

Resistance to Crime by Talent Development in Dutch Youth Work. a Q-methodological study¹

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Introduction

Most youngsters in the Netherlands grow up having no big problems. However, fifteen percent of them encounter struggles - for various reasons - during their search for adulthood. They fail to develop their talents in a positive way, have a shortage of success experiences, they fall off prematurely in education and have low perspective for social advancement. Not uncommonly, they find alternative strategies for success, status and respect in the delinquent street culture. These youngsters have an increased risk of coming into contact with crime (Bolt & van der Wekke, 2012; Kooijmans, 2009).

Current Dutch youth policy makers want to tackle juvenile delinquency early and preventively. Since the last ten years, Dutch youth work is - in line with this new policy- more and more confronted with this double assignment: to develop talents of disadvantaged youngsters on the one hand, and to combat anti social behavior of 'youth at risk' on the other hand. The assumption is that artistic and sportive talent projects help them to change their antisocial attitude and behavior in a more positive way. In those projects, youngsters have been coached to develop their creative and sportive talents, and especially practical and social skills, to create a new network and to develop their motivation to resist the temptations and pressure of crime.

Our research question is: how do these talent projects work from the perspective of the youngsters themselves? The first empirical stage of my research (participant observation and interviews) showed that for some youngsters talent projects work successfully, but for others it seems that they have no stimulating or even negative effects. In a Q study we investigated the significance, value and most important motivating and demotivating elements of talent projects for the respondents.

The purpose of the Q study is to distinguish some typical discourses of youngsters based on their shared meanings and experiences, and to establish whether a relation exists between these clusters of shared viewpoints and the more objective criminological typing, based on their behavior.

Recent studies suggested that effects of social interventions are partly determined by the experience and motivation of participants (Rovers in Kooijmans, 2010; Deci & Ryan, 2002). It is therefore important to know what attitudes youths have of talent projects in relation to their current and future development and behavior. This study hopes to contribute to knowledge about the effectiveness of Youth Work practices that pursue 'resistance to crime'.

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In this paper, the preliminary findings and analyses of our Q study among 48 youngsters in the South of the Netherlands are presented.

Methods and data

Q-methodology

To uncover youth's perceptions, meanings and experiences of talent projects in relation to their development and behavior, we have conducted a Q-methodological study. We choose this hybrid qualitative-quantitative method that provides a foundation for the systematic study of subjectivity, people's viewpoints, beliefs, attitudes, feelings, opinions and the like (van Exel et al., 2006). A pre-selected group of respondents, called the P-set, are presented with a sample of statements about some topic (in this case about creative and sportive talent projects the youngsters are involved in), called the Q-set. The respondents are asked to rank-order these statements according to their point of view from disagree (-3) to most agree (+3), see figure 2, and then to explain their ordering (called a Q sort). The Q sorts are factor analyzed so as to reveal the limited number of corresponding ways the statements were sorted by respondents.

"In Q-analysis, correlation between individual rankings of statements is viewed as an indication of similar viewpoints. Therefore, the results of a Q-methodological study can be used to describe a population of viewpoints, not a population of people. It is a methodology for small samples" (Risdon et al., 2003; Smith, 2001 in Exel et al. 2006).

Q-set (set of statements)

Based on literature, interviews and participative observations in the first stage of the research, we selected all the issues relevant to youngsters' attitude about talent projects in relation to 'resistance to crime'. From these sources we produced a long list of more than 600 statements relevant to our study. This list was structured in 4 categories and condensed to a Q set of 34 statements (table 1). The categories are named: Power, People, Positivity and Perspective

Power: statements about the development of skills

People: statements about social networks and social support

Positivity: statements about intrinsic motivation, success experiences and positive atmosphere

Perspective: statements about pro-social identity and self: a changing self-narrative

P-set

We approached 48 male youths, the P set in Q-terminology, aged between 12-23 years, with an increased risk of delinquency (so called 'resisters') or boys who were delinquent but desisted from crime (called 'desisters'). The sample is a mix of boys beginning at the talent project and more advanced. The respondents are divided into two groups:

- 27 boys involved in a sportive talent project (football)
- 21 boys involved in an artistic talent project (hiphop)

In this first Q study this two groups are analyzed separately.

