
NO GAMES ALLOWED: CONSUMPTION AND CLASS IN SPORT UNDER AUSTERITY

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Synopsis:

Using a methodologically innovative approach of spatial regression modelling, using the Local Authority District (n=326) as our spatial level of analysis, we seek to capture longitudinal spatial inequalities and clustering in sports participation.

Abstract:

AIM:

Scholarly work in the field of cultural sociology has established a clear link between social position and culture, leisure and sport consumption. This relationship has been theorised most famously by Pierre Bourdieu (1984) and Richard Peterson (2005). It is evident that consumption is still bound up in social hierarchies. Place remains largely ignored in scholarly studies of cultural, leisure and sport consumption. Place is a key driver in the formation and maintenance of cultural and leisure lifestyles and this article then takes a step in readdressing this anomaly by examining whether clustering of sport consumption exists at district level in England. Using a methodologically innovative approach to capture spatial inequality in sport, our findings illustrate how place is vital to sport consumption behaviour. We argue that the underlying mechanism behind these sporting patterns at the area level is contextual in nature, and due to the supply of sporting items and the importance of likeminded individuals in active networks.

BACKGROUND:

Inequality is polarizing in Britain based on geographical location. Areas are pulling apart on income, education, wealth, health, and wellbeing. These patterns have accelerated in recent years as a direct impact of the global financial crisis and the onset of austerity. Indeed, in their attempts to tackle the economic downturn, the Conservative and Liberal Demarcate coalition, via the Comprehensive Spending Review 2010, outlined £81 billion of cuts across

government departments by 2014/15. Over the subsequent 5-years there has been a systematic reduction in spending by Local Authority Districts (LAD's) on statutory provision including sport (Parnell, Millward and Spracklen, 2014). With cultural, leisure and sporting consumption highly correlated with inequality (Bennett et al 2009, Bourdieu 1984), a reduction in spending will impact upon this growing polarization in British society, in terms of consumption. This article explores spatial patterns of sport participation in England.

METHODOLOGY:

Using a methodologically innovative approach of spatial regression modelling, using the Local Authority District (n=326) as our spatial level of analysis, we seek to capture longitudinal spatial inequalities and clustering in sports participation. We will use all waves of the Taking Part Survey (2007-2013), adopting a Spatial Regression Model across the England Local Authority Districts. A number of explanatory variables including LA sport and leisure funding cuts, Supply, Census Variables, Indices of Multiple Deprivation and Density will be used. The software Geoda and Arc Map will be used.

RESULTS

Through several mechanisms operating at the macro level we might expect areas of high participation to cluster in geographic space. In this paper, we seek to explore whether in fact, sports participation does cluster in geographic space, where they do, is there a contagion effect (or spill over) - whereby these high activity areas are located next to similar areas. Conversely are those identified as inactive (i.e., low sports participation) areas likely to boarder in geographical space other areas of inactivity. Similarly, the role of funding cuts to sport and leisure will be analyzed.

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