unemployment (Arnett, 2006). An important aspect of this individualisation is the young person's ability to choose what to do and when to do it (Roberts, 1996).

Young people are often preoccupied with identity problems of 'who am I?' and in an attempt to find individual lifestyle preferences they experiment with different leisure activities and social roles (Zeijl, du Bois Raymond & de Poel, 2001). Often, adolescents' focal concerns, such as, relationships with sexual partners, peers and parents produce identity conflicts (Hendry & Kloep, 2010). , Roberts (1997) has also argued that leisure is less equipped to support identity formation but is more likely to act as fun. The identities young people create for themselves disintegrate almost as quickly as they were constructed; that is to say, 'leisure pursuits affect how young (and older) people feel about themselves and add fine detail to their social identities but do not tell them or others who they basically are'

(Roberts, 1997, p.14). Yet it is also true that some young people do create their leisure identity and idioculture based upon their shared beliefs and experiences of sport and physical activity (Wilson & White, 2001).

Almost twenty years ago Roberts (1996) noted the shift away from spending leisure time in organised and supervised settings toward spending time with groups of friends in unsupervised situations (Roberts, 1996). A corollary of that trend is a decline in participation in organised youth clubs and diminished commitment to sports clubs. Indeed, general trends of participation show an increased diversification of physically active leisure opportunities and a move away from traditional team games towards more informal, recreational, lifestyles and adult-like activities such as, aerobics, swimming and weight training (Smith, Green, & Thurston, 2009).

There are a number of key influences on young people's socialisation into, and participation in sport and physical activity. They include gender (e.g., Biddle, Coalter, O'Donovan, MacBeth, Nevill, & Whitehead 2005), previous experience (e.g., Kjønnsken, Anderssen & Wold, 2009), social processes (e.g., Sandford, Armour, & Warmington, 2006), friends (e.g., Green, 2002), family (e.g., Kirk, Carlson, O'Connor, Burke, Davis & Glover, 1997) and social class (e.g., Green, Smith, Roberts, 2005). Together they highlight some of the complexity of young people's sport and physical activity participation but also help explain aspects of young people's lives more generally.

Alongside these there are, as Wouters (2007) explains, on-going processes of informalisation, democratisation and sociability, which are concerned directly with relationships between adults and children. To elaborate, the general patterns is for changes to, and relaxation of the rigid codes of behaviour and in the dominant mode of social conduct for young people. There is a marked increase in sensitivity and flexibility for young people, and

a lessening of inequality linked to changes in the power relations between the parent and the child (Wouters, 2007). Set against this backdrop of social change in the lives of young people, policy makers have attempted to understand (and hence promote) young people's participation in sport and physical activity (Smith *et al.*, 2009). Recent evidence has demonstrated that quality of adult-youth relationships is important in contributing towards positive outcomes from initiatives and programmes targeted at young people (Armour, Sandford & Duncombe, 2013; Sandford, Duncombe & Armour, 2008). Moreover, social processes have been identified as the key to behaviour change rather than specific activities in which young people are engaged (Bailey, 2005), and are likely therefore to play a crucial role in explaining young people's participation in sport and physical activity.

In the late 1980s landmark conceptual work made explicit the importance of a child-centred approach and emphasised the need for a psychological perspective that considered the child's perception of their sport and physical activity experience (Fox, 1988). A 'broad brush' typology was advanced that highlighted psychological dispositions towards sport and physical activity amongst young people. The categories were:

Approachers – individuals who perceive sport and physical activity as uplifting, see some kind of reward in sport and / or exercise, and independently seek out physical experiences (Fox, 1988).

Neutrals – 'those who have no strong feelings or convictions about sport and / or physical activity, and activity patterns' (Fox, 1988, p.35). This group's sport and physical activity participation is likely to be sporadic and responsive to the social setting. Given the right circumstances (for instance, being invited by friends to an activity), they might be persuaded to participate.



Avoiders – individuals who perceive sport and physical activity negatively and stressful. They tend to perceive themselves as uncoordinated and incompetent and are unlikely to choose to participate (without substantial persuasion). This group is the least likely to receive the benefits of physical activity, but is in most need of them.