Q-analysis

The individual Q-sorts of the two groups were analyzed using centroid factor analysis with varimax rotation². For each resulting factor (in this case two respectively three factors), an idealized Q sort is computed. This is a weighted average ranking of the statement, computed on the basis of the Q sorts of the respondents associated with that factor, with the correlation coefficient as weights (Exel et al., 2006). This composite sort represents how a hypothetical person with a 100% loading on the factor would have ordered the 34 statements. The composite sorts are used to interpret and describe the discourses (factors/profiles). In this paper, the interpretation is based on the *characterizing statements* of that factor (those with a rank value of +3, +2, -3 and -2 in the composite sort). Next, differences and similarities between factors are noticed using the distinguishing statements and the consensus statements. Finally, the remarks respondents made to explain their ranking during the Q interviews are also used to describe the discourse.

Results

As noticed, we analyzed the two P sets separately. The results are presented here.

1. *Artistic Talent Projects and Resistance to Crime: two discourses*

The P-set, 21 boys, age 16-23 years, consists of 'resisters' and 'desisters'. Both beginners and advanced talent developers are involved. Q-analyze of the 21 Q sorts revealed two distinct discourses: A: Artistic Talent developers and B: Socializers (Barneveld & Schoof, 2013)

A: Artistic Talent Developers

The 11 boys aligned with discourse A are advanced in the Talent Project and dream about a professional artistic career (+3). They are the oldest group, 21,5 average. Most of them (7 boys) were active in crime before. They are intrinsically motivated to develop their artistic skills (+2) and to desist from crime. The atmosphere at the project is less important for them than the activities (workshops, performances and battles) (-1). Success experiences stimulate them to continue going upward (+2). "Each performance gives me feelings of victory... it gives me the power for a next step" is a typical expression in this group.

The boys are happy with all the facilities (studio, mechanics, instruments, workshops) that give them really chance to develop their artistic skills. A social network is important for discourse A. They trust the Youth Worker at the project (+3) who helps them finding a job, education or a house. Finally, they think that school is more important for their future than participating in the project (-3)

Boys that belong to this discourse do not worry about criminal friends. Statement 5, 'I have to break with friends who are criminal' is rank-ordered low (-2). "There are two worlds, the artistic scene and the street culture, but not strictly separated. You have to deal with it." The few resisters do more agree with this statement. It seems these boys are more worried about the negative influence of criminal friends.

² Q-analysis was performed using PGMMethod 2.11. The software and manual are available at www.rz.unibw-muenchen.de. See table 3 and 4 the factor Q-Sort values for each statement.

B: Creative Socializers

The 6 boys aligned to discourse B are starting their talent development, they are younger (average 19). Five of them were active in crime before. Youngsters from this discourse desisted crime with the help of the project (statement 23, +2) in contrast to discourse A (-2).

This profile is motivated by the social character of the project. They consider the other boys in the project as their friends (statement 11, +2). They will do their best, so that people who love them could be proud of them (statement 21, +3) and they like to be role models for other boys.

The talent project is a means of emotional and creative expression (8, +2) for the guys. They do not focus on an artistic career (30, -2). They consider all participants have same chances (18, +3) but it is up to you if you want to use the opportunities. They are not motivated by performances or applause (33, -3), in contrast to the other profile (0). Youth Workers are positive role models for them. They stimulate them (4, +2) to go upward and to stay on the 'right path'. There is agreement about the importance of a school career: an educational certificate would give them more perspective.