This conceptual point of departure has also been deployed in policy development, for example in Sports England's (n.d.) categorisation of 'always', 'sometimes' and 'never' participants. It also acts as a platform for the present study. Specifically, the 'avoiders' and 'neutrals' were those young people who were more difficult to engage in sport, physical activity and physical education, and were of primary concern to this research. Since it was thought that participation in sport and physical activity for these groups of young people was likely to be sporadic or non-existent, it was necessary to gain an understanding of their leisure lifestyles in general, and not just their leisure-sport preferences (Green, 2002).

### **3. A Note on Method**

Following ethical approval from the university, an accumulated twelve month period of case study research was undertaken in two sequential phases. The first phase was an exploratory study where 18 weeks was spent in six secondary schools selected from across Wales to take account of different socio-economic areas, geography and language (incorporating Welsh and English speaking schools). The purpose of the first phase was to explore young people's experiences of, and attitudes towards participation in extracurricular sport and physical activity. Young people were self-defined by gender and also whether they declared themselves as a participant of '5x60' or a non-participant of '5x60.' Focus groups (n =71) were undertaken that included 413 pupils drawn from 18 separate classes in years 7, 8 and 9 (11-14 years old). The research was supplemented by 24 stakeholder interviews (officers, teachers, heads and local authority officials) and observations.

In the second phase two schools from the original six were selected for more intensive ethnographic fieldwork that built on initial findings from phase one from years 7-10 (11-15 year olds). A further eight weeks were spent at both Valley High and Rhyd y Fro in order to develop existing relationships with the young people to provide better of understanding of their 'world' (Christensen & James, 2000), and how sport and physical activity is reflected in their leisure lifestyles. Seven information-rich case studies were developed with individuals who were less likely to participate and thus 'hard to reach'.

The Principal Investigator (PI) was a qualified Physical Education secondary teacher fluent in English and Welsh. Adopting the role of teacher-researcher (Peeke, 1984) during supply cover lessons.. During these sessions the PI developed some classroom-based activities (see Bryant *et al.*, in press) as a means of exploring issues and developing a rapport with the young people themselves. From a total of 488 young people in both schools, 436 were involved in the data capture, and a total of 33 focus groups were conducted which involved 152 pupils.

All classroom activities were subject to content analysis and all focus groups and semi-structured interviews were transcribed and thematically analysed. Pseudonyms have been used throughout and interviews conducted through the medium of Welsh have been translated and are italicised.

#### 4. Findings

The most striking feature of the research was the heterogeneity of the young people which showed the overall picture to be complex and sensitive to important external influences including gender, socio-economic background, school context, peers and family (Eime, 2013). The opportunity to spend a prolonged period of time with the young people resulted in a four-fold typology of leisure lifestyles being established into which most young people, most of the time, could be clearly located. The typological categorisation provided a deeper and more nuanced appreciation of how extracurricular sport and physical activity formed part of young people's leisure lifestyles. Based on phase two's research findings, the defined categories were 'sporty' (n=106), 'arty' (n=34), 'sporty and arty' (n=15) and 'leisure' (n=241).

Evidence from the focus groups and leisure lifestyle activities confirmed that those in the 'sporty' category were highly motivated, competitive and active participants of the community club and school teams including young people like James, *"I love all types of sports and physical activity, I am very busy with rugby, football and cricket in school teams and outside clubs. I also enjoy activities like surfing, swimming and golf."* Typically, this group were all classified as Fox's (1988) approachers to sport and therefore most forms of physical activity and / or competition acted as a participation trigger for this group. In this sense the young people could be compared to Sport England's (nd) 'always participants' of sport and physical activity. The 'arty' category included young people like Siwan who perceived their participation in activities like music and drama to be most important: *"I do the sketch-show, choir and folk dancing in school and in the evening I go to a 'performing school' and we do a bit of everything like drama and singing"*. A relatively small but

important group comprised young people who were both ‘arty’ and ‘sporty’ – like Dai, “*I am a member of the local swimming and running club ... I also perform with stage show and what I love is meeting new people, famous people and performing on the stage.*” Broadly, this group included young people who were neutrals and avoiders as well as some approachers (Fox, 1988).

The largest and most interesting single group was the ‘leisure’ category which included some approachers but also many neutrals and avoiders of sport and physical activity. The leisure category was extremely heterogenous, with a range of young people and activities characterised by physicality and sociability which took place at the home, youth club / centre, or on the streets reflecting trends and fashions in young people’s leisure lifestyles (Green, 2002). Popular activities included Facebook, going out with friends, (non-competitive) swimming and shopping. Although all young people were typically involved in these types of activities, for those in this category the activities were their main and sometimes only form of leisure engagement.