2. Sportive Talent Projects and Resistance to Crime: three discourses

This P-set, a sample of 27 boys between 12 and 23 years of age exist of 65 % 'resisters' versus 35 % 'desisters'. Both beginners and advanced talent developers are involved. Q-analyze revealed three distinct discourses: C: Sport freaks D: Sociability seekers E: Resistance-focused boys (Kloppers & van der Ven, 2013)

C: Sport Freaks

The boys who defined discourse C were in comparison with discourses D and E more active in crime. They are average 14, 4 years old. The boys are more focused on the football aspects in the project and are motivated by its competitive character. They get more spirit from the battles than from training (2,+2). The social goals of the project, like changing anti- social behavior, are less evident and important for them. The project did not change their behavior according to their own point of view (14, -3; 1, -3; 5, -2) . At the same time they attach importance to the corrections they get in the project if they do something wrong (17, +2). Discourse C likes to be rewarded for their successes in the project (24, +2). Most essential for the boys is that they are allowed to make mistakes at the project (34, +3) and that the youth workers are good role models for them (4, +3).

D: Sportive Sociability Seekers

This group is average 12,7 years old and in contrast to the other discourses the youngest. Most boys were never active in crime. This discourse is focused on the social aspects of the project and less interested in the competitive character. A reward for their successes is not necessary for them (24, -3) and training is just interesting to them as matches (2, -2). The boys mostly agree with the statement that they have to break with criminal friends (5, +3). Otherwise they notice that they do not spend less time on street (1, -2). The boys want to transfer to other boys what they learned in the project (29, +2), they try to do their best for significant others (21, +2), they trust youth workers (15, +3) and see them as role models (4, +2). Finally, also for this discourse a school certificate is most important for their future (10, -3).

E: Resistance Focused Boys

The boys aligned to this profile are 'resisters' or advanced 'desisters', average 15,6 years old. Boys from this discourse mostly agree on the negative influence of criminal friends (5, +3) and the positive effects of the project in relation to their behavior. They see themselves as positive role models for other youngsters (13, +3) who are aspirant members and not their friends (11, -3). Just as discourse C, they like to be rewarded for their efforts (24, +2) and to be coached more on good behavior (17, +2) than on a football technique. A school certificate is finally more worth for their future than involvement in the project (10, -3).

Similarities and differences between the discourses

A quick view shows some similarities between discourse A and C (Artistic talent Developers and Sport freaks) and between Discourses B and D (Creative Socializers and Sportive Sociability Seekers).

Discourse E (Resistance Focused Boys) seems the odd group out. But there is also consensus between all the discourses: all discourses see youth workers as positive role models, all of them think that a positive school career is more important for their future than involvement in an artistic or sportive talent project, and all participants have the same chances in the project. Both artistic talent developers and sport freaks do agree that it is not necessary to break with criminal friends. Both artistic Socializers and sportive Sociability Seekers are focused on their social environment: they try to do their best for others.

Also notable are the differences between artistic and sportive discourses: the artistic Talent Developers are more focused on a professional career and the Sport Freaks on competition (as a hobby). For sportive sociability seekers the negative influence of the street culture is most important (+3) in contrast to artistic socializers who do not worry about this issue (-2).

As noticed, the resistance focused profile is quite divergent. They give credit to the talent project for their positive change of behavior. They are focused on the main purpose of the project (resistance to crime), take responsibility for younger boys and would like to be role models for them. Some of them are involved in the project as an assistant youth worker or as a volunteer.

Conclusion and discussion

This Q-methodological study revealed five discourses of youths about their attitude, meanings and experiences regarding talent projects in relation to 'resistance to crime': A) 'artistic talent developers', B) 'creative socializers', C) 'sport freaks', D) 'sociability seekers' and E) 'resistance focused boys'.

Reading and comparing these five discourses lead to the hypothesis that there are three main discourses: 1. a talent focused, 2. a social network focused and 3. a resistance focused discourse

The next step, a factor analysis of all the 48 individual sorts together, would give us more evidence of this distinguishing discourses.