The findings from the classroom activities and focus groups revealed some interesting dimensions in relation to the ‘5x60’ initiative. In contrast to other related research that examined this impact (Bolton *et al.*, 2008) the data showed more girls participating than boys in three out of the four categories. Only in the ‘sporty’ category showed more boys than girls were involved in the ‘5x60’ programme. Put simply ‘5x60’ provided new opportunities for sporty boys who were interested in mountain biking, basketball, 5 a-side football and water polo while sporty girls appeared to enjoy touch rugby / tag rugby, not typically available during traditional PE lessons.

As the largest and most diverse group, the ‘leisure’ category also included considerably more females than males. For this category the look of ‘5x60’ was particularly important as

was the role of the '5x60' SDO in establishing a distinct approach that aimed to be different to the school's norms and set the programme apart. For Rhys, a '5x60' SDO, the fact that the PE staff did not know the names of the pupils taking part indicated that '...you know you have targeted the right people.' The need to be a friend not a teacher was pivotal to its success and highlighted the role of informalisation and democratisation in establishing a successful relationship (Smith *et al.*, 2009). The '5x60' dancers and members of the aikido and fencing clubs included young people from the leisure category that did no other physical activity.

By listening to their stories it was clear that some avoiders were resistant to changes in their daily patterns either voluntarily or involuntarily. But others were receptive if the 'offer' appeared attractive and it suited them. For these neutrals the '5x60' intervention was particularly important and had the potential to demonstrate how young people may be prepared to shift their patterns of behaviour and incorporate sport and physical activity into their leisure lifestyles. Groups of image conscious girls were particularly attracted to dance related activities and street kids were drawn to basketball, break dancing and surfing. Inter-form and inter-house dodgeball and basketball tournaments were also popular. More important than the activities themselves, however, was the need to create the right kind of environment for the young people. In this regard the role of the '5x60' SDO was pivotal for getting to know the young people and developing an attractive programme that would be appealing to non-traditional, non-sporty types. A synopsis of seven individual examples of young people resistant to physical activity but were enticed by the '5x60' offer is presented in Table 1 (also see Leyshon *et al.*, 2012).

Table 1. Synopsis of individual examples

| Case Study   | Summary of case study evidence   |
|--|--|
| Tommy, 16 year old male  | An overweight pupil who was disengaged in school life and never brought his PE kit to lessons. Tommy was a well known character in the school staff room, he'd been on the verge of being suspended for his unruly and inappropriate classroom behaviour. As a result of his active involvement in '5x60' mountain biking, aikido and fencing club he demonstrated more confidence and a change in attitude towards sport and physical activity. His increased confidence was reflected in his motivation for PE and school multi-gym participation. Moreover his participation also resulted in his family's socialisation into sport and physical activity.  |
| '5x60' Dance Leaders, female 14-16 years old                       | Disengaged pupils in school who had made the link from their curriculum Dance Leaders Course to become leaders of dance clubs such as the primary school dance club. The dance Leaders' course offered at the school was a vehicle for female pupils (14-16 year olds) who had become disengaged from PE to become involved again in physical activity. Georgina and Jo – were difficult characters in detention quite a lot as a result of going through the Dance Leaders role they became more pleasant young adults. They also developed respect and empathy with teachers when leading. Claire – disliked school but dance leaders was used as an avenue to engage her with school.   |
| Billy & Sammy 14 year old male young leaders & '5x60' participants | Both Billy and Sammy were in the foundation set in school, they found it difficult to concentrate and disliked any school work that involved writing. Sammy was dyslexic and had a previous history of being disruptive. The most important aspect of school life was their PE lessons and their involvement with '5x60'. Importantly, the boys were responsible for lending sport equipment to pupils (in the Zone 2) and active members of '5x60' clubs. Both boys enjoyed a chat and social contact with the '5x60' Officer, and for Billy this was probably his main reason for participation. The boys proudly wore their '5x60' hooded t-shirts and reported an improvement in their self-esteem as a result of their role.  |
| The male 'Fencers' Steffan 13 yrs old Lloyd & Ben – 15 year olds   | Thirteen year-old Steffan was an active member of '5x60' fencing, aikido, football and gymnastics. Steffan was also the recipient of the 'Mr.5x60 award' for attending the most number of '5x60' clubs. He also tried his best at the traditional school sport teams but never quite made it into the teams. However, as a result of his fencing experience joined the community fencing club and then successfully went on to represent Wales. Fifteen year-olds Lloyd & Ben were active members of '5x60' fencing and successfully made the link to the community fencing club. Making this link required a big commitment from the boys and their parents who lived a forty minute drive away from the club. Both did no other form of physical activity. Ben liked rugby but didn't think he was good enough so started the '5x60' fencing club to impress his PE teacher. Lloyd was dyspraxic, had no interest in sport but joined the fencing club as he was interested in the historical link with fencing. |
| '5x60' female touch rugby club, 11-18 year olds                    | A successful '5x60' female club with a range of sporty and non-sporty members. The club took place after school on a Friday and had up to 45 members. An emphasis on fun in a competitive environment, including, opportunity to participate in the regional touch rugby tournament and a National Tournament contributed towards the success of the club. The sixth form male leaders played an important role in the success of the club, they were very popular and were able to relate the young people. The females perceived the sixth formers as role models and friends around school.   |
| Female '5x60' street dancers, 12-13 years old                      | Non-sporty pupils who were active members of the '5x60' street dance but did no other form of sport and physical activity. The dance coach, was a female in her early twenties and was very popular with the girls. The group relished the opportunity to perform in dance festivals and concerts. Such opportunities were very positive experiences for the girls and have them an opportunity to build or regain their confidence.   |
| Bethany 12 year old female   | A pupil with 'Asperger's' syndrome referred to as a developmental disorder, usually of childhood characteristics, by impairment of social interactions and repetitive behaviour patterns (reference). Moving from primary to secondary school was a big ordeal for Bethany. She was inactive at home, had a negative previous (primary) experience of sport and physical activity, was unable to do after school activity clubs as she had to get a taxi home. As a result of her involvement with the inter-form lunch time basketball tournament at the start of the year she gained confidence to join the '5x60' touch rugby club and represented the school in the LA tag rugby tournament.   |