This first separate analysis of the two P-sets in this part of the study solely leads to a few tentative conclusion:

- The talent focused discourses (A en C) are motivated to resist crime (or to desist crime) by developing practical and social skills (POWER) and generating success experiences (POSITIVITY)
- Socializers and sociability seekers (B en D) are motivated to resist crime by creating a positive social network: social support of significant persons and role models (PEOPLE)
- The resistance focused discourse (E) is motivated to resist crime because of the awareness of negative influences of delinquency. This profile is developing responsibility for others, creating a pro-social identity and self and determined 'to go straight' (PERSPECTIVE)

Based on this study little can be said about the correlation between these discourses and background characteristics, with the note that the interpretations are provisionally and hypothesis-generating for a follow up study.

- Some discourses seem to correlate with a age. Socializers aligned to discourse B and D are a little younger than Talent developers. Talent Developers with professional ambitions (A) are the oldest age group. Even the resistance focused discourse (E) is represented by older boys.
- Regarding criminal careers we see less evident correlations. In this study it is remarkable that the social discourses (B en D) were generally not active in crime so seriously.
- Finally we noticed that the talent developers with professional ambitions (A) and the resistance focused group (E) are most advanced in their talent development.

This research is in progress, and it is hoped that the results can be used to increase knowledge about talent projects and the effects of Youth work practice. It would be interesting to discuss about the importance of distinguishing discourses based on the next Q-methodological research stage.

Most groups of youngsters we observed in youth work are composed heterogeneously and the coaching strategies are little differentiated. The few specific methods we see are generally based on observable behavior of the boys instead of being based on their tacit motivation or attitude towards the project (in relation to their behavior). We think that knowledge about specific motivating aspects of different groups of participants can contribute to the quality and preventive effects of 'resistance focused' talent projects.

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Tabel 1: Q-set: 34 statements

1. Since I am participating in the Project I spend less time on street
2. The performances and battles give me more spirit than the workshops.
3. Thanks to the Project I have more chance to find an internship or a job.
4. The youth worker at the project is a positive role model for me
5. If I want to be successful at the project I have to break with criminal friends
6. At the Project I learn to keep myself to appointments
7. At the Project I learn to know my strong and weak properties
8. The Project is a means of emotional expression for me
9. In het Project I focus especially on my talents
10. Participating the Project is more important for my future than courses at school
11. Other boys in the Project are my friends
12. Due to the Project I know what to do when I am angry or aggressive
13. Other boys in the Project see me as a good example
14. Thanks to the Project I changed my behavior
15. I trust the Youth Workers at the Project
16. With the help of the Project I have got more self-confidence
17. It is important for me youth workers correct me when I do something wrong
18. Everybody got the same chances at the Project
19. Due the Project I am less impulsive.
20. The success experiences stimulate me to continue the Project
21. I try to do my best so people who love me are proud on me
22. In the Project I develop my artistic/sportive talents
23. With the help of the Project I made the choice to desist crime
24. I have to be rewarded for my receivables at the Project
25. Since I am participating in the Project I am better with others
26. Compliments stimulate me to continue the Project
27. The atmosphere is more important for me than the activities of the Project
28. In the Project I learn to be aware what good is and bad for me.
29. I want to transfer to other youngsters what I have learned at the Project
30. I want to use my artistic/sportive talents in my professional career
31. I can reach a lot at the Project because I am really motivated for it
32. Thanks to the Project I learn to deal with setbacks
33. I get a boost from applause
34. I am glad that it is allowed to make failures at the Project

Figure 2: Q – matrix to rank-order 34 statements (+3 to -3)