These seven examples provided in Table 1 acknowledge the role that the ‘5x60’ SDO had in motivating them to participate. The SDO was often central in terms of talking to, negotiating with and getting to know the young people, which in turn helped develop an understanding of the pupils and their context (Smith *et al.*, 2009). The importance of the social aspect and process of building purposeful adult-youth relationships has been noted by Sandford *et al.*, (2008), and this appeared to apply especially to the neutrals and avoiders some of whom were considered ‘hard-to-reach.’ This point was illustrated in Tommy’s case study when one teacher commented, “*Rhys, the ‘5x60’ SDO, has been great with Tommy, he has given him the time and attention that he has been looking for*”.

Similarly, the Dance Leaders course proved to be a vehicle and trigger for disengaged females who previously did not participate in PE lessons to return to physical activity. Amy, referred to enjoying Dance Leaders and like most others on the course was attracted to it because it fitted well with her lifestyle priorities such as fashion, make-up, MSN, Facebook and boys. Indeed, many females participating in the Dance Leaders thought that this activity preferable to other possibilities. Amy explained:

We enjoy PE more because of Dance Leaders we really want to do it. Last year I didn’t even take part and would have a note because we did hockey and swimming. Now it is really good as you get to listen to your own music and fetch your ipod in, and make your own dance that suits you best. We are also excited to teach dance in the primary school.

In addition to participating in physical activity and gaining a leadership qualification, there were many other benefits and incentives provided by the Dance Leaders course. As a disengaged pupil, the Dance Leaders Course was used by Valley High as an incentive for Claire:

Before I didn't like school so I stopped coming. The welfare officer and my father came into school for a meeting and they agreed that if I would come to school for two days a week for the Dance Leaders course, English, Maths and Science. I feel better for doing Dance Leaders and coming to school just two days a week.

Significantly for the sustainability of the '5x60' initiative, Claire successfully gained her qualification and then, with her friends, went on to deliver dance at the '5x60' club and primary school. Georgina felt that she had blossomed as a result of her participation in the course:

I'm much more confident now ... before I didn't use to have any respect for the teacher but doing Dance Leaders helped me develop respect for people. When leading you see things from a teacher's point of view. I used to be a bit naughty, but now before I start ignoring teachers I think what I felt like teaching in front of the class and I didn't like it.