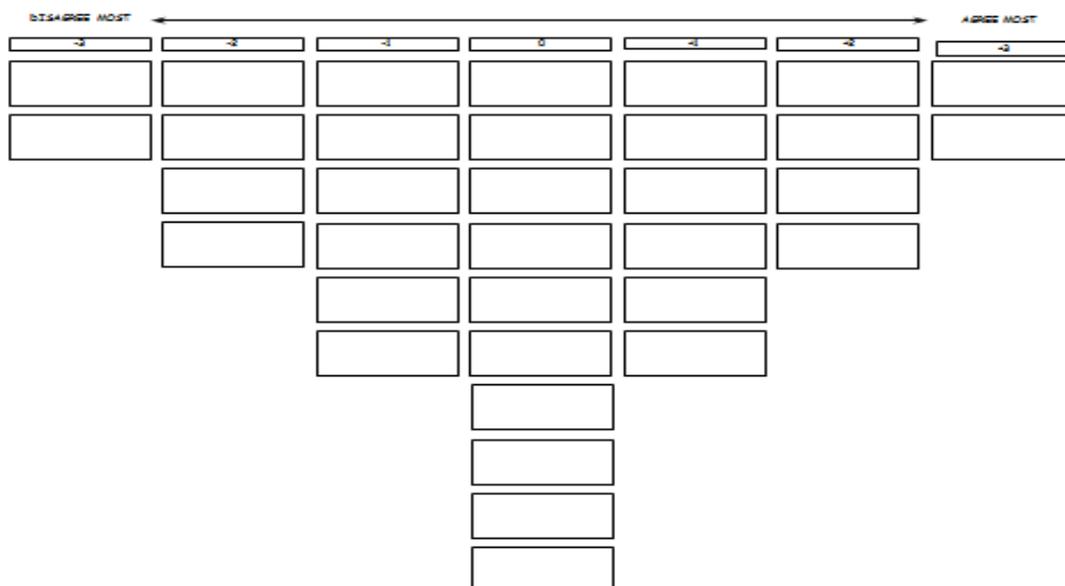


Table 3: Factor Q-Sort Values for Each Statement: Artistic P-set.

Factor 1: Artistic Talent Developers

Factor 2: Creative Socializers

	Factor :	I	II
1 Sinds ik bij R-Newt ben hang ik minder op straat.		0	-1
2 De optredens en battles geven mij meer een kick dan de repet		0	-2
3 Dankzij R-Newt heb ik meer kans op het vinden van een stagep		0	-1
4 De jongerenwerker bij R-Newt is een positief voorbeeld voor		2	2
5 Als ik goed wil worden bij R-Newt moet ik afstand nemen van		-2	-2
6 Bij R-Newt leer ik me beter aan afspraken te houden.		0	0
7 Ik leer bij R-Newt mijn sterke en zwakke kanten beter kennen		-1	0
8 R-Newt is een uitlaatklep voor mij		0	2
9 Door R-Newt denk ik vooral aan dingen waar ik goed in ben.		0	0
10 Wat ik bij R-Newt leer is belangrijker voor mijn toekomst da		-3	-2
11 De jongens bij R-Newt zijn mijn vrienden		0	2
12 Bij R-Newt leer ik wat ik kan doen als ik boos word.		-3	-1
13 Andere jongeren bij R-Newt zien mij als een positief voorbee		1	-1
14 Ik ben door R-Newt veranderd.		-1	0
15 Ik vertrouw de jongerenwerkers bij R-Newt.		3	1
16 Door R-Newt krijg ik meer zelfvertrouwen.		0	0
17 Ik vind het belangrijk dat ik bij R-Newt gecorrigeerd word a		1	1
18 Iedereen krijgt gelijke kansen bij R-Newt.		2	3
19 Door R-Newt denk ik beter na voordat ik iets doe.		-1	1
20 Wat ik bij R-Newt heb bereikt stimuleert mij om ermee door t		2	0
21 Ik wil mijn best doen zodat mensen om wie ik geef trots op m		1	3
22 Bij R-Newt ontwikkel ik mijn artistieke talenten.		2	-1
23 Door R-Newt kies ik er bewust voor geen verkeerde dingen te		-2	2
24 Ik vind dat ik bij R-Newt beloond moet worden als ik goed pr		-2	-3
25 Sinds ik bij R-Newt ben ga ik beter met anderen om.		-1	-1
26 Complimenten die ik bij R-Newt krijg stimuleren mij om door		1	1
27 De sfeer bij R-Newt is voor mij belangrijker dan de activite		-1	1
28 Ik leer bij R-Newt in te zien wat goed en wat slecht voor mi		-1	0
29 Wat ik bij R-Newt leer wil ik doorgeven aan anderen.		1	0
30 Ik wil van mijn artistieke talent mijn beroep maken.		3	-2
31 Ik kan bij R-Newt veel bereiken omdat ik het zelf heel graag		1	0
32 Ik leer bij R-Newt beter met tegenslagen om te gaan.		-2	0
33 Ik krijg een kick van applaus.		0	-3
34 Ik ben blij dat ik bij R-Newt fouten mag maken.		0	1