These examples illustrate some of the benefits of this particular '5x60' activity, namely, improved behaviour and attendance (Sandford *et al.*, 2008), improved self-confidence and esteem, the development of belonging and acceptance (Donnelly & Coakley, 2002), and an increased respect towards others.

Other '5x60' activities revealed a wide range of benefits to the participants. For some, there was the opportunity to assert independence, the informal drop-in nature of clubs, the latest fashions, opportunity for choice and hanging out with friends (Smith *et al.*, 2009), which all appealed to some from the leisure category. The young people relished the element of choice and ownership provided by the exciting and different activities like street dance, fencing, gorge walking, surfing, roller hockey, dodgeball, cheerleading and climbing, describing these activities positively using words such as 'awesome', 'wicked' and 'safe' – meaning that they were enjoyable and exciting. Tommy explained:



‘Gorge Walking’ I didn’t know what it was first ... oh my gosh, it was amazing you walk up and over stones, up rivers and jump off water falls. Some people were screaming I didn’t ... but doing it definitely gave me an adrenaline rush and more confidence in myself and with water.

He went on to elaborate on an additional benefit that arose from his participation in ‘5x60’ – his family’s engagement in sport and physical activity and the importance of that shared experience:

So now (after going to ‘5x60’ club) I’ve had Daddy to do it (cycling) as well ... Before I didn’t socialise with Daddy, but now we socialise more together on the bikes. At home the attitude towards sports has changed a lot...we go out a lot more, we have been out cycling, we cycle down the pub on a bike.

Activity triggers were closely linked to lifestyles; similarly to the dance leaders, the street dance ‘5x60’ activity fitted well with the young females lifestyles. The young people’s participation in some clubs was also influenced by the media – TV programmes, magazines and DVDs. Ben, a 13 year-old fencer, was clear: “I went fencing because I watched it during the Olympics and thought it was cool and I liked the idea of swords”. For some young people activity triggers were linked to personal interests and or hobbies that were not necessarily related to sport. Lloyd disliked rugby but was attracted to fencing: “with fencing if it is linked to history or something then for me that is interesting.”

Touch rugby was a different / new sport for some females and as a result acted as a trigger for participation. However, the success of female touch-rugby at Rhyd Y Fro could also be attributed to other factors, especially the structure of the club, the sixth-form leaders and the competitive opportunities provided by the club. Three touch-rugby sessions (12-13

year olds, 14-15 year olds and 16-17 year olds) were held simultaneously, the 12-13 and 14-15 year olds female sessions were taken by the male sixth-formers and the female 16-17 year olds was taken by the sport development '5x60' Officer.

The benefits of this structure were three-fold. First, having all ages present was advantageous for motivation; second, the older sixth-form females enjoyed having the male '5x60' SDO leading; and third, as Sandford *et al.* (2008) discovered in their own study, that successful leaders encouraged the younger pupils to participate by providing an opportunity for skill development as well as a social aspect to the club. As Bolton *et al.* (2007) indicated in their analysis of the 'pilot' for the '5x60' initiative, a competitive infrastructure was a desirable characteristic of the provision and the opportunity to participate in regional and national tournaments also contributed to the success of the 'touch rugby club.

## **5. Discussion and Implications**

The research presented in this paper has examined the leisure lifestyles of young people and based on their perceptions and perspective, it has explored *their attitudes* towards extracurricular sport and physical activity. The research design involved extensive qualitative research (interviews, focus groups and observations) over a prolonged period of time, cumulatively amounting to twelve months fieldwork. In summary, the findings revealed the heterogeneity of young people and that for many, their interest in physical activity and sport needed to be viewed as part of a wider approach to leisure lifestyles generally.

Based on these research findings, Figure 1 (see below) offers an explanatory framework that addresses the complex and inter-twined environment of policy and how its implementation, can influence young people's leisure lifestyles. To be interpreted from left to right, it recognises the central role of young people and acknowledges the context specific

environments that young people find themselves. To varying degrees all young people are influenced by three sets of factors, namely individual (which includes personal-psychological and family issues), local (which includes peers, neighbourhood, cultural and community issues) and societal (which includes structural socio-economic, demographic and political issues). Each of these sets of factors is extremely complex in its own right and how they connect to each other and between each other will undoubtedly impact on the attitudes and behaviour of young people. After Fox (1988), the analysis from the six participating schools revealed that while some young people are ‘approachers’ to physical activity and sport, many are either ‘neutral’ or indeed resistant, otherwise referred to as ‘avoiders.’

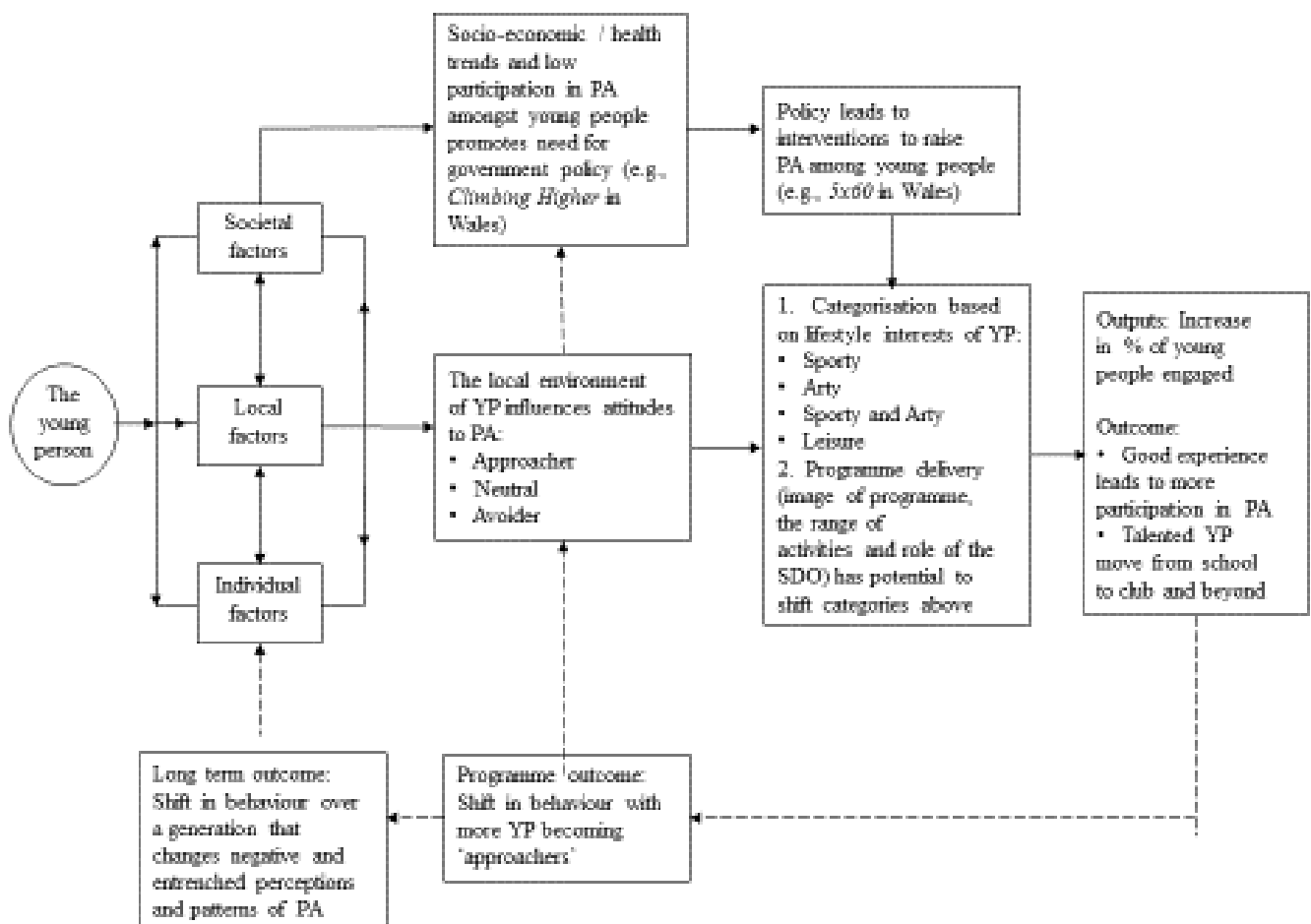


Figure 1: Summative Explanatory Framework

Headline data from Welsh Government (2013) have revealed an insufficient participation in physical activity and sport resulting in too few ‘approachers’ and too many ‘neutrals ‘ and ‘avoiders’ Only 35% of children were reported as undertaking an hour of physical activity a day, only 29% of adults were reported as doing physically activity on five days a week (Welsh Government, 2013). Moreover, reports such as the Welsh Health Survey increasingly acknowledge the increase in child obesity (Welsh Government, 2013) and its concomitant links to sedentary lifestyles (includes a poor diet, lack of exercise and too many hours watching TV and gaming). Recognising that many young people are resistant to physical activity and sport, this issue has become relevant with successive governments becoming drawn in (Houlihan, 2000. Evidence has shown the long-term benefits of adopting healthy lifestyles when young (Kjonnisken *et al.*, 2009) and consequently the Westminster Government and devolved governments of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have introduced various policies to address these problems. In relation to the present research, Figure 1 reflects a recognition of these contextualising variables by Welsh Government in its national strategy which led to the policy that all children and young people must undertake 60 minutes of exercise every day (Welsh Assembly Government, 2005). This led to the introduction of the ‘5x60’ initiative.

The complexity of young people’s lifestyles made any categorisation beyond Fox’s threefold typology difficult. Nonetheless, though spending a prolonged period with the young people and gathering data from classroom based research activities, four categories were used to define the lifestyles of young people (sporty, arty, sporty and arty and leisure orientated). This research was over-laid with a detailed analysis of the intervention itself that revealed there were three key elements to the ‘5x60’ initiative that could make a real difference locally, in terms of its implementation on the ground. Firstly, the image of the

programme and how it is presented and communicated to young people is pivotal in creating an identity. Participants in the present study frequently referred to its distinct characteristics and many relished the fact it was marketed and branded differently from other school programmes and initiatives. These factors are fundamental to the way the target audiences perceive the programme and its relevance to them. Inevitably the use of social media will be a key driver in communicating directly with the target audiences and can enable bespoke messages and branding that will be attractive to different sub-groups of young people. Secondly, there are the activities themselves – the type and range of activities (linked to the expressed and latent demands of young people) and their organisation (timing, quality of coaching and overall logistics) will impact on take-up. While the opportunity to participate in a new activity produced a renewed sense of responsibility and commitment for some, others wanted the more informal recreational set up, characterised by an ‘opt in, opt out’ arrangement as it suited their transient lifestyles. Thirdly, the research revealed the difference