Variance = 2.353 St. Dev. = 1.534

Table 4: Factor Q-Sort Values for Each Statement : Sportive P-Set

Factor 1: sportive sociability seekers

Factor 2: sport freaks

Factor 3: resistance focused boys

No. Statement	No:	1	2	3
1 Sinds ik bij Doelbewust ben hang ik minder op straat.	1	-2	-3	1
2 De wedstrijden geven mij meer een kick dan de trainingen.	2	-2	2	-1
3 Dankzij Doelbewust heb ik meer kans op het vinden van een st	3	-2	-1	-2
4 De jongerenwerker bij Doelbewust is een positief voorbeeld v	4	2	3	0
5 Als ik goed wil worden bij Doelbewust moet ik afstand nemen	5	3	-2	3
6 Bij Doelbewust leer ik me beter aan afspraken te houden.	6	0	0	0
7 Ik leer bij Doelbewust mijn sterke en zwakke kanten beter ke	7	0	1	0
8 Doelbewust is een uitlaatklep voor mij.	8	0	-1	-1
9 Door Doelbewust denk ik vooral aan dingen waar ik goed ik be	9	0	-1	-2
10 Wat ik bij Doelbewust leer is belangrijker voor mijn toekomst	10	-3	-2	-3
11 De jongens bij Doelbewust zijn mijn vrienden.	11	1	1	-3
12 Bij Doelbewust leer ik wat ik kan doen als ik boos word.	12	-1	0	1
13 Andere jongeren bij Doelbewust zien mij als een positief voo	13	-1	0	3
14 Ik ben door Doelbewust veranderd.	14	-1	-3	0
15 Ik vertrouw de jongerenwerkers bij Doelbewust.	15	3	1	-1
16 Door Doelbewust krijg ik meer zelfvertrouwen.	16	1	-1	1
17 Ik vind het belangrijk dat ik bij Doelbewust gecorrigeerd wo	17	1	2	2
18 Iedereen krijgt gelijke kansen bij Doelbewust.	18	1	2	0
19 Door Doelbewust denk ik beter na voordat ik iets doe.	19	1	-1	-1
20 Wat ik bij Doelbewust heb bereikt stimuleert mij om ermee do	20	0	0	0
21 Ik wil mijn best doen zodat mensen om wie ik geef trots op m	21	2	1	1
22 Bij Doelbewust ontwikkel ik mijn voetbaltalent.	22	-1	0	-2
23 Door Doelbewust kies ik er bewust voor geen verkeerde dingen	23	2	-2	0
24 Ik vind dat ik bij Doelbewust beloond moet worden als ik goe	24	-3	2	2
25 Sinds ik bij Doelbewust ben ga ik beter met anderen om.	25	-1	-2	0
26 Complimenten die ik bij Doelbewust krijg stimuleren mij om do	26	1	1	1
27 De sfeer bij Doelbewust is voor mij belangrijker dan de acti	27	0	0	-2
28 Ik leer bij Doelbewust in te zien wat goed en wat slecht voo	28	0	1	1
29 Wat ik bij Doelbewust leer wil ik doorgeven aan anderen.	29	2	0	2
30 Ik wil dat van mijn voetbal-talent mijn beroep maken.	30	0	0	0
31 Ik kan bij Doelbewust veel bereiken omdat ik het zelf heel g	31	0	0	0
32 Ik leer bij Doelbewust beter met tegenslagen om te gaan.	32	0	0	2
33 Ik krijg een kick van applaus.	33	-2	-1	-1
34 Ik ben blij dat ik bij Doelbewust fouten mag maken.	34	-1	3	-1

Variance = 2.353 St. Dev. = 1.534