that the ‘5x60’ SDO could make. Being *in situ* was considered very important both by pupils and school alike. This individual was uniquely placed to break down barriers and ‘get to know’ pupils, especially those that would not typically be associated with school sport. This was frequently commented on by the young people themselves who saw the ‘5x60’ SDO as a mentor and coach, not someone in authority (see Nesti, 2001). Importantly and perhaps unbeknown to the young people themselves, was the performance of the SDO her/himself who was affected considerably by the support received from the local authority and the school itself (in terms of attitude to the programme, commitment, ethos, and staff buy-in).

Evidence from the present study suggests that if well established and managed properly, changes in participation patterns should be expected. Figure 1 explains that there

should be an increase in the percentage of young people participating and more significantly a change in attitude towards physical activity and sport including, for some, a pathway that bridges school activities to community clubs and beyond. However, this study also makes clear that although policy initiatives and interventions are necessary they are not in themselves sufficient to produce long-lasting and sustained changes in attitudes toward sport and physical activity among young people. Thus the final aspect of Figure 1 suggests that while a successful programme can bring about *in situ* changes these cannot be guaranteed to affect what we have termed generational change. To achieve this requires long term sustained investment where a whole system approach is taken that includes school, club, and community and which puts young people themselves at the centre. With the right balance it is possible to implement interventions that reflect young people's heterogeneity and are grounded in the leisure lifestyles of young people themselves.

In conclusion Figure 1 should be tested further by considering some of the research and emerging themes explored in this paper. Additionally, we suggest three further areas of research that were beyond the scope of this project but which would benefit from further investigation. Firstly, if physical activity is to become a lifelong habit then there is a need to explore interventions alongside the role of transitions further, from primary to secondary and from secondary to Further Education, Higher Education and the work place. Secondly, research that places the young people at the centre of programme design could be the basis of some action research studies. For volunteers and pupil ambassadors, the role of 'co-creators' could be crucial for the success of such projects. Lastly, research that looks further at identity and youth sub-cultures, especially in terms of communication and the role social media could play would be valuable to sport managers. This research has revealed the importance of understanding the heterogenous nature of young people's leisure lifestyles

which in turn through the development of the '5x60' initiative provided new opportunities to engage young people to participate. This should be developed further by analysing specific sub-groups that are more resistant to engaging in extracurricular sport and physical activity.

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